



**California Community Colleges Veterans Caucus
Veterans Caucus Business Meeting Minutes
The Community College League of California's 2024 Annual Convention (Hybrid)
January 29, 2024
Time: 9:00 am - 10:00 am
Sheraton Grand Sacramento Room - Bataglieri**

1. Welcome and Announcements:

Bill Withrow called the meeting to order at 9:07 AM.

2. Election of CEO Co-Chair(s):

Bill Withrow introduced Dr. Rick MacLennan as the current interim co-chair and a candidate for the co-chair position. Bill Withrow called for any additional volunteers, and there were none. A motion was put in place to appoint Dr. Rick MacLennan as the CEO Co-Chair. The motion carried unanimously.

Bill Withrow also called for volunteers for the position of alternate CEO co-chair, and in the absence of none, moved for Ryan Cornner's appointment. The motion was approved by unanimous consensus, and Ryan Cornner was appointed alternate CEO Co-Chair.

3. Introductions:

Bill Withrow called for introductions around the room and zoom appearances, and meeting participants introduced themselves.

4. Strategic Goals Planning:

The Co-Chairs lead a group discussion to create a list of action items to restructure the caucus' approach to making a difference for veteran student success, by getting to the priority of what the issues are, developing subcommittees i.e. a small group of people with a focus on something, and figuring out ways to achieve the result.

Participants were invited to make comments and suggestions on the issues that need to be prioritized. The issues raised include the following:

- An ask to the Legislature regarding the need for collaboration between disability resource center and veterans resource center in relation to services and funding, and/or a need to incorporate the disability component in the Veteran Resource Center (“VRC”).
 - The issue of veteran students that are not taking advantage of disability services from the disability service centers due to several issues such as, the stigmatization of the term “disability” as veterans are not self-identifying as disabled or are not aware that the challenges, they face fall within the scope of “disability” as defined by College campuses;
 - The need for mental health services funding that will enable VRCs to care for the veteran student upon enrollment in the college – the use of a questionnaire that will be issued upon enrollment to help identify veteran students with disabilities; and a need for a licensed mental specialist to be placed in the VRCs.
 - The need for the records to be confidential and how to protect the identity of the veteran’s students (as data is submitted to the VA) to protect their individuality.

A recommendation was made on establishing a Best Practice Policy which would be categorized in three ways:

- Student’s support on campus - including to maximize credit for prior learning (for veterans and students in the California Community College system (MAPs), Mental Health Services;
- State Advocacy;
- Federal Advocacy including funding issues and G.I. Bill

The caucus agreed that the word “disabilities” be replaced with “challenges”, noting that “special support” has also been used as a replacement.

Discussions were had on the need to partner with Norco to follow up with what they are doing regarding MAP Project Initiative or have them present at one of the caucus meetings; noting that it is an ongoing effort, so would be redundant to address those issues from scratch.

Discussions were had on how CalVet funding will impact the VRCs, noting that it is their call on how to allocate the funding, but the VRCs will need to advocate for what they need it for; as well as categorical funding for the VRCs. The caucus agreed that a committee will be established for advocacy -to have veterans tell their stories as they advocate to the legislature for funding.

Discussions were had on the structure and reorganization of the caucus. Bill Withrow stated that a Secretary and Treasurer should be elected to serve as a conduit to share information and correspondence to caucus members. On ways to increase/ reach the membership, it was agreed that the caucus will get in touch with the administration of the respective colleges. Additional dialogue on the caucus' structure covered the following:

- Need to figure out a way to communicate with veterans who are not in the community college system.
- Need to figure out how often the Executives/ the Caucus at large meet.
- Need to establish a membership list for communication with caucus members.

5. Adjournment:

The meeting adjourned at 9:56 AM.