



# JOINING FORCES

**THE INSTITUTE FOR VETERANS  
AND MILITARY FAMILIES**  
is the nation's leader in  
serving veterans and  
their families, guiding  
strategies to support  
their success

BY AMY SPEACH



J. Michael Haynie (left), Barnes Professor of Entrepreneurship at the Whitman School, is founder and executive director of the Institute for Veterans and Military Families, a national center focused on serving America's vets and their families.



Early in 2011, J. Michael Haynie sketched out on the back of a napkin his vision for creating an institute that would elevate Syracuse University's already distinguished veterans' services to a whole new level. Based on his experience as founder of the acclaimed Barnes Family Entrepreneurship Bootcamp for Veterans with Disabilities (EBV) in the Whitman School of Management, he had high expectations about the potential benefits of a University-based center devoted to serving veterans and their families and high hopes about SU being its ideal home. But before moving forward with his idea, he looked around at what other

educational institutions in the United States were doing to serve veterans. And he learned that not only would Syracuse be the perfect place to establish such a center, it would be the first higher education institution ever to do so—appropriately enough for a university with a noble history of supporting and educating veterans. "To my great surprise, there did not exist anywhere else in the country another interdisciplinary academic institute focused solely on veterans and their families," says Haynie, who served as an officer in the U.S. Air Force for 14 years and is the Barnes Professor of Entrepreneurship at the Whitman School. "Nobody else out there was



In 2012, IVMF representatives participated in the New York City Veterans Day Parade.

## FORTIFYING VETERANS' COMMUNITIES

RETIRED U.S. ARMY COLONEL James D. McDonough Jr. is crystal clear on his mission as senior director of community engagement and innovation at the Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF): align the resources in community settings to serve veteran families

where they live and work. As a former director of the New York State Division of Veterans' Affairs and former president and CEO of the Veterans Outreach Center Inc. in Rochester, New York, he's equally certain about how to accomplish that goal: bring together models of excellence, evaluate them, and disseminate

them. "We want to take known good stuff and spread it further across this country so we are building the quality and potential of what our communities can do for veteran families," he says. "To do that, we need to figure out what works and what doesn't.

So we are deeply committed to looking at the veteran landscape, cataloging it, and teasing out high-performing organizations."

In his role at the IVMF, McDonough oversees the nation's first state-based Direct Training and Technical Assistance Center (DTA) to support communities interested in better serving veteran families. Through the DTA, established through a grant from the New York Health Foundation, the IVMF worked with New York State community nonprofit organizations serving veteran families, helping them develop their capacity and apply for federal funding intended to address homelessness. Those efforts yielded \$26 million in Supportive Services for Veterans Families (SSVF) grants offered by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), more than tripling the amount of VA funding earmarked for New York State veterans over last year's \$8.2 million. "We were sleeves-rolled-up from Long Island to Buffalo, developing relationships in communities that could

be fundable by the VA," says McDonough, whose team is now working with the VA to extend this community engagement work in other states. "It was remarkably impactful, allowing us to serve 7,000 veteran families a year in this state who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless."

With more than 60,000 men and women veterans facing homelessness on any given day, this funding is vitally important, McDonough says. He sees it as a crucial first step in ensuring that veteran families gain direct access to resources and services in the communities they call home. "The VA's investment in the nonprofit sector to help end homelessness further establishes what good public-private collaboration can truly look like," he says. "It also provides communities a rally point from which to align resources provided by government, business, nonprofit, and philanthropic sectors, so we are able to provide support where it can do the most good and serve veteran families more holistically."



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—JILL W. CHAMBERS, Army veteran  
IVMF advisory board member

Temporary housing sprang up across campus in 1946 when SU admitted thousands of veterans under the original GI Bill of Rights. The University’s dedication to vets continues today through the IVMF’s research network, educational and employment-focused programs, and cross-disciplinary partnerships.

providing this kind of thought leadership and impactful programming situated in a higher education context. To this day I am still shocked by that.”

Once Haynie shared his vision with Chancellor Nancy Cantor, everything fell quickly into place, and in June 2011 the University made an institutional commitment to launch the Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF). In support of this effort, JPMorgan Chase broadened its existing collaboration with SU by providing a \$7.5 million gift to establish the institute, which officially opened its doors on campus on Veterans Day 2011. Haynie is proudly situated at the helm as executive director, joined by co-founder James Schmeling and supported by a growing team of what Haynie calls “world-class talent.” The first of its kind, the IVMF serves as a national center in higher education focused on the

social, economic, education, and policy issues affecting the country’s 22.5 million military veterans, tackling such critical matters as homelessness, unemployment, and suicide. Its mission is to fully leverage the University’s resources and relationships in service to America’s veterans and their families, developing education and employment-focused programs in collaboration with industry, government, nongovernmental organizations, and the veteran community.

The creation of the institute builds upon SU’s legacy of national leadership in serving veterans, from its historic role in educating the post-World War II generation under the original GI Bill of Rights to its dedication to post-9/11 servicemen and -women through participation in the Yellow Ribbon Education Enhancement Program and the establishment of the campus Veterans Resource Center. “Syracuse was among the first to open its doors for World War II veterans by saying to them, ‘Come here. We’ll take care of you. We will educate you,’” says Army veteran Jill W. Chambers, a member of the IVMF advisory board. “Which is exactly what is happening right now with this new generation of veterans: Here we have a legacy.

# POST-WAR PATHS TO SUCCESS



Insane. Marine Corps veteran Brian Iglesias says that's the only word for what he experienced during an eight-hour fire-fight on his first day as an infantry platoon commander in Iraq. When it was over, after he got done talking to his Marines and "telling them how good they did and how proud I was," Iglesias made this promise to himself: "Man, if I get out of here in one piece, I'm gonna make films." Thankfully, he did get out of there. And thanks to the Barnes Family Entrepreneurship Bootcamp for Veterans with Disabilities (EBV), offered through SU's Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF), he kept his promise. A 2008 EBV graduate, Iglesias is now president and CEO of Veterans Expeditionary



The Barnes Family Entrepreneurship Bootcamp for Veterans with Disabilities (EBV) provides experiential training in entrepreneurship and small business management for post-9/11 veterans with a service-connected disability. Pictured are members of the EBV Class of 2012.

Media. His first film project, a documentary chronicling the Korean War battle of Chosin Reservoir, was selected as the basis for a Hollywood feature film, for which he will serve as an executive producer. He credits EBV for making it possible and encourages other eligible veterans to apply. "Everything about the course—the material, the instructors, the support, the networking—is absolutely invaluable," says Iglesias, also a member of the IVMF

advisory board. "I couldn't put a price tag on it even if I wanted to. Something this profound comes around very few times in someone's life. And I'm lucky."

The EBV training program is one of several programs offered through IVMF, all designed to ease the transition from the military to civilian life and help veterans and their families achieve their educational and professional goals. Here is a brief look at several of them.

## Entrepreneurship Bootcamp for Veterans with Disabilities (EBV):

14-month, cost-free experiential training in entrepreneurship and small business management for post-9/11 veterans with a service-connected disability.



For more information, visit [vets.syr.edu](http://vets.syr.edu).

## Entrepreneurship Bootcamp for Veterans' Families (EBV-F):

14-month, cost-free experiential training in entrepreneurship and small business management for family members of a post-9/11 veteran or active duty military (including Guard and Reserve), or surviving spouse or adult child of a service member who lost his or her life while serving.

## Women Veterans Igniting the Spirit of Entrepreneurship (V-WISE):

Three-phase, low-cost training and ongoing support in entrepreneurship and small business management for all active duty and veteran women and female spouses or partners of military service members.

## Veterans Career Transition Program (VCTP):

No-cost, online distance learning program offering three track options for post-9/11 veterans entering careers in business/industry or government, or Guard and Reserve members employed in or transitioning to the civilian sector.

## Operation Endure & Grow:

Eight-week, low-cost online training in the fundamentals of launching or growing a small business for current or former Guard or Reserve members or their family members.

The Entrepreneurship Bootcamp for Veterans' Families extends entrepreneurial training to spouses and family members.



IVMF hosted the Conference on Engaging Community Support for Veterans in 2012.



Let's continue this. Let's provide a really remarkable education."

The groundbreaking EBV program—launched by Haynie at the Whitman School in 2007 and now offered at universities across the country—serves as a shining example of the University's commitment to educating veterans and tailoring academic programs to their unique needs. The program has earned national recognition for its innovative approach to helping veterans with a service-related disability make the transition from military to civilian life through business ownership. Its success has set the standard for an ever-growing list of offerings under the umbrella of the IVMF, including an entrepreneurship-focused training program for family members of veterans and one designed specifically for women (see page 36). "I believe entrepreneurship is what makes America great," says Marine Corps veteran Brian Iglesias, a 2008 EBV graduate who is president and CEO of Veterans Expeditionary Media. "Having the freedom and opportunity to follow a dream is the reason why we serve our country."

## SUCCESS STORIES

One of the most exciting aspects of the IVMF story, from Haynie's perspective, is how rapidly it has developed into a thriving organization that's making swift progress toward its lofty goals. The institute is not only having a powerful impact on those it serves, but is also further distinguishing SU as a leader in higher education focused on this important segment of the nation's population—looked to even by the federal government as the expert on veterans' affairs. For example, U.S. Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki visited the IVMF to learn more about its mission and explore opportunities for collaboration, personally deeming the institute's work "historic." Additionally, at the invitation of former President George W. Bush, the IVMF serves as academic partner of his new institute and library in Dallas. And in September, Haynie testified at a Congressional hearing exploring the idea of a national veterans' strategy, based on the policy report drafted by the institute in collaboration with the Institute for National Security and Counterterrorism, a partnership of the College of Law and Maxwell School. Building from an examination of more than 1,300 federal and state policies affecting veterans and their families, the report argues for a whole-of-government approach to serving veterans and recommends processes for crafting and implementing such a strategy. "When we launched the institute our vision was to become recognized as the nation's leading authority on the concerns impacting vets and their families," Haynie says. "And it wasn't even a year later that the White House issued a press release in which they themselves called us just that."

Photos (top to bottom):  
The IVMF officially opened its doors at 700 University Avenue on Veterans Day 2011.

EBV program representatives take part in ringing the closing bell at NASDAQ in July 2010.

The institute's V-WISE programs bring female veterans and spouses/partners of veteran business owners together for a conference focused on entrepreneurial training and support.





Now retired Whitman School of Management Dean Melvin T. Stith G'73, '77, a former Army captain, played a key role in creating the groundbreaking EBV program that led to establishment of the IVMF.



**Top right:** IVMF executive director Mike Haynie meets with former U.S. President Bill Clinton to announce the institute's "Commitment to Action" stemming from its participation in the 2011 Clinton Global Initiative.

**Below:** U.S. Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki visited the IVMF in June to learn about the institute's mission and explore opportunities for collaboration.

In the two years since cutting the ribbon outside IVMF's home at 700 University Avenue, the institute has grown from being a team of five to employing 28 full-time staff members and 17 students, with 14 research fellows at institutions across the country. "When we began, we had three programs for veterans and maybe four private sector funders," Haynie says. "Today, we have nine different training programs for veterans and their families all over the United States,

and this year alone we'll put 4,000 veterans through those programs."

Haynie points to new relationships and contracts within the federal government as another indication of the institute's success, including with the Department of Defense, Department of Labor, Department of Veterans Affairs, and the U.S. Small Business Administration. Additionally, the IVMF has expanded its industry partnerships, now working with more than 200 private sector companies with





The institute's nine educational programs provide veterans and their families with the skills needed to be successful in education, work, and life.



As IVMF co-founder and managing director, James Schmeling focuses on establishing partnerships with the SU community, government partners, nongovernmental organizations, higher education institutions, and others with a stake in the institute's mission and values.

regard to veterans' programs and veterans' employment, including collaborating with Google to create VetNet, a comprehensive free online resource for veterans entering the civilian workforce. "We've also been very successful in bringing outside dollars to the University, more than \$20 million over the last several years from corporate sponsors, government contracts, and private philanthropy," Haynie says.

## HEIGHTENED AWARENESS

As another crucial part of its mission, the IVMF works to create national awareness around veterans' issues. In its efforts toward achieving this goal, it has attracted a social media following of nearly 170,000 people. The institute's work has also been covered in some 300 national news articles and 35 television programs, including the CBS News series *60 Minutes*, which featured the IVMF in spring 2013. "From the day we cut that ribbon, all of a sudden every media outlet in the country that was doing a story on vets said, 'Okay, there's an institute now. We need a quote from them.' And that continues to be the case," Haynie says.

According to IVMF managing director James Schmeling, the institute's swift success can be at least partially credited to the fact that no one else had yet taken up this mission in a comprehensive way. "There was a real need and hunger for the knowledge and the work we're doing, because America is so attuned to veterans right now and to the needs of veterans coming home,"

says Schmeling, an Air Force veteran and former chief operating officer and managing director at SU's Burton Blatt Institute. He believes another contributing factor is the quality and commitment of the IVMF team, many of whom are veterans themselves. "In terms of our ability to grow and build on what we've done here, I'm not surprised we've gained traction as quickly as we have," he says. "We've got talented people who are very interested in this work and bring a great deal of passion to it."

Haynie agrees, adding that the institute's effectiveness can also be attributed to the entrepreneurial approach of its trademark training programs for veterans and their families. As an entrepreneurship professor by training, he has as much faith in that private-sector, market-focused approach as he does in the veterans themselves. "The only reason we're doing everything we're doing is because we believe in what veterans can accomplish," he says. "I could tell so many remarkable stories about what the veterans who go through our programs have accomplished—from literally being homeless or close to homeless to now running businesses, working in Fortune 500 companies, or going back to school for degrees when there was never a plan or an aspiration to go to school when they started working with us. We can see every day the impact we're having on a population of Americans that deserves the support of all Americans. Those kinds of stories—that's what keeps me going. That's what gets me out of bed in the morning." <<

