

JCCC offers services to veterans

Roger Patterson and Tara Moseman, work-study students, visit with Kena Zumalt, Veterans Administration adviser.

JCCC was recently named to the 2010 list of Military Friendly Schools by GI Jobs, a magazine for military transition. The list honors the top 15 percent of colleges, universities and trade schools that are doing the most to serve America's veterans.

To this end, JCCC has in place a network to assist veterans, starting with the Veterans Services office, staffed full time since July 2008 by Kena Zumalt, Veterans Administration adviser. Zumalt serves as JCCC's point of contact for veterans (which includes all active, reserve and retired military as well as dependents). As the VA certifying official, Zumalt's primary responsibility is to administrate the enrollment certification process of veterans to the Veterans Administration; she is assisted by two work-study students who are veterans. Almost all JCCC programs are approved for GI Bill certification, including some certificate programs in Continuing Education.

JCCC is a member of the Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges, a consortium of colleges and universities accredited for service members and their adult dependent family members. The college is committed to evaluating and awarding academic credit for military training and experience, transfer course work from other institutions and awarding credit for nationally recognized testing programs. That is where Paula Costello, Testing Center specialist, comes into the network, helping veterans with evaluation of prior military transcripts. Two counselors, Randall Dawson and Phyllis Goldberg, are designated to work with veterans, and Carolyn Foster, counselor, Career Services, assists with career goals.

Paul Kyle, dean of Student Services, heads a veterans advisory team comprised of faculty and staff campuswide.

"This team is in its infancy," Kyle said. "We want to do even more to respond to the needs of veterans."

Keeping abreast of new initiatives and benefits is sometimes complicated for service members as they make the transition from active to veteran status. JCCC is serving as a pilot in a new search engine, VetLink, which will allow veterans to enter their era of service and ZIP code in order to obtain a list of services in their area – including education.

"This is an exciting time to be serving veterans because there is so much we can do to assist this group of Americans," Zumalt said.

The newest education benefit is the Post-9/11 GI Bill, effective Aug. 1 and designed for service members and veterans who have qualifying active duty service since Sept. 11, 2001. Billed "as the most comprehensive education benefit package since the original GI Bill of 1944," the Post-9/11 GI Bill can pay the cost of tuition and fees, not to exceed the most expensive in-state undergraduate tuition at a public institution, monthly housing allowance and a book stipend of up to \$1,000 per year.

Zumalt says veterans have to decide which benefits are most advantageous to use first if they have eligibility for more than one benefit. It may be they want to save the Post-9/11 GI Bill benefit to further their education at a more expensive institution. Zumalt can assist with that decision as well as a new tool on the Veterans Administration Web site, "Which Benefit is Best for Me?"

This semester, the college has awarded 30 JCCC Veterans



Tara Moseman, specialist, National Guard, and Roger Patterson, former U.S. Marine, work-study students in the Veterans Services office, say having earned their education benefits by serving in the military makes them appreciate the opportunity to obtain an education.

Scholarships, given to eligible veterans who attend JCCC within six months of discharge.

“I admire our military students. They deserve excellence in return for their service to our country,” Zumalt said. “These are people with integrity.”

In honor of JCCC faculty, staff and students who have served in the military at any time, the veterans advisory team has planned a week of events around Veterans Day.

- **Monday, Nov. 9** – Free drink coupons for JCCC Dining Services will be distributed to veterans and active military members at the Veterans Services office, Student Success Center and Student Information Desk.
- **Tuesday, Nov. 10** – Student veterans reception from 12:30-1:30 p.m. in the Corner Lounge of the Commons Building.
- **Wednesday, Nov. 11** – Dr. Joe Law, an expert in post-traumatic stress disorder and Army combat veteran, will speak at 10-11:30 a.m. in the Hudson Auditorium, Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art. The event is free and open to the public.

There will be a luncheon for JCCC faculty and staff veterans at noon in the Capitol Federal Conference Center.

Taps will be played at 11:11 a.m. on the hill in the Commons Courtyard.

Law will also do a presentation from 1:30-4:30 p.m. in the Capitol Federal Conference Center for faculty and administrators who work with veterans.

- **Thursday, Nov. 12** – Continuous showing of documentary filmmaker Larry Cappetto’s *Lest They Be Forgotten* series, as seen on PBS, from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. in the Craig Community Auditorium. Documentaries are free and open to the public.
- **Friday, Nov. 13** – The JCCC jazz ensemble will perform swing band music from 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. in the north side of the Commons dining room.

For more information regarding Veterans Services or veteran week events, call 913-469-8500, ext. 3924. 

