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### Advancing Veteran Success in Higher Education: Case Highlights of Vocational Accelerator Programs at Del Mar College, Tarrant County College, and Wake Technical Community College

Zachary S. Huitink  
*Syracuse University*

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# Advancing Veteran Success IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Case Highlights of Vocational Accelerator Programs at Del Mar College,  
 Tarrant County College, and Wake Technical Community College

Zach Huitink | Research Associate



## About the Vocational Accelerator Programs

The vocational accelerator programs at Del Mar College, Tarrant County College, and Wake Technical Community College are a set of workforce development programs focused on delivering vocational education to veterans and transitioning service members. Funded through the Walmart Foundation Vocational Acceleration Grants Program, each school's accelerator program involves partnering with local workforce development organizations, businesses, government agencies, and other stakeholders to equip veterans with high demand vocational skills and connect them with employers actively seeking out those skills. Each program aims to deliver a fast-paced, vocation-specific sequence of instruction and training that prepares veterans for jobs with community employers. Since the training occurs outside the confines and constraints of a traditional two- or four-year degree track, the programs offer veterans an opportunity to quickly acquire new and highly sought-after skills that accelerate their employment.

## Acknowledgments

This report would not have been possible without generous support from the Walmart Foundation, which provided initial funding for each of the depicted programs through its Vocational Acceleration Grants Program. At its core, the report reflects the tremendous effort and dedication of each program's leadership, management staff, instructors, student participants, and partners from government, business, and the nonprofit community. Thank you especially to Mary Afuso, Dara Betz, and colleagues at Del Mar College; Jennifer Hawkins, Jerry Hutyra, and colleagues at Tarrant County College; and Ben Wagoner and colleagues at Wake Technical Community College for providing invaluable insight into each of your program's visions, principles, foundation story, and keys to success. Thank you also to Kathy Cox of the Walmart Foundation for providing guidance, support, and direction regarding the Vocational Acceleration Grants Program, grantee experiences, and the intent of the report from a "big picture" perspective. Thank you to Sarah Ahmadi and Maggie Pollard at Accenture Consulting for being liaisons with each program and providing detailed information on programmatic experiences and achievements. At IVMF, thank you to Nick Armstrong, Beth Kubala, and Rosalinda Maury for their guidance and feedback on report content, organization, and direction, as well as to Kerry Manahan and Dennis Kulis for their outstanding graphic design work.

## About the Author

### ZACH HUITINK

Zach Huitink is a research associate at the Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF) at Syracuse University, and a PhD candidate in the Department of Public Administration and International Affairs at Syracuse University's Maxwell School. He holds an MPP from the James W. Martin School of Public Administration and Policy at the University of Kentucky, and a BA in Business Administration and Economics (double major) from Coe College in Cedar Rapids, IA, where he graduated magna cum laude with departmental honors. Prior to graduate school, Huitink worked as an analyst in the financial services industry, and has previously served as an intern in the policy research group at the Council of State Governments and a volunteer with AmeriCorps VISTA. He maintains an active research agenda concerned with US national security, defense policy, and veterans issues

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## OVERVIEW

Del Mar College, Tarrant County College, and Wake Technical Community College exemplify how institutions committed to advancing veterans employment can leverage external funding to design, develop, and deliver accelerated vocational instruction to veterans and transitioning service members. With support from the Vocational Acceleration Grants Program, a project funded by the Walmart Foundation and led by the Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF), these schools created unique continuing education programs focused on equipping veterans with skills highly sought after by local and regional employers. These case highlights showcase how each program blazed a trail to success. Through an examination of the programs' approaches to recruitment and service delivery, as well as a survey of their achievements to date, the case highlights identify five best practices that could inform other efforts to use vocational acceleration as a means of advancing veterans employment:

- ✓ Pursue a multi-faceted recruitment strategy that leverages both personal- and institutional-level relationships with public, private, and nonprofit partners;
- ✓ Design a program that harnesses existing resources and infrastructure to maximize program enrollment capacity and minimize time required to complete training;
- ✓ Raise program stakeholders' "veterans IQ" by providing tools and knowledge necessary to understand the unique needs veterans bring to the learning environment;
- ✓ Continuously gather data and feedback to tailor training to area employers' needs; and
- ✓ Plan for the future: develop a vision and a plan of action for delivering additional training modules that equip veterans with more high-demand skills.

## THE WALMART FOUNDATION VOCATIONAL ACCELERATION GRANTS PROGRAM

Veterans and transitioning service members have the potential to make a tremendous contribution to the workplace, offering their employers a unique combination of discipline, leadership experience, and unwavering commitment to mission accomplishment. For many employers, hiring a veteran is not only good for families and communities—it's good for business.

Recognizing employers' need for individuals with coveted vocational skills—and the opportunity veterans offer these employers—the Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF), with support from the Walmart Foundation, created the Vocational Acceleration Grants Program ("Vocational Accelerator Grant Program"). Launched in 2013, the purpose of this effort is to seed, cultivate, and provide technical support for a network of workforce development programs focused on delivering vocational education to veterans and transitioning service members. The funding supports programs that equip veterans with high demand vocational skills, and connects them with employers actively seeking out those skills. Each program aims to deliver a fast-paced, vocation-specific sequence of instruction and training that prepares veterans for jobs with community employers. Since the training occurs outside the confines and constraints of a traditional two- or four-year degree track, the programs offer veterans an opportunity to quickly acquire new and highly sought-after skills that accelerate their employment.



# BEST PRACTICES

## FOR DELIVERING ACCELERATED VOCATIONAL INSTRUCTION TO VETERANS AND TRANSITIONING SERVICE MEMBERS



An examination of Del Mar College, Tarrant County College, and Wake Technical Community College vocational accelerator programs points to best practices that may be instructive in the design and implementation of vocational accelerator programs at other workforce development institutions.



### RECRUITING

- ✓ Pursue a multi-faceted recruitment strategy that leverages both personal- and institutional-level relationships with public, private, and nonprofit partners



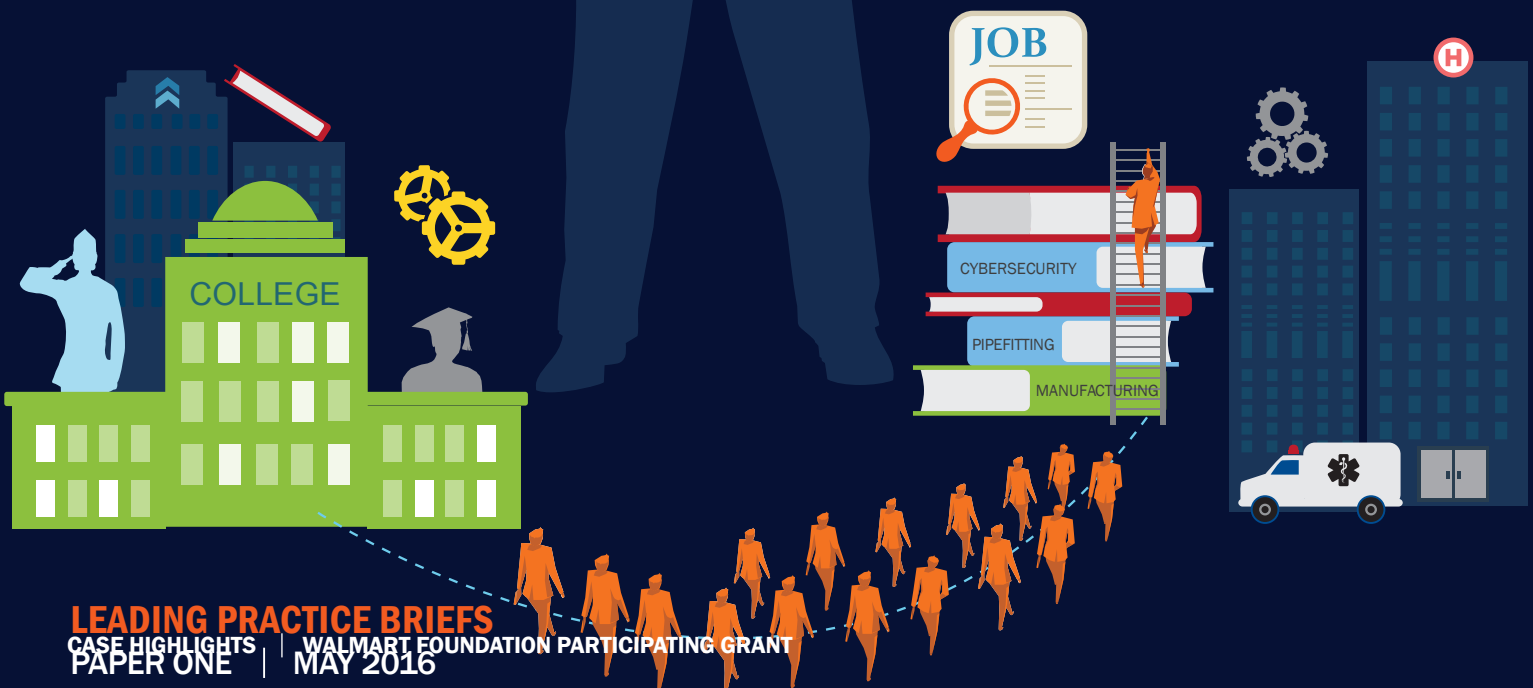
### DELIVERING INSTRUCTION AND TRAINING

- ✓ Design a program that harnesses existing resources and infrastructure to maximize program enrollment capacity and minimize time required to complete training



### GETTING RESULTS: ACHIEVING AND GROWING PROGRAM IMPACT

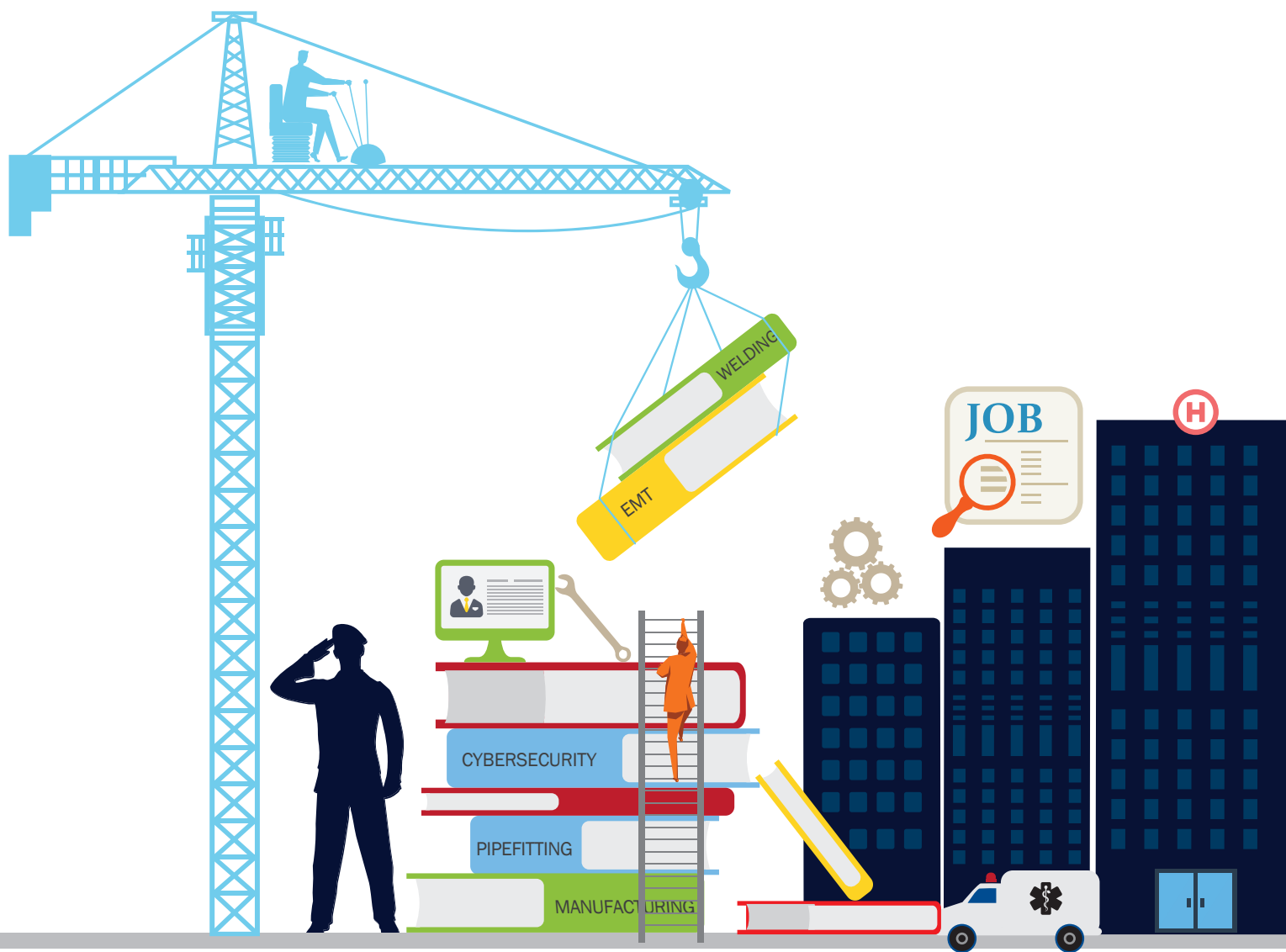
- ✓ Raise program stakeholders' "veterans IQ" by providing tools and knowledge necessary to understand the unique needs veterans bring to the learning environment
- ✓ Continuously gather data and feedback to tailor training to area employers' needs
- ✓ Plan for the future: develop a vision and a plan of action for delivering additional training modules that equip veterans with more high-demand skills.





# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	<b>ii</b>
<b>Case Highlights</b> .....	<b>5</b>
Del Mar College: Pathways with a Purpose.....	6
Tarrant County College: Advancing Veterans Employment through Vocational Acceleration.....	8
Wake Technical Community College: Accelerated Career Transformation Services.....	10
<b>Keys to Success: Best Practices for Delivering Vocational Acceleration Services to Veterans and Transitioning Service Members</b> .....	<b>12</b>











## PATHWAYS WITH A PURPOSE

### Overview of the School and the Program

Del Mar College is a comprehensive community college serving 22,000 students a year across its main campus in Corpus Christie, TX, and the larger Coastal Bend region of southeast Texas. With support from the Vocational Accelerator Grant Program, Del Mar launched Pathways with a Purpose (“Pathways”).

Pathways is a vocational accelerator program that rapidly equips veterans with skills, credentials, and certifications in high demand among local and regional employers, specifically in welding, pipefitting, and emergency response services. The program offers a six-month course in welding/pipefitting and a 35-day course in emergency first response. In its initial run, the program served 170 veterans, both male and female, across a range of ages, ethnicities, and eras of service.



### Recruiting

To recruit veterans to Pathways, Del Mar used an aggressive, multi-pronged recruitment strategy combining formal marketing with informal outreach efforts. Program staff created hard copy marketing materials (e.g.,

pamphlets, fliers) for distribution at area military installations, job fairs, and other venues and events for veterans and transitioning service members, and advertised the program and its offerings on social media. Program staff also leveraged a rich set of pre-existing relationships with civilian and uniformed personnel at area military installations, recruiting centers, and state and local workforce development and veteran services organizations to further spread the word. Collectively, these partners acted as “force multipliers,” significantly increasing the impact and effectiveness of the program’s recruiting efforts.

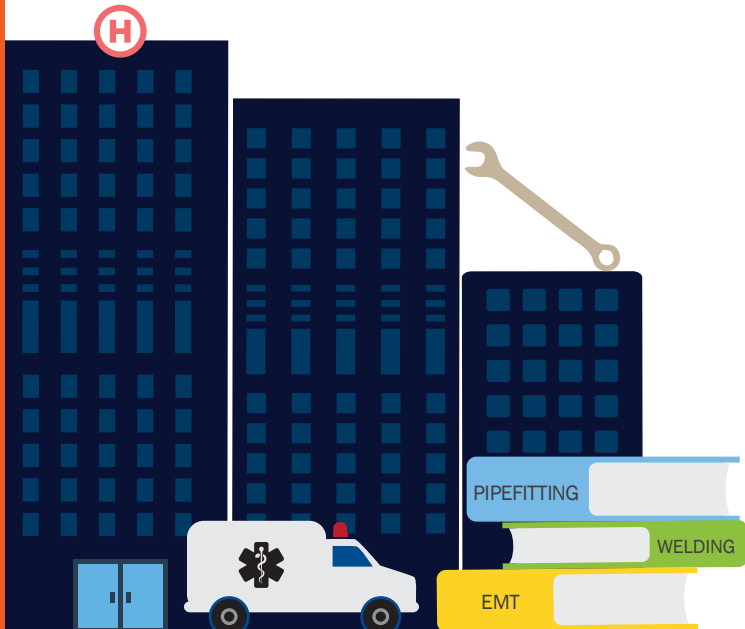


### Delivering Instruction and Training

Building on its recruitment strategy, the architects of Pathways leveraged institutional relationships between Del Mar and its area public, private, and not-for-profit partners to create a unique delivery model centered on accelerated course instruction and hands-on-training aligned closely with the needs of local employers.

In the welding and pipefitting track, Del Mar used a portion of its grant funding to assist Craft Training Center of the Coastal Bend, an accredited construction education provider and long-standing partner of the college, in purchasing a welding simulator that significantly reduced the cost of delivering on-site welding and pipefitting instruction, and increased the number of students who could participate in the training at Craft’s facilities. Combining simulated and hands-on-training allowed Del Mar to open the welding and pipefitting course to more students—since they could work on either the simulator or in a live, hands-on environment instead of just one or the other—and reduced the amount of raw materials required to deliver this instruction exclusively through the hands-on approach (thus reducing the costs of the training). According to program staff, the simulator proved especially helpful in letting veterans work in a hazard-free environment to improve their muscle memory and other mental and physical abilities required to safely, effectively perform welding and pipefitting tasks.

In the emergency response track, Del Mar partnered with First In Rescue, Safety, and Training, LLC (F.I.R.S.T.), a company offering emergency response training to individuals interested in careers as first responders. This partnership was instrumental to Del Mar, since the college currently lacks the infrastructure and resources necessary to provide emergency response instruction on campus, and would otherwise be unable to accommodate students interested in acquiring high-demand first responder skills and credentials. Building on this partnership, Del Mar used its Accelerator Grant funding to buy students training supplies they would typically need to buy on their own. Combined with the partnership, the grant funding helped Del Mar overcome both





its own constraints and constraints faced by students to provide instruction in another high-demand skill area. Going forward, Del Mar will sustain its financial commitment to students by drawing on support from a variety of funding sources, including federal and state education grants, funding from the Del Mar foundation (an area nonprofit committed to civic, cultural, and education-related causes), and additional federal funding secured through collaboration between Del Mar and its partners at the state government level.

To support delivery of the full suite of instruction and training under Pathways, Del Mar also used its grant funding to buy a software product called Veterans on Campus. Developed by Kognito, a company drawing on research in psychology and neuroscience to create software that simulates interactions with unique-needs clients in healthcare and education settings—thus giving healthcare and education professionals an opportunity to hone their interpersonal skills—Veterans on Campus is a software product that helps educational instructors and staff understand how to approach and engage with student veterans. Instructors and staff across the Del Mar Campus used this software to acclimate themselves with, and enhance their knowledge of, different veterans' issues (e.g., program staff report that the software educated instructors and staff on how to recognize different symptoms of PTSD). In essence, the software helped Del Mar instructors and staff develop the “soft skills” required for effective delivery of vocational instruction to their student veterans. College leadership have since directed all faculty and staff campus-wide to complete the software training. The college has yet to complete a large scale data gathering effort on the effectiveness of this training, but has received positive anecdotal feedback and is incorporating it into its training plans.



### Getting Results: Achieving and Growing Program Impact

Results from the program's first delivery period suggest that in Pathways, Del Mar has found a promising formula for leveraging vocational accelerators to advance veterans employment. Among other accomplishments, information submitted in the program's final performance report indicates the following:

- 170 participants enrolled, with 81% completing their entire sequence of instruction, training, and skill development
- 21 participants employed in new jobs, over 75% of whom found jobs within 30 days of completing their training

In addition to these quantitative outcomes, a number of qualitative outcomes further illustrate the effectiveness of the Pathways program. They also speak to the program's potential



for growing and sustaining its impact going forward. For example, by reiterating and bolstering Del Mar's institutional commitment to veterans, the Pathways program deepened the college's relationships with its external partners, including the Corpus Christi Army Depot, Workforce Solutions of the Coastal Bend, the Texas Veterans Commission, and the Texas Workforce Commission. Due in significant part to the initial success of Pathways, the Texas Workforce Commission elected to independently fund additional veterans-focused vocational acceleration programming at Del Mar. Program staff report that they will use these new resources to implement a training and credentialing sequence focused on construction—another of the area's most rapidly growing industries—and that they are also developing a training sequence focused on electroplating. Expansion into these new areas is especially promising, having the potential to grow the scope of Pathways, build new partnerships with the business community, and most importantly, accelerate employment among a larger portion of the area's veteran population.

More broadly, the architects of Pathways report that its success is raising awareness about veterans' issues at Del Mar and in the larger community. They suggest, for instance, that Pathways has provided other veterans-serving offices and staff an opportunity to improve their own impact, by giving them another outlet into which they can plug veterans seeking educational opportunities at the college. Program staff further report that participating in Pathways convinced a handful of veterans that, despite having been out of a school environment for an extended period of time, they are still “college material.” Thus, while the program focuses on vocational training, it may have the unintended benefit of giving veterans considering more schooling the “push” they need to move forward.



## ADVANCING VETERANS EMPLOYMENT THROUGH VOCATIONAL ACCELERATION

### Overview of the School and the Program

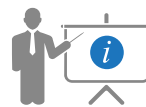
Tarrant County College is the sixth largest community college in Texas, serving over 60,000 students a year at its main campus in Ft. Worth, TX, and the surrounding Tarrant county area. With support from the Vocational Accelerator Grant Program, Tarrant launched the Vocational Acceleration for Military Veterans of Tarrant County Project (“Tarrant Vets”).

Tarrant Vets offers training, certification, and credentialing opportunities in welding, computer numerical controlled (CNC) machining, and advanced composite technology manufacturing. In its initial run, the program served 49 veterans, both male and female, across a range of ages, ethnicities, and eras of service.



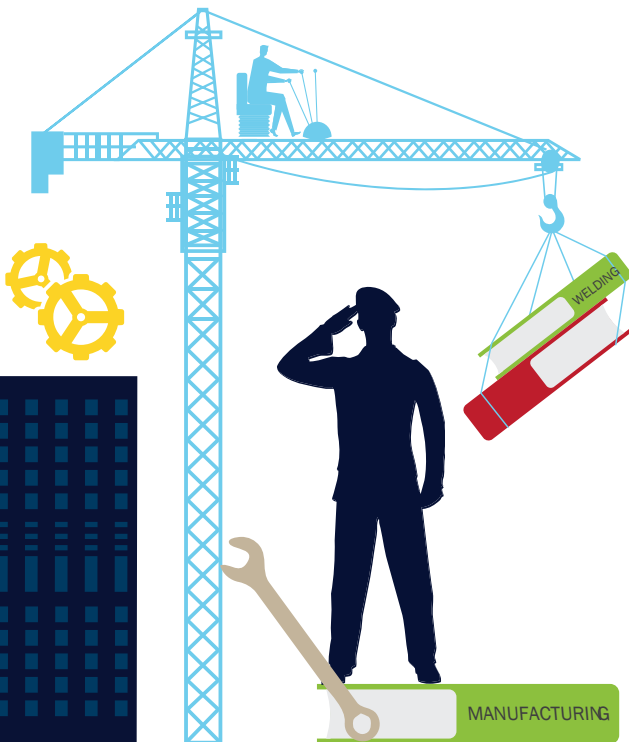
### Recruiting

Tarrant Vets staff relied on a combination of formal marketing and informal outreach efforts to recruit veterans and transitioning service members to their program. On the formal side, staff created a dedicated program website with information about vocational instruction and the program’s various ancillary service offerings, including human resources development, job fairs, connections with other employment and training opportunities (e.g., Boots to Business entrepreneurship training), and referrals to wrap-around services in the Tarrant County area. Staff also used a social media strategy to connect veterans with the website and other sources of information about the program. They complemented these efforts with an informal outreach campaign, reaching out directly to individual veterans on campus and in the surrounding community, attending veterans conferences, and leveraging partnerships with state and local workforce development organizations. Program staff worked particularly closely with the Texas Workforce Commission and the Texas Veterans Services Commission, each of which shared information with its clients about Tarrant Vets and encouraged them to reach out to the program’s managers for more information.



### Delivering Instruction and Training

Across the three vocational tracks, program instruction and training involved a mix of classroom learning and hands-on experience in environments similar to what students would encounter on the job. The college used its own classroom facilities and labs for machining and manufacturing training. It turned to external partners to host students for hands-on training in the welding track, but will use a recently constructed on-campus lab going forward. With the completion of this lab, program staff report that the college will be



able to deliver hands-on training completely on an in-house basis.

Integral to Tarrant Vets was the employment of instructors who were also veterans. Program staff argue this arrangement—veterans teaching veterans—made students more comfortable and more motivated to be engaged in classroom- and lab-based instruction. Indeed, relative to a program with a purely civilian instructor cadre, using a mixed cadre that included both civilian and former military instructors infused Tarrant Vets with a kind of built-in cultural competency civilian-staffed programs could only cultivate through much more time- and resource-intensive orientation efforts.

Also integral to Tarrant Vets was a unique arrangement in which representatives from area employers participated as observers in the hands-on portion of the training, gaining direct insight into student learning and skill development (rather than having to glean this information from interviews, tests, and other tools that do not give as a clear picture of an individual's fit with a particular type of job). According to program staff, this arrangement generated significant enthusiasm among employers, some of which targeted specific students for jobs with their companies. The arrangement also benefitted the program itself, since through observing the training employers could provide feedback to staff and instructors on the relevancy of the curriculum, new features that would make program participants stronger candidates for jobs, and features that were outdated or not relevant to the companies' needs.

As an additional source of value, Tarrant Vets offered a variety of ancillary services like mock interviews and resume writing assistance, as well as workshops on what to expect as new employees and how to make a positive impression and impact from one's first day on the job. The program also provided aid in accessing community-based wrap around services to ensure student veterans received all the external support required to remain in and complete their training sequence. As one of the program's senior managers explained, doing these "little things"—such as providing service referrals, or even just incorporating simple features like an attendance policy—can make a real difference in whether a student completes the program or drops out.



### Getting Results: Achieving and Growing Program Impact

Despite having just completed its initial run and still working to collect data on program enrollees, preliminary results from the Tarrant Vets project are promising. According to information provided in the program's final performance report and comments from program staff:



- 49 students enrolled, with 100% completing their entire sequence of instruction, training, and skill development
- 39 participants newly employed, many within 60 days of completing their training

Qualitative outcomes also point to the success of Tarrant Vets and its potential for growing and sustaining its impact. For example, the program's initial success has facilitated a stronger partnership with the Texas Workforce Commission, which is interested in providing independent support to add additional vocational tracks. The program's success has also motivated the college to more systematically analyze how it can give veterans credit for prior military experience, in order to reduce training time and speed up entry into the local job market. More broadly, staff report that the program has created a deeper appreciation among the entire college community about how important it is to leverage veterans' military skills when creating initiatives to advance their employment. The institution remains strongly committed to this mission, and is working diligently to provide veterans with an enriching educational experience that puts them on the path to a successful career.





# CASE HIGHLIGHT

## Wake Technical Community College



### ACCELERATED CAREER TRANSFORMATION SERVICES

#### Overview of the Program

Wake Tech is North Carolina’s largest community college, serving over 70,000 students a year across its main campus in Raleigh, NC, various offsite learning centers, and online instruction platforms. With support from the Vocational Accelerator Grant Program, Wake Tech launched Accelerated Career Transformation Services (“ACTS”).

The ACTS program offers training, credentialing, and certification opportunities in apartment maintenance, emergency response, cybersecurity, and computer network security. It also offers a suite of ancillary services, including employability workshops, interview preparation materials, peer mentoring, and aid in accessing wrap-around services and community support. In its initial run, ACTS served 63 veterans, both male and female, across a range of ages, ethnicities, and eras of service with emphasis on female veterans 34 and under.



#### Recruiting

Wake Tech used an aggressive, grass roots, boots-on-the-ground strategy to attract veterans and transitioning service members to the ACTS program, relying in particular on a “snowballing” strategy—harnessing knowledge garnered through initial outreach to guide and bolster subsequent outreach. Accordingly, program staff began from the ground up, approaching faculty, administrators, and student veterans on the Wake Tech campus to talk about ACTS, gauge interest in the program, and learn from students and other stakeholders about where best to target recruiting efforts in the broader community. Staff then launched a systematic community-wide recruiting charge. Using insights garnered at Wake Tech, they concentrated their efforts on select veterans clubs and veterans’ services organizations, the state National Guard office, and some of the area’s largest and fastest growing employers to identify potential program participants. Once identified, the staff approached these individuals to both encourage their participation and to learn from them about other veterans who might be interested in enrolling. Staff also encouraged the veterans they approached to “join in” on the recruiting effort and share information about the program with their peers. In this way, they stimulated a kind of independent peer-to-peer information sharing effort that expanded the reach and impact of their direct recruiting activities.



#### Delivering Instruction and Training

In designing and delivering ACTS, staff began with a comprehensive assessment of experience gained in program-relevant military occupational specialties (MOSs). The goal of this assessment was to structure the training in a way that (i) maximized the credit program participants received for prior military experience, (ii) eliminated unnecessary or redundant aspects of training programs, and (iii) minimized the time required to garner new skills, credentials, and certifications. In the certified apartment maintenance technician (CAMT) track, for example, program staff used information about veterans’ prior military experience to offer them opportunities to “test out” of certain components of the training. For the most qualified and experienced participants, staff worked with the National Apartment Association—the professional association overseeing CAMT training and credentialing—to waive the one year apprenticeship that is otherwise a prerequisite for working full-time in this field. These and other streamlining efforts reduced the total training time in the CAMT track from 120 hours to 100 hours. Efforts to streamline other tracks allowed for similar reductions, cutting the cybersecurity training time from 169 hours to 132 hours, and the emergency responder training time from 180 hours to 45 hours.

In addition to streamlined training, ACTS offered a number of



other value-added services and supports. The program used its grant funding to provide veterans with full financial support—eliminating a significant barrier to participation since Wake Tech typically does not offer scholarships for continuing education—and also gave veterans child care assistance (the college plans to sustain these commitments by dedicating resources to a permanent scholarship fund to support continuing education for veterans, and by exploring additional external sources of support, including from the VA). The program required veterans to participate in a human resources (HR) development workshop focused on building resume writing and job search skills, and through an array of partnerships with area employers, the program helped veterans connect directly with companies seeking employees in the skill areas emphasized in the ACTS curriculum. Toward this end, program staff have been using job placement data, employer feedback, and up-to-date knowledge of skills in demand in the local economy to continuously fine-tune ACTS’s curriculum and instruction sequences. To acclimate Wake Tech faculty and staff (including those working in ACTS) with the unique needs and opportunities student veterans bring to the learning environment, one of the ACTS program’s senior managers created a presentation called “Understanding the Veteran Student.” The presentation was used to facilitate a workshop at Wake Tech’s annual Faculty and Staff Professional Development Day. Program staff report that this workshop helped them to more effectively deliver both the vocational instruction and the ancillary services associated with ACTS.



participate in small group break-out sessions where they discuss how to negotiate specific scenarios involving student veterans (e.g., challenges in establishing relationships with non-veteran classmates who may be of much different ages, unfamiliar with military lifestyles and experiences, or reluctant to engage student veterans in discussions and group projects). The school has also created a Senior Vice President of Military and Veterans programs, a senior leadership position created to provide a more integrated, strategic approach to delivering veterans programs and services across the Wake Tech community. According to program staff, each of these developments—career services, awareness training, and new senior leadership—has helped Wake Tech make significant progress toward its long-term objective of creating a “one-stop” veterans services center offering a full suite of education, employment, and other forms of support to veterans and transitioning service members.



The success of ACTS has also helped Wake Tech build and cultivate numerous institutional partnerships with area employers, veterans’ services organizations, and state and local government agencies. The depth and quality of these relationships is illustrated by the success of the Veterans Services Summit, a March 2015 event the school put on as part of its effort to launch a second round of ACTS. At this all day event, over a dozen of Wake Tech’s partners came together to offer veterans professional development workshops, networking opportunities, and information on services and support available in the Raleigh, NC, community.

Building on the momentum of the summit—as well as all the successes and lessons learned in the initial delivery of the program—the architects of ACTS are firmly focused on the future. They are aiming to expand the program’s scope—growing the number of training modules to address demand for more sought after vocational skills—as well as open up the program to veterans’ spouses and family members.



### Getting Results: Achieving and Growing Program Impact

Results from the program’s first delivery period illustrate the strong potential of the ACTS approach. Among other accomplishments, information submitted in the program’s final performance report indicates the following:

-  63 participants enrolled, with 79% completing their entire sequence of instruction, training, and skill development
-  10 participants newly employed, all within 60 days of completing their training

In addition to these outcomes, Wake Tech’s success with ACTS has spurred a number of positive developments on campus. Program staff report that veteran-specific services are being incorporated into the school’s new Career Pathways Center (a campus-wide career services office), and that the school is introducing new, institutional-level veterans’ awareness training using the “Green Zone” program, a nationally-recognized training program in which faculty and staff attend information sessions on veterans issues and



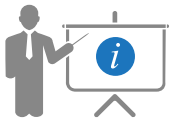


# Best Practices for Delivering Vocational Acceleration Services to Veterans and Transitioning Service Members

Case Examination of the Pathways, Tarrant Vets, and ACTS programs point to five best practices that may be instructive in the design and implementation of vocational accelerator programs at other workforce development institutions.



- ✓ Pursue a multi-faceted outreach and recruitment strategy that leverages, in particular, both personal- and institutional-level relationships with area public, private, and nonprofit partners. Each program built its recruiting strategy in a way that combined formal marketing with a broad, informal outreach campaign in which staff leveraged pre-existing relationships with individuals at area military installations, recruiting centers, state and local workforce development organizations, and veterans services organizations to spread the word as widely as possible. Empowering individual veterans and VSOs to cultivate interest among their peers may be especially valuable. As a program staffer at Del Mar put it, the power of an institution's and program's recruiting efforts can be greatly amplified by using this "veterans helping veterans" approach.



- ✓ Design a program that harnesses existing resources, infrastructure, and participants' past experiences to maximize program enrollment capacity and minimize time required to complete training. Instead of letting their infrastructure and resource constraints prevent them from delivering value-enhancing vocational instruction, the institutions profiled in these cases turned to area partners to provide training space and materials. Likewise, the institutions made a concerted effort to understand program participants' prior military experience, and used this knowledge to streamline their training curricula.



- ✓ Raise program stakeholders' "veterans IQ" by providing tools and knowledge necessary to understand the unique needs veterans bring to the learning environment. The institutions featured here had the foresight to know that no matter how well they designed and implemented their programs, their impacts would be fundamentally limited if program stakeholders did not understand the unique nature of their students. Accordingly, the institutions sought to raise their staff's and instructors' "veterans IQ" using tools like professional development seminars and interactive trainings. Where possible, they also sought to employ veterans in instructor roles.



**Continuously gather data and feedback to tailor training to area employers' needs.**

Relevance is one of the most fundamental concerns of a vocational acceleration program. In short, it is critical that training and instruction equip veterans with skills actively sought after by area employers. Each institution strived to garner feedback about how their program graduates were fairs in the labor market, whether the training they provided ensured graduates were a good fit for their employers, and whether their training included any unneeded or outdated elements that could be cut from the curriculum. Involving employers in the development of curricula and instruction practices and consistently garnering their feedback can significantly raise program effectiveness.



**Plan for the future: develop a vision and a plan of action for delivering additional training and credentialing modules that equip veterans with skills in high demand in the local and regional economy.** From the very start, each of the featured institutions took a long-term perspective: they not only built a curriculum and implementation plan for the trades their programs initially focused on, but also planned for the future by identifying additional types of training they could offer going forward and expanding training opportunities to veterans' family members.



# BEST PRACTICES

## FOR DELIVERING ACCELERATED VOCATIONAL INSTRUCTION TO VETERANS AND TRANSITIONING SERVICE MEMBERS



An examination of Del Mar College, Tarrant County College, and Wake Technical Community College vocational accelerator programs points to best practices that may be instructive in the design and implementation of vocational accelerator programs at other workforce development institutions.



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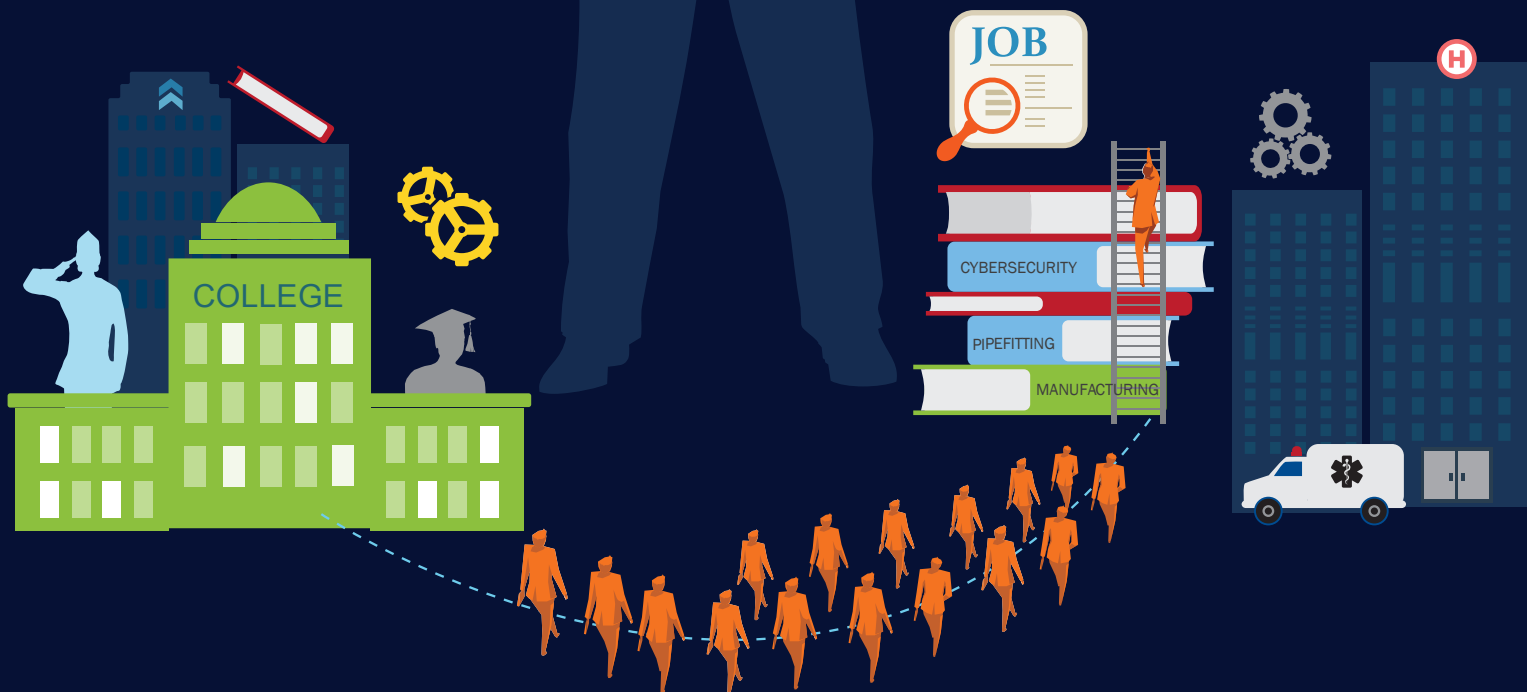
### DELIVERING INSTRUCTION AND TRAINING

- ✓ Design a program that harnesses existing resources and infrastructure to maximize program enrollment capacity and minimize time required to complete training



### GETTING RESULTS: ACHIEVING AND GROWING PROGRAM IMPACT

- ✓ Raise program stakeholders' "veterans IQ" by providing tools and knowledge necessary to understand the unique needs veterans bring to the learning environment
- ✓ Continuously gather data and feedback to tailor training to area employers' needs
- ✓ Plan for the future: develop a vision and a plan of action for delivering additional training modules that equip veterans with more high-demand skills.





## About The Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF)

The IVMF is the first interdisciplinary national institute in higher education focused on the social, economic, education, and policy issues impacting veterans and their families post-service. Through the focus on veterans programming, research and policy, employment and employer support, and community engagement, the Institute provides in-depth analysis of the challenges facing the veteran community, captures best practices, and serves as a forum to facilitate new partnerships and strong relationships between the individuals and organizations committed to making a difference for veterans and military families.



## About Philanthropy at Walmart

Walmart and the Walmart Foundation are committed to helping people live better through philanthropic efforts that draw on the strengths of Walmart in the arenas of sustainability, economic opportunity, and community. As part of our commitment to creating a more sustainable food system worldwide, Walmart and the Walmart Foundation are leading the fight against hunger in the United States. They recently exceeded a \$2 billion commitment to fight hunger one year ahead of schedule and have donated more than 1.5 billion pounds of food to those in need across the country. To learn more about Walmart's giving, visit [foundation.walmart.com](https://foundation.walmart.com).

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