

# VALOR

VETERAN ★ ALLIANCE

December 2020

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Colleagues and friends,

As we approach the end of the fall semester and another year, I find myself reflecting upon the way 2020 began and the way it will end. I am sure that this was not the year any of us wanted; but, as we come to its close, we would be remiss if we did not contemplate the ways in which we have changed and perhaps even grown in 2020. This year has taught us about ourselves - our frailties, our capabilities, our compassion, and, most importantly, our resilience.



At NDSU, like so many businesses and organizations across the country, we have reimagined ourselves and the ways in which we do things. Struggles to adjust to change have resulted in the need for us to dig deeper and to be kinder to ourselves and others. In rising to these challenges we have had an opportunity to recognize our innate ability to adapt and we have become more resilient in the process.

And yet, the impact of the loss of family members, friends, colleagues, and community members, has been, and will continue to be, devastating and heartbreaking. There are no comfortable spaces to rest while we remain in the midst of the pandemic. No matter how we try to reconstruct it in our brain, there is no semblance to the normalcy we started 2020 with.

But we endure, because we know that the new year holds the promise of getting to the other side of the pandemic. In 2021, we will be able to reconceptualize a "normal" built on the lessons we have learned in 2020. Until we get there, may you and your family members remain safe and well.

If you have any student veteran matters you need assistance with, do not hesitate to reach out to me or Jim Stoddard. We are always available to you. Thank you for your continuing commitment to VALOR and our student veterans at NDSU. Happy Holidays.

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

## Did You Know...

- [Military Times](#) offers a number of helpful resources to include [daily news](#), [a job board](#), [a transition guide](#), and a myriad of other items designed to serve veterans, members of the military, and their family members.
- NDSU Spectrum recently published two articles focused on student veterans, see them here ([Thank You](#) article, [Patriotism Matters](#) article).
- [Team Rubicon](#) is a nonprofit organization that utilizes the skills and experiences of military veterans to rapidly deploy emergency response teams to disasters in the U.S. and abroad. You can volunteer to work with Team Rubicon [here](#).



**VCO Update**  
Jim Stoddard

You can visit Jim on campus at the Veterans Educational Training Office in Ceres 329; or by phone at 701-231-9706; or by email at james.stoddard@ndsu.edu.



### Congratulations!

Please join VALOR in congratulating the 29 student veterans at NDSU set to graduate this semester.

24 of these students carry a GPA of 3.0 or higher, and of this number, three carry a GPA above 3.8!

The virtual Winter 2020 Commencement will be held December 18th - connect here: [NDSU's Celebration page.](#)

Great news for anyone who was not available for the live VITAL webinar on Moral Injury in November. A recorded version of the presentation is available here for you to watch at your convenience: <http://va-eerc-ees.adobeconnect.com/pp5r5ff1xqas/>. We believe the future webinars will also be recorded, so they will be more readily available to those with scheduling conflicts. The spring semester VITAL webinars should be in February and March 2021; topics have not yet been announced.

I want to share a few things I got out of this webinar myself. We often think of the classic “war movie” examples of moral injury involving profound guilt over killing innocent civilians, but there can be much more subtle and common moral injuries that people struggle with. It might be committing infidelity while downrange, or in order to “get the job done”, not always being as honest as you hoped you would be.

Our moral code may not be limited to a traditional religious framework. Maybe we’ve violated a service-related code that we hold ourselves to, like “watching out for your buddy”, or “loyalty to the unit”. And just witnessing a morally objectionable event, even if not directly participating, is enough to cause some level of guilt in a military person; maybe because of a heightened sense of collective action (“WE did this”, or “WE failed to prevent...”). I think it’s important to recognize that this concept of debilitating guilt over failing to live up to one’s own moral standards isn’t unique to veterans, and may affect our students or co-workers.

We’re making some progress on the effort to standardize and simplify the process a National Guard or Reserve student should follow to validate to instructors their periods of absence due to military service. We’re exploring having students coordinate absences and provide documentation through a single request to the Dean of Students office, rather than separately to 5 or 6 individual instructors. This would work similarly to what students already do to coordinate family emergency absences. Standards for evaluating if an absence is legitimate and therefore “excused” would be applied more consistently, and if approved, a message would be automatically sent to instructors of all courses for which the student is registered as well as their advisor. This should create clarity and efficiency for both students and faculty!

In December, I’ll send out a current version of our “8 Keys to Veterans’ Success” document, capturing the measures that NDSU has in place to support student veterans, and which key they align to. It also shows measures we’ve identified as future goals that we’re still pursuing. VALOR has been using this tool to examine how NDSU is doing in implementing these recommended best practices and improving the campus climate for military students.

Another plug for NASPA’s Symposium on Military-Connected Students (SMCS), scheduled for February 24 –26, 2021. Since it will be all virtual this year, this might make it more feasible for you to participate (i.e., no costs for travel or lodging and no worries about being away from home). Information and discussions at this symposium would benefit anyone in Student Affairs working with veteran students, such as Career Center, Admissions, and Disability Services staff, and Registrars evaluating military training for college credit.

Event details, including the registration process, can be found here: <https://www.naspa.org/events/naspa-virtual-symposium-on-military-connected-students>. NDSU is an institutional NASPA member, so NDSU employees can join NASPA with a “Professional Affiliate” membership, allowing you to register for the conference at the reduced NASPA member rate. Let me know if you have any questions.





## Veteran's Voice

*Craig Schwinden*

*VALOR Student Veteran Representative*

Holiday Greetings! December is right around the corner, and I hope you and your loved ones are staying safe. It is the season of giving. Last month, we gave thanks for what we have and this month we should be giving to others. You have all given (or are giving) to your country and I would encourage you to keep up that spirit of giving this holiday season and beyond. Our military leads the way in giving of their time and effort to help those in need.

How is school going? I hope it is still going well. We are only a couple of weeks away from the end of the semester now. I know my intention was to be on campus as much as possi-

ble this semester, but it just hasn't worked out that way this year. It has been a challenge for all of us for sure. I've had some conversations with fellow student veterans as well as other students and it sure sounds like many students are attending class from home.

As mentioned here before, the VA has extended its temporary policy of paying the full BAH rates even though we are online or "hybrid". This extension takes us up to 21 December of 2021. So, including this upcoming summer session, we are good to go for the next three semesters. Here is a link to keep up with new information: - [Student FAQs: COVID-19 Information Affecting Education Benefits for Students - Education and Training](#).

Of course, I can't write this article without, once again, reminding you to keep an eye out for our fellow students, be they part of our veteran community or not. I experienced this firsthand previously (as I described to you in our November issue). These are challenging times for all of us, but we may have a

vaccine soon, so it is more important than ever to buckle down and take care of each other. I know we have heard this a lot, but it bears repeating. Let's lead the way and set the example on campus! Here are some NDSU links to get assistance for yourself or others: [Counseling Center](#); [Academic and Campus Resources](#); and, [Student Health Service](#).

Lastly, be sure to check out our student profile this month. I am not sure where we found this guy, but he is our Student Veteran of the Month. He is a junior here at NDSU studying Emergency Management while minoring in Organizational Communication and History. He retired from the military in 2016 after 28 years of service. His favorite thing to say on the radio while performing airdrop duties was..."LOAD CLEAR!" I hope you enjoy this month's profile, it's mine.

As always, please feel free to e-mail me with comments on the article or ideas for future columns or articles at: [craig.schwinden@ndsu.edu](mailto:craig.schwinden@ndsu.edu).



# THE SPOTLIGHT

Name: Craig Schwinden

Major/Minor: Emergency Management  
Organizational Communication and History

Originally from: Fargo, ND

Current city: Fargo, ND

Military service: U.S. Air Force / U.S. Air Force Reserves,  
Retired 30 Sep 2016

Military awards: Meritorious Service Medal (MSM); Air Medal (+4 OLC); USAF Achievement Medal (+1 OLC); USAF Commendation Medal; and, Iraqi Campaign Medal (+1 CStar).

NDSU activities/engagement: Treasurer, Emergency Management Student Association (EMSA); NDSU VALOR Student Veteran Representative; and, Member - Bison Student Veterans (BSV).

Community activities/engagement: Meals on Wheels (We need help! It's easy and not a large time commitment!); high school football official (I officiated in this year's Dakota Bowl in the 9-man championship game).

College scholarships, awards, etc.: Department of Emergency Management Integrity Award (2019)

An interesting tidbit: Ask me sometime about my mid-air collision. It's a great story!

Favorite experience/memories/etc. at NDSU: Football games...the games in the Division II days played outdoors was such a great atmosphere. Walking on campus...sitting downstairs in the union and people watching.



Craig Schwinden



## CALL TO ACTION: DO WHAT YOU CAN

As we celebrate the holiday season, let us remember those who are actively serving in the military and will be away from home and their families this year. There are many things you can do to support and honor these men and women during the holidays, to include everything from sending a card or letter to donating to organizations that provide specific care packages. To learn more about sending holiday cards or other greetings, see [this article](#). To donate money for specific gifts, see the [USO Wishbook](#) or [this list](#) of other vetted organizations.

May we also remember our military members and veterans at home and their specific needs this season. Even the smallest gesture serves as a reminder that you recognize their service and sacrifice. May we all find the time this season to do what we can to show our gratitude and respect to others, particularly those that served, or continue to serve our country.



**The Drop Zone: Delivering BSV news “on-time, on-target”**

*Chase Tozer, BSV Vice President*

After a busy month in October, the Bison Student Veterans rolled into November with spirit and resolve. Many incredible opportunities arose and we are trying to keep that optimism through the remainder of the semester. Administratively, we are continuing to host two meetings each month. We were fortunate enough to have NDSU’s Director of Student Success Programs and Dean of Students, Mr. Casey Peterson in attendance at a recent meeting to experience the camaraderie and care we have for this group and our fellow student veterans. In addition to his other duties, he leads the Student Voice Project. BSV participates in that project through representative Karlee Kaylor, a phenomenal scholar who articulates concerns relevant to NDSU student veterans. Thanks, Karlee! We will continue to hold a second virtual “hangout” on the third Tuesday of each month, as this is becoming more popular with our members. Also, SVA’s National Conference will be held virtually in February.



In other news, the Bison Student Veterans are selling challenge coins! Challenge coins have a long history with the U.S. military, providing recognition of the accomplishments of its members. The challenge coins we have created are a symbol of what we have become and serve as an enduring connection to the Bison Nation and BSV’s service commitment to our fellow students. Pick one up today! They sell for \$10 (non-BSV members) and \$5 (BSV members). This is a great way to show your support for the organization! We are able to purchase these coins with the help of recent Chipotle fundraiser earnings (we received \$70 from the event).



Chase Tozer

The BSV has been collaborating with NDSU’s Public Relations Student Society of America with a PR campaign. As a result of initial brainstorming, our group is in the process of setting up Instagram and Twitter accounts. In other discussions, talk of meet-and-greets with local military leadership have been brought up. Look for those in Spring 2021.

**COMING UP IN DECEMBER**

- December 1 Civil Air Patrol Birthday
- December 7 Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day
- December 13 U.S. National Guard Day
- December 19 National Wreaths Across America



**A message about Student Veteran Support Partnership (SVSP):**

As you know, we are in unprecedented times. College is stressful, especially for non-traditional students, even when we aren’t in the middle of a pandemic. The uncertainty of the pandemic increases anxiety and stress that can affect our wellbeing, productivity, and success.

Maintaining connection with others is essential to our ability to deal with the many challenges the pandemic presents. VALOR is committed to helping you build and maintain connections at NDSU and in the community within the veteran network. The Student Veteran Support Partnership (SVSP) initiative is designed to connect student veterans with other veterans, military-connected staff and faculty, and community organizations for the purpose of guidance, support, mentoring, and friendship.

If you would like to participate in the SVSP initiative (to be a connection, seek a connection, or both), please complete the confidential SVSP initiative form (find the form here: [https://ndstate.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_bl0NMPvW4VuHgdD](https://ndstate.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_bl0NMPvW4VuHgdD)). The SVSP will create pairings on a rolling basis as requests come in. If you have an urgent need to connect with a veteran or VALOR resources - call Jim Stoddard at 701-231-9706 or Carol Cwiak at 701-231-5847 or 701-261-8025.

Let’s help get each other through this - connect today.