

Ribbon-cutting held for Veterans' Lounge in Nixon Hall

Monday, April 21, 2014



At the ribbon-cutting (from left): Vice President for Student Affairs David Herman, President Virginia Horvath, SUNY Fredonia Veterans Scholarship recipient Erin Dorozynski, Vice President for Advancement David Tiffany, Veterans Affairs work-study student Mark Mackey, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Terry Brown and SUNY Fredonia Veterans Affairs Administrator Ben Hartung.

The official ribbon-cutting ceremony was held April 18 for the Veterans' Lounge, a comfortable space in Nixon Hall set aside for student veterans and dependents of military service members enrolled at SUNY Fredonia.

The dedicated space for study, socializing and programming events was established to better assist a growing number of student veterans, service members and their families in the transition from military to college life, according to Benjamin Hartung, Veterans Affairs administrator at SUNY Fredonia.

SUNY Fredonia President Virginia Horvath said the lounge is reflective of the campus commitment to provide a welcoming and inclusive environment for service members by providing a dedicated space for them to connect with each other and to study.

“The creation of lounge is a direct response to the numerous requests over the past several years from our students and was accomplished with the outstanding support and donations by various sources throughout our campus community,” Hartung added. It is also consistent with SUNY Fredonia’s designation as a “Military Friendly School” by Victory Media, a media entity for military personnel transitioning into civilian life.

“Since the creation of the Post 911 GI Bill in 2009, the number of students assisted through the SUNY Fredonia VA Office has nearly doubled and now averages around 75 students per semester, so there has been a demonstrated growing need for a dedicated space for these students,” Hartung explained. “We saw this as an opportunity to better serve our veterans and as a way to honor their service to the country.”

The Nixon Hall space, which formerly housed ResNet and the VA office, was chosen due to accessibility, convenience and availability. ResNet and VA offices were relocated last fall into larger spaces at 154 McGinnies Hall.

The 400-square-foot lounge is comprised of a main room, furnished with cushion chairs, end tables, a large HD television and wall-mounted rack stocked with VA brochures; a study room, equipped with a computer and printer; and meeting area that features a microwave, refrigerator, a table and chairs. A dark-blue area rug containing the emblems of the five military branches highlights the main room.

“We had some input from veterans about what they would like to see in the lounge, such as a television, a computer and printer, and wireless access,” Hartung said.

Hung in the main room are framed vintage military posters, including James Montgomery Flagg’s best-known work – the 1917 Uncle Sam recruitment poster – and Joe Rosenthal’s iconic Raising the Flag on Iwo Jima photograph.

A “soft” opening of the lounge was held at the end of the fall semester, in time for Dead Week and final exams. Hartung said reaction to the new lounge has been very positive. “It’s one of those things that people enjoy having their own personal space.”

Open seven days a week, 7 a.m. to 9 p.m., the lounge is available to current student veterans, service members and children of veterans who receive educational entitlements based on a parent’s military service.

“The new Veterans Lounge builds upon our campus tradition and commitment of providing outstanding transition assistance programming for our students. The university has been very dedicated and conscientious in taking care of these special students — many of whom have returned from the front lines of Afghanistan and Iraq, and who truly help make our campus a special place,” Hartung said.