



Fall 2021 Mission: S.E.R.V.E. Newsletter

Mission: S.E.R.V.E – Success, Excellence, and Retention for Veterans in Education
Please send comments/feedback to lpcveteransfirst@laspositascollege.edu

2.2 for 22 Challenge for Veterans

The Veterans First Program hosted the 2.2 for 22 Challenge for Veterans between October 23 to November 19, 2021. This community event encouraged awareness of the struggles many veterans face with mental health issues after leaving the military. The number 22 represents the number of veterans that lose their struggle to suicide daily. The issues that are faced by veterans are often not obvious to civilians and can go ignored by others until the damage has already been done.

2.2 for 22 Challenge for Veterans consisted of a virtual fitness competition between multiple teams of sponsors from community and veteran organizations. Events promoted fitness, introspection, and mental wellbeing.

Like last year's event, this year's event consisted of 22 separate challenges. These challenges instructed participants to perform exercises, do stretches, talk to those they care about, express themselves through art, and of course run or walk 2.2 miles.

Participants were allowed to team up for a semi-competitive online portion of the event. After performing the challenges participants were allowed to log down their activities. When a



teamed-up member logged an event, their team gained points which contributed to the team's total score.

Due to Covid restrictions, this year's event followed the online format of the previous year. Despite social distancing, the 2.2 events this year still managed to be a populated event. Dozens of groups signed up and participated while learning about the importance of veterans' mental health.

On the last day of the event, participants celebrated the closing of 2.2 for 22 with a drive through celebration at Las Positas College. Participants received a 2.2 for 22 t-shirt and a commemorative medal.

Funds raised from the event contributed to scholarships and services to support student veterans at Las Positas College.

Las Positas College | Veterans First Program (VFP)

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Leadership. Updates. Communication.

Mission L.U.C (Leadership. Updates. Communication.) is a program where campus and community leaders connect with student veterans where they collectively gain insight about leadership, campus updates, and dialogue with campus leaders. These sessions are not recorded which gives everyone an opportunity to talk freely. By being part of an open discussion on the real issues, leadership and student veterans gain a greater understanding and capability to make meaningful changes to the college environment.

We appreciate our guest speakers at Mission L.U.C. September 1, 2021 **Dr. Dyrell Foster**, President of Las Positas College led Mission: L.U.C. for Fall 2021.

Dr. Foster is a proud and frequent speaker at Mission: L.U.C. His talk focused on safely reopening the campus during this pandemic.



To Ellis, strong leadership is to empower one’s subordinates to perform to the best of their abilities.



The second Mission: L.U.C. featured **Dr. Jeanne Wilson**, VP of Student Services at Las Positas. **Dr. Wilson** specializes in counseling, student life, student equity, and financial aid in the California Community College system.

The final talk took place on November 3 and featured **Colonel Jon E. Ellis**. Ellis was a training senior leader who worked in simulation modeling during his time in the Army.

He specialized and served in Army Aviation for over 28 years. Currently, **Ellis** is the president of the William F. Dean chapter of the Association of the US Army. **Ellis** discussed his pathway to becoming an aviator and leader in the army.

Ellis’ leadership philosophy focused on “servant leadership,” the idea that a leader exists to guide and serve the subordinates they lead. To **Ellis**, strong leadership is to empower one’s subordinates to perform to the best of their abilities.





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September 11 Remembrance

To memorialize those lost in the September 11 attacks of 2001, the Veterans First Program was honored to host a special presentation by **Dr. Nicole B. Simpson**, survivor, Doctor of Theology, and bestselling author. She shared her story about surviving the tragedy, resilience, and success.

On Thursday, September 9, close to 200 online participants logged to remember 9/11.

The event opened with a live rendition of the National Anthem sung by **Alejandra Quezada Sermeno**, LPC student and UC Berkeley Air Force ROTC.



Dr. Simpson shared her traumatic experience on the day of the attack.

Simpson was at the time working in finance on the 73rd floor of the second tower. After American Airlines Flight 11 hit the 1 World Trade Center she decided to begin evacuating prematurely of her own volition.

Her premature evacuation ended up saving her life, as she was on a lower floor when the Flight United 175 impacted floors near her floor of work.

From there **Dr. Simpson** recounted her experience of being evacuated out of the center and subsequently being ferried off by boat out of the vicinity of the disaster.

The disaster deeply affected **Dr. Simpson**, in the talk she stated that “people who were right next to me didn’t make it.” **Dr. Simpson**



recounts how it took her years to come to terms with the survivor guilt and the trauma associated with the event. **Dr. Simpson** believes that as a survivor it is her prerogative to make the world a better place and that she must fulfill her purpose which guided her not to die in the tower that day. Simpson spoke with a fiery passion for her recovery but also sorrow for those who had died that day.

At the conclusion of the event, **Kenia Vazquez**, Navy Veteran and Co-President of the Student Veterans Organization, presented **Dr. Simpson** with a challenge coin in appreciation for sharing her story.

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Operation Diaper Change

Operation Diaper Change has made its return this Fall 2021 term! A huge thank you to our wonderful community sponsors who have helped fund the program for this semester!

Operation Diaper Change gave student veterans with little ones an opportunity to receive free diapers.



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Mi Familia Militar: Stories of Serving My Country Hispanic Heritage Month

Launching the event, **Ms. Arica Steedley**, Mexican-American, US Army Veteran majoring in Computer Network Technology and Co-President of the Las Positas College Student Veterans Organization led the Pledge of Allegiance. Hispanic Heritage Month recognizes the contributions and influences of Latino/Hispanic Americans to the history, culture, and achievements of the United States, especially those who served in the military. Their experience serving our country add a wealth of knowledge and experience in the classroom that creates a diverse and inclusive environment at Las Positas College. This event took place on September 22 at 11 am.

The Hispanic Heritage Month acknowledged the numerous contributions of Hispanic Americans to the military and the country as a whole. This event also featured Hispanic student veterans who shared their experience serving in the military. Panelists included **Bryan Hernandez**, US Marines veteran and Engineering Technology major, **Darel Lopez**, US Navy veteran and Psychology major, **Kenia Vazquez Garcia**, US Navy veteran and Pre-Nursing major, **Luis Orozco**, US Marines veteran and Fire Science Technology major, and **Reina Rocha Diaz**, US Army veteran and Early Childhood Development major.

Panel discussion started with a video “Not being Hispanic enough;” students explained how they sometimes felt alienated when they were expected to speak Spanish, despite not knowing the language. In another topic, **Bryan Hernandez**, US Army veteran, discussed how stereotypes affected him during his deployment.



In a particularly touching story, **Reina Rocha Diaz**, US Army veteran, currently studying at LPC, recounted how her parents showed concern when she signed up for the US Military.

Diaz’s family, having previously lived in El Salvador, thought that the family was losing their El Salvadorian identity as more of their children worked and lived in the culture of the States and as **Reina** served in the US Navy. **Diaz** discussed how her parents eventually accepted that they had raised their children in America and how her father gained his American citizenship symbolically reconciling the disconnect that the difference of perception had caused between him and **Reina**.



Stephanie Gatas, U.S. Navy veteran, shared her experiences of serving that led to PTSD, and the evolution of being the CEO and founder of The Pink Berets. She spoke of hope, truth, and resilience as a Latina in this current day. She compared the cultural difference between Hispanic home life and Deployment in the military. In particular, she compared the difference between the very strong but different structures of respect. In addition, she recounted her story of being a Hispanic woman working on a ship during a time in which the ship was undergoing the integration of women into the crew.



In addition to **Stephanie Gatas**, **Xóchitl Rodríguez Murillo**, Deputy Secretary for Minority and Underrepresented Veterans at the California Department of Veterans Affairs shared her Hispanic heritage background and welcomed our esteemed speakers.

At the conclusion of the Panel, **Gatas** was presented with a challenge coin in recognition of her contributions to the Veterans Community.

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SVO Halloween Trunk-Or-Treat

On October 28 the families of student veterans and local members of the Livermore community celebrated the Halloween spirit at the Veterans First Trunk-or-Treat. This event was hosted by the LPC Student Veterans Organization.

Groups such as Blue Star Moms, the LPC Drama Program, and students of the LPC Middle College



program, converted their cars in a festive and creative booth in the spirit of the season. These booths were used as locations to give out candy to

the “Trunk-or-Treaters.”

By providing a small celebration of the season, the event brought many student veterans and their families an opportunity to see and be with others from the larger student veteran community. The event took place in Parking Lot C, in front of the 1600 building, between 5:30 pm and 6:30 pm.

This outdoor venue was chosen to ensure the safety of student veterans and their families. The event had a spectacular turnout leading to a jovial and pleasant atmosphere.



Pearl Harbor Survivor: Mickey Ganitch Veterans Day Talk

On November 11th, 2021, we were honored to have our friend, **Mr. Mickey Ganitch** be our guest speaker for honoring Veterans Day at Las Positas College.



Mickey Ganitch is a U.S. Navy Veteran who was present during the 1941 Attack on Pearl Harbor. **Mickey** is a distinguished veteran and prominent member of the veterans' community. His talk recounted his memories of the event, discussed his thoughts on being a veteran of the US military, and affirmed the pride he feels to be an American who has served his country.

Veterans Day honors and commemorates the actions of those living and the fallen who have served for the protection of the United States. Lest we lapse, keep in our hearts to never forget those who protect the free world. Past and present; their honor, their duty, and their sacrifice are a gift that must never be forgotten.

As a surprise to **Ganitch**, after his talk was concluded, the veteran was presented with a birthday cake, provided by constituents of the LPC veterans community in celebration of **Ganitch's** upcoming 102nd birthday.





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Veterans Holiday Cheer Adopt-A-Family

The LPC Veterans First Program partnered with local veterans’ service organizations and individual sponsors who provided a memorable holiday for student veterans and their families.

For those who signed up, “secret santas” or those who signed up to “adopt a family,” were paired up with an LPC veteran and their family to share gifts for their child or children. The program was an excellent success as many organizations and individuals signed up to provide a bright and memorable Christmas for student veteran families!



Special thanks to our “Secret Santas” from various veterans’ service organizations and individual community members for delivering gifts for children of student veterans!

We especially would like to extend a special thank you to the following organizations for their continued financial support and gift cards for student veterans:
Pleasanton Military Families, Blue Star Moms-Danville, AUSA – Dean Chapter Camp Parks, VFW Pleasanton, American Legion, VietNam Veterans Danville.



In return, student veterans expressed their thanks and gratitude through video messages and letters. Delivering gifts to the children were truly a rewarding closure for the year. We look forward to partnering with the community next year.

Student Veterans Organization

The Student Veterans Organization (SVO) is a group of student veterans, service members, and dependents dedicated to the goals of camaraderie, veteran advocacy, and helping student veterans transition to academic and civilian life. The SVO hosts numerous events for student veterans in order to bolster a sense of camaraderie and build a social support network for student veterans.

Events have included: paint nights, hiking, virtual game nights, Christmas events, and volunteer work. Along with events, the SVO also advocates for student veteran values at campus administrative meetings.

For more information or to join the SVO please contact the Veterans First Office at lpcveteransfirst@laspositascollege.edu or visit us online at the Virtual Welcome Center.

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Veterans First Program Services

The Veterans First Program offers many online services to LPC student veterans. We encourage any student veterans to make use of these programs to support their education and mental health.

Virtual Veterans Welcome Center

The Virtual Veterans First Virtual Welcome Center is here to help. It is an online service managed by the LPC Veterans First Program that aims to help student veterans with concerns

VA Course Certification Form

To receive educational benefits, student veterans must certify that they are taking classes at the College. This can be done at www.laspositascollege.edu/veterans/certifyclasses. If you have any specific questions regarding Course Certification process, visit the LPC Veterans Virtual Welcome Center.

Veterans Chill and Chat

Sometimes, life can be hard. The LPC Veterans Chill & Chat is an opportunity for veterans to socialize and express themselves. The event was hosted every Wednesday at 6 pm and can be found accessed from the Veterans First website. The event hosts a mental health counselor intern and several Veterans Center staff who are ready to be helpful and supportive to any student veteran who wants to join in the conversation. Feel free to join our weekly Veterans Chill and Chat Zoom ID: 919 4934 0783.

Speak to the Veterans Counselor

The Veterans First Counselor can assist in the creation of education plans, cover letters, and the transition to civilian life. Fill out an appointment request at www.laspositascollege.edu/veterans/requesting_an_appointment to speak to our Counselor.

Veterans Learning Community: Mission Ready



The Veterans First Program Mission Ready has laid the groundwork for a new learning community, Veterans First Learning Community: Mission Ready, launching this Fall 2021 term. Mission Ready is a class grouping that allows student veterans to complete English and Communications Classes in a veteran-friendly space. This program is intended to help student veterans meet their academic goals.

Mission Ready students participate in the classes English 1A, instructed by **Professor Dr. Jim Ott**; Communications 1, instructed by **Professor Scott Laczko**; Math 30 (Fall 2021) and Math 39 (Spring 2022), instructed by **Professor Kristi Woods**. Any student veteran can join Mission Ready to take advantage of the support the learning community provides. It should be noted that students in Mission Ready are required to take both associated classes to be part of the Mission Ready Learning Community. Mission Ready is joining the group of established learning communities, including: the Umoja Program, the Puente Project, Engineering Technology, and Gateway to Success.

Mission Ready is intended to support student veterans enrolling in Las Positas College. Though intended for veterans, it should be noted that Mission Ready is open to all students as space permits. Enrolling student veterans are encouraged to sign up for Mission Ready to tap into this amazing academic opportunity.

Special thanks to our Mission: Ready Newsletter editors: Hannah Nelson and Kimberly Brutus. Please send feedback to lpcveteransfirst@laspositascollege.edu

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Fall 2021 Mission: Ready Newsletter

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Sponsors of the 2.2 for 22 Challenge for Veterans

The 2.2 for 22 Challenge for Veterans was made possible by the participation of hundreds of individuals and several organizations from around the Tri-Valley. From the bottom of our hearts, thank you to all of the individual and group sponsors of the 2.2 for 22 Challenge for Veterans 2021!



Special thanks to our 2.2 for 22 Sponsors which included individual students, Associates of the Kaiser Foundation, Blue Star Moms, the Association of the US Army, MkHurder Photography, John Muir Health, Alliance of Therapy Dogs, American Legion Castro Valley, American Legion Livermore, American Legion Pleasanton, Chabot FCU, Denco Incorporated, Diablo Vietnam Vets, Growth Sector, Heart Guards: Honoring Michelle Lee, Kaiser Veterans Association, Lee Busey, the LPC Academic Senate, the LPC Classified Senate, the LPC Student Senate, Military Officers Association of America, Mony Nop Real Estate Team - Compass, Pleasanton Military Families, the Rotary Club of Pleasanton, the Rotary Club of Livermore, the Some Gave All - Joey Graves Foundation, VA Works, VFW Post 6298, VFW Castro Valley Post 9601, VFW Post 75, the Safeway Foundation, the Sean Brock Foundation, Jamba Juice, Carl's Junior, the City College of San Francisco, Pieology, and Insignia Designs.

SAVE THE DATE!
2.2 for 22 Challenge is slated for October 22, 2022
Email Todd Steffan (tsteffan@laspositascollege.edu) for sponsorship opportunities.

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