

Kansas State University Excellence in Engagement Award

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Abstract

The Institute for the Health and Security of Military Families at Kansas State University provides research, outreach, training, and clinical service programs to address the complex effects of wartime service on the long-term health and well-being of military personnel, veterans, and their families. Contributions are made by researchers from colleges across the university and the Institute relies on collaborations with area military installations. Topics of recent research include the effects of trauma and deployment on marriages, military children and deployment, financial behaviors of soldiers, health and well-being of military spouses, and violence prevention in military families. Launched in 2009, the Institute also provides clinical programs and retreats for service members, veterans, and their caregivers. The Institute is the “tip of the spear” for K-State’s alliances with area military installations, the Kansas National Guard, Army Reserve, US Department of Veteran’s Affairs, the Department of Defense, and other state and national organizations, providing support to the scientists and practitioners, students and faculty, from diverse disciplines across Kansas State University who are addressing the health and well-being of current and former military service members and their families. The Institute has also engaged graduate and undergraduate students through research, academic partnerships, and outreach programs with our military partners. The Institute Director was recognized in 2014 with a Department of the Army Outstanding Civilian Service Award for her ability to build and maintain relationships between key stakeholders working on behalf of veterans and military families. In February 2015, the Director will be attending (by invitation) a forum for national military research center directors at the University of Southern California to develop a national military research agenda among academic researchers and policymakers to address the critical and emerging issues for our military service members. The Institute is uniquely positioned to provide national leadership for engaged programs that target the needs of today’s military personnel and their families.

Partnerships

Selected programs conducted at Kansas State University and in partnership among the Institute and specific military and community partners are described below. Although there are additional programs in which the Institute is engaged, the programs described here provide exemplars of the breadth of our engaged work.

Engaged Research Programs

Fort Riley KS Military Family Survey: Family Decisions to Accompany Soldiers Study (2008)

The purpose of this project was to better understand why families choose to accompany or not to accompany their Soldier when he/she is transferred to Fort Riley, Kansas. The study results provided Fort Riley commanders with information about the key factors and decisions that motivated families to accompany soldiers to Fort Riley, the factors that caused families to not accompany soldiers to Fort Riley, and recommendations for programs to improve family relocation to Fort Riley. Data from this study were utilized in the Fort Riley 2015 Strategic Plan.

Selected Grant Funded Projects

- *Family Support Programs Evaluation Plan Development and Implementation*. USDA/DoD Contract with Purdue University; S. MacDermid Wadsworth (PI), \$1,300,000 total, 2014-2015—K-State Subcontract, Nelson Goff, B. S., \$271,277.

- *MIL-SERV Retreats Program: Military Support and Educational Retreats for Veterans (MIL-SERV) – Communities Serving Our Service Members, Veterans, and Their Families After War.* Nelson Goff, B. S., K-State Center for Engagement and Community Development Grant, 2014-2015, \$9,500.
- *National Veterans Wellness and Healing Center/Gratitude America Service Members, Veterans and Families Retreats,* Nelson Goff, B. S., School of Family Studies and Human Services GRA Funding, Spring 2014, \$2,300.
- *Institute for the Health and Security of Military Families Women and War Film and Panel Events,* Nelson Goff, B. S., K-State Academic Excellence Fund Award, 2013, \$4,000 approved (\$5,500 requested).
- *USDA-NIFA Military Family Readiness System Grant (Subcontract from the University of Arizona),* Nelson Goff, B.S., Johannes, E., & Olsen, C., 2011-2013, \$28,835.
- *NISH Army Hospitality Services Initiative.* Nelson Goff, B. S. American Military Communities, 2010, \$19,647.
- *Family Resilience Program for Kansas National Guard Members and Their Families.* Nelson Goff, B. S., & Anderson, J., Kansas National Guard (USPFO for Kansas), 2009, \$115,610
- *Operation FAST: Family Adaptation and Sustainability Training for Kansas National Guard Families.* Nelson Goff, B. S., Johannes, E., Schumm, W., Maddux, E., Olsen, C., Anderson, J., McCants, T., & Kahl, J., Kansas National Guard (USPFO for Kansas), 2009, \$75,000.
- *Fort Riley Military Family Survey: Family Decisions to Accompany Soldiers Study.* Nelson Goff, B. S., & Anderson, J. R., Fort Riley Kansas (ACA Fort Riley), 2008, \$30,778.

Engaged Academic and Educational Programs

The Kansas National Guard Resiliency Project: Family Advocacy Program (2008-2009)

Operation FAST: Family Adaptation and Sustainability Training: Completed a resilience training manual that included information for spouses and soldiers for the Kansas National Guard, which consisted of current knowledge, practice, and application information relevant to current family issues (e.g., family financial resilience, coping with grief and loss, healthy relationships, conflict resolution, child and youth development)

Family Resilience Program: Provided education, research, and training programs for the Kansas National Guard; developed and provided the family resilience training component for the KNG Front Line Leaders resiliency course; provided oversight and coordination of the current research being conducted with Kansas National Guard soldiers and families.

Academic Partnerships and Internships (2012 to present)

Fort Riley Academic Internship Program: Developing academic partnerships with Fort Riley, specifically expanding the potential for academic internships for K-State students on post. We have worked with Fort Riley leadership and have estimated that there are currently around 25 K-State students in 7 academic areas completing academic internships at Fort Riley. The goal of this project is to expand opportunities for K-State students to 125 students in up to 35 different disciplines. This project has provided the opportunity for K-State to partner directly by providing academic expertise and students completing internships who can assist with the various programs for soldiers and families related to direct support efforts.

Other Academic Internship and Volunteer Programs: Since 2012, 12 undergraduate students have completed formal academic internships with the Institute, with another 15 students volunteering with various institute programs. We also have referred 10 undergraduate students to two DoD/USDA Partnership national internship programs: Project Y.E.S! (North Carolina State University) and the Military Extension Internship Program (Purdue University).

Continuing Education and Other Training

CEU Courses: Developed two online professional development CEU Courses through the K-State Global Campus portal: 1) *Understanding Trauma and Traumatic Stress* (12 CEU Credits provided); 2) *Military Culture 101* (1 CEU Credit provided). These courses are available to professionals seeking to increase their knowledge of working with military personnel, veterans, and families.

UMKC School of Nursing and Health Studies External Consultant: Provide military culture training as an external grant-funded consultant; Mobilizing Interprofessional Care Teams toward Improving the Behavioral and Physical Health of Medically Underserved Veterans with Multiple Chronic Conditions. Peterson, J. (PI), Health Resources and Services Administration Nursing Division – Advanced Nursing Education Program, 2014-2017, University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Nursing and Health Studies, \$1,011,000

Engaged Military Community Outreach Programs

Military Child Education Coalition (2012)

The Institute hosted the Military Child Education Coalition Public Engagement Event for Kansas, May 1-2, 2012, at K-State, attended by 90 invited representatives from across Kansas. The Institute served as the primary facilitator for ongoing work throughout Kansas, based on the key initiatives identified in the meetings.

National Veterans Wellness and Healing Center (2011 to present) and GratitudeAmerica (2013 to present)

The Institute has collaborated with these organizations in conducting military support retreats for Soldiers/Veterans and their spouses. The Institute conducts the program outcome research for the Retreats program, as well as completing online applications and program evaluations. Data from 105 Veterans and their Spouse/Support Person have been collected and are currently being analyzed; additional data collection at three retreats will be conducted in Spring 2015.

Military Community Lectures and Programs

The Institute partners with university and community organizations to provide annual community education programs, which include participants from K-State, Fort Riley and the community:

- Lecture by LTG (R) Robert and Diana Durbin, October 2009
- Lecture by MAJ Jeff Hall, Sheri Hall, and CPT Joshua Mantz, October 2010
- Lecture by Victoria E. Bruner, Deployment Health Clinical Center, Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, Bethesda MD, October 2011
- Lecture by General Richard B. Myers, USAF (Ret), Former Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, and K-State Alumnus, October 2013
- Lecture by Journalist and Pulitzer Prize winning author, David Finkel, on his book, “Thank You For Your Service,” on October 17, 2013.
- Film Screening of the documentary film, “LIONESS” on October 30, 2013
- Lecture by National Book Award winning author, Phil Klay, on his book “Redeployment,” October 1, 2014
- Manhattan Veterans Day Vietnam Veterans Panel, November 11, 2014

Lessons Learned and Best Practices

In developing these programs, there have been numerous lessons and best practices gained along the way:

1. Patience is more than a virtue—it is a necessity! Developing partnerships between academic colleagues and military partners is exciting, yet it also requires a significant understanding about two completely different systems of operation, with different sets of rules, roles, procedures, and even languages.
2. Tenacity is essential. One primary reason why we have seen an increase in opportunities to develop military programs is because we remain steadfast. Being present at meetings that may not seem relevant or that we may not understand completely has proven to be necessary in forging these partnerships. As situations arise, we are able to identify areas for collaboration and connect the necessary partners.
3. Our engaged partnerships require “thinking outside the gates.” In terms of academic and military gates, partnering across very distinct and varied systems requires individuals on both sides to consider alternatives, particularly from systems that historically have not collaborated.
4. Regardless of the groups with whom we work, to truly be fully engaged and the work to be mutually beneficial, it is necessary that the work and tasks be met with passion and enthusiasm.