

VALOR

VETERAN ★ ALLIANCE

May 2020

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Colleagues and friends,

As we continue to address the COVID-19 pandemic as a campus, community, state, and country, we find ourselves living in a time which my daughter has coined, the "new abnormal." Yet, as you look around you can see so many reminders of who we are and who we have always been - our collective humanity. The acts of kindness, support, and courage that we see each day remind us that we are stronger than the fear and disruption this virus seeks to visit upon us.

Alas, the enduring nature of this pandemic event introduces a burdensome weariness that is difficult to shake. The notion that this weariness will continue for many months to come strains many individuals' coping capacity. Now, more than ever, we need to be mindful of our own and others' mental health and well-being. Taking steps to reduce the sense of uncertainty will help lower anxiety levels, improve coping, and enhance resilience. See this month's *Call to Action* to learn more about tips from psychologists to deal with uncertainty.

The VALOR newsletter will be on hiatus during the summer months (June and July) and will return in August. While the newsletter will take a break, VALOR and its network of resources will still be available. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me or Jim Stoddard should any questions or issues arise. Thank you all for your commitment to VALOR and our student veterans at NDSU. Stay safe and well.

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



Commemorate the men and women who died while serving our country by pausing at 3:00 PM (local time) on Memorial Day (Monday, May 25) for a minute of silence.

Did you know...

- The PenFed Foundation is providing financial relief grants up to \$1,500 to veterans who have been impacted by COVID-19. <https://penfedfoundation.org/apply-for-assistance/coronavirus-emergency-financial-assistance/>
- NDSU's Career and Advising Center and its myriad of student-focused services are currently available - check it out! <https://career-advising.ndsu.edu/>
- Recruit Military continues to host a series of virtual job fairs for veterans. <https://success.recruitmilitary.com/events/schedule>



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.



In an [update to the campus community](#) on April 30th, NDSU President Bresciani announced that some employees will be returning to the campus in July and August to ensure essential operations are covered.

He also noted that NDSU expects to offer most of its courses via in-person instruction in the fall (with accommodations for vulnerable populations).

You can see an earlier message sent by the President to students and their families [here](#).

A little good news among all of the recent craziness: NDSU has 48 military-connected students expected to graduate this spring! The support of allies like you is so critical to these achievements; thank you so much for all you're doing to enable these success stories!

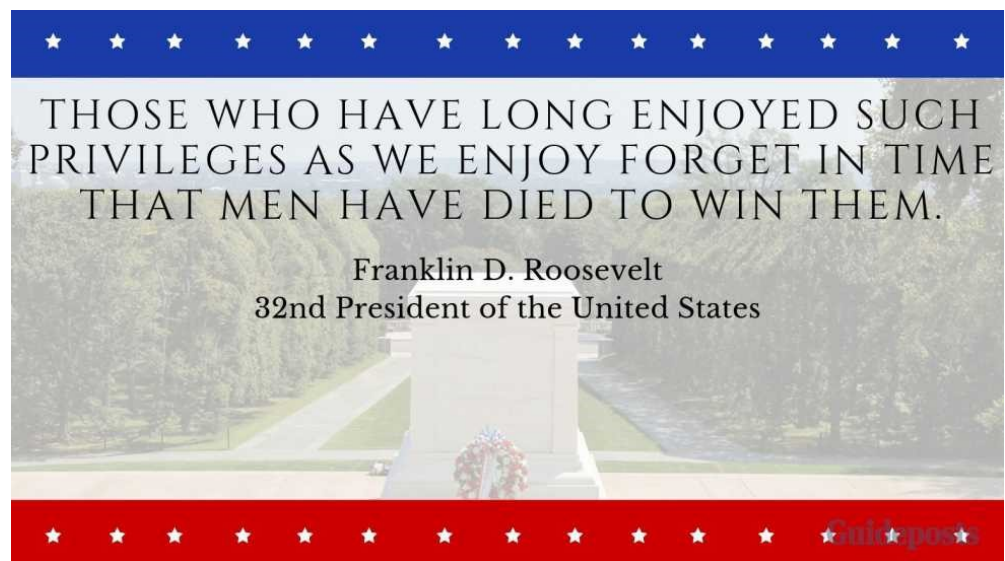
Summertime may be a good time for you to continue your personal education in veteran issues through the PsychArmor Institute. Many of you serve as academic advisers to military-connected students, so one course I would highlight for you this month is "Advising Military Students on Higher Education" (<https://psycharmor.org/courses/advising-military-students-on-higher-education/>). It's a short, 10-minute video covering topics like military credit programs, and making the transition to college. There are several other good modules in the same "higher education" track you may find helpful!

Over the last few weeks, my office has been conducting weekly e-mail contacts to the approximately 400 undergraduate military-connected NDSU students to check if they needed assistance with basic needs or access to needed technology. Most of the questions we got back involved the potential impact of opting for "pass/fail" grading on their GI Bill benefits, and other benefit questions, which we referred to Scott Fuller in the Office of Military and Veteran Certification. Anecdotally, a few students expressed some significant difficulty succeeding in their courses in the remote learning format, and many are holding off on registering for fall, waiting to see what happens.

A reminder, Student Veterans of America's "Life Cycle Atlas Survey" which seeks information on the general student veteran experience, remains open at: <https://atlas.studentveterans.org/>.

It's hard to make any real plans right now, but we are hoping to have a few "welcome" events in the fall. We're still planning to co-host a table for military-connected students at the Affinity Dinner event during Welcome Week, and the Bison Student Veterans should be having a pizza party membership event early on in the semester.

Assuming university-sponsored travel is allowed at the time, the Bison Student Veterans are hoping to take a small group to the Student Veterans of America's annual National Convention in January 2021. This is a great networking and learning opportunity that should be energizing not just for those that attend, but for the rest of the group that will benefit from all the information and ideas the attendees bring back to campus with them.





Veteran's Voice

Craig Schwinden

VALOR Student Veteran Representative

Hello Student Vets,

I hope all of you and your loved ones are staying safe and healthy. Here we are ready to end another semester. However, the feeling is certainly different. Instead of packing to go home or to head out somewhere for a summer job, we are all wondering when it will end and until then, what comes next. For those of you who are graduating, congratulations and best of luck to you in these trying times.

That being said, let's stay focused and get through these last couple of weeks of the semester. I know it probably has been uncomfortable,

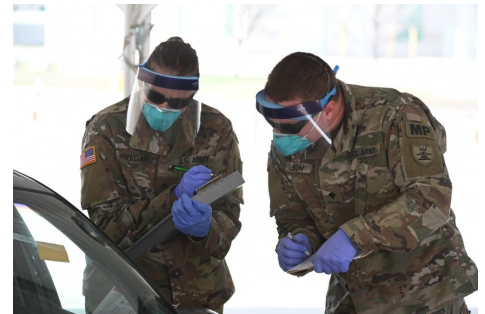
inconvenient, and no doubt other things for most of us; I know it has been for me. Remember in these trying times that you have lots of people and organizations on and off campus that are here specifically to help you regardless of your situation. And of course, we (VALOR), are also here to help you. Please ask for help if you need it.

Here are some links you can follow for information and assistance. Some of these links you may be familiar with:

- G.I. Bill
<https://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/>
- NDSU Career & Advising Center
<https://career-advising.ndsu.edu/>
- Veterans Crisis Line
<https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/>
- NDSU Counseling
<https://www.ndsu.edu/counseling/>
- ND Job Service
<https://www.jobsnd.com/>
- ND Dept. of Health
<https://www.health.nd.gov/>

- NDSU Records & Registration
<https://www.ndsu.edu/registrar/>
- NDSU VALOR Facebook page
<https://www.facebook.com/valor.veteran.alliance.organization/>
- NDSU VALOR LinkedIn page
<https://www.linkedin.com/company/64622022/admin/>

Check these sites regularly for useful and up-to-date information about the issues affecting us. As always, please do not hesitate to contact me at craig.schwinden@ndsu.edu for any questions, comments, or article suggestions or ideas. Stay focused, stay healthy, and continue to follow the recommendations of public health and government authorities.



Accept the Commissioner's Challenge: Complete S.A.V.E. Training

The North Dakota Commissioner of Veterans Affairs, Lonnie Wangen, has challenged all North Dakotans to accept the challenge of completing the S.A.V.E. training to help prevent veteran suicides. This challenge involves two steps and requires about 25 minutes of your time to complete.

First step: Add the contact information below to your phone so you are prepared to help

CONTACT NAME: SAVE
 PHONE: 800-273-8255 (24-hour suicide lifeline), press 1 for veterans
 WEBSITE: <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>
 TEXT: 838-255 to chat
 INSTANT MESSAGE: veteranscrisisline.net/chat

Second step: Register and complete the 23 minute online training at: <https://psycharmor.org/sign-up/ndsav/?gid=351472&unDaDziBt7dbY>

The S.A.V.E. video was a collaborative effort between the Veterans Administration and PsychArmor Institute and was designed to empower viewers with the basic knowledge of what the signs may be for someone who is struggling with thoughts of suicide and ideas on how to help.



Read more about veteran suicide here: <https://www.stripes.com/news/veterans/after-years-of-failure-to-end-the-crisis-veteran-suicide-takes-center-stage-on-capitol-hill-1.621428>.



THE SPOTLIGHT

Name: Megan Lenling

Major/Minor: Marketing

Originally from: Saint Paul, MN

Current city: Saint Paul, MN

Career plans after college: After college I hope to move to Austin, TX or go back to the Twin Cities and get a job in marketing analytics or marketing research. I also want to pursue my master's degree or get a certificate in data analytics to further my education.

Military Service/Awards: Nominated Outstanding Airman of the Year for strong work ethic, positive attitude and self-motivation; recognized and coined by 133rd Airlift Wing's Lieutenant Colonel, and Logistics Readiness Squadron First Sergeant for outstanding initiative, surpassing required tasks, and taking on multiple responsibilities during a training trip; and, received recognition on DFT's (annual training) for work ethic and going above and beyond assigned tasks.

NDSU activities/engagement: Public Relations Coordinator and member of NDSU Bison Student Veterans Association and NDSU Management Information Systems Club.

Community activities/engagement: Volunteer for Sandbag Central, Rosewood on Broadway Nursing Home, and Microsoft's STEM DigiGirlz program.

College scholarships, awards, etc.: Dean's Honors List - 4 Years.

An interesting tidbit about the veteran: I never thought I would join any branch of the military. However, my parents were both active duty (Marines and Army) and later joined the Army reserves, so they talked me into it. Now, 5 out of 6 of my family has served/is serving, and we have over 50 years of service in my family history! Such an awesome feeling to continue the legacy and serve this country! Aside from this, I love being outdoors/being active, spending time with my family, and I enjoy road trips or traveling to new places in general. I hope to travel to all 50 states (currently on 27) and to travel internationally more.

Favorite experience/memories/etc. at NDSU: My favorite part about NDSU is getting more involved in the Fargo-Moorhead community and attending events such as the Red River Market and Christkindlmark. I'll also never forget the spirit of camaraderie felt among Bison fans at football games and tailgating. It was super neat to see the whole community cheering for the Bison!



Megan Lenling

CALL TO ACTION: DEALING WITH UNCERTAINTY

One of the most challenging things to deal with during this pandemic (beyond illness) is the feeling of uncertainty it instills. This feeling of uncertainty increases anxiety and affects our mental health and well-being. There are things we can do to reduce the uncertainty we feel so that we can better endure this challenging time. This is a call to action to help yourself and others - particularly veterans - better deal with uncertainty.

A [recent article](#) focused on 12 ways in which individuals can cope with the uncertainty the coronavirus causes. This article suggests that that it is important to focus on the things you know for sure and the things you can control and to help others do the same. It also suggests that individuals recognize the value in routine, relaxation, and gratitude.

We are bombarded with the impacts of the virus at every turn. We see and hear almost constant coverage in the media, it permeates social media posts, organizational and corporate communications are framed around the impacts of the virus, and we live and work in communities where people we may know are getting sick and dying. And while having more information is good in most situations, in this instance the saturation level of information is so high that it is psychologically crippling. Cut down on constant virus information exposure and focus the time saved on connecting with others, particularly those who are isolated. We will get through this pandemic together.





Looking for new hobbies? Here are a list of [13 hobby suggestions for veterans dealing with stress](#) from Military.com - some more interesting than others.

May 1	Loyalty Day
May 1	Silver Star Service Banner Day
May 1-31	Month of the Military Caregiver
May 3-9	Public Service Recognition Week
May 8	V-E Day
May 8	Military Spouse Appreciation Day
May 9-17	Armed Forces Week
May 13	Children of Fallen Patriots Day
May 16	Armed Forces Day
May 25	Memorial Day

JUNE

June 6	D-Day
June 12	Women Veterans Day
June 14	U.S. Flag Day
June 14	Army Birthday
June 23	Coast Guard Auxiliary Birthday
June 27	PTSD Awareness Day

JULY

July 4	Independence Day
July 27	National Korean War Veterans Armistice Day
July 29	Army Chaplain Corps Anniversary

AUGUST

August 1	Air Force Day
August 4	Coast Guard Day
August 7	Purple Heart Day
August 10	U.S. Department of Defense Birthday
August 14	Navajo Code Talkers Day
August 16	National Airborne Day
August 29	Marine Corps Reserve Birthday

The VA has developed a robust FAQ page for veterans regarding coronavirus symptoms, concerns, treatment, and the impacts the virus has had on resources and services regularly offered to veterans. Find it here: <https://www.va.gov/coronavirus-veteran-frequently-asked-questions/> .

As we noted in last month, this page of the newsletter typically features dates of local meetings and events. But as we continue to weather the COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts, most face-to-face gatherings for the near future remain cancelled or postponed. We encourage you to continue your interaction on social media with friends and colleagues until we can safely gather again.

NDDVA

facebook.com/NDDVA/

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/

Dilworth VFW Post 1223

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

Fargo VFW Post 762

facebook.com/fargovfwclub/

West Fargo VFW Post 7564

facebook.com/VFW7564.org/

North Dakota Veterans Educational Training

facebook.com/VeteransEducationalTraining/

Bison Student Veterans

facebook.com/NDSUBSV/

VALOR

facebook.com/valor.veteran.alliance.organization/