EDITORS’ NOTES

Throughout the rich history of this series and consistent with the goals of the student affairs profession, focus has been placed on meeting the needs of special student populations. This volume continues that tradition.

In the 1960s and 1970s, many veterans of the U.S. armed forces, on returning home from Vietnam, discovered that their service was not honored. The war effort had lost popular support, anti-war protests were common, and the country was divided. As a nation, we were unable or unwilling to separate an unpopular war from those who had been sent to fight it. College campuses, often the places where the protests were held, did not respond well to the needs of veterans who became students. And while it is likely that there were individuals who provided exceptional services, little in the literature from that era suggests that campus leaders in general and student affairs professionals in particular understood the needs of students who were making a transition from combat to campus.

During the early years of the twenty-first century, the United States is again a nation at war and, again, those who were sent to fight the wars are coming back and enrolling as students. While popular support for these wars is also an issue, society, including campuses, is responding in mostly positive ways to veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The contributors to this volume are persons who recognize the need to separate attitudes toward war from attitudes toward those who were sent to fight wars. The contributors are involved either as members of the higher education community or with issues related to higher education. The contributors have worked to understand the needs of students who are making the transition from military service, have participated in the development of programs in response to those needs, or have themselves experienced the transition from the military to the campus.

The purpose with which we approached this project was to share information and programmatic initiatives as a way of encouraging campus leaders to seriously and creatively become involved with students on their campuses who are also veterans. Such efforts would include identifying the needs of students and providing resources so that they can successfully achieve their academic goals.

Chapters One through Four are intended as a framework for understanding the experiences of those who have served in the military and then make the transition to college. Chapter One, which we coauthored with Regina L. Garza Mitchell, offers basic research about the current generation of students who have experienced war, using interviews with veterans from
the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. The findings provide a starting point for understanding the contemporary issues facing students who are making the transition from combat to campus. Chapter Two, by Mark Bauman, extends the basic research theme by describing a study of students who served in National Guard and reserve units that were deployed to war zones. It focuses on how disruptive a call to duty can be for students who are still in school and how student services administrators and others on campus can support their deployment and return to college. In Chapter Three, Corey B. Rumann and Florence A. Hamrick provide a historical perspective on the relationship between higher education and students who have served in the military. They also offer suggestions for services and support programs that student affairs professionals can use to assist student veterans. Margaret Baechtold and Danielle M. De Sawal break new ground in Chapter Four with a piece about women veterans. Focusing on gender identity, they present information about the concerns of female students who have served in the military.

Chapters Five through Eight focus on programs that can help campuses become veteran-friendly by providing exemplars of good practices. Several of these initiatives are designed to extend services to the families of veterans. In the student services profession, we have always valued the sharing of ideas, and that is the intent of this group of chapters. Concern for the well-being of veterans is exhibited across society in various ways. In Chapter Five, Jayne M. Lokken, Donald S. Pfeffer, James McAuley, and Christopher Strong detail efforts to support military-affiliated students in Minnesota. They demonstrate how state agencies—including a college and university system office, an individual university within the system, and the veterans affairs department—collaborated to assist students and improve the chances for their success. In Chapter Six, Teresa Johnson shares lessons learned from her university, which has had a tradition of assisting veterans since the first Gulf War. In Chapter Seven, Deborah Ford, Pamela Northrup, and Lusharon Wiley offer ideas from their institution for creating partnerships and initiatives for veterans and active-duty military personnel who are students. Both Chapters Six and Seven provide important examples of programs and services for campus administrators to consider. Chapter Eight, by John Summerlot, Sean-Michael Green, and Daniel Parker, describes student veterans organizations, including their history, formation, and roles.

In an effort to provide specialized information, Chapter Nine, which David coauthored with Michele Spires, offers a look at a nationwide program that assists severely injured veterans in making a successful transition to college. Finally, in Chapter Ten, Michael McGrevey and Darryl Kehrer describe federal programs that are open to students who have served in the military, including information about GI Bill benefits that have become available since the September 11 attacks.

As you read this volume, keep in mind that the student services profession has a tradition of developing research-based programs to support the
academic success of student populations with special needs. On some campuses, efforts are under way to identify and establish programs that recognize veterans as a student population with unique needs. In the course of working on this project, we spoke of the need to do research, to share information, and to advocate on behalf of student veterans. As you consider the issues raised in this book, think also of how you can provide that leadership on your campus in order to serve your students.

Robert Ackerman
David DiRamio
Editors

ROBERT ACKERMAN is associate professor of higher education leadership at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV), where he served as vice president for student services from 1986 to 2000. He edited The Mid-Level Manager in Student Affairs and was co-editor of Student Freedom Revisited, both publications of NASPA—Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education. He is a founder of and faculty advisor to the UNLV Student Veterans Organization.

DAVID DIRAMIO is assistant professor of higher education administration at Auburn University. He has coauthored five research articles, including “From Combat to Campus: Voices of Student-Veterans” in the NASPA Journal. He serves as NASPA’s liaison for an American Council on Education initiative to help severely injured veterans attend college.