

VALOR

VETERAN ★ ALLIANCE

May &
Summer 2024

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Lonnie Wangen
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NDSU NORTH DAKOTA
STATE UNIVERSITY

Colleagues and friends,

I will be retiring this month after 22 years at NDSU. It sometimes feels like I have been at NDSU for a very long time, and other times it feels like I just arrived yesterday. It's funny how we perceive time sometimes; alas, I can see when I look in the mirror that time has certainly elapsed.

NDSU has offered me so many valuable opportunities and experiences. I received my Ph.D. from NDSU – the first Ph.D. in Emergency Management awarded in the world (I know it makes me sound old, but it is really just a testament to NDSU's role in shaping the discipline of emergency management). I have had the privilege of using my education to contribute to government efforts, academic contributions, and practitioner community advancements. I have enjoyed the privilege of following our graduates' success from the classroom to the workplace, and I have marveled at their progression through other life events after college. There have been so many memories built over the years.

Eight years ago, I promised four prior students (now NDSU alumni) – Calie Lindseth, Shelby Moen, Tom Webb, and Noah Avon (all veterans) – that I would endeavor to carry forward an initiative they developed during their time at NDSU. That initiative, VALOR, afforded me the opportunity to work with an incredible group of people to include those who are currently serving, or who have served, in the military, and those who support the success of student veterans on the NDSU campus. As the mother of a disabled veteran, the mother-in-law of another disabled veteran, a friend of many veterans, and a faculty member fortunate to participate in the educational journey of student veterans, I have viewed my engagement with VALOR as a distinct honor and solemn responsibility.

I want to thank all of the allies, student veterans, campus partners, and community members who have stepped up to support VALOR. I want to particularly thank the VALOR Board Members, many of which have been with us since the beginning. I have been privileged to be in your presence and have been humbled by your support. Of course, my endless gratitude and admiration goes to my colleague, Jim Stoddard. Jim has dedicated so much of himself to VALOR and has established himself as a touchpoint for student veteran success on the campus. In all things, he has been a steady presence and great collaborator. As far as a work husband goes, I could not have asked for a better one. Thank you, Jim, for every single thing.

The newsletter will continue. This edition is Jim's first time doing it, and I know he will do a great job. Long-time VALOR Board Member, Andrea Smith, from the College of Business, will become the new faculty liaison for VALOR.

I leave you in excellent hands; carry on.

Carol Cwiak, J.D., Ph.D.
VALOR Faculty Liaison





VCO Update
Jim Stoddard

You can visit Jim on campus at the Veterans Educational Training Office in Morrill 112; or by phone at 701-231-9706; or by email at james.stoddard@ndsu.edu.



I first want to express my sincere thanks and best wishes to Dr. Carol Cwiak upon the occasion of her retirement from NDSU for her many years of dedicated advocacy for student veterans. Carol has championed many efforts designed to improve the higher education experience for veterans and to enable their success. We wouldn't have made the progress we've made without her leadership of the VALOR team or her work to establish and maintain our more extended network of veteran supporters. Bravo Zulu, Carol! (meaning "well done!" for our non-Navy people).

At this same time last year, I wrote about how Todd and I would soon be moving from Ceres Hall to a new combined veteran center in Morrill Hall (suite 112). Now, almost exactly one year later, we've made a lot of progress in setting up a comfortable and welcoming place for military students to come get information, coordinate their benefits, and make helpful connections.

Looking back on this semester, in January 2024, the Bison Student Veterans coordinated a mini-resource fair where representatives from the Cass County Veteran Services Office, the Disabled American Veterans, the Fargo VA Health Care System, and our own GI Bill Certification office held "office hours" on campus. This allowed student veterans to more conveniently apply for additional benefits for which they are eligible, but have not known how to get started. Blake and I plan to expand on this project and hold an event with even more service providers in September 2024.



And now thinking ahead: Spring Commencement is coming up soon, and this time we congratulate 62 of our student veterans who are projected to finish their degrees! That's more than double the number of veteran graduates from spring 2023! We wish fair winds and following seas to all of them as they sail on to new challenges and adventures! And thank you to all the supporters and allies for helping them succeed!

A few other statistics about this term's veteran graduates, based upon preliminary grade data:

- 12 of those 62 expected spring and summer 2024 military veteran graduates (19.4%) are currently on track to graduate with a GPA of 3.90 or higher.
- Overall, 58 of those 62 (93.5%!) are projected to finish with GPA of 3.0 or higher. Watch for them all wearing the red, white, and blue honor cords at the ceremony!

A little further ahead, when we all return in the fall, during the 2nd week of classes, we'll be hosting a military community table at the Affinity Dinner event, where new students get to connect with other students and staff with which they have common background or interests. More details as we get closer, but this has been a great chance for new military students to meet informally with each other and with key staff and faculty supporters to get them off to a good start at NDSU.

Please let me know if I can help with any student issues that are related to military connections!

The Bootprints at NDSU



We've started our "Bootprints at NDSU" project where we're building a collage and display of photos and other military service-related mementos (name tapes, unit patches, stickers, etc.) contributed by NDSU's veterans. Come by the hallway display case outside of Morrill 112 to check it out, and let us know if you have a photo or item you'd like to contribute, either permanently or just on loan.

What are we looking for? E-mail us a photo of yourself during your military service (we can print it), information about your service (Branch, official job title, rank, where (unclassified!) was the photo taken, etc.

If you're a military veteran graduating this Spring/Summer with a GPA of 3.0 or above, and we missed you on our project to award you with a Veteran Honor Society honor cord to wear at Commencement, please let one of the BSV officers know right away and we'll arrange a time with you. If you're away from the Fargo area, we can also get it mailed out to you. We'll ask you to fill out a short survey to let us know how our organization could serve future students better.

Seven of those veteran graduates have been members of the Bison Student Veterans, including our current president, Beatrice. **Our new officers for the coming year** are:

- President, Andrew Hatori. Combat Health Care Specialist formerly in the US Army, and now the Minnesota Army National Guard. NDSU major: Nursing Hometown: Minneapolis, MN
- Vice-President: KK Swinland. Chemical Specialist formerly in the US Army. NDSU major: Management with an emphasis on Human Resources From Devils Lake, ND
- Treasurer: Gideon Blazek. Abrams Tank Crewman in the Minnesota Army National Guard. NDSU major: Civil Engineering From Wyndmere, ND
- Event Coordinator: Katarina Kraljic. Intelligence Analyst with the Minnesota National Guard, and current ROTC cadet. NDSU major: Philosophy, with minors in Entrepreneurship and Military Science From Elk River, MN

We look forward to another great year of camaraderie and completing our education mission together! Watch for announcements about our fall 2024 meeting schedule.

Speaking of camaraderie events, **what are you doing on Saturday, June 15th?** The Brady's Legacy Ruck March (<https://www.bradyslegacyruck.com/>) will be a fun way to get some physical and social activity while raising money for an excellent and important cause, veterans' mental health and suicide prevention.

Choose your level of pain/fun, from an "Air Force" 2 miles (sorry, my wingmen!), a Seabee 5 miles, an Army 10-miler, or a Marine-level 22 mile walk-in-the-park! For you Special Forces wannabees, you can do the "**Brady's Patriot Challenge**" (12 mile Ruck with a 35 lb pack in under 3 hours) and earn a special "Brady's Patriot" commemorative patch! The event can also use some volunteers to help with logistics, and you can always donate to the Foundation. However you want to participate, we hope to see you at the Agassiz Recreational Trail in Ulen, Minnesota!

Sincerely,
Beatrice Newman
Andrew Hatori

Join us on myNDSU (Student Activities hub): [Bison Student Veterans - myNDSU](#) | [North Dakota State University](#) | [Connect with BSV via email or Facebook.](#)



Career Corner

Jerry South, Assistant Director, Career Coaching, NDSU Career and Advising Center



Congratulations! You completed everything needed academically to graduate. You also came to the Career and Advising Center for help on your resume, practiced a few interviews, completed an internship or two over the years and now have landed a full-time job. As you prepare for the transition from student to employee, know that it can be a bit of a challenge adapting to the work culture in a new job. There are all the new faces to get to know, discovering the chain of command, learning the expectations of work and the approved level of social engagement just to name a few. Here are a few tips to help ease the sometimes-awkward and sometimes stressful transition.

My first tip is to be flexible. Everyone knows you are new and still learning the ropes. Give yourself some grace while you explore the new environment. If you are in a brand-new position where you are just learning the job, it's ok to make some mistakes. If you're familiar with the position but in a new company, remember to give yourself some buffer time on your deadlines. Your efficiency will suffer a little bit typically as you learn where things are in the office/work space as well as learning how to access all the computer programs you may be required to use.

Next, be sure to ask questions. Don't pretend you know exactly what's needed or how to do a given task. Ask for clarification on preferred office processes, best practices, and work expectations. In the process of learning, don't compare yourself to others. Everyone has their own learning style and speed, and everyone brings a different set of skills to the job. Find out who is the subject matter expert for the given situation and seek out their wisdom and advice. If possible, see if they are willing to be your mentor to help get you up to speed.



Meet with Us

It's always a best practice to be a team player as well. Even if you work in a cubicle, others are around who can give you help or whom you can offer help too. We are social creatures and the best way to get to know the culture of the company is to observe and ask around. See how often breaks are allowed, where do people typically congregate on break, what is ok to talk about and what topics are taboo. Watch out for getting involved with any office clichés or politics though. These can cause you to get pigeon holed or stereotyped as part of a group that may not be looked well upon.

Finally, be yourself. Share your thoughts and ideas about a project in a professional and timely manner. If someone says or does something that upsets you, respectfully let them know. Remember, they know you just as much about you as you know them; everyone is on the same learning curve when it comes to getting to know each other, so give them and yourself the respect, grace, forgiveness, and time it takes to develop a solid working relationship. These things don't happen overnight, it takes time, energy and effort to become a successful part of the team.

NDDVA

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DAV North Dakota

facebook.com/davnorthdakota/

American Legion Post 2

facebook.com/americanlegionpost2/

American Legion Post 21

facebook.com/legionpost21/

North Dakota American Legion

facebook.com/NDAmericanLegion/

Fargo VFW Post 762

facebook.com/fargovfwclub/

West Fargo VFW Post 7564

facebook.com/VFW7564.org/

Dilworth VFW Post 1223

facebook.com/VFW-Post-1223-106022496155155/

NDSU Bison Student Veterans

facebook.com/BisonVeterans/

"You gain strength, courage, and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You must do the thing which you think you cannot do." ~Eleanor Roosevelt



Join members of the Bison Student Veterans marching in the **Brady's Legacy Ruck March** on Saturday, June 15th, 2024 in Ulen, Minnesota (about 40 miles NE of Fargo).

Enjoy this day with other veterans and supporters as we walk along the scenic Agassiz Recreational Trail and raise money for a great cause!

Located near the North Dakota border, this natural-surface trail alternates through sparsely wooded stretches and iconic Minnesota farmland, offering scenic views of the Sand Hill and Wild Rice rivers. You're likely to catch glimpses of wildlife, such as deer, birds, coyotes, and squirrels. https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/ohv/trail_detail.html?id=2

Proceeds from this event will benefit the Brady Oberg Legacy Foundation, a 501c(3) nonprofit organization that provides scholarships for veterans pursuing a degree in the mental health field, and arranges rejuvenating outdoor recreational retreats for combat veterans that allow them to have fun while unburdening their hearts and minds as only they can do, with brothers and sisters who "get it".

You can register for various lengths and load challenges of 2 miles, 5 miles, 10 miles, or 22 miles and earn a special prize when you finish. **Complete the "Brady's Patriot Challenge"** (12 mile Ruck with a 35 lb pack in under 3 hours) and earn a special "Brady's Patriot" commemorative patch! Don't forget your sun protection, tick and mosquito repellent, water, energy snacks, and a personal first aid kit.

For more details or to register, go here!: <https://www.bradylegacyruck.com/>. If you're not able to march, please **consider volunteering** to assist with event logistics, **or donating** to the Brady Oberg Legacy Foundation anytime.

Brady Oberg was a combat veteran from Ulen, Minnesota who was tragically lost to suicide following his combat deployment to Afghanistan with the 10th Mountain Division and not finding the help he needed to fully recover from that experience. **Read more about him** and the Foundation his loved ones set up in his memory to hopefully prevent this tragedy from happening to anyone else: <https://bradyoberglegacyfoundation.org/>



Benefits Update

Military and Veteran Certification Office



Todd can be reached by phone at (701) 231-9782 or by email at todd.yackley@ndsu.edu

Program Coordinator

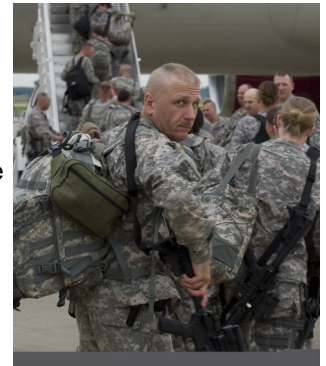
Veterans Educational Training Office



Blake can be reached by phone at (701) 231-4230 or by email at blake.sykes@ndsu.edu

Hello, everyone! For those who don't know me yet or haven't met me, just a brief background: I say that because there are some familiar names of community partners that I've met, some that I've done business with, and some I've worked extensively with on the list of VALOR Board Members. Before coming to NDSU to work as a VET Program Coordinator, I worked for a non-profit agency that administrated the Department of Labor's Homeless Veteran Reintegration Program (HVRP) grant which helped military veterans acquire jobs and training. This was extremely rewarding work, and we (community of partners) here in ND have been very successful. When I started just over three years ago, there were almost 200 homeless Veterans in the state, and when I left, there were just under 30.

I have a Masters in Business Science, spent 26 years in the National Guard and Federal Reserves (22 Army & 4 Air Force) and currently in the Retired Reserves for the Army. I mobilized twice and deployed once to Kuwait in 2011-2012. I've run my own business doing Aircraft Maintenance in this area, and when I worked the HVRP, I covered the entire state of ND by myself for over 18 months. I believe in trying to live life in a deliberate, meaningful way with purpose. I thrive on challenges.



My goal working here would be to help Jim with data analytics, customer service, and most importantly to improve the involvement/engagement of military affiliated students with the military programs we have here at NDSU and the other ND colleges.

Upcoming Events

May

V-E (Victory in Europe) Day	May 8
Military Spouse Appreciation Day	May 10
Mothers' Day	May 12
Armed Forces Day	May 18
Memorial Day	May 27

June

D-Day Commemoration	June 6
US Army Birthday	June 14
U.S. Flag Day	June 14
Fathers' Day	June 16

July

Independence Day	July 4
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Recurring Local Events:

Veterans Coffee Hour: Join other veterans for coffee, conversation, and free Sandy's Donuts. (this is a free event)

- ◆ When: **Second Wednesday of every month from 10 AM - 12 PM.**
- ◆ Where: at the **Fargo Air Museum** (1609 19th Ave N)