MCC serves diverse military student population

In the 2011-12 academic year, MCC served 1,463 military students. This includes current military, veterans, spouses, and dependents who utilized military education benefits.

Of those students, approximately 32% were female, 23% were non-white, and 41% were over the age of 30.

MCC military students also pursue a diverse range of academic goals, including majors in Business/Office 14%, Public Service 11%, and Computing 8%.

Veteran student achieves success through others

In late 2009, after a 25 year absence, Dave Satrapa walked into the doors at Metropolitan Community College’s South Omaha Campus. Satrapa, at 55, was coming from the Stephen Center, which provides transitional housing and alcohol treatment. He crossed the street from the Stephen Center to MCC to obtain an email address. While a seemingly small mission compared to those he helped carry out during his time in the Air Force, getting an email address was the first step in what Dave calls “taking care of the unfinished business on 27th and Q St.”

Three years as an F-111 crew chief and air craft maintenance journeyman in the Air Force leading launch and recovery of the F-111A and F-111F granted Satrapa the technical and leadership experience necessary to succeed in a variety of fields. He initially came to MCC to substantiate and enhance his experience with a degree in automotive technology and welding. But the promise of continued success eluded Satrapa, when, as he puts it, “the drinking took it all away.”

Of the many people who helped him get back on a path to success, Satrapa points to MCC instructors as some of the most important, saying, “MCC instructors concentrate on thought process. They want to know what you think, how you are thinking it, and why you are thinking it. That’s what I love about the instructors—they’re all about fundamentals, and if your thought process is off, they’ll help you adjust it.” He points to two instructors in particular, Darrell Bush in automotive technology and David Eledge in industrial and commercial trades, as particularly important in developing his critical-thinking skills.

Satrapa sought other connections at MCC that expanded his opportunities. Military and Veteran Support Services staff nominated him to attend the 2012 MCC Student Leadership Conference, which he calls “an eye-opening experience.” Because of the conference, Satrapa says he “sense[s] a duty and responsibility to the student body, vet or non-vet. I was very proud to be a part of it—I feel like I can do more good.” He is also an active member of MCC’s Student Veterans of America (SVA) chapter, has received the Vietnam Veterans Scholarship, and has made the Dean’s List twice.

Success in college has also stoked his entrepreneurial fire. He is currently in the process of starting his own business, Dave Satrapa Engines, which he hopes to open in the spring in South Omaha. An SVA meeting connected Satrapa to the Nebraska Business Development Center’s Veterans Assistance and Services Program, and he has utilized their assistance in developing his business plan.

When speaking of his path from homelessness to business owner, Satrapa is quick to mention those around him who helped him along the way. Whether homelessness case managers at the VA, MCC staff and instructors, or NBDC staff, he praises those who serve veterans, but it is his own choices and drive that allow those people to succeed in doing their jobs. He made the choice to put down the bottle, to cross the street, to serve others, to start his own business. There may be some unfinished business, but given Satrapa’s current string of choices, it won’t be unfinished for long.
Phyllis Brown enlisted in the Army in October 1982. She did her basic training and advanced individual training at Fort Jackson, S.C. She began as a 76C supply specialist and her first duty station was at Fort Riley, Kan., home of the Big Red One. Their motto is “No mission too difficult, no sacrifice too great, duty first”—a motto she lives by.

She was then stationed at Ft. Lewis Washington in 1985 where she was deployed to Korea as part of Team Spirit, serving there in 1987—88. She says she loved the culture and especially the people, and it was during this time she witnessed her first Olympics.

Upon leaving Korea, she was stationed back at Ft. Lewis Washington. A year later, she re-enlisted for Germany. From 1988 to 1993, she moved five times, twice as a soldier and three times as an Army spouse. After eight years of service, she left active duty to focus on family and her education. She made the decision because she and her husband had both been activated for the first Gulf War. As she puts it, “Someone had to stay home and raise the children.” The thought of her 8-month-old and 9-year-old son potentially losing both their parents was an unbearable thought, but one military families consider on a daily basis.

After completing her degree in criminal justice administration at Bellevue University in 1997, she heard the call again and joined the Army Reserves 530th Military Police Battalion in Omaha as a supply specialist. She served six years. During that time, she experienced her second Olympics in Utah, deploying with a cell of 14 soldiers as a security team for the 2002 Winter Olympics.

In 2005, Brown completed her graduate degree from Bellevue University in human services, and began working at MCC as an adjunct professor. A year later, she decided to finish her military career with the Air National Guard, in Lincoln, Neb. She gave her Human Relations Skills class an assignment regarding something in life they wished they had completed or would like to. One of the students asked her if there was something in life she had not completed and would like to. Her response was her military career, which she was six years shy of completing. Her challenge was losing 15 pounds and passing the entrance physical. Brown believes in the phrase, “No sense in making a challenge if you won’t challenge yourself.” She loves teaching as an opportunity to improve and continue to learn. She enlisted as an education and training specialist and three years later became a chaplain assistant, which is a position she says she “prayed for.” Brown retired in the summer of 2012. She says she ended her military career “on a high note, and one full of grace and mercy.”

Brown is married to Beauford, who is also retired from the Army. Her two sons SirWayne and Andre’ also are military members: SirWayne was medically retired from the Army in 2010 after serving two tours in Iraq, while Andre’ is currently serving in the Navy on the aircraft carrier Abraham Lincoln. He also has served two tours in Afghanistan.
Call for student nominations: Operation Joining Forces Conference and Expo

MCC’s Operation Joining Forces Conference is a military support conference and expo scheduled for March 8 at the Fort Omaha Campus, Swanson Conference Center from 8 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Military and Veteran Support Services has 50 free tickets available to MCC student veterans and service members through faculty nominations. MVSS is encouraging all faculty members to recognize and nominate military students from their classes. To nominate a student, faculty must email the student’s full name and class attended to MVSS at mvss@mccneb.edu by Friday, March 1. Eligible students must be a veteran or service member and be in good academic standing.

Operation Joining Forces is an initiative to bring the message of the White House Joining Forces campaign to the Omaha area. The Conference will feature keynote speaker the Rev. Terri Lavelle, director, VA Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, Washington, D.C., and will include workshops, an employment expo, breakfast and lunch. The event is open to the general public and is $25 per ticket. MCC military and veteran faculty members are encouraged to attend.

Get to know a community resource: Nebraska Business Development Center

For 35 years, the Nebraska Business Development Center has been providing management and technical assistance to businesses in Nebraska.

The NBDC’s Veterans Assistance and Services Program is free to qualified veterans and their companies. Individuals are eligible for VASP services if they have honorably served in the Army, Air Force, Navy, Marines, or Coast Guard or in their guard or reserve components. If a business is 51% veteran owned, non-veteran partners and employees are welcome to participate in all programs.

- Get advice for business decisions: Loan packaging, government contracting, manufacturing, marketing, business start up, etc.
- Write a “bullet-proof” business plan through an online, self-paced course specifically designed to help veteran entrepreneurs start and manage a business.
- Locate, bid on and win contracts from local, state, and federal government agencies.
- Network with other veterans in business.
- Get help preparing and sustaining business for deployment.

Contact NBDC VASP
Traci Miller, program coordinator
402-554-4085
tracimiller@unomaha.edu

For more information or to register, visit:
www.mccneb.edu/mvss/conference.asp

South Omaha Campus advising hours
Monday - Friday
10 a.m. – 3 p.m.
Schedule an appointment:
402-738-4774
mvss@mccneb.edu
Free personal finance workshop offered for veterans and their families

MCC is hosting a free personal finance workshop for veterans, service members and their dependents on Wednesday, Jan. 23 from 1 to 3 p.m. and again 4 to 6 p.m. at the South Omaha Campus, ITC, Room 103. The event is open to the public, and no registration is required.

The workshop covers topics such as saving for retirement, budgeting, investing, insurance options, escaping debt and protecting income and assets. Don’t miss this opportunity to build a foundation for financial success.

For more information, contact Military and Veteran Support Services at 402-738-4774 or mvss@mccneb.edu.

MVSS to host opening reception to celebrate new office location

MVSS invites you to an opening reception and open house for the one-stop Military Student Support Center at its new location in the Connector, Room 134 at the South Omaha Campus.

The opening reception will be held Wednesday, Jan. 30 from 1 to 1:30 p.m., while the open house will run from 1:30 to 6 p.m. See the space, meet the staff and enjoy refreshments as we celebrate the next step in serving MCC military and veteran students.