NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE APPROVING AGENCIES

2024 Summer Business & Training Meeting Agenda

August 10th – 14th, 2024 | LAS VEGAS, NV

NASAA *celebrates*

nasaa-vetseducation.com

CONFERENCE INFORMATION & POLICIES

COVID PROTOCOLS

At this point, we ask that you use your best judgment to protect yourself following established, common-sense guidelines, and that you be respectful of others' choices to do the same.

HEAT SAFETY GUIDELINES

- Stay indoors in the A/C when possible. Limit outdoor activity to cooler hours.
- Wear appropriate clothing (loose, light color/fabric) when outside.
- When in the sun, wear sunscreen, a wide-brimmed hat, and sunglasses.
- Stay hydrated, replace salts and minerals when sweating.
- Use a buddy system and know the signs of heat-related illness.

*See more at: www.cdc.gov/extreme-heat/prevention/.

EMERGENCY CONTACT

On the back of your name badge, please write name(s), phone number(s) for the person(s) who we may contact in case of an emergency.

PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEO RECORDING

If you do not wish to be photographed, please mark a large "X" on your name badge. Audio and video recording, streaming, or broadcasting of any type during any part of our program is prohibited unless expressly consented to in writing by NASAA. Photography is permitted unless explicitly prohibited by a presenter at the commencement of their session. By appearing at or attending the Conference, Attendee agrees that NASAA and its authorized representatives may conduct interviews and may take photographs and/or record video directly or indirectly of you at any time during the event. You authorize NASAA all rights necessary to record Attendee during the event and to use any or all portion of such photographs or video recordings at any time in the future for educational, informational, commercial, or any other business and in any form and waive right or approval of the uses and any claim for compensation.

EVENT SURVEYS

Please complete the surveys daily. Survey links are on the back of the program booklet. You may also contact any member of the Conference Planning Committee with feedback and suggestions.

CONNECT ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Use the following event Hashtags: #nasaasummer

Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/NASAAVETSEducation/

LinkedIn: https://www.linkedin.com/company/natl-assoc-of-state-approving-agencies

Website: http://www.nasaa-vetseducation.com/

X (Twitter): https://x.com/nasaa_vetsed

Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/nasaa_vetsed/

NASAA Storytellers: https://open.spotify.com/show/7lYzh1Cf3TOSpg1Gdf79A1?si=m2uF5dEfRPuNCAhKvcB_wg&nd=1

Threads: https://www.threads.net/@nasaa_vetsed

PROGRAM, ACTIVITY, OR EVENT CHANGES

NASAA reserves the right to make policy, program, event and schedule changes, additions or cancellations for any reason. Speakers are confirmed when listed but may be subject to change due to illness or other unexpected conflicts.

AGENDA

FRIDAY, AUGUST 9, 2024

Travel Day for members needing to travel from the East Coast, etc. Sleeping rooms are available at the conference rate.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 10, 2024

(Business Casual Attire)

2:00 pm – 3:00 pm	Directors' Session (Note: This session is open to SAA Directors only) Frank Myers (SC) *Room: Huntington*		
3:00 pm – 4:00 pm	Audit James Henley (MO) *Room: Huntington*	Conference Planning Rebecca Ryan (RI) *Room: Laguna*	Constitution and Bylaws Andrew Martin (WI) *Room: Monarch*
4:00 pm – 5:00 pm	Honors & Awards Judy Schuler (TX) *Room: Huntington*	Professional Development Gwen Hacker (KY) *Room: Laguna*	Archives & History Lisa Deneen (OR) *Room: Monarch*

SUNDAY, AUGUST 11, 2024

(Business Casual Attire)

7:30 am – 9:00 am	Registration & Liaison Activity *Napa A/B*	
8:30 am – 10:15 am	Contract/Cooperative Agreement Stephen Rudnick (OK) *Room: Napa C*	APP/OJT Tara Monk (TX) *Room: Monarch*
9:00 am – 10:00 am	New Member Orientation Gwen Hacker (KY) *Room: Huntington*	Bill Schroeder (OH)
10:00 am – 10:30 am	BREAK *Room: Napa A/B*	

SUNDAY, AUGUST 11, 2024

10:30 am – 12:00 pm	IHL/NCD David Salgado (TX) *Room: Napa C*	Flight Deb O'Neill (WSAC) *Room: Monarch*	Automation & Technology Melissa Triplett (OH) *Room: Huntington*	
12:00 pm – 1:00 pm	LUNCH (on your own)			
1:00 pm – 3:00 pm	Legislative Joseph Wescott (NC) *Room: Napa C*	Communications Lily Snyder (GA) *Room: Huntington*	Military Transition Assistance Torrence Joseph (LA) *Room: Monarch*	
3:00 pm – 3:15 pm	BREAK *Room: Napa A/B*			
3:15 pm – 4:45 pm	Region Meetings			
	West Kathy Snyder (NM) *Room: Monarch*	South Lily Snyder (GA) *Room: Napa C*	East Everette Jackson (MD) *Room: Laguna*	Central Ed Godfrey (MN) *Room: Huntington*
4:45 pm – 5:00 pm	BREAK			
5:00 pm – 6:00 pm	Executive Board Meeting Frank Myers, NASAA President (SC) *Room: Huntington*			
6:30 pm – 8:30 pm	President's Reception Frank Myers, NASAA President (SC) *Room: Napa A/B*			

MONDAY, AUGUST 12, 2024

Napa C/D
(Business Attire)

7:00 am – 8:15 am	Registration & Liaison Activity *Napa A/B*	
8:15 am – 8:45 am	Opening Ceremony	Frank Myers (SC) NASAA President
	Presentation of the Colors	Nellis Air Force Base Honor Guard
	Pledge of Allegiance	Robert Kohutek (UT)
	Invocation and Moment of Silence	Cleo Wallace (LA)
	Remarks Military Acknowledgement	Frank Myers (SC) NASAA President
	Message from Communications	Lily Snyder (GA)
	Welcome Messages	Kathy Snyder (NM) Cheryl Iannello (CA) Kelly Wuest (NV)

MONDAY, AUGUST 12, 2024

8:45 am -9:15am	Keynote Address	Commissioner Sharon Frederick Vice Chair of Commission on Postsecondary Education
9:15 am – 10:15 am	Education Service Update with Q&A	Joseph Garcia Executive Director, VBA Education Service
10:15 am – 10:30 am	BREAK- NASAA Group Photo *Napa A/B*	
10:30 am – 11:30 am	Cooperative Agreement Updates	Janice Fisher (USDVA) Stephen Rudnick (OK)
11:30 am – 12:00 pm	NASAA General Session 1 Nomination of Officers (NASAA Members Only)	Dan Wellman (IL) NASAA Past President
12:00 pm – 1:15 pm	LUNCH (on your own) / Past President's Lunch	Dan Wellman (IL)
1:15 pm – 2:30 pm	Supervisory Visits and RBS FY24 Updates	Crystal Standifer (SC) Shane Ferrebee (CA) Michael Marks (USDVA) Janice Fisher (USDVA) Michele Mendola (USDVA)
2:30 pm – 3:30 pm	School Certifying Official Panel	Moderator: Rebecca Ryan (RI) Dr. Jan Del Signore (NAVPA) Andrea Wheeler (AVECO) Jason Garcia (WAVES) Joe Rasmussen (Big 10 Alliance)
3:30 pm - 3:50 pm	BREAK *Napa A/B*	
3:50 pm – 4:50 pm	Study Abroad and Foreign Approvals	Cinda Quattrini (USDVA)

TUESDAY, AUGUST 13, 2024

Napa C/D
(Business Attire)

7:00 am – 8:30 am	Liaison Activity *Napa A/B*	
8:30 am – 9:00 am	NASAA General Session 2 Election of Officers Regional Officer Elections (NASAA Members Only)	Dan Wellman (IL) NASAA Past President
9:00 am – 10:15 am	NASAA Business Meeting (NASAA Members Only) Committee Report Outs (schedule on page 6)	Frank Myers (SC) NASAA President Committee Chairs
10:15 am – 10:30 am	BREAK *Napa A/B*	

TUESDAY, AUGUST 13, 2024

10:30 am – 11:45 am	Committee Report Outs (Members Only)	Committee Chairs
11:45 am – 12:00 pm	Announcement of Elected Officers (NASAA Members Only)	
12:00 pm – 1:15 pm	LUNCH (on your own)	
1:15 pm – 2:15 pm	NASAA General Session 3 Open Discussion (NASAA Members Only)	Frank Myers (SC)
2:15 pm – 3:15 pm	Legislative Panel	Moderator: Dr. Joseph Wescott (NC) Kelsey Baron (S-VAC) Halle Sarkisian (H-VAC) Kevin O'Neill (American Legion) Tammy Barlett (SVA) Dr. Jan Del Signore (NAVPA)
3:15 pm – 3:30 pm	BREAK *Napa A/B*	
3:30 pm – 4:45 pm	Apprenticeship/OJT Panel	Tara Monk (TX) Torrence Joseph (LA) Dr. Ed Godfrey (MN) Tim Fisher (WY) Janice Fisher (USDVA)
6:30 pm – 7:00 pm	Reception *Napa A/B*	
7:00 pm – 9:30 pm	Awards Ceremony and Banquet *Napa A/B*	

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 14, 2024

Napa D (Business Casual Attire)

8:00 am – 11:00 am	Executive Board Meeting Elected Officers and Committee Chairs	President Elect

THURSDAY, AUGUST 15, 2024

Travel Day for those members who need to travel to the East Coast, etc.

COMMITTEE REPORT SCHEDULE/CONTACT INFO (subject to change)

9:00 am – 9:15 am	Regional VP Report Outs/New Member Introductions	Regional Vice Presidents
9:15 am – 9:25 am	Treasurer's Report/Financial Secretary's Report	Tramaine Carroll-Payne (VA) Tramaine.Carroll-Payne@dvs.virginia.gov Chris Garcia (TX) chris.garcia@tvc.texas.gov
9:25 am – 9:40 am	Legislative	Dr. Joseph Wescott (NC) Joseph.Wescott@milvets.nc.gov
9:40 am – 9:50 am	IHL & NCD	David Salgado (TX) david.salgado@tvc.texas.gov
9:50 am – 10:00 am	Apprenticeship and OJT	Tara Monk (TX) tara.monk@tvc.texas.gov
10:00 am – 10:15 am	Contract/Cooperative Agreement	Stephen Rudnick (OK) Stephen.Rudnick@odva.ok.gov
10:30 am – 10:40 am	Flight	Deb O'Neill (WSAC) debbieo@wsac.wa.gov
10:40 am – 10:45 am	Military Transition Assistance	Torrence Joseph (LA) torrence.joseph@la.gov
10:45 am – 10:50 am	Professional Development	Gwen Hacker (KY) gwen.hacker@kctcs.edu
10:50 am – 10:55 am	Audit	James Henley (MO) James.Henley@dese.mo.gov
10:55 am – 11:00 am	Automation & Technology	Melissa Triplett (OH) melissa.triplett@dvs.ohio.gov
11:00 am – 11:05 am	Communications	Lily Snyder (GA) saals@vs.state.ga.us
11:05 am – 11:15 am	Conference Planning	Rebecca Ryan (RI) Rebecca.Ryan@riopc.edu
11:15 am -11:20 am	Honors, Awards, Membership & Alumni	Judy Schuler (TX) judy.schuler@tvc.texas.gov
11:20 am – 11:25 am	Archives and History	Lisa Deneen (OR) lisa.deneen@odva.oregon.gov
11:25 am – 11:30 am	JPRG	Rebecca Ryan (RI) Rebecca.Ryan@riopc.edu
11:30 am – 11:45 am	Constitution & By Laws	Andrew Martin (WI) Andrew.Martin1@dva.wisconsin.gov

PRESENTER BIOS

Tammy Barlet, Vice President of Government Affairs, Student Veterans of America

Tammy Barlet is Vice President of Government Affairs for Student Veterans of America.

She served eight years in the United States Coast Guard as an Operation Specialist Third Class Petty Officer. In 1998, she patrolled the Persian Gulf on the USCGC Chase (WHEC-718) for Military Interdiction Operations (MIO). During this patrol, USCGC Chase diverted four vessels in violation of United Nations Sanctions against Iraq, interdicted 1,527,740 gallons of fuel oil, and conducted eighty-six gunnery exercises. Her last duty station was the Vessel Traffic Service Houston/Galveston. She was awarded the Coast Guard Achievement Medal for de-escalating an incident that could quickly have become a Homeland Security Threat.

After returning home to Pennsylvania, Tammy was certified as a sterile compounding pharmacy technician and worked in the Lehigh Valley area for ten years.

Tammy holds a Master's in Public Health from George Washington University, Washington, D.C., and a Bachelor's in Public Health from Temple University in Philadelphia, PA. While pursuing her studies, Ms. Barlet fulfilled her MPH practicum requirements at Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society as a State Policy Intern and The Mission Continues fellowship as a Policy Associate at Student Veterans of America. She received the Distinguished Undergraduate Internship Award from the College of Public Health at Temple University for her work during her internship in Alaska. In 2021, Tammy was awarded Temple University's Public Health Alumni award for her advocacy work to ensure veterans receive timely, high-quality health care.

As a 2019 VFW-SVA Legislative Fellow, Ms. Barlet's proposal revolved around oral health as preventative care for the veteran population. The VFW used her research as a part of the written testimony for the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Health legislative hearing later that year.

To recognize Tammy's contribution to enhancing the lives of other veterans, service members, families, and caregivers, she has been named one of VA's Center for Women Veterans 2023 Women Veteran Trailblazers.

Ms. Barlet's knowledge and expertise in public health, higher education, and VA led her to testify before the House Veterans Affairs Committee and the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee on mental health, preventative care, reproductive health, women veterans, and education services.

Tammy resides in Maryland and enjoys quilting, kayaking, hiking, biking, and geocaching.

Kelsey Baron, Senior Benefits and Defense Policy Advisor, Ranking Member Jerry Moran (R-KS), Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs

Kelsey Baron has been with the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs since January 2020. She leads the Committee's benefits portfolio with a specific focus on military and veteran education, VA and DOD dual beneficiaries, compensation and pension benefits, survivor benefits, insurance, transition to civilian life matters, VA home loan benefits, accountability/labor issues at VA and veteran employment opportunities, including SCRA and USERRA protections for National Guard and Reservists. She is also the Committee's policy advisor on defense-related issues as well as the annual National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). Previously, she served as Senator

James Lankford's (R-OK) Military and Veterans Legislative Assistant and advised him on military and veteran policy as well as Defense and MilCon/VA provisions in his role on the Senate Appropriations Committee. Prior to her work in the Senate, she served on the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs (HVAC) as a Professional Staff Member on the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity. On HVAC, she focused on oversight and legislation relating to improving veterans' education and vocational rehabilitation benefits, opportunities for veteran owned small businesses, veterans' employment, the Transition Assistance Program, VA's Loan Guaranty Program, and accountability for all VA employees. She has worked on various pieces of legislation that have been signed into law, including provisions related to VA accountability, veterans education and compensation benefits, transition assistance improvements, and several components of the NDAA. Kelsey graduated in 2012 from Auburn University in Auburn, AL, with a Political Science degree with a focus in International Relations. She currently resides in Washington, D.C. Kelsey got her passion for military and veterans' issues from her parents. Her mom served in the Navy for over 30 years, retiring as a Navy Nurse Corps Captain, and her dad recently retired from the Merchant Marines after two decades as a captain and after serving a decade in the Navy.

Dr. Jan Del Signore, President, National Association of Veterans' Program Administrators

Dr. Jan Del Signore presently serves as the Associate Vice Chancellor of Military Affairs at Keiser University, and is a strong advocate for veterans' educational benefits. Dr. Del Signore is the current President for the National Association of Veterans' Program Administrators (NAVPA), Board member with the Florida Association of Veteran Education Specialists (FAVES) and served as President for the Florida Advisory Council for Military Education (FL-ACME). She serves on numerous military connected committees and councils. She is a Gulf War veteran and recipient of many military honors and distinctions. While serving her country, she became a military instructor for the Community College of the Air Force and achieved the status of Master Instructor.

Shane Ferrebee, Senior Education Specialist, California State Approving Agency

Shane Ferrebee currently serves as a Senior Education Specialist for the California State Approving Agency for Veterans Education (CSAAVE). Shane has been employed within CSAAVE for nine years. Prior to his employment with the State of California, Shane worked for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Education Services for ten years. In addition to his work on the RBS Special Committee, Shane also served as Vice Chair of the Contract/Cooperative Agreement Committee this past year.

Janice Fisher, Chief, Agreements & Federal Programs, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Janice Fisher grew up in Niagara Falls, NY and received a Bachelor of Arts degree from State University of New York at Buffalo, Magna Cum Laude. She had an extensive Human Services career before beginning with VA at the Buffalo RPO as an Education Case Manager in 2001. Janice was promoted to Management and Program Analyst at VA Central Office in 2005 and moved to DC locality. She received a promotion to Chief, Contract Management Team in 2008 (name change of team to Agreements & Federal Programs several years ago). She lives in Pasadena, MD with her husband Bill; they have three children and four grandchildren. Janice enjoys reading, traveling, camping and watching suspenseful series like Jack Reacher and most recently Yellowstone in free time.

Tim Fisher, Director, Wyoming State Approving Agency

Tim is a proud veteran of the United States Air Force, first enlisting as a high school senior in 1985 into the delayed enlistment program, off to basic training upon completing high school in 1986, and retiring in 2010 after a 24-year career in the law enforcement, medical and recruiting fields. Upon retirement, he began to embark on his next journey to continue pursuing his passion of helping Veterans reach their educational goals leading

them to rewarding careers following their honorable service to our Nation. To meet this goal, and after graduating from the University of Northern Colorado with a master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling, he worked for the Veterans' Benefits Administration until early 2012 as a vocational rehabilitation counselor with the Integrated Disability Evaluation System for Wounded Warriors at Ft. Carson, Colo. Moving back to Wyoming in spring 2012, an opportunity to work for the Wyoming SAA came available, and since then, Tim has been active in NASAA first as Vice Chair for the Flight Committee and then chair of the OJT/APP committee during the period of the VALOR Act implementation.

Commissioner Sharon Frederick, Vice-Chair of Commission on Postsecondary Education

Sharon Frederick has served on the Commission on Postsecondary Education since November 29, 2012, in addition to her election as Vice-Chairman. In accordance with legislation passed by Nevada Assembly Bill 526, she was appointed as the first Veterans Commissioner representing Nevada's student veteran population.

Commissioner Frederick is involved with the Veterans of Foreign Wars, currently serving as President for the Stephen P. Gibbs VFW Auxiliary #12198. In addition, she is VFW Department of Nevada Auxiliary hospital program chairman. She is the proud owner/handler of K9 Asta and K9 Kane, staff hospital therapy dogs at VA Southern Nevada and the lead canine team at this medical facility for veterans. Asta is a white Pitpoo (Pitbull/Poodle) and Kane is a tan Aussiehuahua (Australian Cattle Dog/Chihuahua). Both dogs are four years young.

Commissioner Frederick is the widow of Arthur Eugene "Gene" Frederick, United States Navy.

Jason Garcia, President, Western Association of Veterans Education Specialists

Jason Garcia is a U.S. Army retiree and has worked in Military/Veteran education services since 2016. Jason's professional experience includes Education Advisor, Veterans Affairs ECSS and ELR, and VA compliance manager for a non college degree school. His current role is Associate Director of SCOs at National University. Jason's passion is helping Veterans achieve their educational goals; guiding students to enhance their quality of life through higher education and training. He strongly believes in the idea that education is the great equalizer, and strives to be a positive example- Jason proudly holds a certificate in Human Resource Management, Bachelor's in Management, and Master of Business Administration (MBA) from Herzing University.

Joseph Garcia, Executive Director, Education Service, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Joseph Garcia was appointed as Executive Director of Education Service on August 1, 2022. He previously served in the higher education sector as a Vice President at William Jewell College in Missouri, Empire State College in New York, and The Citadel: Military College of South Carolina. He served in Senior Executive Service (SES) positions at Department of Homeland Security (DHS)/FEMA and at the US Department of Agriculture (USDA)/Food Safety Inspection Service. He also worked in the private and nonprofit sectors in Washington, DC. Garcia spent 28 years in the Air Force, including tours at the Pentagon, Air Force Academy, Germany and South Korea, and a Middle East deployment. He taught leadership courses at the Air Force Academy and The Citadel and has authored four leadership books. Among his awards are Male Boss of the Year from the Federal Woman's Program, CFO of the Year from the Kansas City Business Journal, and a superior mission achievement award from DHS.

Mr. Garcia holds an Executive Master's in Leadership from Georgetown University, a Master's in Business Administration from the University of Central Oklahoma, and a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from the University of Arizona.

Dr. Ed Godfrey, Minnesota State Approving Agency

Dr. Edward 'Ed' Godfrey has worked for the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs for 7 years, 6 of which have been with the State Approving Agency. He is also an administrator for the Minnesota GI Bill®. Prior to MDVA, Ed spent entirely too long in college. As an undergraduate at Gustavus Adolphus College in Minnesota, he double majored in Physics and Religious Studies with a minor in Philosophy. He pursued his graduate studies at Temple University in Philadelphia where he studied Japanese and Indian Buddhism, Sāṃkhya/Yoga philosophy, and the depth psychology of Carl Jung. During this time, he taught 28 college courses in Religious Studies at Temple University and La Salle University, and one study abroad Yoga course in India. Somewhere in there he joined the Army Reserve with the Army Military Police Corps. Signing up for "one weekend a month, two weeks a year" under the Clinton Administration, he ended up getting deployed for nearly three years. '99-'00 he spent in Germany conducting garrison law enforcement (backfilling for the Active Duty MPs that went to Bosnia/Kosovo), and '03-'04 he spent in Iraq conducting convoy escorts and enemy prisoner of war operations. Now working for Minnesota SAA, he finds these two seemingly disparate threads of his life—higher education and military service—coming back to nestle together almost poetically. With the SAA, he has found himself compulsively drawn to NASAA service.

He currently serves the Central Region Vice President and has served as a National Training Institute Instructor as well as chair of the Apprenticeship/OJT Committee. He currently or has previously served on the Apprenticeship/OJT Committee, the Professional Development Committee, the Flight Committee, the IHL/NCD Committee, and the SAA Jurisdiction Committee. He is also currently serving on the Conference Planning Committee as he prepares to host the NASAA Summer Conference in Minneapolis in 2025!

Torrence Joseph, Educational Program Consultant, Louisiana State Approving Agency

Torrence Joseph is an Educational Program Consultant for the Louisiana Department of Veterans Affairs, State Approving Agency (SAA). The SAA is responsible for ensuring that Veterans and other GI Bill® participants have access to a range of high-quality education and training programs at which to use their GI Bill® benefits. The roles of the SAA include initially approving programs of education for GI Bill® purposes, conducting compliance surveys to ensure that the facility and approved programs are in compliance with policy, conducting supervisory and technical assistance visits, and approving changes to programs approved for GI Bill® benefits.

Torrence has over 20 years in education, earning his Bachelor of Science degree in Environmental Science from Louisiana Tech University, Master's degree from the University of Southern Mississippi in Educational Leadership and currently a doctoral candidate at Brenau University in Gainesville, GA. He has worked in various educational roles, including teacher, disciplinarian, assistant principal, and principal. He has over 20 years served in the U.S. Army and is a member of the Louisiana Army National Guard, where he holds the rank of Major (P). His current assignment is Battalion Executive Officer for the 199th Brigade Support Battalion. He has been deployed to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation New Dawn, as well as in support of COVID-19 response for the city of New Orleans and various hurricanes, most recently Hurricane Ida.

Michael Marks, Chief, Approvals, Compliance & Liaison Team, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Michael Marks is the Chief of Approvals Compliance and Liaison Division overseeing strategically planning, operational and tactical procedures to ensure proper oversight of approved education and training programs.

Michael has had a very successful career at the Veterans Administration since 1999 as a Claims Examiner in Education Division. He has moved through progressively more responsible positions to reach the current position he holds today. During his career, he has served as a Compliance Survey Specialist; Education Liaison Representative for various states; Coach for Education Services Unit and the Work Study Team. Previously, he served as the Chief Education Liaison Officer for the West Region Approvals, Compliance & Liaison Division.

Michael joined the US Army and served from 1988 to 1992. After separation from active duty, he continued his military service with the Army Reserves until retiring in December 2008 at the rank of Master Sergeant.

Michael attended Northeastern State University in Tahlequah, OK graduating cum laude in 1998 with a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration.

Michael, his wife Pauline, and daughter Torea live in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma.

Michele Mendola, Chief Education Liaison Officer, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Michele Mendola began her career with the Department of Veterans Affairs in March 1995, as a Veterans Claims Examiner. Throughout her VA career, she worked as an Education Case Manager, Senior Veterans Claims Examiner, Supervisory Veterans Claims Examiner, and has been the Chief Education Liaison Officer since October 2011. In this role, she is responsible for the oversight of the Central Region's Approval and Compliance activities consisting of 7579 training institutions covering 11 states. The Division is comprised of 42 employees committed to protecting the integrity of the GI Bill®. She appreciates her mission and is proud to provide her very best to our Veterans and their dependents.

Tara Monk, Program Specialist, Texas State Approving Agency

Tara Monk is a Program Specialist with the Texas Veterans Commission (SAA). She is a U.S. Navy veteran who deployed as a Hospital Corpsman with Naval Mobile Construction Battalion (NMCB) 22 in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. After deployment, she earned a Master of Arts degree from the University of North Texas and served as the Director of Student Services and Recruitment for Texas State Technical College's North Texas Campus. Since joining the TX SAA in 2016, Tara completed a Master of Science degree in Higher Education from Texas A&M University-Commerce and began adjunct teaching online freshmen seminar courses with TSTC.

Tara currently serves as the chair of the Apprenticeship/OJT Committee. She is also the South Region representative for the Legislative Committee and a member of the Constitution and By-Laws Committee. She lives in the Dallas area with her husband Les and their teenage son Jacob. She enjoys spending time with family and friends and off-roading in her Jeep Wrangler Rubicon.

Frank Myers, NASAA President, Director, South Carolina State Approving Agency

Frank Myers has worked for the South Carolina SAA as the Program Manager, Assistant Director, and now Director for the past 21 years. Frank graduated from Battery Creek High School located in Beaufort, South Carolina at the age of 17 and enlisted in the United States Army right after high school with his dad having to sign his enlistment papers. Frank is a Desert Storm veteran and retired from the Army in 2002. He was hired with the SC SAA just two days after his retirement from the military.

Frank holds an M.B.A. from Saint Leo University, a B.A. from Excelsior College and an A.S. from Rockland Community College.

Prior to his election as President, Frank served as NASAA treasurer from 2012-2022. He has held the office of NASAA Contract Committee Chair and Vice Chair and served as a member of the Conference Planning, Honors and Awards and Professional Development Committees. He has also served on 12 JPRG's with NASAA. He is the recipient of two NASAA Presidential Awards, two NASAA Star Awards, and multiple Certificates of Appreciation.

Kevin O'Neil, Senior Policy Associate, American Legion

Kevin O'Neil is a Senior Policy Associate for The American Legion's Veterans Employment and Education Division in Washington, D.C. He is a U.S. Air Force veteran who served eight years at military installations across the globe. He was abroad for more than half of his military career and carried out airfield operations in various capacities, including anti-terrorism and humanitarian operations. After his service, Mr. O'Neil used the Post-9/11 GI Bill to pursue his master's degree from Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service. Mr. O'Neil also received his bachelor's degree—with honors—in international relations from the University of San Diego.

In his role at The American Legion's National Headquarters in Washington, D.C., he advocates for education and employment opportunities on behalf of servicemembers, veterans, and their families. In addition, he works with federal, state, and local stakeholders to increase licensing and credentialing opportunities for the military connected community. Moreover, he prepares congressional testimony before Congress and works with the Department of Veterans Affairs, Department of Defense, and Department of Labor to improve transition benefits for our nation's servicemembers.

Cinda Quattrini, Chief, DGIB Policy and Procedures Team, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Cinda Quattrini began working for VA as an Education File Clerk in 1995. Over the years, she worked as a Veterans Claims Examiner (VCE), Sr. VCE and Claims Processing Supervisor. For more than 10 years, Cinda served as Education Liaison Representative (ELR) for schools in New York and Buffalo AC&L region. After joining Education Service in 2019 as a Management Analyst on the Procedures team, she now serves as Chief of the DGIB Policy and Procedures team in VACO.

She was an adult student and graduate of the State of New York University at Brockport with a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Management. Cinda's husband, daughter and son are Navy Veterans. Each used their VA EDU benefits to further their careers.

Joe Rasmussen, Director, University Veterans' Services at University of Wisconsin-Madison

Joe Rasmussen is an experienced leader in higher education with military-connected students. He has chaired workgroups, provided consolation services, testified as an expert witness to Congress, and directs a staff supporting military-connected students at Wisconsin's flagship intuition. His current work is focused on professionalizing military-connected student work, advocating for changes to better support the current military-connected student, and increasing the number of military and veteran students enrolling in high quality educational experiences.

Stephen Rudnick, State Approving Officer, Oklahoma State Approving Agency

Stephen Rudnick serves in the role of a State Approving Officer with the Oklahoma Department of Veterans Affairs State Approving Agency (ODVA SAA). Mr. Rudnick has served with ODVA SAA since it began operations in 2019 and served in the same capacity with the Oklahoma State Accrediting Agency (OKSAA) from 2017, until its sunset in 2019. During his time with ODVA SAA and OKSAA, Mr. Rudnick has strived to ease workloads, simplify challenging processes, and foster better communication between SAA, the VA, and the Veterans education community. Mr. Rudnick provides frequent training presentations to schools and professional organizations including Oklahoma Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (OASFAA), Oklahoma Veteran Education Specialist Association (OVESA), National Association of Veterans' Program Administrators (NAVPA) and others.

Prior to his role in SAA, Mr. Rudnick was a School Certifying Official at the University of Oklahoma – Outreach, where he served students in online programs and at campuses worldwide. Mr. Rudnick brings with him broad

experience in higher education, technology & trade, private enterprise, and volunteerism. He enjoys a scholarly interest in the laws, regulations, and the policies and procedures that govern the administration of VA education benefits. Mr. Rudnick prides himself in being part of a community of Veteran's Education Specialists and is dedicated to serving School Officials.

When he isn't focused on VA Education, Mr. Rudnick spends his time providing a free youth archery program; being the PTA President's first Gentlemen and Watch D.O.G.s coordinator at his children's school; volunteering at Kerr Scout Ranch; attending his children's dance and Special Olympics competitions; and napping.

Rebecca Ryan, NASAA Vice President, Director, Rhode Island State Approving Agency

Rebecca was hired as the first full time SAA Director in Rhode Island in 2013 and her present title is Director of Compliance and Student Protection for the RI Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner. She is proud to have developed an active and engaged SAA in the smallest state, even serving as the host for the Summer Business and Training Meeting in 2017. Over the years, Rebecca has served as member of the Archives and History Committee, Vice Chair of the Contract/Cooperative Agreement Committee, Alternate Vice President and Vice President for the East Region. As the NASAA Vice President, she currently serves as Chair of the Conference Planning Committee and the JPRG Committee and is a National Training Institute Faculty Member. She is also a member of the IHL/NCD Committee, the Contract/Cooperative Agreement Committee and the Professional Development Committee. She is the recipient of multiple Certificates of Appreciation, NASAA Star Awards and a NASAA President's Award.

Prior to joining the SAA, Rebecca spent several years working as a certifying official at Johnson & Wales University. She has a B.A. in History and American Studies and an M.A. in American and Modern European History from Providence College. She is a lifelong Rhode Island resident and most enjoys spending time with her family.

Halle Sarkisian, Legislative Assistant, House Committee on Veterans Affairs

Halle currently works as a Legislative Assistant for the Economic Opportunity Subcommittee on the Committee on Veterans Affairs. At the office, her duties mainly include administrative, legislative, and research support for the subcommittee. Halle serve as a communication line between VSOs, other Congressional office members, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and the Committee. She is grateful for the opportunity to give back to those who have dedicated themselves to safeguarding our freedoms. Before joining the public sector, she completed her undergraduate and graduate degrees in Diplomacy and Global Politics at Miami University. Halle completed the Wilson Center Foreign Policy Fellowship Program, the Wilson Center AI Fellowship Program, and the Jamestown Young Professionals Program and believes that these fellowships have shaped her into a well-rounded leader with a deep understanding of national security policy. They have provided invaluable opportunities to build meaningful relationships and cultivate innovative ideas. She is excited to continue her journey toward becoming an expert in this field and making a positive impact on the world.

Crystal Standifer, Program Coordinator, South Carolina State Approving Agency

Crystal Standifer joined the South Carolina SAA as a Program Coordinator in December of 2021. Prior to joining the SAA, she served her country for 22 years in the United States Air Force as an Education and Training Manager. Her final active duty assignment was with the 388th Fighter Wing, Hill Air Force Base, Utah where she was the F-35 Maintenance Training Superintendent. She currently serves as Chair of the RBS Special Committee. She has a M.A. in Executive Leadership, B.A. in Management and two A.S. degrees. She resides in South Carolina with her husband, an Air Force veteran, and is the mother of two adult sons.

Dan Wellman, Director, Illinois State Approving Agency

Dan Wellman serves as the Administrator of the Veterans Education and Training Section at the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs. He has worked at the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs since July 1997. As the Administrator of the Veterans Education and Training Section, a position he has served in since 2013, he oversees the State Approving Agency, along with the Illinois Deceased, Disabled, and MIA-POW Veterans' Dependents Scholarship and Grant. Wellman retired from the Illinois Army National Guard in August 2007. He has a bachelor's degree in history and political science from Western Illinois University and a master's degree in history from the University of Illinois-Springfield. Wellman is a member of the Military Order of the Purple Heart, Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Legion, and Disabled American Veterans. Wellman is currently serving as the Senior Vice Commander of the Illinois Military Order of the Purple Heart. He was President of the National Association of State Approving Agencies from 2015 to 2017.

Dr. Joseph Wescott, Legislative Director, National Association of State Approving Agencies

Joseph W. Wescott II (Joe) is the Legislative Director for the National Association of State Approving Agencies. He also serves as the Legislative Liaison in the office of the Secretary of the North Carolina Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (NC DMVA). Previously, he served two terms on the Department of Veteran's Affairs (VA) Advisory Committee on Education, and he has served as NASAA President, Vice President and Legislative Director.

Wescott was Executive Director of the North Carolina State Approving Agency (NCSAA) for almost a decade, an agency he now supervises in his role as NC DMVA Legislative Liaison. Prior to his service at the NCSAA, Wescott served in various leadership roles in higher education including director of the office of Planning, Policy and Evaluation at Brunswick Community College, federal relations analyst/government relations representative for Duke University and an adjunct instructor at several colleges and professional organizations.

Dr. Wescott is a veteran, having served on active duty as a combat officer in the US Army. Earlier, he attended Wake Forest University on a four year Army ROTC scholarship, graduating with honors. He holds advanced degrees from Wake Forest University and North Carolina State University, including the doctorate in Higher Education Administration. In addition to other duties, Wescott serves as an Adjunct Professor in the Department of Leadership, Policy, Adult and Higher Education at NC State University. He serves on several national boards including the Council on College and Military Educators and the George W. Bush National Task Force on Higher Education.

Dr. Wescott has written several articles and books on history and higher education topics including veterans' employment and the history of the North Carolina Community College System. Most recently he coauthored two major reports released by the American Legion on online learning and education oversight. In 2010, Dr. Wescott was elected to the North Carolinian Society for service to his home state and in 2013 and to the Honorable Order of Kentucky Colonels for service to the state of Kentucky.

Andrea Wheeler, President, Association of Veterans Education Certifying Officials

Andrea Wheeler currently serves as Regulatory Affairs Sr. Analyst at DeVry University. She's been with AVECO since 2013, but her journey to "regulation nerd" started long before that.

Originally from Milwaukee, Wheeler graduated from Tennessee State University, a historically black college and university (HBCU) with a bachelor's degree in business information systems, and later received her Master of

Science in management and human resource management at the University of Phoenix. After college, she went to work for Walgreens, which eventually took her out of Tennessee and into the Chicagoland area, which she now calls home. After transitioning from the corporate world to higher education, first through a for-profit school and later (after another short stint in the corporate world at Caterpillar) to Harper College in Palatine, IL, and Waubonsee Community College in Sugar Grove, IL.

Her first brush at working with veterans came at Harper College, where she worked with federal work-study students. But student veterans were also coming into her office to ask about their benefits.

GI Bill® is a registered trademark of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). More information about education benefits offered by VA is available at the official U.S. government Web site at https://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Ryan Rishling	Committee Vice Chair	NV
Darlene Bartlett	Committee Member	WA
Susan Beckett	Committee Member	NV
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Cheryl Iannello	Committee Member	CA
Josee Martin	Committee Member	AZ
Andrew Pieper	Committee Member	IL
Kelly Wuest	Committee Member	NV
Dr. Joseph Wescott	Committee Member	NC

Special NASAA Guests

Commissioner Sharon Frederick
Senator Pat Spearman

Southpoint Hotel & Casino

Esmeralda Benton, Catering Manager
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