February 19, 2014

Student Veterans of America
1625 K Street NW, Suite 320
Washington D.C. 20006

Re: “VetCenter Initiative” – Application Support for Veterans/Military Center at Forsyth Tech

Dear Application Judges:

As we state in our mission, “Forsyth Technical Community College provides students with flexible educational pathways to a competitive workforce for the community and global economy.” Veterans are an integral part of our community making up approximately 15% of the population of Forsyth County. We have 407 declared student veterans enrolled for Spring Semester 2014. We serve over 10,000 credit students and 24,000 non-credit students each year, many of whom are undeclared veterans and may not know about all their benefits.

We have heard the reports that young veterans just out of the service and receiving health care from the government commit suicide at nearly three times the rate of active-duty troops in recent years, and twice the rate for the same age group in the general population. Roughly two young veterans a day commit suicide according to the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Our policy of engagement for retention and success applies to all our students, but how we reach various demographics differs widely. We want all our students to succeed in higher education and in a chosen career following graduation. Our desired outcome is that all veterans will succeed in higher education, achieve their academic goals, and gain meaningful employment.

We are dedicating a space solely for our veterans, active duty, Reserve and Guard, and veteran supporters who attend Forsyth Tech. We want to create a lounge area for veterans to gather, meet, relax, or just do homework. This area may include a microwave and free coffee for veterans. Connected to this area will be an office for the VA Certifying Official and a counselor for veterans. We will engage work study students (veterans) to help student veterans with needs or referrals to places they can get assistance. Another adjacent space would be dedicated to privacy for veterans to meet with people from the VA, and discuss benefits or other matters. Part of the area would contain computers to enable homework and online searches for veteran assistance.
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Through this infrastructure and particularly the staff and volunteers who work there, we can build relations with outside organizations that will continue to help and support students during and after they leave Forsyth Tech and promote the following:

- Provide veteran-related benefit services in general.
- Encourage self-disclosure of veteran status - right now we rely on those who use their benefits and work through our Certifying Official in Student Financial Services.
- Centralize career services for vets – career coach for job seekers
- Provide vet specific orientation to Forsyth Tech – more efficient use of orientation for vets and others.
- Answer the oft asked question of how particular MOS training and prior service translate into academic credits.
- Provide a venue for soft-skills training on campus, resume building and interview practice.
- According to some national statistics up to 64% of grads become giving alumni. Veterans tend to give more and this would be the place to grow that potential.
- Provide structure for new student veterans who are accustom to getting accurate information from one place or one person, picking up the road map and stepping off smartly.
- Mentor in a familiar setting, among familiar faces and with understood traditions.
- Provide a source of student mentors/tutors as an outreach to less mature, non-veteran students.
- Invite experts to speak on current veteran issues including ADA and suicide, and encouraging ‘safe’ discussion of these topics among the student veterans themselves.

Strengthening our veterans learning and interaction with outside partners, agencies and the private sector can only increase Forsyth Tech’s impact on our community and in developing a technically savvy workforce to further attract jobs to the region.

I hope you will support our efforts.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Gary M. Green
President