# Veteran and Military Services Council

# Washington State Student Services Commission

Overview:

Washington State Student Services Commission (WSSSC) currently fosters eight Student Services councils designed to facilitate cross-system collaboration between the Community and Technical College system. These councils provide subject matter experts, area administrators, and support staff an organizational structure to work on current CTC concerns and guide future direction and innovation. Veterans and Military Services staff across the CTC system would like to have access to the same support structure as these other Student Services areas.

Objective:

* Increase awareness and cooperation on issues affecting military and veteran students statewide
* Provide a format for training and cultural competencies for school certifying officials, advisers, administrators, etc.
* Increase collaboration between military and veteran services specialists and closely related service areas
* Create a representative body to liaise with the Federal Veterans Affairs Administration and Washington State Community and Technical College representatives

Proposal:

With the prospective increase in military connected students across the Washington State Community and Technical College system, an increase in the demands on VA school certifying officials with the advent of Post 9/11 GI Bill and the 2018 Colmery (Forever) GI Bill, and the dissolution of the Department of Defense Navy College Office, now is the time to create a supportive network for veteran and military service specialists within our system. During the 2016 – 2017 academic year the CTC system served 16,885 military connected students (12,335 veterans, 1,317 active duty, 3,233 dependents). To meet the growing military connected student need that each community and technical college has, veteran services specialists engaged in a variety of roles. Each school that is eligible to receive GI Bill funding is required to have a designated liaison to certify VA benefits, commonly known as a School Certifying Official (SCO). The SCO’s responsibility and time and effort have increased over the last nine years since the implementation of the Post 9/11 GI Bill in 2009, relative to the previous iterations of veterans educational benefits.

Council Criteria:

Veterans and military services at community and technical colleges in Washington State meet the following criteria required for formally recognized councils:

1. **Represent administrative areas that are central to the work of student services and the colleges**.

Each community and technical college in Washington State that is eligible to receive and process VA education benefits is required to have a veteran services liaison, i.e. School Certifying Official. This position is usually housed in Financial Aid, Student Development, or Enrollment Services.

1. **The administrative areas are represented on at least two-thirds of the community and technical colleges.**

This area is represented on all of the CTC schools. See attachment A.

1. **Work to standardize or improve practices across the system.**

This is already happening informally with SCO’s and other veteran services representatives meeting semi-annually with the State Approving Agencies and VA Education Liaison Representatives. Veteran and military services representatives from Washington also meet at the Western Association for Veteran Education Specialists (WAVES) and National Association of Veteran Program Administrators. This council would focus on WA CTC system needs and processes with provided support from WSSSC.

1. **Share expertise and advocacy on significant functional areas.**

 This would occur by holding regular quarterly or semi-annual meetings for the council. The council would also utilize communication methods such as group listserv, website, SharePoint, etc. The council would also seek to bring in Subject Matter Experts to provide trainings for new and current members on relevant veteran and military services topics.

1. **Available to be assigned work from the WSSSC work plan**.

 The council would receive and respond to assigned work from WSSSC.

1. **Once established, develop annual work plan that aligns with the WSSSC work plan.**

The council will establish an annual work plan once approved by WSSSC.