

STCC Forms Veterans Support Group on Campus, Signs Statement of Support

Many of the 218 veterans attending classes at Springfield Technical Community College will participate in a meeting of the newly-formed Veterans Support Group/Club on campus, on Monday, March 23 at 12:15 p.m. At the meeting, STCC President Ira Rubenzahl will sign the Statement of Support for the Guard and Reserve, which guarantees a leave of absence for employees for military service.



Earl Bonett, Western Area Chair of the Massachusetts Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, said the signing is an opportunity for the president of the college to show the institution's support for the men and women serving in our armed forces.



civilian life to re-integrate into society.”

STCC student Dan Guyette, majoring in Computer Systems Engineering Technology, is vice-president of the Veterans Support Group/Club. He said, “We want to help vets in the area get the information they need to come to college, and help those here to stay in school. Many veterans simply don't know about financial aid or how to apply for it, or about other benefits available to them. We also want to help those who have difficulty with the transition to

Carol Mathison of the STCC Counseling Center, a member of the staff and faculty veterans advisory committee, said, “We started with a student club to gain visibility on campus for our students who are veterans. We are establishing a dedicated drop-in center to provide immediate support, right on campus, where veterans can be with other vets -- often the only place where they can express their feelings to a buddy who has been there and understands.”

According to STCC Veterans Affairs officer Liz Almeida, there is more awareness now, of the increasing number of veterans on campus, and of the barriers they may face. “I'm delighted with the prospect of additional services for our students who are, or have been, in military service,” she said.

Mathison said the group has applied for a grant to hire an outreach counselor specifically to assist vets with information on housing, financial aid and scholarships; assistance with paperwork for admission to college; and listings of available services on campus and in the community. The committee is considering creation of a veteran-specific orientation to college, since veterans may find it difficult to interact with non-vets in a classroom or social setting. They are also hoping to establish a website with information for vets, as well as providing print resources to assist in college admission and retention, job placement, tutoring services, finding and paying for housing, and other necessary assistance.

The group is planning to hold an information session for the greater Springfield community, on Thursday, April 23, explaining aspects of the new, post-9/11, GI Bill which will take effect on August 1. The workshop will be held at 1:30 in the 7th floor conference area of Scibelli Hall.

Guyette noted, "Next fall we may see an influx of more military personnel returning from Iraq. In this poor economy, education may be their best route toward a job. We need to get information to these folks, and be prepared to help as much as we can."