

**PELLISSIPPI STATE
COMMUNITY COLLEGE**



Veteran Reconnect Grant Program

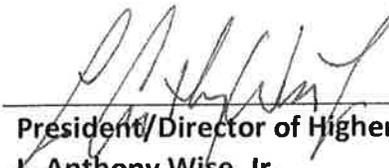
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Funding requested:

\$ 100,000



President/Director of Higher Education Institution
L. Anthony Wise, Jr.



Project Director
Rachael Cragle

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LETTER OF SUPPORT

Abstract

Pellissippi State Community College (PSCC) is proposing the following initiatives to implement the Tennessee Higher Education Commission Veteran Reconnect Grant at the Hardin Valley Campus in Knoxville, Tennessee. The largest portion of the grant will be used to hire a Coordinator of Academic Student Support, Veterans to act as a single point of contact for all student-veterans. The College also proposes to make upgrades to the two-year-old Ben Atchley Veterans Success Center, including new study carrels in a quiet area within the Center for student-veterans, who may have a particular need for a quiet study area without distractions. PSCC will also provide access to the online tutoring program, tutor.com, throughout the 2015-2016 academic year for up to seventy-five student-veterans. Along with these upgrades to the Center, the College will implement an intrusive advising model in order to improve student-veterans' completion, retention, and graduation rates. PSCC's intention is to continue the work the College has already begun in providing extra services to student veterans. The College has shown its commitment to this work by establishing the Veterans Success Center and by supporting specific student services required by the unique student-veteran population. The Veteran Reconnect Grant will provide the College an opportunity to expand these support services in order to increase the success of student-veterans.

PSCC certifies that Veteran Reconnect Grant funds will not be commingled with payment for existing staff member duties and that these funds will be dedicated and used exclusively for the execution of the services outlined in this proposal.

Section 1. Program Need

Campus-specific data demonstrating the need for action

Pellissippi State Community College (PSCC) serves a large student-veteran population with approximately 350 self-identified veterans representing 4-5% of the student population each semester. In the last three-year cohort of PSCC student-veterans, there were approximately 1,167 student-veterans enrolled, of which 871 were male and 296 were female. In that same cohort, 214 completed a degree or certificate for a three-year completion rate of approximately 22%.

Chart 1: PSCC Enrolled Degree-seeking Students Earning Award: Students Earning Associate's and Certificate Awards						
	2012		2013		2014	
	Non-vet	Vet	Non-vet	Vet	Non-vet	Vet
Earned Associate's Degree	9.40%	15.90%	9.50%	14.60%	9.80%	14.70%
Earned Certificate	4.40%	7.80%	3.30%	4.20%	4.40%	6.80%
Source: PSCC Office of Effectiveness, Assessment, and Planning						

U.S. Census Bureau and PSCC data indicate that the majority of PSCC's veterans are low-income, underserved, high need, nontraditional students whose graduation rate has been declining. This decline highlights the magnitude of the need for the plan outlined in this proposal.

The U.S. Census Bureau estimates there are 40,467 veterans living in PSCC's Knox County and Blount County service area. Currently, there are only 22 self-disclosed veterans with disabilities being served by the PSCC Office of Disability Services. Chart 2 shows that while 15% of the veterans living in the PSCC service area have a disability, only 6% of PSCC's veterans have requested assistance from the Office of Disability Services. This is a red flag that many PSCC student-veterans are not getting all of the assistance available to them.

Chart 2: Service-Connected Disability-Rating Status and Ratings for Civilian Veterans 18 years and over	Knox County	Blount County
Total:	28,744	11,723
Has no service-connected disability rating	24,159	10,237
Has a service-connected disability rating:	4,585	1,486

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0 or 9 percent	355	54
10 or 20 percent	1,825	437
30 or 40 percent	845	259
50 or 60 percent	460	249
70 percent or higher	878	460
Rating not reported	222	27
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013 5-Year American Community Survey		

The overall unemployment rate during April 2015 was 4.8% in Blount County and 4.3% in Knox County. The rate for veterans was double that (8.8% in Blount and 7.7% in Knox). The placement rate of graduates from PSCC’s high-demand, high-pay, technical programs is 93%.

Chart 3 shows that while the poverty rate in the PSCC service area is high, it is small compared to the 49.1% of PSCC student-veterans who are Pell grant eligible (low-income).

Chart 3: Disability, Unemployment, and Poverty Status Service Area vs. PSCC			
DISABILITY STATUS	Knox County	Blount County	PSCC
With any disability	14.60%	18.50%	6%
EMPLOYMENT STATUS			
Unemployment rate	7.20%	8.80%	Unknown
POVERTY STATUS IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS			
Below poverty	13.60%	12.60%	49.1% *
Source: U.S. Census Bureau FactFinder 5-year estimates and PSCC Office of Institutional Effectiveness, Assessment, and Planning			
* 49.1 percent of PSCC student-veterans were Pell eligible/low income in 2014			

An important issue facing student-veterans is readiness to begin college-level courses. Chart 4 shows veterans enrolling at PSCC as first-time freshman do about half as well as non-veterans. The data shows that student-veterans have a great need tutoring prior to the pre-admission test.

Chart 4: PSCC Veteran Fall Enrollment, Fall 2012 - Fall 2014 Enrollment by Term and College Readiness for First-Time Freshmen						
	2012		2013		2014	
	Non-vet	Vet	Non-vet	Vet	Non-vet	Vet
College Readiness	34%	19.5%	33.4%	19.5%	35.2%	23.3%
Source: PSCC Office of Effectiveness, Assessment, and Planning						

Chart 5 indicates that 49.9% of veterans living in Blount County and 35.9% of veterans living in Knox County have no college. This compares to 42% of all Tennessee veterans. In

today's job market, the lack of a two-year college degree or a certificate means the veteran will have a much more difficult time finding a job.

Chart 5: Veteran Educational Attainment	Knox County	Blount County
Civilian population 25 years and over	289,490	86,303
Less than high school graduate	9.80%	13.30%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	26.10%	36.60%
Some college or associate's degree	29.70%	29.30%
Bachelor's degree or higher	34.30%	20.80%
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013 5-Year American Community Survey		

Outline of program/intervention

PSCC was fortunate to receive two grants that allowed the College to open the Ben Atchley Veterans Success Center (VSC) on the Hardin Valley campus in 2013. The money from these grants provided the equipment and supplies for the Center including: computers, laptops, furniture, study carrels, printers and other related items. The three existing study carrels are not located in a quiet area. The College is proposing to add two additional carrels in an area of the Center where quiet would be provided.

A major upgrade will be to employ a full-time Coordinator of Academic Student Support, Veterans (VSC Coordinator), who will provide advising, refer student-veterans to any required assistance at the College or in the community, help them obtain all the Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) credits they have earned, assist with career selection, provide optimum class selection to reduce the time to graduation, assist with enrollment, refer veterans with possible disabilities to the PSCC Office of Disability Services, and provide other services.

The College will improve outcomes for student-veterans by piloting the initial implementation of the new Hobsons predictive software to improve persistence, retention, and graduation rates for student-veterans and to develop corrective action plans for student-veterans who may be at risk.

Clear linkages between grant activities and program needs

The college-specific and U.S. Census Bureau data presented above clearly shows that student-veterans in PSCC’s service area are low-income, unemployed, lack the education to obtain career employment, and unprepared to attend college. The implementation of co-requisite remediation, beginning this fall at PSCC, puts these student-veterans at a higher risk of dropping out of college, if they do not have initial success in these courses.

Two years of experience in operating the Ben Atchley VSC has shown that a full-time Coordinator, dedicated to utilizing all the services available, but unused by student-veterans, is essential in order to improve their persistence, retention, and graduation rates. As an advisor focused on student-veterans, the Coordinator will use the predictive and early warning aspects of the new Hobson’s software to provide early intervention and avoid student-veteran failure. Rather than student-veterans being directed from office to office to enroll, obtain financial aid, or tutoring, the Coordinator will be the one-stop location minimizing the all-too-frequent student run-around. The quiet study carrels will serve combat veterans and others who may have difficulty concentrating in an active, noisy atmosphere.

Optional Priority Area: Institutions partnering with a local employer

A letter of support from PSCC’s industry partner is attached at the end of the application.

Section 2. Program Plan

Detailed project timeline and overview

Activity	Fall 2015	Spring 2016	Action
First Contact for New Students	August	January	Establish a degree plan and a pathway to completion, refer to Veterans Upward Bound (VUB), refer to any required services, apply for PLA, review student-veteran services available, and provide tutor.com

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Referral to VUB	July/ August	December	Receive free tutoring for the placement test, assistance with obtaining veteran's benefits, and review student-veteran services available
Second advising meeting two weeks into the semester	September 24-25	February, 8-12	Discuss the start of the semester and address any concerns the student-veteran may have, review student-veteran services available, provide access to tutor.com and discuss any additional meetings needed
Develop transition workshop for student veterans and "Understanding student-veterans at the College and in the classroom."	September –December	January –May	Schedule workshops, advertise and promote workshops, recruit attendees, present workshops
Referral to appropriate offices as needed	September –December	January –May	Review predictive analytics to look for patterns of success or failure and provide direct, early intervention actions recommended as needed and discuss use of tutor.com
Review of predictive analytics and early alert reports	September, October, and November	January, February, and March	Implement an intrusive advising plan, implement early intervention actions, review student-veteran services available and ask about use of tutor.com
Meeting to register for Spring/Fall Semester	October	April	Review and discuss any adjustments to degree plan and the pathway to completion, review Grade Point Average (GPA), and review student-veteran services available including tutor.com
Final Meeting for Fall or Spring semester to discuss any outstanding issues	November	April	Review completion of milestone courses and their semester GPA and review and discuss any adjustments to degree plan and the pathway to completion, refer to any needed services, discuss summer school
Apply to graduate	October	March	Complete paperwork to graduate, assist with gown, etc., and refer to Placement Office
Participation in transfer information events or resumé workshops.	Final semester of student enrollment	Final semester of student enrollment	Provide information on transfer events and university transfer information, refer to Placement Office, and resumé workshops

PSCC will bring all of the services available at the Ben Atchley VSC together under one Coordinator and add additional services. PSSC's experience over the past two years has shown that this effort needs to be under the direction of one person.

The Center established a textbook Lending Library. The book stipend most student-veterans receive is inadequate. PSSC student-veterans can borrow textbooks and other required

texts from the Lending Library for the semester. There is a check-out process and students cannot get their final grades until the books are returned. The Lending Library asks the student-veterans to “pay it forward” by donating any textbooks they purchased to the Lending Library. Some funds from the grant would go to purchase additional textbooks for this service.

PSCC offers student-veterans one-on-one tutoring for math and English in the Center. PSCC’s Academic Support Center is often crowded and very noisy. Some student-veterans find this to be too much stimuli. Therefore, PSCC has arranged to have several tutors available at various times to meet these special needs. New study carrels in Center conference room will allow quiet space.

Student-veterans receive specific information tracks during New Student Orientation and a Veteran Affairs (VA) certifying official in financial aid and veteran specific advisors are available.

Coordinator Job Description

PSCC will hire a Coordinator of Academic Student Support, Veterans (VSC Coordinator) for student veterans. This employee will report to the Director of Advising and will have the following responsibilities: Community outreach for recruiting and partnerships; advise student-veterans, refer to internal and external support services and agencies; develop and present workshops to assist student-veterans with financial, personal, and other skills required to be successful in college; assist with obtaining PLA credit; provide a single point of contact for information and services necessary to achieve their educational goals; review predictive analytics in order to develop plans for at-risk students; maintain relationships with the VA certifying official, Academic Deans, counselors, and internal and external support services, such as

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Veterans Upward Bound and assist student veterans with transition, placement, and transfer after graduation.

The Coordinator will meet with each new student-veteran prior to enrollment to establish a degree plan and a pathway to completion that meets their needs.

PSCC will track each student-veteran's completion of milestone courses for their major and their semester GPA. This data will provide the Coordinator with the information needed to develop an individualized program for correction.

Student-veterans will be the initial group to use the new Hobson's predictive analytics program, which will indicate a student's trajectory for success based on a multitude of factors. These analytics will enable PSCC counselors and advisors to see patterns of success or failure and provide direct intervention as needed.

The new Hobsons' enrollment management software will enable an early alert system allowing the College to track class participation and mid-term grades.

The College will implement an intrusive advising plan similar to the Tennessee Promise. PSCC will refer all incoming student-veterans to the VUB program at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville. Enrollment in VUB enables student-veterans to receive free tutoring for placement tests and assistance with obtaining veteran's benefits.

PSCC will require all student-veterans to meet with the Coordinator to discuss an academic plan, apply for PLA college credit and schedule subsequent meetings. The second meeting will give the student-veterans an opportunity to discuss the start of the semester and address any concerns they may have. The Coordinator and student-veteran will determine if another meeting is needed before the next registration period and will continue to meet as needed.

The two additional study carrels in the Center conference room will require an additional

two computers, two laptops, two printers and one scanner. A desktop computer and laptop will also be needed for the Coordinator.

tutor.com

PSCC will offer the student-veterans access to the online tutoring resource, tutor.com. Using student-veterans, PSCC will pilot a program to determine the viability of offering this service to student-veterans on a regular basis. Each student-veteran will receive four hours of time on tutor.com per semester. The College will base the decision on the number of students who utilize the service and how much it is used. PSCC will re-evaluate the existing Veterans Support Committee established three years ago in response to the growing number of student-veterans on campus. The Committee was established to meet the unique challenges faced by student-veterans. As part of the grant proposal, PSCC will develop a more active role for the Committee in monitoring, implementing, and evaluating the outcomes of the Center. PSCC plans to re-name the Committee the, “Veterans Success Taskforce”, and assign the Taskforce specific duties in order to help student-veterans succeed, graduate, or transfer. The Taskforce will meet monthly throughout the academic year. The Taskforce will function under the office of the Vice President of Student Affairs. The Taskforce will consist of the following members: two faculty members, one counselor, the Director of Advising, the VA Certifying Official, the Vice President of Student Affairs (chairperson), and the Admissions Coordinator (recruiting).

Student-Veterans Club

The College has a Student Veterans Club. It is involved in College social activities. It allows them to foster connections and provide support to each other outside classes. Such clubs are a “best practice” recommended for student success by the American Council on Education study. The 2013 report concluded that student-veterans, like non-traditional students, are less

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likely to engage on campus due to personal responsibilities such as family and work. PSCC will provide a faculty mentor and additional opportunities for Club members to engage.

PSCC will conduct transition workshops and provide college employees with training on the issues faced by veterans on campus and in the classroom. These sessions will be facilitated by counselors, faculty and outside speakers with knowledge of the issues facing student veterans.

PSCC will address the opportunities for student veterans once they complete their certificate or degree. The Coordinator will assist student veterans with transfers to 4-year colleges. The Coordinator will set-up advising, tours, and orientations for these transfer students.

PSCC also maintains a close working relationship with the local Tennessee Veterans Business Association. This relationship will allow the College to find graduates employment opportunities with veteran-owned companies. The PSCC Placement Office will help graduates complete their resumé and contact potential employers.

Measurable objectives for each phase of the project

1. The graduation rate for the 2010-2013, three-year cohort (all students) was 22%. PSCC proposes to increase the 2012-2015 cohort by 5%.
2. The Fall 2013 to Fall 2014 retention rate for PSCC student-veterans was 62.6%. PSCC proposes to increase the Fall 2015 to Spring 2016 rate by 3%.
3. An average of 10 veteran-students per school day will utilize the Center. An electronic log-in will be used to substantiate the usage.
4. A minimum of 100 student-veterans will obtain or be referred for services each semester. A participant file with a record of services will be maintained by the coordinator.

Project governance and accountability plan

The Coordinator will report to the Director of Advising. The Director of Advising reports

to the Assistant Vice-President of Academic Affairs, who reports to the Vice-President of Academic Affairs, who reports to the President. The Veterans Success Taskforce will monitor the progress of the Center toward its measurable goals and make recommendations for improvements to the Director of Advising and the Coordinator.

Section 3. Budget Plan – *See complete budget in Appendix B*

The largest portion of the budget will be used to hire a Coordinator of Academic Student Support, Veterans (VSC Coordinator). This position will cost approximately \$48,300 per year, including the full-time benefit package of 38%. PSCC is also requesting \$24,500 for upgrades to the current VSC. PSCC will use \$16,200 to pay for tutor.com access for up to four hours of time for approximately 75 student veterans for two semesters. A portion of the grant will be used to purchase textbooks for general education courses, provide funds for training and workshops for faculty, staff, and student-veterans and miscellaneous supplies and printing for the VSC.

Section 4. Sustainability

In order to sustain the proposed high level of student-veteran services, the VSC Coordinator position will need to continue. However, the College can return to the current level of service using student-veteran work-study students and employees from the various student services departments, if necessary. The College will also evaluate the current budget for the Center in order to determine the most efficient use of limited funding. The physical improvements to the Center resulting from this grant will continue to serve student-veterans. If the student-veteran population continues to grow and the data collected during the grant demonstrates improved retention, persistence, and graduation rates, PSCC will be able to justify making the Coordinator's position permanent.

APPENDIX B – BUDGET

Veteran Reconnect Grant Program, Pellissippi State Community College, Knoxville, Tennessee

GRANT BUDGET LINE-ITEM DETAIL:

Salaries, Benefits & Taxes	AMOUNT
Full-time, Coordinator of Academic Student Support, Veterans (VSC Coordinator). To coordinate the activities and services of the Ben Atchley Veterans Success Center at Pellissippi State Community College. This employee will report to the Director of Advising and will have the following responsibilities: Community outreach for recruiting and partnerships; advise student-veterans, refer to internal and external support services and agencies; develop and present workshops to assist student-veterans with financial, personal, and other skills required to be successful in college; assist with obtaining PLA credit; provide a single point of contact for information and services necessary to achieve their educational goals; review predictive analytics in order to develop plans for at-risk students; maintain relationships with the VA certifying official, Academic Deans, counselors, and internal and external support services, such as Veterans Upward Bound and assist student veterans with transition, placement, and transfer after graduation. Base salary - \$35,000 plus 38% fringe benefits	\$48,300
TOTAL	\$48,300

Supplies, Telephone, Postage & Shipping, Occupancy, Equipment Rental & Maintenance, Printing & Publications	AMOUNT
Office supplies, brochures, textbooks, and printing	\$3,600
One scanner, three Dell desktop computers (one for Coordinator), three Dell laptop computers (one for Coordinator), two printers, two study carrels	\$24,500
TOTAL	\$28,100

Specific Assistance To Individuals	AMOUNT
Access to tutor.com for student veterans for two semesters; four hours per student for up to 75 students at approximately \$54 per hour	\$16,200
TOTAL	\$16,200

Indirect Cost	AMOUNT
Eight (8) percent of direct costs	\$7,400
TOTAL	\$7,400

DENSO

DENSO MANUFACTURING TENNESSEE, INC.
1720 Robert C. Jackson Drive
Maryville, Tennessee 37801

July 1, 2015

L. Anthony Wise, Jr., President
Pellissippi State Community College
10915 Hardin Valley Road
Knoxville, TN 37933

Dear Dr. Wise:

DENSO Manufacturing Tennessee, Inc. (DENSO) is committed to working with Pellissippi State Community College to address workforce gaps in Engineering Technology jobs in Tennessee and to achieve the employer related outcomes of the Tennessee Higher Education Commission Veteran Reconnect Grant.

DENSO Manufacturing Tennessee has an existing internship program with Pellissippi State Community College in which we provide two, one-year internships per year to qualified students. DENSO would be pleased to give qualified veterans a preference in filling these internships when they are available.

A future workforce with excellent technical skills is absolutely essential to DENSO's continued success in Tennessee. Combining enhanced technical skills with the already existing strong Tennessee work ethic provides state employers with the foundation for highly successful global operations based within our state.

DENSO and our 3,800 Associates appreciate the foresight shown by the State of Tennessee in offering grants. We look forward to working with Pellissippi State Community to maximize the impact of the grant funds to ensure good jobs for future generations in Tennessee.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Booker', with a horizontal line drawn through it.

Bob Booker
Senior Manager, Corporate Services
DENSO Manufacturing Tennessee, Inc.