



Business and
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Women's
Foundation

For Immediate Release

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Women Veterans Lack Resources on College Campuses
BPW Foundation and Women in Higher Education Seek Solutions

January 28, 2009 - Washington, DC -- Women veterans at a meeting co-sponsored by The American Council on Education's (ACE) Office of Women in Higher Education and Business and Professional Women's (BPW) Foundation reported that college campuses lack the resources necessary to meet their unique needs as they transition to civilian life.

During a meeting held on Friday, January 23, 2009 to explore the particular needs of women veterans on college campuses, women veterans explained how their needs can best and most effectively be met.

The Gen X and Gen Y women veterans in attendance spoke about their specific experiences and concerns related to lack of information, resources and coordination that resulted in personal frustration and barriers on campus for this underserved population.

Jennifer Hunt, an Army reservist who recently graduated from American University in Washington, DC said that "women were hesitant to join [campus veteran groups] because of negative reactions [to women in the military]." Networking opportunities also are lacking for these women.

Cindy Hunt, a recent Navy veteran, said her biggest challenge was "not knowing who to contact about how to use my veteran benefits on campus." Other women identified a cadre of transitioning issues, such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and continuing emotional repercussions from sexual harassment.

Deborah Frett, CEO of BPW Foundation, reported some of the findings from its survey of 1,600 women veterans, asserting that "women veterans receive less support upon return from service and generally have a difficult transition. Coupled with the issues of pay equity, work-life balance and gender discrimination that continue to plague women, it was apparent that we needed to support our military sisters as they re-enter their civilian lives, in the classroom, in the workforce and in the home."

"Women deal with different issues than men when deploying and returning and therefore need unique services on campus," said Army veteran Genevieve Chase.

"We had this meeting today because while many organizations are working diligently to make the transition from military service to civilian life seamless and painless, we wanted input from women themselves on what they felt they need. ACE has done vital work with its *Serving Those Who Serve* initiative and in getting information out about the specifics of the new GI Bill, for example."

“Still, women’s needs are different from men’s either in kind or in degree in almost every life arena. Is it not likely, then, that women veterans moving into higher education will also have some needs that differ from those of their male counterparts?” asked Donna Burns Phillips, director, Office of Women in Higher Education, ACE.

“During today’s meeting, women student veterans identified a number of areas that deserve attention. Now it’s our responsibility to prove that we were listening by getting this information out to campuses and by continuing the conversation,” Phillips concluded.

The unique needs of women veterans include the desire for academic, career and emotional counseling that are designed specifically from the female veteran perspective. Veteran groups on campus are rare and rarer yet are groups focusing on women’s issues where women feel more comfortable joining.

According to the BPW Foundation survey, 28 percent of the respondents reported that their military training did not help them in their civilian career, suggesting that it is imperative that women veterans have access, funding and resources to better translate their military skills to civilian jobs, and to attend advanced training or secondary educational institutions to attain career goals in the civilian workforce.

“Under the Obama administration, and with the public support of Michelle Obama, we’re optimistic that women veterans and their families will get the attention that they so rightly deserve,” Frett noted.

Business and Professional Women’s Foundation is transforming workplaces by partnering with employers and focusing on issues that impact workingwomen and families. BPW Foundation’s mission is to empower workingwomen to achieve their full potential and to partner with employers to build successful workplaces. Established in 1956, BPW Foundation became the first foundation dedicated to conducting research and providing information solely about workingwomen.

Founded in 1918, ACE is the major coordinating body for all the nation's higher education institutions, representing more than 1,600 college and university presidents, and more than 200 related associations, nationwide. It seeks to provide leadership and a unifying voice on key higher education issues and influence public policy through advocacy, research, and program initiatives.