Cornell University Veteran’s Colleague Networking Group  
Annual Report June 2015

The VCNG continues to broaden its membership, engage the community through outreach efforts and strengthen group recognition throughout Cornell through the consistent commitment of its membership.

**VCNG 2014-15 Activity Highlights**  
The VCNG had a busy Fall 2014, working together with numerous on campus groups to host a series of veteran related events.

On July 22, 2014, the VCNG and the on campus veterans representative sponsored an information table at the annual Staff Development Day event.

On September 23, 2014 Dr. Gus Kappler, BA ’61 and MD ’65 presented on his experiences during the Vietnam War to over 60 faculty, staff, community members, and ROTC cadets. The event was in support of Cornell’s membership in the Vietnam Veteran Commemorative Partner Program, and sponsored by the Cornell Vietnam War 50th Commemoration Committee, the VCNG, and the Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections.

From September 27 to October 4, 2014, the VCNG supported of the Entrepreneurship Bootcamp for Veterans, hosted by the School of Hotel Administration. This is the third annual group hosted at Cornell and the VCNG and Team Red White and Blue-Ithaca supported networking events, offered morning work-outs and participated in daily activities.

On November 3, 2014, the VCNG co-hosted Military Boots to Civilian Shoes, conference exploring the challenges facing women veterans as they transition from service with a focus on recruitment, retention, and climate issues. About 60 members of the local community, regional colleges, and veterans’ affairs experts joined us to discuss the issues and a white paper is pending with the resulting best practices. The event was hosted in partnership with the President’s Council for Cornell Women (PCCW), the Department of Inclusion and Workforce Diversity, the Diversity Councils of Human Resource and Safety Services, the School of Hotel Administration, Cornell Libraries, and a grant from Towards New Destinations.

The VCNG participated in Veterans Day events on November 11, 2014, where Admiral Michelle Howard presented to a full room at Annabel Taylor hall. Adm. Howard is the Vice Chief of Naval Operations and became the first female four star in the 239 year history of the United States Navy. She is also the highest ranking African American. Over 150 people attended this event which was sponsored in conjunction with the Department of Inclusion and Workforce Diversity, the Navy ROTC, Women of Color Colleague Network Group and the VCNG.

In December 15, 2014, the VCNG hosted a networking event and holiday social.

The VCNG presented to Diversity Council Leads at their January 29, 2015 quarterly meeting on suggested Towards New Destinations veteran related initiatives. We also provided a handout with specific veteran related recommendations.
The VCNG gave an introductory presentation at the Recruitment and Employment Center Signature Lecture Series kick-off on March 26, 2015. James Schmelling went on to present on recruiting veterans into the work-force.

Members of VCNG participated in the Soldier Story Day at Ithaca High School on May 22, 2015, sharing their experiences in the service with young people.

For the second year in a row, the VCNG hosted a Walking Tour of the War Memorials on Saturday, June 6th (Reunion Weekend) to engage alumni veterans and their families and raise awareness around the Vietnam Veterans collection in the University Archives.

We also host guest speakers at our monthly meetings as well as outreach and familiarization between our group and other entities. The 2014-2015 season included:

- Judy Appleton – Vice Provost for Land Grant Issue, updating the group about student veteran initiatives
- David Stipanuk – a veteran and professor emeritus who spoke about an initiative called Feed My Starving Children
- Lynette Chappell Williams – Vice President of the Dept. of Inclusion and Workforce Diversity who update the group on Towards New Destination initiatives and the emphasis on the lived experience of our diverse workforce.
- A team from the National Veterans Crisis/Homeless Call Center, located in Canandaigua, NY that provides counseling and referral services nationwide for veterans in crisis.
- Dane Cruz from the Cornell Interactive Theater, presenting on a new veteran based character for their education theater experience called “My Story, Your Story”.

Developed a mentor list of veteran staff/faculty willing to connect with new or prospective staff members to offer guidance, insight, or connection with resources.

Our VCNG blog site drew 2.428 page views from June 2014 to end of May 2014. The Veterans Memorial site had 1,924 page views during this same period.

VCNG members coordinated and participated in a women veterans recruitment video released Fall 2014: https://www.dropbox.com/s/3gqbd1wmqlehukd/vet%20women.mp4?dl=0

Through the efforts of the VCNG, the presence of the Veterans Affairs representative, Kevin Justian, was increased from one to two days per week.

At the May 2015 commencement, the VCNG further recognized the achievement of fifteen graduating veterans with red, white and blue honor cords, which we sponsor annually.

In the spring, the VCNG worked with Cornell Team & Leadership Center (an offering of Cornell Outdoor Education), the Cornell Undergraduate Veterans Association (CUVA), Team RWB Ithaca, and the Office of Academic Diversity and inclusion to create a proposal for integrating new undergraduate student veterans at Cornell through a day long team building experience. This is still being reviewed.
**Team RWB-Ithaca**
As our community service and outreach, the VCNG continues to participate in Team Red White and Blue, a national organization that encourages veteran re-integration through athletics and community outreach. We became an official community of Team Red White and Blue titled Team RWB-Ithaca in the Spring of 2014 and in 2014-2015 have dramatically grown our activities and participants, hosting over 124 events (including weekly work outs) and growing our Facebook membership to 83 individuals.

Our Team RWB-Ithaca activities to date include:

**Lunchtime work-outs:**
- Mondays, Wednesday – circuits, stairs, sprints
- Fridays - two mile campus run

**Outreach events:**
- Cornell Reunion Weekend 5K Running Tour of Cornell Veterans Memorials, Friday, June 6, 2014
- National Run@Work Day, Friday September 19, 2014, in cooperation with the Cornell Wellness Program
- POW/MIA Watchfire @ Myers Park in Lansing, NY, Friday, September 19, 2014
- WOD with Warriors @ Ultimate Athletics, Wednesday, November 5, 2014
- Veterans Day 5K Running Tour of Cornell Veterans Memorials, Monday, November 10, 2014
- Networking event and bowling at Atlas Bowling in Trumansburg on April 28, 2015
- Hoffman Challenge Course and Picnic, May 30, 2015 (we filled the program with 19 reservations and families had the chance to fully experience the confidence course. Additional people attended the picnic afterwards).

Team RWB-Ithaca also provided networking and support for a variety of causes through community sponsored events:
- Twilight 5K @ Ithaca High, Wednesday, June 11, 2014, supports the Finger Lakes Running Club
  
- 18th Fillmore 5K in Moravia NY, Saturday, July 26, 2014, supports the Four Town First Aid Squad [http://fourtownfirstaidsquad.com/](http://fourtownfirstaidsquad.com/)

- 6th annual Time To Sperr 5K and 10K @ Sperr Memorial Park in Big Flats, NY, Saturday, August 23, 2014, supports the Trooper Andrew J. Sperr Memorial Park [http://www.sperrmemorialpark.org/](http://www.sperrmemorialpark.org/)


- Ithaca Glows 3K @ Stewart Park in Ithaca, Saturday, October 11, 201, supports the Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County [http://ccetompkins.org/](http://ccetompkins.org/)

- Thanksgiving Day Turkey Trot @ Ithaca High School, Thursday, November 27, 2014, supports Loaves & Fishes of Tompkins County [http://www.loaves.org/](http://www.loaves.org/)

- Hawaii 5-0 5k sponsored by Island health and Fitness and the Finger Lakes Running Club on February 7, 2015 to support the Finger Lakes Running Club.


- 3rd annual Mud Sweat and Cheers in honor of Corporal Christopher Bordoni @ Island Health and Fitness, Saturday, May 9th, 2015, with proceeds supporting improvements to the Bordoni Trailhead and Chris Bordoni Scholarship at Ithaca High School.


- Ithaca Festival Mile @ Ithaca High School, Thursday, May 28, 2015, the Ithaca Youth Bureau Annual Fundraiser [http://www.ithacafestival.org/](http://www.ithacafestival.org/)

Events are posted via Facebook group ([https://www.facebook.com/#!/groups/TeamRWBIthaca/](https://www.facebook.com/#!/groups/TeamRWBIthaca/)), in a blog site ([http://teamrwbithaca.org/](http://teamrwbithaca.org/)), and on the Cornell running club sites as well as local publications.

**VCNG Recognition/Press Highlights**

Veterans Day coverage of event with Adm. Michelle J. Howard, vice chief of naval operations, who recalled the service of Women Air Force Service Pilots (WASP) during WWII and early feminist leaders:


PawPrint, November 7, 2014


VCNG Web Presence

- Began a monthly VCNG newsletter that is distributed to the listserv and archived on the web site.
- Began a quarterly Team RWB newsletter promoting upcoming events

VCNG Future Plans/Projects/Goals

- In conjunction with the Cornell Veterans Affairs office, develop an expanded CU veteran’s services office that will become the reference for all veteran’s issues, staffed by a Cornell employee and Cornell veterans benefits expert, either a half time or full time position. We see this position as strongly linked with student recruitment efforts and are exploring ways to identify and more fully integrate student veterans at Cornell so they can advocate for their needs from a strong position.
- Increase information on the website in the areas of:
  - Education, visual identity of veterans at the University (pics and stories from staff, faculty, students), jobs, networking
- Further promote college and/or unit level training on veterans’ special opportunities/needs, transfer of resume skills, university policies affecting veterans, and other recruitment and retention issues as well as making effective Towards New Destination recommendations for unit veteran initiatives.
- Develop a Vet2Vet volunteer mentoring program (our list of veteran mentors was our first effort towards this end but our combined team building experience at Hoffman Challenge Course is meant to take this goal to the next level).
VCNG Challenges
The VCNG is eager to develop a position for a dedicated veteran’s representative on campus but we recognize that this will need to be a joint effort with the student services offices. While we have drafted a position description outlining the many duties we see the position fulfilling, we are waiting for additional student oriented initiatives to come to fruition before we move further to find funding for this position.

Summary
The VCNG is developing greater recognition around campus and in the community. The dedication and bonding of this group is the backbone of our veteran community on campus and continues to inspire new veterans interested in joining Cornell.

VCNG Mission/Executive Officers
The Cornell University Veteran’s Colleague Networking Group (VCNG) was formed in 2010 and in accordance with University guidelines, the mission of the VCNG is “to raise awareness of Veteran issues here at the University, provide a forum for Veterans and their supporters to meet and discuss topics of mutual interest and concern, and to support the University's recruitment and retention of Veterans at Cornell University”. In support of this mission, we have defined our vision principles as the following:

- "We are a leader to, and resource for, all veteran faculty, staff, students, alumni, partners, and allies at Cornell University.
- We position ourselves to support a diverse veteran community while maintaining alignment with the University's strategic goals.
- Our services partner combinations of public, private, and military resources which set the standard for supporting veterans; from new students recently completing honorable military service to faculty and staff with past honorable service.
- We improve climate for all service men and women through our military friendly events, educational lectures, networking programs, and town/gown relations."

The VCNG currently has 321 people on the veterans and military listserv and 15-20 regularly attending members at our monthly meetings. Our executive committee consists of the following:

Term: 2013-2015
Emily Franco, Co-Chair
Dennis Shaw, Co-Chair
Glenn Larratt, Historian
Dave Juers, Member-at-Large
Robert Morris, Member-at-Large
Rick Roper, Member-at-Large
Keith G. Tidball, Member-at-Large
Robert Morris, Member-at-Large
Sue Withers, Member-at-Large
Cassie Joseph, Public Relations
Rick Roper, Events Coordinator
Nicole Jefferson, Community Service
Steven Headrick, Local Community Connections
Lynette Chappell-Williams, Executive Liaison

Team RWB Ithaca Leadership
Jase Baese – Team Captain
Rick Roper – Athletic Director
Amy Layton – Community Outreach Director
Seamus Murphy – Veteran Outreach Director
Jessica Waldman – Social Director