

March/April 2020

# The Husky Vet Gazette

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## *Contact Us!*

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Due to the University's response to the COVID-19 Virus, UConn's Office of Veterans Affairs & Military Programs will be teleworking until further notice. Our team will be answering all emails and checking phone messages during this time. All of us are committed to supporting all military-affiliated students.

**Email** – [veterans@uconn.edu](mailto:veterans@uconn.edu)

**Phone** – 860-486-2442

**Website** – [www.veterans.uconn.edu](http://www.veterans.uconn.edu)

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## Graduation Cords:

We are making graduation cords available to student Veterans who are graduating this spring, even though we realize commencement ceremonies are cancelled.

**These cords commemorate your successful completion of your degree program here at UConn as a student Veteran.**

Any graduating student Veterans at UConn who are interested in having a graduation cord sent to them can send an email to [Nikki.eberly@uconn.edu](mailto:Nikki.eberly@uconn.edu) and we will mail them out. *Please note: we anticipate mailing them out in early May to students.*

Students from any campus, undergraduate or graduate, who are graduating can receive a cord.

## VA Updates

- **Veterans Affairs** - The VA is encouraging Veterans to call before visiting their VA facility. They're also encouraging Veterans to utilize [online and telehealth services](#) for medical appointments.
- **Vet Centers** – Vet Centers are also continuing to support Veterans through appointments online and by phone. [Find a Vet Center near you!](#)
- **Veterans Crisis Line** – Need help outside of regular business hours? Call 1-800-273-8255 and press 1. Or go to <https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/> which also has many useful online resources.
- **GI Bill** – Good News with the Senate, House and President fixing the issues with the G.I. Bill so student Veterans will still receive their educational benefits despite classes transitioning online.

# Message from the Director

On March 23<sup>rd</sup>, the message below was emailed out from Alyssa Kelleher, Director of UConn's Office of Veterans Affairs & Military Programs:

Hello,

First and foremost, I hope this email finds you and your family well during these uncertain times. I want to provide you all some updates related to the GI Bill and other military affiliated student issues. First, you may have heard about the GI Bill being adjusted for students who have transitioned to online classes, this is due to the language in the legislation for the GI Bill. This weekend, the Senate, House, and President have already passed a bill fixing this issue. As long as you remain at your current rate of pursuit, your benefits will not be affected.

The West Haven VA is preparing for an influx of COVID patients and currently has 30 isolation rooms set up. They are also working on setting up a drive-up testing site in Orange, CT in addition to testing at their two main facilities. Other VA resources are very limited at this time. See FAQ's from the VA here: <https://www.va.gov/coronavirus-veteran-frequently-asked-questions/>. Importantly, the Vet Centers are still open for counseling, although they are encouraging video or telephone sessions, and some locations are requiring it.

If any of our students are facing hardship due to being unable to work or other financial issues related to COVID19 or the quarantine, please reach out to our office and we can connect you to various state or military related resources.

We are all checking our email and voice messages throughout the day, and are available for your questions about anything included in this email or any additional concerns you may have. Please continue to send in your Form D's as you register for upcoming semesters. We are processing them remotely as we receive them. We are here for all of you, please stay healthy, stay focused, and don't hesitate to reach out to us.

Sincerely,

Alyssa Kelleher and the Veteran's Affairs and Military Programs Team

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## **Veteran of the Month:**

### **Benji Buchanan**

The Office of Veterans Affairs & Military Programs is pleased to announce Benji Buchanan as the Veteran of the Month. Benji is also the recent recipient of the Willis N. Hawley Service and Leadership Award, which is recognized by the University of Connecticut through the [Student Life Awards](#). The Hawley Award recognizes a student veteran each year who has made significant contributions to the UConn Community.

## **Veteran of the Month (cont'd.)**

Benji is a Senior Computer Science major in the School of Engineering who is graduating in May. He served two years in the Navy, mostly on the USS Wasp (LHD-1) as a firefighter, or a member of "Crash." Benji has been very active in the VSO (Veteran Students Organization) at UConn, serving as the Secretary for the VSO. He has also been a mentor in the FYE (First Year Experience) program, assisting new student Veterans with their transition to UConn and student life. Additionally, Benji has been an integral part of the Veterans Community at UConn, often providing guidance and support to his fellow student Veterans in regards to motivating others to live a healthier lifestyle, providing study tips and in-depth resources for effective studying, and sharing his past struggles with mental health to help other Veterans who are struggling.

Please congratulate Benji on his upcoming graduation and on receiving the Hawley Award!

We are always looking for nominations for Veteran of the Month. If you know someone you'd like to nominate (including a student, faculty, or staff member), please contact Nikki Eberly at [nikki.eberly@uconn.edu](mailto:nikki.eberly@uconn.edu) with the name of the person and reasons for your nomination.