

My name is Janet Steinbacher, and I serve as a Program Manager in the Military and Veterans Services office at The Ohio State University. One of my primary responsibilities in this role is to manage the Major Lawrence Miller Military Community Advocate program. The program started in 2013, and I have worked with the program since 2014.

The program initially started being known as the Veteran Community Advocate program and 12 students who were active-duty, guard, reserve or veterans were part of the first cohort, all based at the Columbus campus. Over time, the program name was changed to the Military Community Advocate program and now includes ROTC members and military dependents. Additionally, the program is now available on all 5 of our regional campuses. This Fall semester, we will have 36 Military Community Advocate positions.

Simply put, this program pairs a selected Military Community Advocate (MCA) with a campus office to provide the student opportunities to expand and sharpen skills, be in community with other MCAs, and to build community and share resources with other military connected students. This helps our big campus feel a little bit smaller. This program is also instrumental in helping offices who take on an advocate learn about the life of a military connected student and frankly those in the assigned offices that work with an advocate become a personal resource for the greater military connected community. This program definitely offers connections on both sides.

At OSU, our advocates work approximately 5 hours a week in their assigned office and are asked to complete a project or offer programming that maps back to a topic area of the office to which they are assigned. Those offices may be an academic unit like the College of Business, College of Social Work, etc., but they may also be assigned to work in a student engagement area such as Career Services, Student Wellness Center, and Off Campus and Commuter Student Services. Although they must follow University guidelines in doing such, they really do get to display creativity with their offerings. Let me tell you about a few projects/programs that have been completed, because I think it speaks to the goals of this program.

Our career services Advocate provided a private tour of the large career fair on campus thirty minutes before it opened, so that our students could catch their breath for a moment, as some don't handle crowds well. They could get the lay of

the land before they actually participated. Our MCA with Career Services has also learned how to help military students with their resumes to translate their military experiences into concepts that a civilian reader may more easily recognize.

An MCA hosts networking nights with a variety of community-based groups that provide mentoring relationships for military connected students.

Our MCA at the Marion campus has just worked with campus officials and other military students to install a bee apiary in their campus prairie with the help of the Central Ohio Beekeepers Association and is working to establish a military garden area there as well. Those are extremely therapeutic endeavors.

One of our advocates who is studying in our Speech and Hearing program worked with her faculty member to offer hearing tests to our veterans and provided students with resources if they needed further help.

We've had etiquette dinners, dresses for success workshops, private mixes with employers after career fairs, and employment lunch and learns. We've also offered hikes in the metro parks, been apple picking at a central ohio orchard and offered a ceramic painting class at a local business. All of these events allow participants to expand their network and feel connected to campus and the surrounding areas.

In closing, we hope that each of our Military Community Advocates is proud to list their MCA experience on their resume, that they can speak to the skills they have gained and the connections they have made, and that their service to campus is recognized by future employers.