



## *News Release*

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## **Century Named a Military Friendly School for 2010**

Century College has been named a Military Friendly School for 2010 by G.I. Jobs magazine.

Century was honored for its services to veterans, including the establishment of the [Veterans' Center](#) off the West Campus counseling area. Century this semester has about 250 students who are veterans.

Vietnam veteran and National Guard consultant Dr. Ernie Boswell, a psychologist who teaches at Century, said the biggest challenge facing today's veteran student is dealing with feelings of alienation.

“Veterans feel very different because they have experienced things that other students have not,” said Boswell. “When you have been a warrior and experienced the extraordinary things that happen in war, you feel on the outskirts of society. You have issues with distractions and concentration, and you tend to take anti-war remarks very personally. Veterans are more at risk for dropping out of school because they do not believe that their warrior experiences are being validated.”

Boswell said it is important to reach out to veterans. He applauded Century's efforts to establish a veterans' club, veterans' speaker series and Veterans' Day Celebration.

"Veterans want to be thanked for their service, but you don't have to go on and on," said Boswell. "I have been on airplanes, for example, where the pilot announced that servicemen were on board and the passengers applauded. They seem to like that."

Boswell said in the classroom, simply asking for a show of hands of how many students are veterans is often appreciated because veterans need a social support network. They need to connect with other vets.

With an increasing number of people questioning the role of the United States forces in Afghanistan, veterans often feel uncomfortable and alienated. "We have to help vets understand that we live in a world based on the free exchange of ideas," said Boswell. "We have to help them not take people's opposition to the war personally."

Boswell said when he returned from his service with the U.S. 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry in Vietnam and attended California State University Fullerton in 1970, he challenged the anti-war views of his professors and was made to feel that his position was not worthy. "After that, not many people knew I was a vet," said Boswell, who went on to earn his doctorate degree in clinical psychology at Bowling Green State University in Ohio.

Boswell said his service in Vietnam "opened my eyes to a whole different dimension of the world. It taught me how precious and expendable life is." Serving in Vietnam also motivated him to go to college to honor the memory of his friends who died in the war. His service also changed his core values, making him both more cynical and more compassionate.

"I felt a fierce drive to keep moving forward," said Boswell. "I wanted to push through it. Not give up. I felt I could live with failure, but I couldn't live with not trying."

Student veteran adjustment problems can result in disturbed sleep, inability to concentrate and excessive alcohol use.

“The military prepares you to take a tougher path,” said Boswell. “It puts you in touch with your capabilities and your endurance. For example, you might find you can go three days straight with no food and then participate in a running gun battle. I would never want anyone else to have my military experience, but I am glad that I had it. It truly was the worst of times and the best of times.”

Communication with a veteran can be difficult, Boswell said, because he or she may not have the words to explain their military experiences. And well-intentioned people may not have the words to ask about those experiences.

“A veteran can attempt to tell you what it’s like to experience war,” said Boswell. “But you don’t really know what it is until you have been through it. There is a gulf that separates the veteran and the civilian.”

Time and reflection help veterans adjust to the civilian world. “It takes a lot of work to redefine your life’s purpose after being a warrior,” said Boswell. The good news is, veterans are receiving more help these days from the government than they received in the 1970s. “The GI Bill is a wonderful deal,” he said. “It can pay a vet’s tuition, books and housing allowance.”

Boswell said he would like to see more forums that allow veterans to talk about their experiences. “It gives them a point of legitimacy,” he said.

Century’s Veterans’ Center has computers and printers for use by veteran students and it is open from 7:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. on school days. A GI Bill benefits specialist from the Minnesota Department of Veterans’ Affairs, Ray Bohn, comes to Century every other Monday to help vets understand their government benefits. In addition, vet student workers and service learning students provide support and information to fellow veteran students.

The week of Nov. 9, Century will host a Veterans Reorganization Week. Veterans Day is Nov. 11.