



# V.E.T.S. in College Update

VCU-RRTC

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Virginia Commonwealth University-RRTC, a grantee of the CNI Trust Fund (#10-176), is an equal opportunity/affirmative action institution providing access to education and employment without regard to age, race, color, national origin, gender, religion, sexual orientation, veteran's status, political affiliation or disability.



Education coaches currently serve **17 active participants**. McGuire's SCI Unit has referred 33% of the active participants. Each veteran works with a primary and secondary education coach to plan and support a successful transition and experience in postsecondary education.

## Motorcycles & the Military

High adrenaline situations are part of the military experience. Off-duty, service members sometimes try to replicate that experience on the back of a motorcycle like a Suzuki Katana or a Triumph Thunderbird. Four of the seventeen active participants enrolled in the VCU-RRTC Veterans Education and Transition Supports (V.E.T.S.) in College program have sustained spinal cord injury (SCI) and/or traumatic brain injury (TBI) as a result of a motorcycle accident.

Overall, military researchers counted 4,901 motorcycle deaths and injuries among all active duty service members from 1998 to 2008.\* The Marines reported the highest rate of accidents with over four out of every 10,000 service members involved in a motorcycle accident. The Navy and Army reported the second and third highest incidences of motorcycle-related accidents respectively. Although each branch implements its own safety initiative to combat motorcycle-related accidents and even death, the lasting effects of such an injury can be life-changing.

A motorcycle accident in 2009 forced Joe Tracy\*\* to leave the military after over 16 years of active duty service. Along with the profound effects of a SCI, the impact of a TBI proved equally challenging. While accommodations such as a modified work space and reach extenders helped Joe perform his duties in an office position, his short-term memory and processing skills posed new obstacles when he decided to return to college. Although he had completed several college credits prior to his injury, he found that the cognitive challenges that he experienced due to his TBI made returning to college much more difficult than he had anticipated. When he first met with his V.E.T.S. in College education coach, Joe was already failing the one course he was taking at a local community college. Joe planned on transferring his community college credits to a state university when he finished, but repeating coursework could delay completion of his degree and place his GI Bill benefits at risk.

Christine Grauer, Joe's primary education coach, encouraged Joe to use the academic accommodations he was determined eligible for through the college's Disability Support Services office. "We've worked with Joe to incorporate assistive technology into his coursework so that he can compensate for his memory challenges by using devices such as an audio recording pen. We have also helped Joe to develop study strategies that he can use when he's at home preparing for tests," Grauer said. "We just started working with Joe, but we're optimistic that he will be successful because he's learned to make use of accessible study spaces on campus and reading software which helps with his cognitive processing." Grauer said she believes Joe can eventually complete his Bachelor's degree within the time allotted by Post 9/11 GI Bill because he will be able to increase his course load as he adjusts to the demands of higher education.

\*[http://www.armytimes.com/news/2009/07/military\\_motorcycle\\_accidents\\_deaths\\_070609w/](http://www.armytimes.com/news/2009/07/military_motorcycle_accidents_deaths_070609w/)

\*\* Profile composed from aggregate data

## Updates

- VCU & McGuire IRB approved V.E.T.S. in College for another year.
- The program is **still recruiting student veterans** who may be in need of educational coaching.
- The advisory committee will meet next on **Monday, April 25**

## Referral Sources

J. Sargeant Reynolds' Student Accommodations.....	1
Virginia Wounded Warriors Program.....	1
McGuire Mental Health.....	1
DC VAMC Mental Health.....	2
McGuire OEF/OIF Program.....	2
McGuire Polytrauma Inpatient Unit.....	3
McGuire PTRP .....	7
McGuire Polytrauma Outpatient Unit .....	11
McGuire SCI Unit .....	29
Other.....	3
Total referrals to date.....	60

**Visit our new project website:**

<http://www.worksupport.com/VETS/index.cfm>