

# FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**President Obama Applauds Community Colleges’ and Universities’ Efforts to Implement 8 Keys to Veterans’ Success**

*More than 250 Institutions of Higher Education Embracing the Administration’s “8 Keys to Success”*

WASHINGTON -- As part of the Obama administration’s ongoing effort to foster postsecondary educational opportunities and dramatically improve employment outcomes for returning service members, the Department of Education (ED) and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced today a challenge to education institutions to adopt best practices supporting educational success. More than 250 community colleges and universities across the country have immediately answered the call to implementing the “8 Keys to Success” to help Veterans on campus.

President Obama introduced the “8 Keys to Success” on Saturday at the Disabled American Veterans National Convention in Orlando, Fla.

“We’re announcing what we call ‘8 Keys to Success’ -- specific steps that schools can take to truly welcome and encourage our Veterans,” President Obama said. “And so far, more than 250 community colleges and universities have signed on, and today I’m calling on schools across America to join us in this effort.  Let’s help our Veterans get that degree, get that credential and compete for the high-skilled jobs of tomorrow.”

With the more than 250 institutions leading the way, the “8 Keys to Success” can aid Veterans in their effort to afford and complete their college degrees, certificates, industry-recognized credentials and licenses in preparation for jobs in high-growth sectors of the economy.

To help draft the “8 Keys to Success,” ED convened more than 100 experts to review approaches that could be scaled and replicated to foster Veterans’ success on campus and via distance learning. A wide range of stakeholders participated in the discussions including non-profit organizations, foundations, Veterans service organizations and, importantly, Veterans who had recently completed postsecondary education in a range of disciplines. Best practices learned from existing programs at ED and VA provided the foundation for the “8 Keys to Success,” specifically best practices from the highly successful VA “VetSuccess on Campus” programs.

“This is a major step forward in the administration’s work to encourage institutions of higher education to support Veterans with access to the courses and resources they need to ensure that they graduate and get good jobs,” said U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan.

The “8 Keys to Success” include the following:

**1.** Create a culture of trust and connectedness across the campus community to promote well-being and success for Veterans.

**2.** Ensure consistent and sustained support from campus leadership.

**3.** Implement an early alert system to ensure all Veterans receive academic, career, and financial advice before challenges become overwhelming.

**4.** Coordinate and centralize campus efforts for all Veterans, together with the creation of a designated space (even if limited in size).

**5.** Collaborate with local communities and organizations, including government agencies, to align and coordinate various services for Veterans.

**6.** Use a uniform set of data tools to collect and track information on Veterans, including demographics, retention and degree completion.

**7.** Provide comprehensive professional development for faculty and staff on issues and challenges unique to Veterans.

**8.** Develop systems that ensure sustainability of effective practices for Veterans.

More than 250 community colleges and universities in 24 different states and D.C. will fully adopt the “8 Keys to Success” and more are expected to rise to the challenge in the coming months. At Western Nevada College, for example, the school hosts a "Veterans Orientation" to make sure returning service members begin college on the right track, and that every Veteran has a counselor assigned to work with him or her on adjusting to the classroom environment, performance expectations, personal challenges and program completion.

“This commitment made by colleges and universities will help Veterans better transition from military service into the classroom, graduate, and find a good job to help strengthen our economy,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. “Given the opportunity, Veterans will succeed because they possess exceptional character, team-building skills, discipline, and leadership.”

Another example of postsecondary institutions working to implement the keys is Virginia’s Community Colleges, where schools are leveraging partnerships to connect Veterans with jobs and careers in high-growth, high-demand fields.

“These partnerships bring together local businesses, community colleges, workforce investment boards, the Virginia Employment Commission, other state government agencies, and nonprofit providers of social services all in support of Virginia’s Veterans,” said Glenn DuBois, Chancellor of Virginia's Community Colleges. “The keys to success provide a helpful set of recommendations for moving forward.”

The keys build on the administration’s work to provide Veterans and military families with a high-quality, affordable education. In April 2012, President Obama signed an executive order establishing the Principles of Excellence (POE), which provide protections for our nation’s military, Veterans, and their families.

To further Veterans’ success in higher education and employment, the VA is also expanding its [VetSuccess on Campus](http://vetsuccess.gov/vetsuccess_on_campus) (VSOC) and Veterans Integration to Academic Leadership (VITAL) programs, which connect Veterans to VA resources. Thousands of colleges and universities are developing or expanding their Veterans Success Centers as a result of the VA’s VSOC and VITAL investments. VSOC is currently located at 32 campus sites in 16 states and is expanding to additional campuses in 2013.

The Post-9/11 GI Bill has also played a large role in helping returning service members attend college. VA has issued approximately $30 billion in Post 9/11 GI-Bill benefit payments since its inception in August 2009, and helped nearly one million service members, Veterans, and their families pursue an education. The Post-9/11 GI Bill is the most extensive educational assistance program since the Serviceman’s Readjustment Act of 1944, more commonly known as the GI Bill, was signed into law.

The administration will continue to build on its work to ensure Veterans’ success by acting on our nation’s commitment to place higher education within reach for all who are willing to work for it. Federal agencies, colleges and universities, and their many partners are united in their determination to make sure this generation of Veterans, active-duty service members and their families are aware of and take advantage of all the benefits and resources provided by a grateful nation.

Click [**HERE**](http://www.ed.gov/veterans-and-military-families) to see the list of more than 250 community colleges and universities working to implement the “8 Keys to Success.” Click [**HERE**](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/08/10/fact-sheet-obama-administration-s-work-honor-our-military-families-and-v) to see the administration’s new fact sheet on the President’s commitment to honor our military families and Veterans.

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