Hi, I am Bill Brown, Director of the Military Connection Center and a retired Army officer. I would like to introduce you to ODU’s Military Connection Center which is, as the name implies, a center developed to support our military related students. With more than 6,000, or 25% of our students, being in or tied to the military in some way, it is important for us to fully support this segment of our student body. With the largest Navy base just 2 miles from our campus and all branches of the military having bases in the Hampton Roads region, ODU has a great opportunity to attract, retain, and graduate a large number of those who serve our nation. I feel confident that ODU is leading the way in how we work with our military and their families and as they first make contact with us through to graduation and beyond.

Here’s how you can reach me, at any time.

The Military Connection Center was established in the fall of 2013 after an internal study determined what veterans and military affiliated students’ needs were on our campus. The MCC serves our military-affiliated students as the ‘hub’ that responds to current and prospective students. The MCC will help connect students with the right campus, or off campus, resources whether it be about their GI Bill benefits, transferring in credit from other schools or military service, or looking for help with finding a career or job while they are at ODU.

The Military Connection Center is housed in the Division of Student Engagement & Enrollment Services and is located in the Student Success Center in the Perry Library. We are committed to assisting all military-affiliated students, who we define as veterans, those still serving in the military whether on active duty, in the reserves or in the National Guard, and the spouses and children of our veterans and military as they successfully navigate the transition to academic life. Our goal is to provide comprehensive support for students to succeed at ODU from the point of admission through graduation and beyond.

The MCC is staffed by Veterans, student veterans and military family members who understand what it means to be in the military and make sure students get the information or assistance
needed. We know military members and families have unique needs and the MCC and its staff pledge to serve each one of our military-affiliated students to make sure they all earn their degree and find meaningful employment.

The MCC provides a broad array of services to support military-affiliated students, as well as faculty and staff who work with them. We utilize a seamless service delivery model to assist students with the areas as listed on this slide:

- Adjusting to the ODU Community
- Navigate the required administrative processes for admission and finance
- Find Peer sponsors and faculty mentors
- Connect with Campus Resources
- Secure Academic tutoring advice
- Locate opportunities for student employment through the VA work study program
- Participate in educational and social programs
- Identify community Resources

We are contacted every day by prospective and newly admitted military members who have no experience with higher education and want to make sure they are doing everything correctly. Coming from the military, they know that doing things the right way the first time is important, and I have been really impressed how diligent many of them are in preparing to start their studies at ODU. Sometimes it feels like some of them plan their arrival and time at ODU with more detail than we did during some operations in Iraq! They take it very seriously and are glad to have our office and our Student Veterans to help explain things to them.

In order to meet the goals just shown, we engage in a variety of activities and programs to reach our military-affiliated students. One area that has been very successful has been holding a Military Transition to ODU program prior to the start of each semester. Offices from across campus are on hand as we introduce a Veteran heavy audience to the different departments they will interact with during their time at ODU. We also sponsor our Student Veterans
Association which is an official ODU Student Organization and winner of last year’s Student Organization of the Year award. We are also working to help our military feel welcome at ODU and are doing this through a ‘Sponsorship Program’ which is similar to a program all branches of the military use to help newly assigned personnel learn their way around their new base. Student veterans volunteer to serve as a sponsor to newly arriving student veterans and help them get familiar with campus and to serve as someone they can ask any question, no matter how silly they may think it is. The Department of Veterans Affairs has also placed one of its vocational rehab counselors in the MCC under an agreement with ODU to help our veterans with disability ratings as they use their VA benefits to attend ODU.

From time to time, we have been called on to assist faculty and staff in working with Student Veterans and military affiliated students. While the majority of our Veterans and MAS are working hard and doing very well at ODU, there are some who may experience some difficult times at ODU due to past military experiences or due to having trouble getting used to being on a campus. If you sense any of this is happening with your students, please feel free to reach out to me and to our center; we will work with you and your student to resolve the situation and help the student focus on their academics. In the last year, we have helped student veterans find housing, obtain loans to pay off debts, and have helped as they were called to military training during the school year, something that does happen quite a bit for our reservist and National Guard students. We also helped a faculty member who suspected their student was using military training as an excuse for not completing course work. If you do not understand what a student is telling you or may be going through, feel free to call and we will help.

Finally, the ODU website has a lot of good information for our military-affiliated students with our campus wide website redesign project, all military related links are located at one address. We also have a very easy to remember email address at the MCC, military@odu.edu, and we are glad to help our military affiliated students and our faculty and staff with any military related issues. We are in Room 1000 of the Student Success Center and can be reached at military@odu.edu or 757-683-7153.
In conclusion, just let me welcome you to ODU and remind you that the Military Connection Center is here to provide support anytime that you need us. Glad to have you at ODU!