



COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
CENTER FOR VETERAN
TRANSITION AND INTEGRATION

2024 IMPACT REPORT



The Center for Veteran Transition and Integration was born from both vision and necessity. My late colleague and dear friend, Peter J. Awn, and I first put our ideas to paper in what became the white paper that laid the intellectual foundation for the Center. True to Peter's uncompromising standards, we revised that document more than thirty times, because we knew the work demanded precision, clarity, and purpose.

From the start, our goal was simple yet urgent: to dismantle the "soft bigotry of low expectations" too often placed on veterans in their pursuit of education and careers. At Columbia, we saw firsthand the extraordinary talent, discipline, and promise of student veterans, and we also saw the systemic barriers that held too many back. We knew that our efforts could not be confined to one campus. With collaboration as our cornerstone, we set out to share lessons learned, build communities of practice, and expand cultures of support nationwide.

Today, under the unwavering leadership of General Studies Dean Lisa Rosen-Metsch and with the support of university leaders, the Center continues to honor Peter's legacy by working directly with veterans, their families, and the institutions and practitioners who serve them. By strengthening capacity and cultural competency across higher education and the workforce, we ensure that veterans are not only welcomed, but empowered to thrive.

Our mission remains clear: to improve the lives of transitioning service members and their families through innovation, collaboration, and an unwavering belief in their potential.

Curtis Rodgers

Vice Dean School of General Studies
and Founder of CVTI

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OUR MISSION

CVTI improves the lives of veterans, transitioning service members, and their families by collaborating with institutions, organizations, municipalities, and practitioners to build integrative cultures of support in higher education and the workplace.

98%

of those surveyed agreed that CVTI helped build their capacity to serve veterans effectively

96%

of those surveyed agreed that their work with CVTI helped them gain confidence as military-serving professionals

96%

of those surveyed agreed that their engagements with CVTI would make them more effective in their role

"Here, we can draw from one of CVTI's core values: while the responsibility for transitioning belongs to the veteran and military-connected student, on their own terms and using available resources, the responsibility for integrating with the veteran and their narrative belongs to the administration, staff, and faculty."

David Keefe

CVTI Director of Community Engagement

Data based on constituents surveyed at in person engagement surveys

Force Multiplication and Advisory

We offer advisory support, communities of practice, cultural transformation guidance, and a library of tools and resources for institutions and organizations.

Community Action Research

CVTI collaborates with communities and stakeholders via focus groups, listening sessions, close observation, and surveys, to generate insights and explore evolving needs of students and support systems, then review and share data through various methods of analysis.

Collaborative Thought and Convening

From our campus space we lead ongoing conversations that engage veterans, families, professionals, institutions, and employers in shaping meaningful support systems.

Content Creation and Distribution

We develop resources, insights, and perspectives, publishing across multiple platforms to reach diverse audiences

WHO WE SERVE

Nationally

We focus on strengthening the people and systems within institutions, ensuring that veterans and military-connected students have access to resources, guidance, and an environment where they can thrive.

We serve a broad and interconnected community across the country:

- **Veterans**
- **Transitioning service members**
- **Military-connected students**
- **Dedicated support professionals**

At Columbia University

We foster collaboration across schools, bridge gaps in services, and create a university-wide network of support through initiatives like the Columbia University Veteran and Military-Connected Student-Support Partnership (VMSP).

CVTI is building a culture where every veteran and military-connected student, and the faculty and staff who guide them, can succeed and fully belong at Columbia.

OUR IMPACT IN NUMBERS

250,000⁺ **Constituents Served**

2,300 **Collaborative Engagements**

\$588,900⁺ **Cost Savings for Institutions**

1,100 **Organizations Served**

OUR WORK IN ACTION

Capacity Building at Amazon

For two years running, CVTI has been honored to collaborate with Amazon Global Military Affairs to help shape the Mission Forward Veterans Summit at HQ2 in Arlington, VA.

During the Summit:

CVTI delivered interactive capacity-building content to over 150 Amazon veterans and military spouses on non-cognitive skill topics:

- **Recognizing and Combating Damaging Misconceptions About Veterans**
- **Building Social-Emotional Intelligence Competencies and Cultivating Growth Mindset in the Workplace**
- **Translating the Military Skill Set to Civilian Settings**



“We have built our summit agenda around CVTI’s deeply impactful and thought-provoking presentations that have struck a resounding chord with all 150+ veteran leaders, quickly helping them understand that their feelings and perceptions are not individual but shared amongst the group, and how we must work together to evolve our culture to become a more veteran ready company. CVTI’s work has resonated with Amazon’s veterans ranging from hourly associates to VPs and has strengthened, unified, and empowered our veteran programming.”

Ian McDuffie

Senior Manager, Global Military Affairs

OUR WORK IN ACTION

Working with Veteran Service Organizations to understand the evolving needs of the military population

CVTI collaborates with two of the largest and most prominent veteran service organizations, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA) and Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), to better understand the needs and challenges facing America's veterans while enhancing transition outcomes and experiences for separating and retiring service members.

Working with IAVA: CVTI helped modify the the design, distribution, and impact of the IAVA Annual Membership Survey, one of the most visible survey instruments gauging post-9/11 veterans' experiences. The resulting data highlights the priorities and needs of this generation of veterans and tracks changing trends related to health, employment, education, and access to benefits.

Working with the VFW: CVTI helped redesign the survey given to service members who are filing disability claims upon discharge from service. The new survey is designed to inform internal and national veteran policies, improve support programming, and enhance veterans' readiness for civilian life.

CVTI uses the resulting data to inform best practices.

Both Efforts Informed Organizational Briefings on Veteran Needs to Congress

"This new relationship with CVTI is the next step in understanding how the transition experience has evolved over time so we can provide real-time, data-informed insight on the needs of today's transitioning force."

Ryan Gallucci

Executive Director, VFW Washington Office

Community College Round Table

We brought together community college professionals from across the country to talk about what works on their campuses, what does not, and how we can better support veteran and military-connected students, together.

- **Humanizing Success**
Success is more than grades. It is purpose, community, and progress.
- **Investing in Frontline Staff**
Give the people doing the work tools they need to thrive.
- **Lifecycle Support**
Start early. Stay consistent. Support veterans before, during, and after college.
- **Cultural Change on Campus**
Shift perceptions. Train faculty. Affirm the value of veterans in every space.
- **Modernize GI Bill**
Push for policies that actually work for community college students.

"I have been supporting student veterans for a long time, and while I know the work is important, it's also lonely work. After these last two days, maybe for the first time, I feel like I have peers in this work."

Stephen Onley

Director, Military and Veteran Success
Hudson Valley Community College

OUR WORK IN ACTION

Building Capacity for Veteran Narratives

In collaboration with the Columbia University Public Safety training team, CVTI developed an in-person training module to deepen officers' understanding of veteran and military-connected identity, experience, and culture. Drawing on veteran and public safety narratives, the course equips officers with campus resources and practical tools to support the community effectively.



- **Recognizing diverse military cultures and veteran experiences**
- **Exploring veteran narratives to engage the community**
- **Understanding the institution's history of veteran support**
- **Identifying campus resources and how to connect students to them**

Officers now actively engage student veterans, visit the CVTI Community Space to learn more about resources on campus, and some with military backgrounds have inquired about returning to college.

OUR WORK IN ACTION

Faculty Guide to Engaging Veterans in the Classroom

CVTI developed a comprehensive guide that equips Columbia Core Curriculum instructors and faculty members with knowledge and strategies to better support student veterans in learning environments.

The Guide covers:

- **Diversity of veteran experience**
- **Veteran transition challenges**
- **Strategies for teaching non-traditional students**
- **Prompts for pedagogical reflection**
- **On-campus resources**

“We know that this Core Instructor’s Guide to Engaging Veterans in the Classroom is something that will raise instructor awareness and provide them with firm footing in ensuring that student veterans are fully supported, and will make a deep impact on the growing number of student veterans who are enrolled in Core classes. We are also eager to continue our collaboration with CVTI in the coming year. The enthusiastic and equal partnership that CVTI provides makes them an invaluable resource, and a pleasure to work with.”

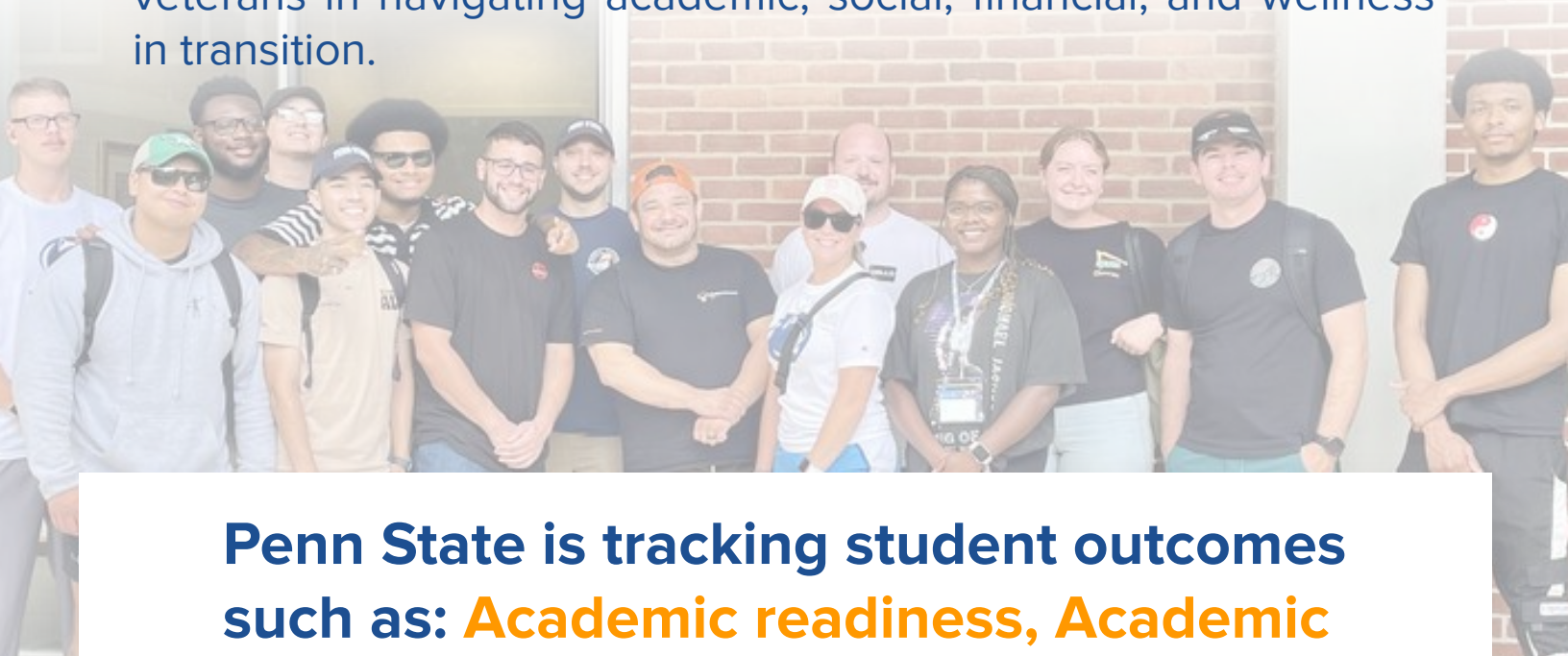
Ashley Nail, DMA (she/her)

Assistant Dean of Academic Programming,
Center for the Core Curriculum, Columbia
College, Adjunct Assistant Professor of Music
Humanities

OUR WORK IN ACTION

Penn State's Veterans College Bootcamp

CVTI partnered with Penn State to help design and deliver capacity-building content for their new Veterans College Boot Camp, an intensive program that supports first-semester student veterans in navigating academic, social, financial, and wellness in transition.



Penn State is tracking student outcomes such as: Academic readiness, Academic achievement, and Engagement

“Working with CVTI has had a profound impact on our staff, students, and the services and programming we provide to this population. The tools that R.J. has provided us, all powerfully shared through his vulnerability and authentic connection to our staff and students, have not only informed our practice, but more importantly, have provided our students with the confidence and joy of true possibility, and of excitement for themselves and their futures.”

Renée Thornton-Roop

Senior Director of the Office of Veterans Programs
Penn State

At CVTI, our hope is simple: to create cultures of belonging and stronger futures for those who have served in the United States Armed Forces and their families. Every day, we are inspired by the resilience, the expertise, the leadership, and the stories of veterans and military-connected students, and we remain committed to building pathways that honor their service and expand their opportunities.

This work isn't possible without community. We believe that real change happens when people come together, sharing knowledge, experiences, and resources to support one another. That is why we invite you to stay connected with us, to lend your expertise, and to join us as collaborators in advancing this important mission. Together, we can shape educational access, strengthen career readiness, and nurture communities where every veteran and military family feels seen, supported, and empowered.

We are deeply grateful to the greater veteran support community for your unwavering commitment. Your dedication, whether through teaching, mentoring, advocacy, or partnership, helps open doors and build bridges for those making the transition from military to civilian life.

Our hope is that you will walk alongside us on this journey: connect with us as a partner, collaborate with us in shaping solutions, and, if you are able, support our work through charitable giving. With your support, we can continue to grow a network of belonging, building not only futures of possibility for veterans, but stronger communities for us all.

Connect. Collaborate. Contribute.

veterans.columbia.edu

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