



TONY KURTZ

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 50th ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

2019 Assembly Bill 684

Relating to: veteran-related tuition grants for certain veterans and dependents enrolled in private nonprofit institutions of higher education and making an appropriation.

Public Hearing: Assembly Committee on Colleges and Universities

January 23, 2020

Thank you, Chairman Murphy and members of the committee for holding a public hearing on Assembly Bill 684 (AB 684).

Wisconsin has a reputation as a state that is very veteran friendly. Our state provides great benefits to our veterans from tax incentives, grant opportunities, and housing assistance. We have a tradition in this state of making sure our veterans feel valued.

One of the most prominent benefits Wisconsin provides is the Wisconsin GI Bill (WI GI Bill). This program offers tuition remission for eligible Wisconsin veterans and certain dependents of those eligible veterans that attend public institutions of higher education in Wisconsin. Under current law, if a veteran attends UW-Madison or Milwaukee Area Technical College, they are eligible for tuition remission under the WI GI Bill. But, if a veteran decides to attend Viterbo University, or another private nonprofit institution, they are not eligible for tuition remission under the WI GI Bill.

AB 684 seeks to correct this by creating a new grant program that complements the current tuition remission through the Higher Educational Aids Board (HEAB). This bill requires HEAB to make veteran-related grants for students enrolled in bachelor's or graduate degree programs at private nonprofit institutions that are members of the Wisconsin Association of Independent Colleges and Universities. The grants are made for students who would have qualified for veteran-related tuition remissions if they had enrolled in the University of Wisconsin System or a technical college. Using the same process and requirements under current law, this bill would allow an eligible veteran to attend a private nonprofit institution and receive tuition remission.

AB 684 further seeks to build upon Wisconsin's legacy of taking care of those that have served our country by expanding access to educational opportunities in our state.

I thank you for your time and for listening to my testimony. I would be honored to have earned your support of AB 684 and will take any questions you have for me at this time.



Alberta Darling
Wisconsin State Senator
Co-Chair, Joint Committee on Finance

Testimony Before the Assembly Committee on Colleges and Universities
Assembly Bill 684
Thursday, January 23, 2020

Thank you Chairman Murphy and committee members for taking the time to hear Assembly Bill 684. AB 684 continues Wisconsin's tradition of taking care of our veterans through educational assistance.

Wisconsin has long been known as a state that provides great benefits for our veterans, from tax incentives, grant programs and housing assistance. One of our most well-known and impactful benefits offered is the WI GI Bill. Under current law, the WI GI Bill offers tuition remission for eligible Wisconsin veterans and certain children and spouses of eligible veterans that attend public institutions of higher education in Wisconsin.

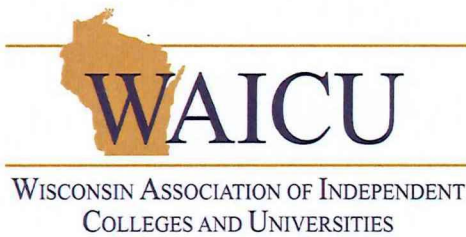
AB 684 would create a parallel program to the WI GI Bill that expands educational opportunities to those who attend a private nonprofit institution. This legislation helps bring equality to our system by creating a new grant program that complements our current system and continues to prioritize our veterans.

Using the same process and requirements under current law, our bill would allow a veteran to attend a private nonprofit institution and receive a grant of up to \$2,000 per semester or session. Any participating institutions would be required to provide a matching grant to the student.

This legislation has a fiscal cap of \$5 million over the biennium. Therefore, the size of the grant given to the student would vary based on the number of students that apply for the program.

I'd like to thank Representative Kurtz for his leadership on this issue. Thank you again, Chairman and committee members. Please join me in supporting our veterans by expanding educational opportunities here in Wisconsin.

ALVERNO COLLEGE
BELLIN COLLEGE
BELOIT COLLEGE
CARDINAL STRITCH UNIVERSITY
CARROLL UNIVERSITY
CARTHAGE COLLEGE
CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY
EDGEWOOD COLLEGE
HERZING UNIVERSITY
HOLY FAMILY COLLEGE
LAKELAND UNIVERSITY
LAWRENCE UNIVERSITY



WISCONSIN'S PRIVATE, NONPROFIT COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES
WORKING TOGETHER FOR EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

MARIAN UNIVERSITY
MARQUETTE UNIVERSITY
MEDICAL COLLEGE OF WISCONSIN
MILWAUKEE INSTITUTE OF ART & DESIGN
MILWAUKEE SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING
MOUNT MARY UNIVERSITY
NASHOTAH HOUSE
NORTHLAND COLLEGE
RIPON COLLEGE
ST. NORBERT COLLEGE
VITERBO UNIVERSITY
WISCONSIN LUTHERAN COLLEGE

TESTIMONY

By

Dr. Rolf Wegenke, President

Wisconsin Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (WAICU)

on

Assembly Bill 684

to

Assembly Committee on Colleges and Universities

January 23, 2020

Chair Murphy and members of the Committee, my name is Rolf Wegenke. I am President of the Wisconsin Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, or WAICU, the official organization representing Wisconsin's 24 private, nonprofit colleges and universities and their 56,000 students. Thank you for holding this hearing today and for your attention to the important issue of supporting veterans and their families in their pursuit of an education at an institution that is the best fit for them.

When the Wisconsin GI bill was debated many years ago, WAICU institutions were excluded from the program because it was designed as a remission program for public institutions. However, the bill was amended to require the Higher Educational Aids Board (HEAB) to reimburse the public institutions for the tuition waived. The unintended consequence was to create a disincentive for veterans to enroll in private, nonprofit institutions, a missed opportunity for many veterans, their dependents and the State of Wisconsin.

WAICU is asking that educational benefits for veterans and dependents be revisited to assure equitable treatment for all veteran students. Equitable treatment can be achieved by the proposed veterans grant program. The program would require a matching grant from participating WAICU institutions...private colleges would have skin in the game. The program and match of this design reinforces WAICU institutions commitment to doing their part to support students and are a public service and a public good in educating our workforce and serving our veterans and their families.

Specifically, the legislation proposes to do the following:

- Provide a \$2000 maximum grant per semester or session for the qualifying veteran, spouse or dependent.
- Require participating institutions to provide a matching grant for the veteran, spouse or dependent who attend the WAICU institution. This match can consist of scholarships, institutional aid or other assistance.
- Require that all qualifying Federal aid first be applied before students become eligible for the state grant dollars. For example, Federal Post 911 GI bill benefits will have to first be applied along with other benefits.
- Provides for 128 credits of eligibility or 8 semesters of eligibility, whichever is greater. Students must also maintain a GPA of 2.0 to maintain the grant.
- The grant must be applied toward tuition costs and can be used for undergraduate or graduate programs.

The state has a long history of providing students with the educational opportunity that is the best fit for them. The state is also known for treating veterans fairly and equitably. This legislation builds on that record.

My message today is not about institutions, but about fair treatment for all who have served.



**LAKELAND
UNIVERSITY**

TESTIMONY

By

Sue Bialk

**Associate Director of Financial Aid and Educational Funding & Director of
Veteran Services
Lakeland University**

on

Senate Bill 537

Senate Committee on Universities, Technical Colleges, Children and Families

January 23, 2020

Chair Murphy, members of the Committee, my name is Sue Bialk. I serve Lakeland University as the Associate Director of Financial Aid and Educational Funding and Director of Veteran Services. Lakeland is a private non-profit university that serves around 4,000 students at 7 locations around the state and Tokyo, Japan.

Thank you for the opportunity to share with you how we, at Lakeland University support Veterans. We currently serve around 100 veterans annually at the various locations. We have signed the DoD Memorandum of Understanding and are a 100% Yellow Ribbon Participating University. As the Director of Veteran Services, I provide various program support adapted to the needs of the student veterans LU is enrolling.

We have heard from our veteran students that they appreciate the opportunity to be able to attend class by accessing several different formats. At Lakeland we offer classes in the traditional classroom, real time online access through a format we call Blend-Ed Live, or online on their own time. They have access to past lectures, which allows them to review the lecture information. The veteran students have appreciated the flexibility and for some the on-line format is more appropriate for their needs. I would like to read testimony from one of our student veterans, Dustin Merkel. (see attachment)

LU is in its second year of providing a unique cooperative education program which is helping students address post-graduation debt. This past year we have had veterans that have specifically selected us because of this opportunity to obtain valuable work experiences and build a professional resume while in pursuing a degree.

Lastly, as a mother/daughter/sister of a veteran, I can attest to the sacrifices and selfless acts soldiers choose when making the choice to serve their country. It is imperative to me that Wisconsin show the same selflessness and support to the veterans and provide them with a variety of educational opportunities.

To whom it may concern;

As a Veteran of the United States Army and current student of a private nonprofit higher education institution in Wisconsin, I know firsthand that choosing a private institution was crucial towards my academic success.

Private schools such as Lakeland University, offer several things specific to my needs that a larger public school cannot. The smaller class sizes presented here help reduce stress, make me feel more in control of my environment, and allow me to focus on learning rather than the fears I carry in larger crowds. Smaller class sizes give me greater access to professors, tutors, and assistance with classwork. The smaller community here allows me to feel like I'm a part of something again and helps me regain my sense of belonging and purpose. BlendEd classes give me the flexibility to tend to school while also focusing on work and my family. These factors are just some of the many reasons why I chose to attend a private institution.

The benefit of offering financial assistance for Veterans to attend private schools is that it allows Veterans another option to choose the school that is the most appropriate to their individual needs. It helps Veterans reduce stressors they face rather than placing additional barriers in their path to success. Please consider approving any grant that may empower Veterans with the freedom to choose the school that gives them the best chance to succeed. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Dustin Merkel



Milwaukee School of Engineering
1025 North Broadway
Milwaukee, WI 53202-3109
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January 23rd, 2020

**Testimony of Lena Scheibengraber
Senior Financial Aid Counselor and Veteran Affairs School Certifying Official
Milwaukee School of Engineering**

**Assembly Committee on Colleges and Universities
Re: Assembly Bill 684, Veteran-Related Tuition Grants**

Distinguished committee members, my name is Lena Scheibengraber and I have the distinct honor of serving veterans and military members as the Senior Financial Aid Counselor and Veteran Affairs School Certifying Official at Milwaukee School of Engineering. I want to thank you for this opportunity to address AB-684 and allow me to voice my support of this legislation.

As someone whose partner, father, brothers, uncle, and grandfathers have all served, giving back to our veterans is something very important to me. Upon starting my role in 2013, I made it my mission to make our services at MSOE top-notch. It wasn't that the university didn't have anything – we had tutoring services, accessibility accommodations, great financial aid packages and options – but there was something lacking. After pioneering the creation of a Veterans Support Committee and planning our first Veterans Day Luncheon in 2014, a domino effect happened. The establishment of a student-run veterans organization, a veteran-specific space (our Veterans Lounge), a sponsorship through Rockwell Collins and attendance at their Veterans Summit, a policy change to give current military members and veterans priority registration, donor-gifted veteran-only parking spaces and scholarships, a discount in our bookstore, Red/White/Blue graduation cords, the installation of a Prisoner of War/Missing In Action (P.O.W./M.I.A.) Honor Chair, a senior project building a Victory Garden, a new veteran onboarding process, and the distinction of being named 6th Best College for Veterans in the Midwest – all of these sparked from the small idea that maybe we just weren't doing enough.

As the first point of contact for prospective veterans looking for a university to call home, I often have the conversation about how we participate in the Federal Post 9/11 G.I. Bill and Yellow Ribbon Program but not the Wisconsin G.I. Bill. Not only can this be frustrating for the servicemember, but also confusing for them in trying to decide which option will be a better fit. While I am extremely proud of all the services we offer at MSOE, sometimes those general services are not enough; bottom line: financially, things need to make sense. It's disappointing when I hear back from a veteran who decides not to attend MSOE after they hear that we don't have the same tuition benefit as UW System schools – even if culturally, MSOE is more in line with what they want. I see this legislation as providing veterans with that extra benefit. Not only are we showing them how much we value them as individuals, but we are also valuing the freedom of choice.

We say that MSOE is the university of choice for those seeking an inclusive community of experiential learners driven to solve the complex challenges of today and tomorrow. Every day, I see our veterans on campus exceeding the requirements we set for them. Whether they are spearheading projects in a classroom or making structural changes in an organization after they graduate, their impact cannot be overstated. I can tell you dozens of success stories from the veterans who I have worked with over the years – those who thought obtaining an education was out of their reach – especially an education



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at a private university. Attached for you are a few statements from various service members at MSOE, giving you a snippet about why they chose a to attend a private university and what it means to them.

I hope the stories you have heard this morning and the ones you will hear and read after this point help give you all a better idea of the impact this grant can have on our veterans and their families. I can say with 100% certainty that our campus, and our country, is a better place because of these individuals. I encourage you to pass this legislation to ensure that our veterans can choose where they obtain their education post-deployment. Thank you for your attention to this important issue and your commitment to our veterans.

Very Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lena Scheibengraber'.

Lena Scheibengraber
Senior Financial Aid Counselor & Veteran Affairs School Certifying Official
Milwaukee School of Engineering
scheibengrab@msoe.edu
414-277-7221

Milwaukee School of Engineering Student Veteran Testimonies

Jared Burks, Navy Veteran, Biomolecular Engineering Major

I am a new student at MSOE and have a passion for volunteering at Frederick J. Gaenslen School (K-8) teaching STEM classes and workshops. I chose a private college over a public university because I started at a technical college, but I was limited by the roles/positions available to me with an associate's degree in my particular field (Biotechnology). I don't *just* want to be a lab assistant; I want to conduct research and be a part of bigger projects that require more knowledge and skills. With extremely competitive positions, it's not enough anymore to just have a bachelor's degree – I needed to find a specialization that would be attractive to organizations and ensure I was making a difference. I researched the UW schools' programs and they didn't quite offer what I was looking for. There are options for Biomedical Engineering, but I wanted to study BioMolecular Engineering. The two might sound the same but they are very different fields of study. MSOE is the only institution that offers the classes, as well as the degree title I'm looking for.

I feel that I benefit from my education at MSOE by the courses they offer. It's not a general overview of the things I want to learn, but an in-depth study and training for application of what is taught. Once I've obtained my degree, I plan to apply to a study that aims to cure a disease or solve a global issue. Examples are a cure for HIV, cancer, genetic disorders, the clean water crisis, or famine.

Jennifer Vanden Bosch, Wisconsin National Guard, Nursing Major

I am a cadet at Marquette Army ROTC, volunteer for Salvation Army, National Guard Cadet, and work for MSOE Admissions. One thing that attracted me to go to a private college is how tight knit the community is. I felt like I was a person during my tour and not just Student ID number. Additionally, they have a lot more aid and tuition assistance. Once I got into MSOE, I realized that the university has a crazy amount of clinical locations and many connections throughout Wisconsin. By getting hands-on skills it helps my confidence and better prepare me for the real world. I also think that going to a smaller school helped me be more engaged with teachers and seek out tutoring. The professors at MSOE, especially if you have them throughout your time in school, make you very comfortable and you can really see how much they care about you. After graduation, I will commission to the National Guard Nurse Corps and am planning on getting a job at a nearby hospital as a civilian (looking at the VA).

Alexander Wilhelm Holborn, Coast Guard Veteran, Mechanical Engineering Major

I chose a private higher learning institution over a public learning institution for a few reasons. Before I joined the military, I attended a community college in San Diego California. I was enrolled for two years before I gave up. After the first semester it was clear that the vast majority of teachers did not care about teaching. There was very little compassion for students and zero understanding of what a 'work-life balance' should be. Out of the two years I encountered 1 professor that kept the students above all else. While he was a great teacher, it was abundantly apparent that he was also fed up with the system and knew the majority of students were being given a disservice. So, I figured why not try an institution that has to try to keep its customers happy?

I won't lie, I was extremely nervous to go back to school after 10 years. Before my first class started on November 27th, 2018, I just kept referring back to my old college experience of cold-hearted teachers that could care less but I was wrong, so incredibly wrong. From day one I saw a striking difference in just how students were treated. I saw a much more caring environment that wants to

Milwaukee School of Engineering Student Veteran Testimonies

foster growth and creativity through state-of-the-art facilities and professors that are true subject matter experts.

In addition, I have yet to meet a professor or instructor that will not give a student the help they need. I'm not even talking about standard office hours. I have had professors that have stayed with me for hours to help me understand concepts. I have talked with other students who have had instructors stay late into the night to help them understand core concepts in preparation for the next day's test. It honestly warms my heart to see professors that want to watch their students succeed.

I am 100% convinced that if I was not going to MSOE I would have dropped out already. From the free tutoring service to the amazing staff, there isn't one aspect of MSOE that I haven't benefited from. Having the option for group tutoring in the library saved me in my first quarter. I really had no idea what was going on and because of my age I felt like I didn't really fit in, so I kept to myself. When I took advantage of the free tutoring it forced me to open up a little and not be so afraid to ask questions in this new setting. It not only helped me understand some of the concepts that I was struggling with, but it gave me the confidence that I am smart and can, eventually, solve a problem.

I still don't know what where I want to be once I graduate. All I know is that I want to be in a position where I can help people. Once I'm able to, I want to set out with engineers without borders to gain in field experience and make a difference.

Collin Quinn, Marine Corps Veteran, Computer Science Major

I decided to attend a private college due to the smaller class sizes, smaller overall student population, and the fact that MSOE has a great reputation and top-notch degree quality. These were all things I was looking for in an education investment. By attending a private school, I have benefited by the means of gaining more interaction with professors/faculty. I get to have one-on-one time with my professors when I'm in need of assistance getting through coursework, figuring out my class schedule, and asking for advice in preparation for getting involved in industry after graduation. I have heard from friends attending UW schools that it's much harder to have those interactions – students who have a class sizes of 80+ students get lost.

After I graduate from MSOE, I plan to stay living and working in Wisconsin to give back, utilizing my Computer Science degree.

Hello, I'm Michael Kielpikowski, a Sophomore as a Mechanical Engineer at Milwaukee School of Engineering. Unfortunately, a technical college wasn't an option for my degree that I'm pursuing. Before MSOE I chose two other universities UW Madison and University of Illinois Urbana Champaign both public after about a year of struggles figuring out (freshman and transfer student, having not taken the ACT and SAT almost 5 years). Then one day I messaged MSOE and, in a day, got an Email and while later an acceptance letter.

Leaving the military, I was diagnosed with disorganized schizophrenia and more recently ADHD. With that I have Social Anxiety and I'm usually very quiet and sit in the back of most classrooms. I couldn't speak unless everyone talks first or if someone asks for me. I experience auditory and visual hallucinations. Where I get this terrified feeling of saying the wrong words or people thinking that I'm crazy, so I stay silent. MSOE being a small university with small classroom sizes helps reduce my tension.

Today I feel that MSOE is more of a home to me than had I gone to any other university. Growing up in a small town of Kewaunee population of 2,900. Where everything is a 5-10 min drive. MSOE the campus and any type of restaurant is about a 15 min walk and with a campus of 2,800 you can meet everybody. Now I have a good selection of internships with the computer and technical skills that I have acquired from MSOE. This close-knit School taught me skills and the knowledge to becoming a successful Engineer.

After college I hope to work for a company or government contracting, for some time, to save up until I can start my own business, where I want to integrate Engineering with Agriculture. Like in Milwaukee I want to build a building that combines Aquaponics, a grocery store, food trucks (and if ambitious a Michelin star restaurant). Aquaponics can clean impurities in water (such as lead), Provide fresh produce, and by extract oil from algae can produce biodiesel. In Kewaunee have a farm along with a biogas reactor to power a generator much like Pagel's Ponderosa.

I joined Triangle Fraternity freshman year and became House Manager where I keep care of the houses cleaning supplies, and projects like replacing old doorknobs, and making the house presentable. I also visit the Veteran meetings and a Farm Bureau member.

Some of the services I get from MSOE such as the Veteran meetings a time when veterans meet and talk about the College benefits, Housing, activities, and volunteering opportunities. The Veterans and Fraternity study rooms these are rooms where certain organizations can come together to talk or study. I know for myself this is a college life saver to be able to ask questions from homework to writing a resume. The Student Accessibility Services has helped me more ways than one, getting the proper counseling and talking to someone about my weaknesses and seeing how they can accommodate such as getting a list of homework problems a few weeks in advance. Not giving me the answers just more time to focus the problem at hand.

As most veterans join the military right after high school. Most plan on using their benefits on to going to college and like myself some time away from school was a bit of a 'Hop Skip and Jump' for me freshman year was more of a struggle. The Wisconsin GI Bill could help fill in more time. This benefit already exists to the veterans of Wisconsin and to expand it to private colleges could help veterans who just need some extra time instead of typical GI Bill 36 months. Thank you for your time.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity this morning to speak in favor of Assembly Bill 684. My name is Ricky Gronwall. I'm currently a Management Information Systems student and veteran at Milwaukee School of Engineering and will graduate this Spring. I served in the US Army for 6 ½ years during which I deployed to both Iraq and Afghanistan, spending a year in each. After I was honorably discharged at the end of my service, I was diagnosed with PTSD. Some of the symptoms I regularly experience often negatively impact my capabilities as a student. Before transferring to MSOE, I attended Milwaukee Area Technical College for a short time, during which I had a difficult time finding assistance and their student veterans organization was nonexistent.

Once I got to MSOE, I was almost immediately informed of several assistance options available to me as a Veteran as well as one with service-connected disabilities, from testing and parking accommodations to software that helps me take better notes. I joined a growing student veterans organization. My class sizes being much smaller made and continues to make it easier for me to connect with and communicate with my instructors, especially when some PTSD symptoms get in the way of my studies. I feel seen and heard, and know they genuinely care about my success and wellbeing, whereas at a public institution I felt like just another number and who cares if I fail.

I go to a very difficult school that has made it as easy as possible for me to be successful and stay on track as much as possible. I've still had some setbacks and issues, but I have no doubt in my mind that I wouldn't have gotten this far without the services I found at a private college that I didn't at a public one. Based on the current Wisconsin GI Bill, I plan on attending UW-Madison in the future, but I would at least like the choice to continue my education at MSOE or another private college. Thank you again for your time.

January 23, 2020

Good morning. Thank you for this opportunity to encourage your support for Assembly Bill 684.

Wisconsin veterans deserve every benefit we can supply and this certainly includes veteran-related grants to support their higher education, regardless of whether their chosen institutions are public or private.

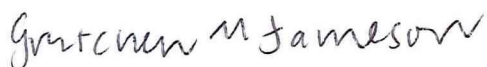
The 24 institutions that comprise the Wisconsin Association of Independent Colleges and Universities serve veterans well. This fall, at Concordia University's Wisconsin campus, we are proud to have enrolled 270 veterans and active duty/reserve military personnel or their dependents. These students represent every possible student type from traditional undergraduate to accelerated graduate learners. Like their fellow Concordians, these students selected Concordia University because it fit their goals, professional aspirations, and - certainly - their values.

Our commitment to these men and women means that we are driven to ensure a world class Concordia University education that is both accessible and affordable. This is why we accept up to 63 military transfer credits, among the most generous in the state, so that our veteran students can leverage their experience and maximize their benefits to attain their degrees.

Additionally, as an institution designated by the U.S. Department of Education as a military friendly school, we have also invested in our veterans department to ensure these students have access to the support they require to achieve their personal and professional goals here on the Homefront. This has resulted in higher than average levels of student satisfaction and retention of our veterans, all of which points to stronger student outcomes.

We are here today to invite and encourage your support of this bill. Higher education supplies so much more than just a diploma or credential. The experiences that learners have within a particular college or university community shape them for life; at Concordia that includes a formation that instills in our graduates a sense of profound purpose and professional passion.

Our doors are open for every veteran student who desires what we offer. And we believe that our Wisconsin veterans should be able to apply their well-deserved benefits to the higher learning institution of their choice. Ultimately, that is what is best for the veteran and better for Wisconsin.



GRETCHEN M. JAMESON

Sr. Vice President

Office of Strategy and University Affairs
Concordia University Wisconsin & Ann Arbor

p 262-243-4563 | c 636-795-6707



January 22, 2020

Good Morning,

I am Keith Casey and I am the Assistant Director for Community Outreach and Veteran Engagement at Concordia University Wisconsin. In this role, I oversee the Veteran Services Department.

I am a 30-year US Army Veteran, having served the last 26 years as a Commissioned Officer in the Field Artillery on Active Duty with my last position as Director, Curriculum, Education and Training Product and Doctrine Development for the US Army's Fires Center of Excellence. I am a native Wisconsinite, born and raised in Janesville and completed my undergraduate degrees at the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh.

Concordia University Wisconsin is proud to be designated as a Military Friendly University, one of only 20 schools in the state, and is a proud participant in the Yellow Ribbon Program.

Concordia is dedicated to working with our Student Veterans and their families to ensure affordable tuition and our education programs have been consistently recognized as a great return on investment. Veterans have numerous options using military education benefits, applying for scholarships and utilizing financial aid if needed. This also includes transferring up to 63 credits for military training and education for college credit. The average number of credits we typically see transfer is 25. In the past two years, we accepted 50 or more credits for transfer for eight Student Veterans with four Student Veterans transferring 63. This allowed these eight Student Veterans to enter Concordia University Wisconsin as juniors and focus their studies on their core courses required for their undergraduate program. However, one of these Student Veterans was not able to cover the remainder of their undergraduate tuition with their Federal Benefits, but choose to continue his education at Concordia University Wisconsin and are now pursuing his graduate degree here.

As I mentioned, Concordia University Wisconsin accepts:

- Chapter 30 Montgomery GI Bill (Active Duty)
- Chapter 31 Vocational Rehabilitation
- Chapter 33 Post 9/11 GI Bill
- Chapter 35 Survivors and Dependents Educational Assistance
- Chapter 1606 Selected Reserve Montgomery GI Bill
- Armed Forces Tuition Assistance (TA) Programs

For Active Duty Personnel, Concordia University Wisconsin accepts the Armed Forces Tuition Assistance (TA) Programs. This program offers eligible Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard, National Guard and Reserve members (activated under Title 10 orders) a benefit that funds a portion of their tuition expenses.

Veterans Education Grant (VetEd)
National Guard Tuition Grant & Reserve Tuition Assistance Program
Wisconsin National Guard Tuition Grant
Military Spouse Career Advancement Accounts
Post 9/11 GI Bill STEM Extension
Yellow Ribbon (unlimited/unlimited)
Two Scholarships solely for Veterans, Spouse and Dependents. \$1,000 each

Our office of Student Veteran Services is partnered with our Academic Resource Center and combined we are dedicated to supporting Veterans, their spouses and family members. We provide services such as, but not limited to:

Academic Skills Development (test taking, reading comprehension, time management, note-taking)
Mentoring (both peer to peer and staff/faculty to student)
Career counseling
Student Finance/Scholarships
Academic Advising
Counseling
Free Tutoring
Accessibility (Disability) Resources: coordinates accommodations for students with disabilities

Concordia University Wisconsin is home to the first Student run American Legion Post (1881) on a college campus in Wisconsin with students comprising 80% of the membership.

Concordia University Wisconsin Student Veterans are in the process of establishing a local chapter of the Student Veterans of America. Student Veterans of America, is a 501c non-profit organization run by Student Veterans focused on addressing the needs and concerns of American military Veterans in higher education.

On average, Concordia University Wisconsin receives 1 call per week inquiring if we currently accept the WI GI Bill. Unfortunately, we have to inform them that we do not. This equates to 52 potential Student Veterans who could not attend the school of their choice.

In conclusion, Concordia University Wisconsin is committed to providing first class service to support our Active, Reserve, and Veteran personnel and their families.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Casey', is written over a faint circular stamp or watermark.

COL Keith A. Casey, USA, (RET)

Assistant Director Community Outreach and Veteran Engagement

December 4, 2019

Dear Sir or Madam,

My name is KaDee Knapper, and I am currently a full time student at Concordia University of Wisconsin (CUW). I am also serving in the Navy reserves with 13 years of combined active duty and reserve time. I concluded my active duty services as to pursue a degree in Athletic Training but continue to serve as a navy reservist.

I choose CUW, which is a private university, because they offered to take 20 credits from my Joint Service Transcript, which is more than other institutions would take at the time I was looking to begin classes.

Another reason CUW is my choice for using my benefits, is that it offers a five year dual degree program for Athletic Training (AT). Meaning that the AT program at CUW combines a Bachelor of Science in Sports Medicine and Master of Science in Athletic Training with the degrees earned concurrently. CUW is one of only a few schools currently offering this format in the state of Wisconsin.

For these, and many other reasons, CUW is my school of choice and I should be allowed to use the benefits I earned at the school of my choosing.

Sincerely,

KaDee Knapper

Navy Reservist - CUW Student

December 4, 2019

Dear Sir or Madam,

I enlisted in the military in 1986, for the sole purpose of receiving a college education. I needed money for school. My parents, who had paid for me to attend a private high school, had informed me that if I wanted to attend college, I had to find a way to pay for it on my own. I learned that if I enlisted in the military, and scored well on the aptitude test, I could receive extra benefits that would help pay for college.

Education was enforced in my family as a means towards economic security. Both of my parents did not receive a college degree, therefore, making me a first-generation college student. My parents believed that with a college degree, you would be to receive a job that paid well.

I am grateful for the educational benefits that have allowed me to receive a college education. I would like to see the WI GI Bill opened and extended to private institutions to afford Student Veterans the opportunity to freely chose and select a college where they can use a benefit honorably earned.

Sincerely,

Kari D. Metts
Veterans Outreach Coordinator
Concordia University-Wisconsin
Veteran Services Department

CONCORDIA  UNIVERSITY
W I S C O N S I N

December 4, 2019

Dear Sir or Madam,

My name is Dejanae James and I am currently a student at Concordia University of Wisconsin (CUW). I am a junior here at CUW, studying Justice Public and Policy. During the three years I have spent at Concordia, I've had a satisfying journey finding more about myself, my peers and faculty members. Essentially, this journey help shape and mold me as an individual and a professional.

I chose Concordia due to its prestigious educational background, area of beautification and it's a medium size community. I believed Concordia was the perfect university to grow and develop at, and that is just what I have done. After my first semester at CUW I found out that they financial aid and scholarships would not be enough to cover my education at the University. After finding this out, I got into contact with a recruiter who enlightened me about the National Guard benefits and how they could cover my educational expenses. After I joined the National Guard and was done with the required training, I came back to Concordia to finish where I left off. I would like to continue my education here at Concordia University because it is a place where I can flourish and develop spiritually.

I am currently using the Montgomery GI bill to cover the remaining expenses for my undergrad. In order to continue studying at Concordia, I will need to pay out of pocket. I would like this bill to be granted for myself and others like me whom have formed a comfortable relationship with their University. By this bill being granted, this would open a variety of school choices for service members serving in the National Guard. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Dejanae L. James
Justice and Public Policy 21'
Concordia University Wisconsin

December 3, 2019

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Moriah White and I am currently a full-time student at Concordia University Wisconsin (CUW), a single mother to three young boys and an eight-year United States Air Force veteran. My areas of study are Social Work and Human Behavior and Development. After the completion of my dual bachelor's degrees I plan on applying to the Master of Social Work program at Concordia University Wisconsin. If I am accepted into that program my federal GI Bill will be exhausted several months into it. If I had the opportunity to use my Wisconsin GI Bill to cover the additional academic obligations there would be no worry. However, as that is currently not an option I will have to pursue other means of student payment that may put me into debt.

When researching colleges, I was between CUW and the University of Milwaukee (UWM). During the transfer credit evaluation process my decision was heavily influenced towards CUW as they would accept 63 of my associate degree credits while UWM would only accept 12. In addition to that, CUW is a much shorter commute from my home residence than UWM. As travel time is a significant matter to consider as a single parent, and an extensive commute would not be conducive to my life, I chose to attend Concordia University Wisconsin.

My desired outcome for this issue, is that I would be able to use the funds allocated to my Wisconsin GI Bill for higher education purposes at the university I deem fit.

Thank you for your time in this matter,

Respectfully,

Moriah J. White



100 Grant Street • De Pere, WI 54115-2099 • www.snc.edu/president

January 21, 2020

Chairman Murphy and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to encourage your support of Assembly Bill 684.

St. Norbert College is a proud supporter of veterans and their families. This includes supporting our veterans through voluntary participation in the Yellow Ribbon Program, an agreement with the VA to fund tuition expenses that exceed the annual cap. We have also signed the DoD Memorandum of Understanding conveying our support to students.

We have a longstanding commitment to military science that dates as far back as 1928. Our ROTC program was founded in 1936. St. Norbert's Green Knight Company is a member of the Fox Valley Battalion, headquartered at the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh. The impact of our Green Knight Battalion graduates is unrivaled. To date, nine graduates have become general officers in both the active and reserve components. Today, many graduates continue to serve. At least 20 students from the graduating class of 1987-1990 alone served in Operation Desert Storm.

Our commitment to veterans and their families means that we are driven to ensuring a transformational educational experience to our students with educational outcomes that match the needs expressed by employers and include: critical thinking, analytical capability, communication skills, problem-solving and group dynamic skills, technology literacy, and other essential outcomes of a liberal arts, Catholic, Norbertine education.

Wisconsin has a reputation of taking care of our veterans through educational assistance. This includes the prominent Wisconsin GI Bill that offers tuition remission to eligible Wisconsin veterans (and qualifying dependents) that attend public institutions of higher education in Wisconsin. However, this benefit is currently limited to public institutions. We believe that Wisconsin veterans should be able to apply their well-deserved benefits to support their aspirations and attend any higher educational institution of their choice.

Assembly Bill 684 would expand educational opportunities to qualifying veterans, spouses or dependents by providing a grant of up to \$2,000 per student, per semester to those who attend a private non-profit institution. Any participating college would be required to provide a matching grant to the student. This match demonstrates the commitment of WI private non-profit colleges in supporting our veterans. This bill would continue the state's longstanding history of investing in students and expanding educational opportunities to veterans.

Thank you for your consideration of this bill in support of our veterans.

Respectfully,

Brian J. Bluess
President
St. Norbert College



TESTIMONY

By

**Jarvis Racine, Campus President and Government Affairs Liaison
Herzing University
on
Assembly Bill 684**

Assembly Committee on Colleges and Universities

January 23, 2020

Chair Murphy and members of the Committee, my name is Jarvis Racine and I am the President of Herzing University's Brookfield Campus and serve as the University's Government Affairs Liaison. On behalf of the University and our 1,300 Wisconsin students, I want to thank you for holding this hearing today and for your support of equitable treatment for our veterans and their families.

Herzing University has, since its founding over 50 years ago, been a strong supporter of our Veterans and their career focused educational pursuits. As a University, our students are eligible for all federal education VA Benefits including; CH33 Post 9/11 funding which encompasses Yellow Ribbon, TOE (transfer of entitlement), STEM, and the Marine Gunnery Sergeant John David Fry Scholarship. Additional qualifying benefits include CH 30 Montgomery GI Bill, CH 31 Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Bill, the Veterans Educational Assistance Program and since we signed the DoD MOU (Dept of Defense Memorandum of Understanding), our students are also eligible for Active Duty Tuition Assistance (all branches) and the MyCAA benefit (for spouses of Active Duty Service Members). In addition to these federal benefits, Herzing University offers a 10% tuition discount to all veterans, spouses/dependents of current active duty servicemembers, spouses/dependents of service connected disability servicemembers, and finally, for Active Duty Servicemembers, a \$250/credit discount for bachelor programs and a \$500/credit discount for graduate programs. Clearly, we are working hard to maximize every financial resource we can to assist our Servicemembers.

As you all know, Wisconsin's demand for labor has created shortages in so many key industries and Herzing is well positioned to assist in training the next generation of workers as 70% of our students are enrolled in high demand healthcare degree programs. Our Military students tell us that the key reasons they chose Herzing include our small class sizes, direct entry nursing programs, year-round course offerings, online courses, accelerated degrees and our culture of engaged student support. These are all important factors to our military servicemembers as they look to maximize their military experience and quickly transition into the workforce.

This legislation is about equity and fair treatment and equalizes educational offerings in the state. Our Wisconsin Servicemembers made a commitment to support and defend our country and we should honor their commitment by allowing them to make their choice on the educational institution that best meets their individual educational needs. I thank you all once again for your consideration of this bill.

Holly Hotchkiss-Roth

Viterbo University

WAICU SENATE BILL 684 Testimony

- There are many Veterans who leave the military carrying with them a multitude of unique experiences. These experiences do not define them as individuals however, these experiences may shape how they navigate life outside of the military structure.
- Fewer than 7% (1 in 10) enlisted military personnel have a bachelor's degree compared to the 19% of all adults ages 18-44 (Pew Research Center 2017). Individuals who enlist in the military and serve our country for X number of years, should have the opportunity to acquire a degree beyond high school.
- When searching for colleges that offer the programs a veteran may be interested in, there may be an instance where the desired program is offered only at a private institution.
- Currently, state veteran's education benefits are only approved for use at state universities.
- I am a veteran and can speak to the importance of pursuing a higher education in a career where my strengths lie. In my case, that is in the arena of mental health counseling. The city I reside in has one university with a MS program in mental health counseling and that university is private.
- The closest MS mental health counseling program to La Crosse, other than the one at Viterbo University, is located at Winona State University in Winona Minnesota. When I was in the process of deciding between the two universities (Viterbo University and Winona State University), that I had been accepted at, there were several deciding factors that I took into consideration.
 - Size: Winona State is larger than Viterbo. While visiting both campuses, I felt more comfortable at Viterbo due to the smaller size.
 - Smaller class size was also very important to me.
 - Location: Winona State University would have required a long commute. This would have created a financial strain due to my employment being in La Crosse.
 - Cost: The cost of commuting and lost hours at work was something I took into consideration when considering Winona State University.
 - Choice: I chose Viterbo University due to the smaller class size, smaller campus, the proximity to my home and employment. The mental health counseling program at Viterbo includes opportunities to serve the underserved populations, including veterans, in La Crosse. There are also many Viterbo values that align with my own. At Viterbo, I feel like I am where I am meant to be.
- Veterans who struggle with depression, PTSD, TBI, anxiety, MST, or other military related trauma, may feel more comfortable on a smaller campus that offers smaller class sizes, and specific programs that align with their strengths. Private universities generally offer smaller class sizes.
- In closing, it is so important to consider whom this bill will ultimately affect in a positive manner. If this education bill is passed, veterans will have the opportunity to attend the

college of their choice, private or state. Whether that choice involves a program that speaks to their strengths, interests, educational goals and/or aligns with their spiritual, religious or personal views.

- Example: A veteran is able to use the proposed education bill at a private university that offers a mental health counseling program. That veteran graduates from the mental health counseling program and goes on to serve underserved populations in the state of Wisconsin and rural communities including veteran populations. This veteran who used this proposed veteran's education bill is now serving veterans and other underserved populations. What if 100 veterans were able to utilize this bill? Wouldn't it be amazing if even one veteran mental health counselor could prevent just one veteran from committing suicide; without this bill approval, that one veteran suicide may not be prevented. On average, 20 suicides occur each day within the population of U.S. veterans, active-duty, reserve, and guard. (Wentling, N., 2019. Stars and Stripes).

Military Aligned Student Support and Recruitment (MAS)

Keith Purnell



Military Aligned Students

- **Military Aligned Student:** those currently serving or have served on Active Duty, in the National Guard or as Reservists; combat veterans of present-day and past conflicts; military dependents
- **Mission Fit**
 - Mission: Faithful Service and Ethical Leadership
 - Values: Contemplation, Hospitality, Integrity, Stewardship, Service



Military Aligned Initiative

Mission & Purpose: perform activities and provide services, in collaboration with the Viterbo University community and various support entities in our surrounding communities, which facilitate quality-of-life and successful degree or program completion of each Military Aligned Student (MAS) at Viterbo. These include:

- **Attract and enroll Military Aligned Students**
- **Retain**
- **Graduation**



Military Aligned Student Commitment

- **Dedicated full-time MAS Director**
 - Engaged with students from application through program completion & beyond
- **University cabinet members who are military retirees**
 - Campus Chaplain – Father Conrad Targonski
 - Rick Trietley – VP of Student Affairs
- **Dedicated Veterans Lounge (Reinhart 015) / Yellow Ribbon Program / SVA Chapter**
- **Veterans' connection to St. Francis: warrior, wounded in action, prisoner of war, PTSD, conversion to peacemaker**
 - *Annual veterans pilgrimage to Assisi, Italy*



Support Services

- **On Campus**
 - Military Aligned Students (Keith Purnell/608-796-3039)
 - Financial Aid/Certifying Official (Dawn Mazzola/608-796-3904)
 - Academic Resource Center (Jane Eddy/608-796-3194)
 - Center for Student Success (Tina Johns/608-796-3084)
 - Campus Ministry (Emilio Alvarez/608-796-3805)
 - Campus Chaplain (Fr. Conrad Targonski/608-796-3804)
 - VP Student Affairs (Rick Trietley/608-796-3801)
 - Mathy Fitness Center (Front Desk/608-796-3121)
 - Career Services (Beth Dolder-Zieke/608-796-3827)
 - Counseling Referral Services (LeeAnn Van Vreede/608-796-3808)
 - Army ROTC (Nathan Rudebusch/608-785-8408)
 - Curtis Peterson (Student Veteran Point of Contact & SVA/608-796-3057)



Support Services

- **La Crosse Area**
 - County Veterans Service Office (Adam Flood/608-785-9719)
 - La Crosse Area Veterans Mentorship Program - LAVMP (Dustin Schultz/608-785-6420)
 - La Crosse Veterans Center (Wesley Porter/608-782-4403)
 - Veterans Affairs River Valley Medical Center-Prim. Care (608-784-3886)
 - Veterans Affairs River Valley Integrated Health Center Outpatient Physical Therapist/Mental Health Clinic (608-787-6411)
 - Veterans Outreach and Recovery Program (Chandler Miller/608-881-9116)
 - Ft. McCoy Morale Welfare & Recreation (608-388-7400/ <https://mccoy.armymwr.com/>)