

# CAREER & EDUCATION

## School Builds New Veteran Services

PCC responds to needs with resource centers

In the Marine Corps, Zach Schoonover served two tours of Afghanistan and Iraq where he helped in the nations' rebuilding efforts. At home, however, he has continued service to his community by helping to build a respected veterans affairs resource center at his Portland Community College campus.

As more veterans return home and go back to college, the need to assist them in navigating benefits, and acclimating to college life is growing. PCC has roughly 1,400 students who are military vets and that number is increasing.

In response to the rising numbers, PCC established the Rock Creek Campus Veterans Resource Center, located at 17705 N.W. Springville Road, as the first and only, one-stop resource center that provides a space dedicated for student veterans to network and relax.

Currently, the Veterans Services Office at the Sylvania Campus, located at 12000 S.W. 49th Ave. only has an office to certify student educational benefits. The Cascade Campus on N. Killingsworth St. has a small area outside of the library, and the Southeast Center on 82nd Ave. doesn't yet have an adequate area to serve vets.

But there are plans to create full-service Veterans Resource Centers across PCC thanks to input from students like Schoonover and funds from the college's bond program.



Zach Schoonover, who served two tours of Afghanistan and Iraq where he helped in the nations' rebuilding efforts, is helping build a veteran's resource center at Portland Community College campus.

Schoonover, a Rock Creek resident, said he's a big fan of colleges establishing resource centers for his peers, which can make a huge difference in the acclimation process.

"It's a fantastic place for veterans at Rock Creek to come in," Schoonover told the House Veterans Affairs Committee back in May at the State Capitol, as part of a presentation with Financial Aid and Veterans Services Director Bert Logan. "They come in, hang out, get information they need, find out where to go to get financial aid on campus, learn how to transfer to four-year universities and get information on other VA benefits."

"We've pretty much set up a support group in there, and we've started branching out and doing commu-

nity service projects that help people in the county," he continued.

The last two years, PCC has amped up the awareness campaign for the needs of veterans. Students and staff organized a Veterans Appreciation Week in the spring across the district that included specific workshops for veterans, jobs and resource fairs, and guest speakers. On top of that, students coordinated service projects such as fundraisers for Lacey House (Oregon's first and only privately funded, full-service home for homeless veterans) and deployment care package drives each term.

"They have a very effective veteran's services program. It's a major transition moving from the military back into civilian life and then into school. The camaraderie

that's available through the resource center is very important," said Rep. Brad Witt, who toured the Rock Creek VRC in May.

"Taking that big leap, making that transition, jumping into something that is unknown; it's easier to make that leap or jump when you are making it with somebody else."

Rock Creek set the standard thanks to Rodriguez, who identified the need for a staffed VRC after convening a group of concerned faculty four years ago.

"I wanted to ensure that when our veterans came back from war that they were able to have the services they need provided to them at the community college," Rodriguez said. "It was also a goal of the faculty who were really struggling in the classroom in understanding who the veterans were in class."

Schoonover is grateful. He earned a bachelor's degree in Religious Studies of Islam from San Diego State University in 2000 be-

fore serving a five-year stint abroad. He worked from 2005 to 2011 as a private military contractor until coming home to enroll at PCC to explore how to set up a small business. In total, Schoonover was removed from civilian life for more than a decade and didn't know many people when he returned. He said, the Rock Creek VRC helped him find his way.

"It is a huge transition coming back to school," Schoonover said. "The big problem that you face is dealing with a younger generation who doesn't necessarily have the same perspective as you. The resource center has provided a good place for veterans to come and calm down when they've had a difficult time. The nice thing about having it on campus is that you see those individuals day in and day out that are also using the resource center."

For more information about PCC's Veterans Services, call (971) 722-4502.

## Student Streetcar Services

PSU to provide free use of Portland Streetcar to faculty, staff, and students

Portland State University and OHSU have negotiated a faculty, staff and student pass program that will provide unlimited use of the Portland Streetcar at no additional cost to campus members.

"With the Eastside line opening and the elimination of the free-rail zone, we thought it was important to provide free transit access throughout the central city," said Dan Zalkow, executive director of Finance and Administration at PSU. "It's also part of

our mission to encourage modes of transportation other than driving."

Around 75 percent of faculty, staff, and students commute to campus by means other than one car with one driver. PSU leaders expect commuting to campus on the Portland Streetcar to increase considerably with the Eastside expansion and the completion of the new PSU/OHSU Collaborative Life Sciences Building on the South Waterfront in 2013.

Located in Portland, Oregon, PSU has about 30,000 undergraduate and graduate students. PSU's motto is "Let Knowledge Serve the City," where they provide students with opportunities to work with businesses, schools and organizations on real-world projects.

"The Streetcar is not just for commuting," said Zalkow. "Our employees use it to travel to meetings and our student residents use it as convenient travel throughout the city."

The three year program is \$195,000, but the cost will be absorbed by the university and not passed on to faculty, staff, or students.

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