



Lipscomb University

Veteran Reconnect Grant Program

April D. Herrington
Director of Veteran Services
1 University Park Drive
Nashville, TN 37204
615.966.1013
april.herrington@lipscomb.edu

Funding requested:

\$ 86,415.00

President/Director of Higher Education Institution

Project Director

July 1, 2015

Dr. Russ Deaton, Interim Executive Director
Tennessee Higher Education Commission
404 James Robertson Parkway, Suite 1900
Nashville TN 37243

Dear Dr. Deaton:

Lipscomb University is pleased to have the opportunity to propose an exciting project that will contribute to the success of our current and future veteran students. Thank you for the invitation to apply for a Veteran Reconnect grant.

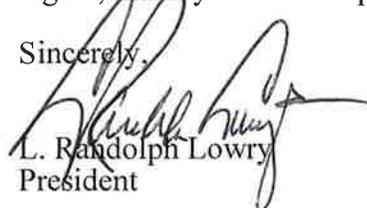
Lipscomb's student population that receives VA educational entitlements has grown exponentially in the six years that Lipscomb has offered tuition-free education to Yellow Ribbon recipients. In 2009, the university had 62 students receiving VA education entitlements; this past spring, that number was 224. Lipscomb has been recognized time and again by U.S. News & World Report, Victory Media, and Military Advanced Education as a military-friendly university. We believe that both the growth in numbers and the recognition of the quality environment for military students is due to Lipscomb's ability to offer competitive, relevant academics in an inviting, nurturing community.

Equipping veterans to make a successful transition from military life to a civilian career—through the pursuit of higher education—is one of Lipscomb's highest priorities and privileges. The proposed project will enable the university to provide more enhanced services and individualized attention to its veteran students as they make their critical transitions. It will allow those who are dedicated to providing services solely to veteran students to become more efficient with their time by harnessing technology to better manage data. And it will enrich the entire campus with a richer awareness of the unique veteran community and how to best serve the students who represent that community.

Lipscomb is excited about the opportunity to partner with Tennessee Higher Education Commission to support the on-campus infrastructure that will enable veteran student success. THEC's support during the proposed one-year project will jumpstart crucial elements of support: the development of a standardized system of tracking veteran student data; the formation of a campus veteran success committee; and the hiring of a student veteran coordinator. Lipscomb is committed to sustaining these elements of support to its veteran student population beyond the life of the grant.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to present our proposal.

Sincerely,



L. Randolph Lowry
President

**Lipscomb University
Veteran Reconnect Grant
“Boots to Bison”**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Cover Sheet	
2. President Randy Lowry Letter of Support	
3. Program Proposal	1
a. Program Need.....	1
b. Program Plan.....	8
c. Budget Plan	9
d. Sustainability	9
4. Axios Letter of Commitment	Appendix A
5. Grant Budget	Appendix B

**Lipscomb University
Veteran Reconnect Grant
“Boots to Bison”**

I. PROGRAM NEED

Lipscomb University is a private, charitable, coeducational institution whose principal focus is undergraduate education in the liberal arts and sciences, combined with several pre-professional fields and master’s degree programs. All degree programs encourage students to develop a sense of world citizenship through a geographically and ethnically diverse student body, as well as wide-ranging cultural and professional growth opportunities.

Lipscomb launched its veteran services program in 2009, through which a growing number of U.S. veterans and their family members are pursuing undergraduate and graduate academic degrees. The program has grown exponentially from serving just 62 VA educational entitlement recipients in 2009-2010 to serving 224 in 2014-15 – an almost 400 percent increase. Since the program’s inception, Lipscomb has offered a dollar-for-dollar match to the federal government aid provided through the Yellow Ribbon Educational Enhancement Program, resulting in many veterans’ ability to earn a Lipscomb degree tuition-free.

Description of Need

Lipscomb has been recognized nationally for its high-quality veteran services program. In Fall 2014, Lipscomb University was ranked the second-best regional university in the South for veterans in U.S. News and World Report’s “2015 America’s Best Colleges” guidebook and named a military-friendly school for the sixth consecutive year by “GI Jobs,” a publication of Victory Media. Military Advanced Education also recently awarded Lipscomb University the designation of a “Top Military-Friendly University” in its 2015 guide.

Additionally, Lipscomb students that receive VA educational entitlements have performed well academically with 74 percent of currently enrolled students maintaining at least a 3.0 GPA, and 16 percent of those maintaining a perfect 4.0 GPA. Since 2009, 206 VA educational entitlement recipients have graduated from Lipscomb. However, even with the laudable success of Lipscomb's veteran services program, many significant challenges still remain.

Challenge #1

One of the biggest challenges for Lipscomb's veteran population is the transition from military to civilian life. Most of the veteran students who begin the program make a quick transition into the academic environment (many within a couple of weeks before the term begins), a drastically different setting than the places and situations that military men and women have been exposed to previously.

In all cases, veteran students need strong support in order to be successful as they begin or renew their higher education experience. The addition of a staff member highly knowledgeable about veteran students' needs and dedicated to the task of assisting them as they embark on academic life is a key element of this project proposal.

Challenge #2

Even though Lipscomb has been recognized as a military-friendly education institution, the challenge still exists to ensure that all areas of campus are fully informed and equipped to effectively serve the veteran student population. While many faculty and staff are familiar with the veteran student's challenges and needs, others who interact in academic and other service settings are less or not at all experienced in dealing with scenarios specific to those transitioning from military life. This proposed project will allow Lipscomb to provide training that will better

prepare academic and service providers on campus to better connect with the veteran student population.

Proposed Goals and Activities

Based on the above-described challenges, Lipscomb proposes the following project goals and activities:

- *Goal #1: Enhance the support to Lipscomb's veteran students to ensure their successful transition to academic life. (Addresses Challenge #1)*
 - The first activity that the University's Veteran Services Office (VSO) will undertake is the development of a standardized system of tracking veterans and student veteran success data. The VSO has already begun conversations with the University's Information Technology Support staff to create this new system by utilizing Lipscomb's existing resources (e.g. Ellucian Banner and Evisions Argos). Currently, the VSO does not have the resources available to efficiently track veteran data over time to analyze trend information to inform and effectively report the details of the services it provides. At present, the VSO contacts the Registrar's Office to request reports that are produced using Microsoft Access, and then veteran data is manually added to generate a comprehensive report. This process can be replaced with standard DataBlock (pre-built database queries into Banner) and ad-hoc reporting in Argos. These reports can be customized and run on-demand or can be run using specific data requests that originate from specific reporting needs. Argos reporting allows this to be done with minimal staff. Once implemented, the new digital data tracking system will allow the VSO staff to run reports that identify strengths and opportunities within their department's services to customize interventions to better serve veterans' needs. Additional database triggers are also planned that will alert the VSO staff of changes in the coursework or financial condition of the veteran student enrolled at Lipscomb. With these changes, the VSO staff will be better equipped to meet the continuous tracking and reporting of the veterans attending the university, as well as the obligation to ensure each veteran student is successful in their pursuit of a degree. Lipscomb's VSO approach takes advantage of the core student information systems in use today, but enhances them slightly to deliver better tracking and reporting for this important class of students.
 - Lipscomb University will hire a full-time Student Veteran Coordinator, whose responsibilities will include representing Lipscomb both on and off campus to prospective VA students, parents and other individuals and organizations involved in the college selection process. Specifically, the Student Veteran Coordinator will serve as the initial contact for perspective veteran students; coordinate recruitment activities (including coordination of VA educational entitlement benefits); develop and implement student veteran-specific orientation and student success program;

serve as the VA student advocate to connect VA students to other departments on campus; prepare each entitlement beneficiary's academic record for compliance with VA rules and regulations; utilize new and existing marketing channels to increase exposure to Lipscomb's veteran services program; and, develop and implement faculty/staff training, create and analyze data to evaluate recruitment, admissions and retention success. While Lipscomb offers a network of support for this specific student population, the university's Veteran Services Office recognizes a strong need for an additional staff member whose focus it is to provide first-line contact, support, and orientation to incoming students.

- Development of a veteran-specific orientation program. The orientation will be separate from the University-wide freshman and transfer student orientation program and will be tailored to orient the student veteran to a wide variety of topics aimed at ensuring a smooth transition to student life. Some of the topics covered will include, but not be limited to: financial aid responsibility and explanation of VA educational entitlements; detailed academic advising; introduction of all resources most relevant to the student veteran, including disability services, counseling center, career center, and the Veteran Services Office; introduction of the Campus Veteran Organization representatives; expectations and requirements of the Veteran Services Office to ensure proper receipt of VA benefits; and, introduction of student veteran peer-mentoring program.
- *Goal #2: Equip the entire campus community to respond effectively to veteran students' needs. (Addresses Challenge #2)*
 - Enhancement of a Veteran Success Committee. To date, Lipscomb's Veteran Services Office (VSO) has spearheaded the establishment of an informal committee that includes representatives of the Business Office, Financial Aid, and Office of the Registrar; this group meets monthly during the academic year to review each veteran student's account individually to make sure that all issues related to class credit, financial aid, and documentation to the Department of Veterans Affairs are dealt with correctly. In an effort to enable the broader campus to respond effectively to veteran students' needs, VSO will convene representatives of other offices on campus to join an enhanced Veteran Success Committee, which will meet at least twice per academic semester to discuss and address issues pertinent to the veteran student population. The members of this expanded committee will include representatives of all areas of campus that have direct veteran student interaction, including but not limited to, representatives from the President's Office, Provost's Office, Office of Student Life, Financial Aid, Admissions, Veteran Services, each Academic College, Career Development Center, Disability Services, Counseling Center, Student Government Association, Campus Veteran Organization, Alumni Relations and Student Advocacy.
 - Training of faculty and staff on veteran-specific issues. Lipscomb will contract with internal and external experts who will lead seminar sessions, on campus, on a variety

of issues, such as post-traumatic stress disorder, TBI, and other wounds of war and become “Green Zone” certified to identify themselves as someone who self-identifies as one who is available to assist the student veteran. These seminars will provide faculty and staff with tangible tips and strategies for identifying issues and concerns of veteran students and helping them find the appropriate resources for problem resolution.

Linkages Between Grant Activities and Local Needs

The wars being fought in Afghanistan and Iraq are the most sustained combat operations since the Vietnam War (Litz, Brett. (2006, June 1) *A brief primer on the mental health impact of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq*. Retrieved June 28, 2015, from the NE Department of Veteran Services website: <http://www.ptsd.ne.gov/pdfs/impact-of-the-wars-in-afghanistan-iraq.pdf>).

Soldiers are exposed to multiple deployments and extended tours of duty and often pushed beyond their emotional and physical limits. The frequency and length of deployments increases soldiers' vulnerability to combat stress. Other factors affecting this vulnerability are related to the unique circumstances of the war in Iraq which is characterized by unpredictability and no recognizable front line. (Usher, Anne (2006, November 1). *Long Repeated Tours In Iraq, Afghanistan Taking Mental Toll on Soldiers*. Retrieved November 29, 2006, from the Veterans for America Web site: <http://www.veteransforamerica.org/ArticleID/8749>).

Many Iraqi and Afghan veterans are pursuing vocational and educational interests to build a secure future. The college setting has become the new front line for many of these returning veterans. Military members, depending on certain variables such as length of enlistment, rank and status when leaving the military, and experiences during wartime may experience culture shock resulting from the stark contrast between the military world and civilian institutions such as higher education. They are leaving a world in which authority is absolute, responsibility for actions lies in the hands of superiors and trust is based on life and death. Structure is at the heart of military life and the rules are clear (Black, Timothy; Westwood,

Marvin J.; Sorsdal, Michael, N (2007). From the Front Line to the Front of the Class: Counseling Students Who Are Military Veterans. In Lippincott, Joseph; Lippincott, Ruth (Eds.), *Special populations in college counseling: A handbook for mental health professionals* (pp. 3-20). Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association).

One notable study of effective interventions for student veterans was conducted at Queensborough Community College in New York. (See, Zinger, Lana, and Andrea Cohen. "Veterans Returning from War into the Classroom: How Can Colleges Be Better Prepared to Meet their Needs?" *Contemporary Issues in Education Research 3.1 (Jan. 2010): 39-51.*) Based on their research, including interviews with returning veterans detailing their greatest challenges to reintegrating into a traditional academic environment, they found the following:

Many of the veterans interviewed described feeling alone due to experiencing a lack of support from college officials throughout the administrative process or because they didn't identify with their peers. One recommendation was to erect a Veteran Center on college campuses which would function as a centralized office. This office could be partially staffed by student veterans and could be a storehouse of information pertinent to veterans, i.e. scholarship information, health benefits, etc. Veterans could get help filling out various forms from staff members or get referrals to offices such as the counseling department, tutoring department, or outside agencies. Having a central office, creates the opportunity for veterans to network with each other and get the social support that they need. This proposal requests funding support to help Lipscomb staff such a position to support our Veteran Center.

Additionally, many veterans in this study reported that attending the veteran office was very helpful and created a supportive atmosphere. It also enabled them to be in the company of other veterans with sharing similar experiences. Veteran support groups should be visibly

advertised. At Lipscomb, a Veteran Group meets weekly on campus to provide opportunity for veterans to get support and identify resources.

The study also recommended that sensitivity training workshops should be provided to both the student body and faculty, as some veterans have reported that the insensitivity that they had experienced from others has negatively affected them. This proposal seeks funding to provide such training to our student body and faculty as well as training for some of our internal staff to continue to offer the training efficiently and in a cost-effective way to future student body classes and to provide ongoing training to our faculty and staff.

Local Employer Partnerships

Lipscomb University has entered into a formal agreement with Axios, LLC, an IT company based in Nashville, TN to provide internship opportunities to its veteran students. (See, Axios Letter of Commitment at Appendix A). Additionally, Lipscomb has a strong partnership with Copperweld Bimetals, LLC and Cigna Healthspring and are formalizing a similar agreement with both of these companies as well.

II. PROGRAM PLAN

Project	Purpose	Phases	Deliverables (Actions)	Key Performance Indicators (Metrics)	Responsible Party		Date				
					Director	Member(s)					
Adding an additional staff member: Student Veteran Coordinator	To increase recruitment and retention. Responsibilities include recruiting new students (military, veteran and family members) and assisting their transition to academic life.	Creating Position	Job Description	Approval by HR	April Herrington	Diane Easley	July 30, 2015				
			Post Position	Track Applications			July 31 - August 13, 2015				
			Close Position	Position Removed			August 13, 2015				
			Review Application	Use scoring method			August 14, 2015				
			Interview				August 17 - 21, 2015				
			Make Offer	Offer Accepted			August 24, 2015				
			New Hire Starts	In process with HR			September 8, 2015				
		Additional Workspace	Meeting	All important personnel attend - Meeting Minutes	April Herrington	Josh Roberts	July 31, 2015				
			Create Invoice	Budget Approved			August 3, 2015				
			Renovations (if needed)	Project Completion on Time			August 3 - 21, 2015				
Develop a system for collecting veteran information	To enhance IT operations in order to track demographic data in relation to veteran students. Allows for identification of strengths and weaknesses within our service department to better serve veterans and their specific needs.	Tracking Veteran Information	Determine Banner Location	Customized Tab	Mike Green	IT Department & Banner Security	August 3 - 14, 2015				
			Create additional tables/fields	Completion			August 17 - September 11, 2015				
			Data Entry	Data specific reports			September 14 - October 9, 2015				
		Reporting with Argos	DataBlocks/Reports created (Veteran Info)	Run on-demand			October 12 - December 11, 2015				
			Scheduled Training	Veteran Service access to manipulate and pull reports			December 14, 2015				
		Notification System	Write database triggers	Real-time notification when a student's schedule, bill or academic standing changes			January 4 - April 1, 2016				
			Document Imaging	Purchase Equipment			Delivery	August 31, 2015			
		Custom Application in Banner Document Management (BDM)		Completion							
		Scan documents		Paperless							
		Upload to Banner		Banner recognition (automated)							
		Formation of a campus veteran success committee	To access student veteran needs, current best practices and to develop resources and establish internal support networks for student veterans.	Committee Selection			Recruit Faculty/Staff	Committee Formed	April Herrington	Veteran Success Committee	August 3 - 7, 2015
				Create Action Plan			Meeting	Finalize Action Plan			August 10, 2015
				Implement Action Plan			Monthly meeting and regular written/oral communication	Success or completion of action(s)			2nd Thursday of every month, starting September 10, 2015
Implementation of Campus Veteran Success Program	To accelerate the success of veterans already enrolled and create favorable conditions to recruit new student veterans.	Identify Faculty/Staff Veterans	Send out survey	Survey completion	Human Resources	All Faculty/Staff	Fall 2015				
			Faculty/Staff Training	Scheduled Green Zone Training twice/semester			Attendance	Fall: August 21 and October 23, 2015, Spring: January 8 and March 11			
		Awarding Door Placard		Training Completion	Susan Lee or Student Veterans Coordinator		Fall: August 21 and October 23, 2015, Spring: January 8 and March 11				
		Incoming Veterans (only) Orientation	Schedule Date	Date confirmed	April Herrington		Provost	July 3, 2015			
			Create agenda	Finalized Agenda				July 6 - 10, 2015			
			Invite Faculty/Staff Key Players	Invite accepted				July 6 - 10, 2015			
		Develop Veteran Seminar Course	Notify students of (mandatory) orientation	Attendance and satisfaction survey	April Herrington		Registrar	July 6, 2015			
			Create syllabus	Approval of course for award of 3 credit hours that count towards graduation				Fall 2016			
		Veteran Student School Catalog	To provide an additional resource that veteran students can refer to for information and gain a better understanding of the academic process	Gather important veteran specific information regarding VA and schools process, policies and procedures	Distribution of catalogs		April Herrington	Veteran Success Committee	Summer 2016		
									Combine information into catalog format	Summer 2016	
		Career Development Hiring Initiative	To better prepare students for post graduation by providing internship programs and full time employment	Keep in regular communication (written/verbal) with current committed employers	Maintain relationship and formal commitment with employers		April Herrington	Career Development Center	Continuous		
									Partner with additional local employers (military-friendly)	Formal commitment	Continuous

III. BUDGET PLAN

Please see Appendix B for budget detail.

IV. SUSTAINABILITY

For the past six years, Lipscomb has been fully committed to providing the necessary resources to accommodate student veterans on campus and create a favorable environment to aide in their pursuit of higher education. We believe our success with veteran enrollment through graduation is directly related to the activities and services we have established to ensure our students have a smooth transition in to campus life. Our mission is to ease the burden of stressors and the unknown so they can primarily focus on their personal and professional growth.

With the financial help and resources the Reconnect Grant will provide, we hope to enhance our current activities and services as well as develop new opportunities for student veterans. A portion of our plan includes the improvement of our internal processes, which will allow us to better serve our current veteran student population and create favorable conditions to recruit new student veterans.

Some of the new projects we plan to undertake are the development of a system for collecting veteran information, the formation of a campus veteran success committee, implementation of a campus veteran success program that includes faculty/staff training and a new student veteran orientation, and the hire of a Student Veteran Coordinator to assist with the execution of the Reconnect Grant plans.

Lipscomb has placed each phase of the project at high importance and believes it will ensure the continued success of our veteran program. To show our devotion to the grant plans we have proposed, Lipscomb is committed to sustain each phase of this project beyond the life of

this grant. In addition, we plan to take it one step further and implement new projects starting in the summer of 2016, which we have laid out in our plan matrix for your review.

The initial fiscal year will include the development, formation and implementation of the proposed projects. The development of a veteran tracking systems will be maintained through continuous data entry and system updates as needed for the entirety of our veteran service program. The formation of Lipscomb's Veteran Success Committee will be comprised of key players across all departments that interact directly with student veterans. It is our plan to elect a new committee each academic year, so all faculty and staff has the opportunity to serve and understand the university's commitment to support the students who have selflessly served our nation. The implementation of faculty/staff training and the new student veteran orientation will become an ongoing training opportunity for all faculty and staff and a fall/spring requirement for all incoming undergraduate student veterans, respectively. The Student Veteran Coordinator position will be financially supported by the University beyond the initial year. Our growth over the past 6 years has been steady and this position will be crucial for our continued success in supporting our ever growing student veteran population. Thank you for the opportunity to partner with THEC to better serve this worthy constituency.

APPENDIX A

AXIOS

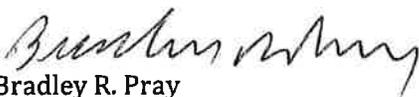
TO: Lipscomb University Veteran Services
FROM: Bradley R. Pray
DATE: July 1, 2015
SUBJECT: Student Veteran Internship Program

Axios, LLC has supported two internships for Lipscomb University veterans thus far and would very much like to continue supporting opportunities for transitioning ex-military students from your academic degree programs.

We see great value in exposing veterans to our lines of operations in information technology, cyber-security, logistics, program management, and precision agriculture. Axios, LLC and the companies that we work with, are fully supportive of veteran-hiring programs and will stay actively involved in mentoring veterans through internship opportunities.

Please accept this letter as our commitment to institute an internship program for student veterans attending Lipscomb University. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me via telephone at 719.641.1685 or email at brad.pray@axios6.com.

Sincerely,



Bradley R. Pray
Chief Operations Officer
Axios, LLC

APPENDIX B

¹ Each expense object line-item shall be defined by the Department of Finance and Administration Policy 03, *Uniform Reporting Requirements and Cost Allocation Plans for Subrecipients of Federal and State Grant Monies, Appendix A*. (posted on the Internet at: www.state.tn.us/finance/act/documents/policy3.pdf).

² Applicable detail follows this page if line-item is funded.

APPENDIX B - BUDGET

GRANT BUDGET LINE-ITEM DETAIL:

PROFESSIONAL FEE, GRANT & AWARD	AMOUNT
Contract for digitization of past VA education entitlement students files as part of student data system	\$9,250
Contract IT labor for implementation of standardized system for tracking veteran and veteran student success data	\$5,750
Professional Fees for outside experts to present to student body and faculty/staff on relevant student veteran issues	\$5,000
TOTAL	\$20,000

INTEREST	AMOUNT
Specific, Descriptive, Detail (Repeat Row As Necessary)	Amount
TOTAL	Amount

DEPRECIATION	AMOUNT
Specific, Descriptive, Detail (Repeat Row As Necessary)	Amount
TOTAL	Amount

OTHER NON-PERSONNEL	AMOUNT
Specific, Descriptive, Detail (Repeat Row As Necessary)	Amount
TOTAL	Amount

CAPITAL PURCHASE	AMOUNT
Specific, Descriptive, Detail (Repeat Row As Necessary)	Amount
TOTAL	Amount