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Employers, Colleges Help Veterans Get Job Training

By Katti Gray

Eugene Clark answers his office telephone with a robust hello, and then, begging the incoming caller's pardon, momentarily vents. "One of our students graduated last February," began Clark, director of veteran enrollment services at Rochester Institute of Technology in upstate New York. "The jobs he's been applying for prefer candidates with master's degrees. He wants the VA to [financially] support his continued education so he can get that master's degree. Each time he submits paper work to the VA, the VA asks for another document. They haven't said 'no,' but there have been these delays."

Certainly, there are kinks to be unraveled in the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) college programs for ex-military personnel, including the Post-9/11 GI Bill that started dispensing funds in August 2009. Nevertheless, Clark, a retired Army captain and on-campus advocate for war veterans, does take the larger, more optimistic view: The aforementioned 2009 grad did earn a bachelor's degree by accepting funds from an earlier allotment of GI benefits. He relies on his academic capacity but also, as he inches toward a hoped-for career, on a network of college advisors and corporate human resource administrators coalescing to ensure that student veterans navigate the classroom and, after finishing their studies, are equipped to compete for civilian jobs.

The collaboration does not go unnoticed. For its efforts at educating veterans, including the hearing-impaired who represent one of the largest sub-categories of American combat injuries in Iraq and Afghanistan, according to the U.S. government, Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) was named to *G.I. Jobs* magazine's list of top 50 Military-Friendly Schools for 2010. RIT is among universities tailoring programs for veterans while welcoming to their campuses corporations such as defense and technology contractor Raytheon, for example. In turn, Raytheon tries to help meld military skills and classroom know-how in ways that benefit employers and veterans who might go on the payroll, said retired Marine Corps Lt. Col. Bob Foley, 57, university programs manager for the company, which maintains a [vet-centric web portal](#).

"The corporations that do this outreach and give support [to veterans] become a catalyst for other companies, something for them to benchmark against," said Foley, who oversees Raytheon's recruitment and other veterans' activities at 130 colleges. "It's a business imperative if what you want to do is include under-represented groups in your workforce. That would certainly mean returning veterans, people with

disabilities.”

Since August 2009, the VA has processed more than 300,000 claims from those whose military service began on or after Sept. 11, 2001 ... *There is more to this article. Full viewing of this and other Society for Human Resource Management print magazine and online news is available only to SHRM members.*