

Call to Order 12:30 pm

Attendance

Elected Members

Joanne Baird, SHRS

Nancy Glynn, Public Health, Dept Epidemiology

Marylou Gramm, Dietrich, Department of English

Julius Kitutu, School of Nursing

Susan Skledar, Elected Member, Pharmacy (*on call*)

Sybil Streeter, Dietrich, Psychology (*on call*)

Staff Council

Tricia Connell, Staff Council Representative

Chancellor's Liaison

Kenyon Bonner, Vice Provost and Dean of Students

Penny Semaia, Senior Associate Athletic Director for Student Life (*on call*)

Pro-tem

Robin Kear, University Library System

Senate Liaison

Gosia Fort, Health Science Library System

Office of University Communications

Donovan Harrell, University Times

Agenda

Speaker: Aryanna Berringer, Director of Veterans Services at the University of Pittsburgh

Please see Aryanna Berringer's PowerPoint presentation attached to the email. Supplemental points are listed below:

1. Aryanna Berringer began by introducing herself as the new Director of Veterans Services at Pitt for the last six months.

Berringer enlisted in the army in 2001 and served on ground in Iraq in 2003. After military service, she earned an MBA and managed IT projects worldwide implementing software.

Seeking a mission, Berringer ran for Congress in 2012 and for Lieutenant Governor 2017-2018.

2. Berringer introduced her mission at Pitt to enable veterans to connect with the community around them, including student veterans, staff and faculty veterans and veteran affiliated individuals on our campus.
3. Q & A and Talking Points (AB = Aryanna Berringer)

Joanne Baird: I've heard that if I see a homeless individual that has a sign "I'm a veteran" that our social services are fabulous for vets are fabulous and that person needs to be connected or has opted out.

AB: Pittsburgh is the number 4 city in the country for supporting veterans even though we don't have an active installation. We have great foundations that support veteran funding and organizations that support them. We can quickly get them networked in. A lot of people don't self-identify as veterans. Especially women. They'll say I served, but they don't identify as a beneficiary. Many younger vets who are just getting out and have not served in combat don't feel they qualify as a vet. They do.

I encourage all members to view the video (early slide on the PowerPoint) about local vets as it is important for civilians to see. There are stigmas concerning what a veteran looks like, and all of us need to approach veterans from a different mindset. He may not be six foot with a blonde buzz cut. May be a young woman of color, a single mother with 2 kids...

Kenyon Bonner: How do you define veteran? Does it include active duty or only after discharge?

AB: If they have trained but not seen combat, they are a veteran; if they have served as national guard, still veteran. DD214 [certificate of release from military duty] form classifies all as veterans. Every vet has a different experience of the process and is at a different point in that transition process; and we never fully transition.

It is important to thank veterans. But it is also vital to ask vets about their service because they have a depth of knowledge that they bring to the subject matter. Ask them about their experiences. Ask students about their service, and they start to build a connection with you. Don't just thank them. They do have to feel safe and comfortable in your classroom to share.

Students may write about their trauma (especially in writing classes). Don't hesitate to reach out to my [Aryanna Berringer's] office if there are concerns about the student distress. Or reach out to PA Serves to get them directly connected to services.

AB: How veterans' skills and strengths match up with the demands of college and how their military experiences make college a challenge [see the PowerPoint for more; this is a brief summary]:

1. Strengths:

Work ethic, attention to detail, "embrace the suck [the challenges]" are all strengths veterans bring to academic work. Veterans bring a wealth and depth of knowledge to your course material; they've traveled the world; they've experienced unique situations. They will enrich your class discussions.

2. Challenges:

- In the military I don't ask for help because I'm told that shows weakness, but in college, how do I learn to ask how to help?
- In the military, I was told when to eat, sleep etc. So how do I learn time management in the less structured life at college?
- Trauma: PTSD very real thing for higher number of veterans.
- All four people in the Veterans Services office at Pitt have taken mental health first aid.

- Invisible wounds—e.g., spinal cord injury. Sometimes pride gets in the way of veterans using disability services.
- Vets struggle with transition. Ages 32-44 highest numbers of veteran suicide. There is a Veterans Crisis Hotline.
- Reach out to OVS if their grades slip, if they don't show up—to check in on them and be proactive in their education.
- Challenges for students who are veteran affiliates who grew up constantly moving and with particular environments and values.

3. Academic Events to Support Veterans:

- CGS 31238 “Mastering the University: Veterans Section” is a hybrid one credit veteran orientation class
- Tutoring hours at CGS
- One day orientation, usually end of August as term begins, Friday before classes.
- Note upcoming events such as the 28 Feb 11-1 story telling event—civilians welcome and encouraged to come hear veterans’ stories!

Julius Kitutu: Is there a new veteran student orientation in the spring for incoming (transfer) students?

AB: That’s a great idea and I will look into it!

Julius Kitutu: We have students who have exhausted GI bill. How can we help them with issues of tuition at Pitt?

AB: There are resources depending upon their type of discharge whether or not they have a disability. There is vocational rehabilitation (30% comes from VA); there are scholarships and grants out of the OVA office. Send them to her office to get more information.

Marylou Gramm: Can you tell us the approximate numbers of veteran students at Pitt?

AB: Overall military and military affiliated [family of military] around 700. A number specific to vets themselves and not dependents is about 500 -- includes regional campuses.

Gosia Fort: How would you know that you have a vet in the class?

AB: That’s a great question. A check box in PeopleSoft would be helpful. If they’re not using benefits, we won’t know that they are here unless they come to talk with us.

Marylou Gramm: I’m now thinking of adding that question to the questionnaire I have all my students fill out on the first day of class—along with what pronoun, are you living on campus or commuting, your major, etc.

Julius Kitutu: Is there a place on the college application when they apply about being veterans?

AB: yes, if they've served. If they answer yes, we don't always get the data. Some of it gets routed to us. Within the FFSA form there is a question as well. But sometimes vets answer it the wrong way.

Julius Kitutu: In our school, for veterans, on the application for admissions, there is no charge for the fee. We don't track them after that.

AB: We need to share information! That would be super helpful. Vets do get priority enrollment into classes. Sometimes fees are waved. But there is more we can do to support them.

Meeting adjourned at 1:30.

Please take note of the Senate Strategic Planning meetings listed below these minutes, which all senate committee members are invited to attend.

Our next meeting will be Tuesday, February 25, from 12:30-1:30 in Hillman, room 272.

Agenda will be our discussion with Katie Pope, Associate Vice Chancellor of Civil Rights and Title IX at Pitt, about initiatives to combat and end sexual harassment on campus.

If you cannot attend, please skype in at this number: : <https://meet.lync.com/pitt/rk25/2N3P5MPB>

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Senate Strategic Planning Meetings

- Benefits & Welfare: Tuesday, January 28, 1:00 – 2:00 p.m., **702 Benedum Hall**
- Senate Education Policies Committee: Monday, February 17, between 3:00 and 4:30 p.m., **826 CL**
- EIADAC: Thursday, February 20, 12:30 – 1:30 p.m., **826 CL**
- Budget Policies: Friday, February 21, 2:00 – 3:00 p.m., **817 CL**

For more information contact:

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