

# BOOTS TO BOOKS & BEYOND CAMPAIGN





**Grayson College and the Grayson College Foundation are proud to be a part of the Boots to Books and Beyond Campaign, and we applaud the community-based approach that is being taken toward serving returning veterans and their families who are so deserving of our attention and support.**

## **Serving Those Who Have Served**

**During the next decade, more than a million veterans will be returning from military service in Afghanistan and Iraq, experiencing the joys and difficulties of readjusting to civilian life as family members, friends, neighbors, employees, and co-workers.**

We are fortunate to have these capable men and women among us. Veterans bring unmatched experience and diversity to our communities. As employees, many are exceptional because they have acquired invaluable decision-making and leadership skills, as well as the experience needed to be team builders and team players. As students, they strengthen our campuses.

Some of these men and women are quickly adjusting, using their many skills and talents to make the successful transition home. However, many are faced with very real challenges, and unique needs that impact all of us. We have a responsibility to give back to those who have given so much for our country.

### Grayson College: Already a Veteran-Ready Campus

- There is a strong institutional commitment to Veterans.
- There are more than 800 Veterans currently enrolled at Grayson College — identification of Grayson College military veterans and dependents is an ongoing process because they may not be using are or not eligible for military education benefits.
- A Veterans Affairs Coordinator, Veterans Benefits Advisor, Veteran Affairs Administrative Assistant and several student veteran workers staff the Office of Veterans Affairs.
- There is an active student Veterans association.
- Our Veteran's Hub is a veterans-only space for our warriors to relax, study and meet other veterans.

## Meeting the Needs of Today's Veterans

**A seamless, supportive pathway to college and job training can help returning veterans regain their sense of purpose.** Veterans are increasingly turning to community colleges to prepare for new careers, transferring their military skills to the workplace because they are career-focused, and successful in working with others, independently, or as part of a team. Two-year colleges are committed to helping students overcome obstacles. On-campus services like counseling, peer support (e.g. veterans helping veterans) and a one-stop-shop Veterans Affairs office are having a huge impact on Veteran student success.

**As veterans navigate college and the labor market, they face a whole new set of challenges:** understanding transcripts and benefits, selecting the right career path, translating military experience into credits, and accessing the appropriate resources and services. Making the transition from a military environment to navigating a complex college environment can be overwhelming.

Making ends meet while attending school can be a burden.

**The post-9/11 GI Bill often falls short in covering the full cost of education and living expenses,** especially for those juggling jobs, school, and families. "Gap" pay is not available between semesters and online student veterans are not eligible for full benefits. Veterans cannot afford to make any mistakes in their educational pathway without negatively impacting their education benefits.

**However, when programs and services are provided, college graduation and retention rates are higher for veterans than the general student population.** Grayson College is the largest institution of higher education in Grayson County and recognizes the important role it can play in supporting our veterans and their families through their educational journey. **Grayson College is committed to providing the critical services and resources needed to meet the needs of a growing veteran student population.**

A surge in enrollment is expected over the next five years as the draw down in Afghanistan continues and soldiers discharge or retire. The number of veterans entering higher education is expected to grow by 40% in Texas by 2016. Texas has the second largest veteran population (1,680,418) in the Nation. This will impact Grayson College and how we serve our warriors. **Many of those returning will live in Grayson County or in the Texoma region,** due to its proximity to veteran resources and the McKinney, Plano, and Dallas/Ft. Worth Metroplex.

## Boots to Books and Beyond Campaign

Grayson College and the Grayson College Foundation has embarked on a campaign to support student veterans at Grayson College. The Boots to Books and Beyond Campaign for will support critical on-campus resources, services, and activities for the next five years and beyond. This strategic initiative is based on research, trends, military draw-down expectations, survey outcomes, and best practices in serving student veterans across higher education. This project has also been developed with extensive community input.

### Campaign Mission

To foster an environment where veterans and their families receive the support they need to overcome obstacles, and to put the Veteran in an environment where they are prepared to achieve academically and can transition into careers or advance to a four-year university.

### Campaign Vision

The Grayson College Office of Veterans Affairs vision is to play a vital role in assisting Veteran students obtain their goals. It develops programs and strategies, and identifies the services for veterans and their families to be academically successful. Grayson College's Office of Veterans Affairs strives to be a beacon for other institutions to follow.

In our commitment to support the College's vision, the Office of Veterans Affairs has established and implemented the following goals:

1. Enhance student retention and enrollment efforts by collaborating with internal and external partners.
2. Provide resources and support for veterans seeking help with benefit services and/or employment with a focus on the unique needs of the Veteran student.
3. Increase the awareness to Veterans that support Grayson College's current veteran students and helps them transition successfully from warrior to student.
4. Assist Grayson College with recruitment efforts related to Veterans through outreach and partnership programs with other higher education institutions, community-serving organizations, and businesses.

### Campaign Outcomes

- Increase the number of veterans and their family members who enroll in Grayson College and graduate from a program of study.
- Increase the number of veterans and their family members who find meaningful employment and/or transfer to a four-year university.
- Increase student veteran level of satisfaction with the support and academic services provided to them by Grayson College.



"It is imperative that we come together as a college and community to provide a strong support network to ease the transition of returning Veterans and their families. The lifelong impact and personal transformation that can occur through higher education cannot be overstated. Current college services and programs are being retooled and strengthened to meet the unique and individual needs of the growing student veteran population."

- **Dr. Jeremy McMillen**  
President, Grayson College



"I came to Grayson College wanting a higher education and better job opportunities. I started too late to receive benefits because it was already 10 years past my discharge date, but that didn't stop the Grayson College Veterans Office from doing everything in their power to get me the help I needed to excel. I am currently receiving Hazelwood Exemption benefits and going for a Mathematics Major so I can become a teacher later on. They also helped me in my goals to get VA Health and Medical benefits by pointing me in the right direction. The Grayson College VA Office offers some of the best help for a veteran I have ever received, has a great support line and gave me the opportunity to meet other veterans that I feel comfortable talking to when I need help or just chat. I currently work at the Grayson College Veterans Affairs Office while finishing my associates degree here."

- **Gary Lorange, U.S. Army Veteran**  
 Grayson College student and  
 Veteran Affairs Navigator

## We All Benefit By Investing in Success for Veterans

A Grayson College education will provide veterans with skills for a lifetime. It will also create a **stabilizing force** for individual veterans, their families, employers, and the community. Our campus and our community will see the long-term benefits from having these leaders as alumni, employees, and citizens.

Supporting Grayson College is a good investment. The college has a solid track record of innovation and responsiveness to community need. Over the past 16 months, the Grayson College Office of Veterans Affairs has identified and developed methods to maximize college credits awarded to veterans and service members while reducing the time to graduate. Grayson College has streamlined the process of awarding credit and has established best practices in collaboration with our College Credit for Heroes Staff, Office of Financial Aid, Grayson faculty and staff.

### Our Vision for the Future

<p><b>Student Veterans</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual and team-based support will help smooth veterans' transition into civilian life and increase graduation rates.</li> <li>• Services that foster reliable relationships that will provide emotional and academic support from peers with similar experiences.</li> <li>• Veterans will be supported in identifying career paths, translating experience to credits, and job-seeking assistance.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Families of Student Veterans</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Veteran families will benefit from the psychological and economic stability resulting from veterans' education and career success.</li> <li>• With all the challenges returning veterans and their families face, knowing there is support will ease their burdens.</li> <li>• Support for GI Bill-eligible family members</li> </ul>
<p><b>Campus Community</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Veterans bring a new level of diversity, leadership, and spirit of service to our campus culture.</li> <li>• Student success rates will be improved because graduation and retention rates are higher for veterans than the general student population.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Broader Community</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local employers will have a stronger pool of experienced, educated veterans to draw from to address workforce needs.</li> <li>• Higher employment rates among veterans will increase Grayson County's economic prosperity and reduce the demand on taxpayer-funded programs.</li> <li>• A hub to elevate community conversations about veteran issues will be led by students, alumni, and community partners.</li> <li>• Grayson College and local businesses will develop an Internship program for Veterans</li> </ul>

## The Boots to Books and Beyond Campaign Will Raise Public and Private Funds to:

- Provide on-campus **support services** to meet the distinct needs of student veterans, including **counseling and disability services**;
- Ensure student veterans and their families are not forced to drop out of college by offering **emergency and “gap” funds**;
- Create an **inviting and centralized space** for veterans to access specialized services and connect with other veterans;
- Provide access to a **career adviser** who is knowledgeable about military transcripts and credit for prior learning experience, and who can help translate service experience into **meaningful career paths**;
- Support **coordination of services** for veterans and their families, as well as student access to **on-campus and community resources**;
- Provide accessible counseling for those facing **“invisible” wounds**;
- Provide **peer mentoring** and **case management** services building a relationship that provides emotional and academic support from those with similar experiences;
- Offer employee training to **enhance sensitivity to military culture** and an understanding of veteran reintegration challenges;
- Create **stronger partnerships** with other organizations serving veterans to improve student veteran access to services and organizational efficiencies; and
- Sustain the services and programs for future student veterans by seeding an **endowment for scholarships**.

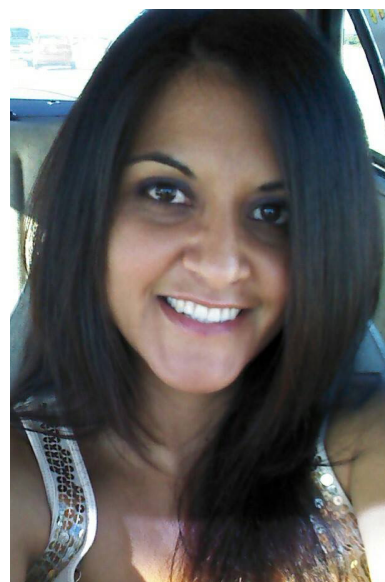
## Join Us!

You can help make the difference for student veterans at Grayson College. To ensure an unbroken path from military service to college and then on to a fulfilling career and life, the college will partner with donors like you to invest in a comprehensive veteran-friendly educational experience.

### Learn More:

#### Randy Truxal

Executive Director  
Grayson College Foundation  
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truxalr@grayson.edu



“I found myself leaving the military with lots of questions. Grayson College was a lifeline and really helped me learn how to live and breathe again. It helped me focus on things I needed to pay attention to — like finding housing closer to school, securing health insurance, and that life, for the most part, isn’t about life and death. I think many veterans find themselves in a world that they feel doesn’t appreciate them and, in turn, may not appreciate it back.”

- **Marcy Babb**,  
current Grayson College student,  
U.S. Army reservist



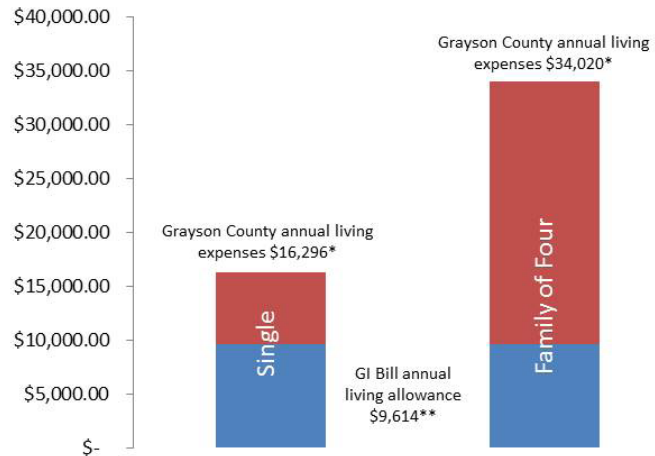
“As a United States Army Combat Infantry Veteran, transitioning into civilian life proved to be a challenge at times. There were many things that I had to learn to adapt and overcome in order to have a positive role and a happy life as an independent man in our society. I am so fortunate to have a supportive family, and equally blessed to have found the dedicated staff of Veterans Affairs of Grayson College. It is truly rewarding to have such assistance on this great climb upward, ascending to the top of the academic mountain, and watching each aspiration become reality. I have Veterans Affairs of Grayson College to thank for squaring me away.”

- **Callahn Talcott**  
current Grayson College student,  
U.S. Army Veteran, Afghanistan

Every 65 minutes, a U.S. military veteran commits suicide.

## Living Allowance Funding Gap for Veteran Students

The chart below shows the gap in living expense funding for full-time veteran students (and part-time student veterans receive even less). The blue portion of each bar represents the GI Bill monthly living allowance and the red portion represents the unfunded remainder necessary to reach the standard living expenses in Grayson County.



\* Living expenses based on MIT report <http://livingwage.mit.edu/counties/48181>  
\*\* GI Bill annual allowance assumes Chapter 33 at 100%, full-time enrollment in long semesters (Spring/Fall) only

\*Based on the monthly self-sufficiency standard for families with preschool children in Grayson County (housing, utilities, childcare, food, transportation, and taxes)

## Key Challenges Facing Our Returning Veterans

- Finding employment — 20 percent of veterans aged 18 to 24 are unemployed and female veterans face an even higher rate of unemployment;
- Dealing with feelings of isolation and disconnectedness with loved ones and others after having been part of a close team;
- Restoring their physical and mental health — 45 percent of veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan have sought disability benefits;
- Coping with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and/or major depression are prevalent among post 9/11 veterans;
- Navigating the complex and confusing network of benefits, services, and support (including educational) that is available to veterans — and then waiting for months to a year to have such benefits start; and
- Dealing with housing and financial instability, especially while attending college and/or supporting families; female veterans have a higher rate of homelessness than their male counterparts.

## College Credit for Heroes

The College Credit for Heroes program seeks to maximize college credit awarded to veterans and service members for their military experience, helping veterans and service members obtain their degrees and certifications more quickly and expedite their entry into the workforce.

Grayson College awards course credit for military training to accelerate degree and certification programs for veteran students in high-demand areas, such as advanced technologies and manufacturing. Grayson College has established an internship program for welding, HVAC, Electrical Technician in which a work-based learning experience enables the veteran to apply specialized occupational theory, skill and concepts all the while using his/her benefits and will be paid during their internship.



## COLLEGE CREDIT FOR HEROES

Grayson College developed a career mobility track program providing veterans and service members with military medical experience an accelerated path to an Associate of Applied Science degree in Nursing, Radiology, Medical Lab Technician and Emergency Medical Services (EMS).



**Grayson College Foundation**  
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GC is an equal opportunity institution.