



2025 IUC Military-Connected Student Symposium

THANK YOU to our Panelists and Moderators:



Laura Lanese

President and CEO, Inter-University Council of Ohio

Laura has been President and CEO of the Inter-University Council of Ohio since December 2022 and advocates on behalf of the IUC's Presidents' Council, comprising the presidents of Ohio's 14 public universities. Prior to joining the IUC, Laura was a leader and a member of the Ohio House of Representatives, where she served as Assistant Majority Whip and Chair of the Higher Education Committee. Additionally, Laura worked as an Assistant Attorney General with the US Department of Justice and as an attorney with the US District Court. She also served in both the Ohio Air National Guard and the US Army Reserve. Laura received her LLM from Georgetown University, her JD from The Ohio State University, and her BA from Miami University. She is the author of four books, one on Ohio State football and three on local history. She and her husband Mike live in central Ohio and have three adult children.



Ted Carter

President, The Ohio State University

Walter "Ted" Carter Jr. is the 17th president of The Ohio State University. Since arriving in January 2024, he has dedicated his time to learning about the Ohio State community and understanding what makes this university uniquely great. His current tenure continues a collaborative leadership style honed during a four-decade career in higher education and the United States Navy.

Carter previously led the University of Nebraska System, the U.S. Naval Academy, and the U.S. Naval War College. He is also a retired vice admiral and naval aviator who has given 38 years of service to our country and logged more than 6,300 flying hours.

Session 1: The Value Proposition of Student Military Community Advocates (MCA) on the Campus and to the State



Facilitator: Jim Miller

President, National Veterans Leadership Foundation

Jim Miller has 35 years serving in several key leadership roles at The Ohio State University. Most recently, Jim served as Associate to the Dean for The Ohio State University's Fisher College of Business. In his role, Miller oversaw all activities related to development, marketing, and external relationships of the college.

Before joining the Fisher College of Business, Miller held leadership roles in the Office of Technology Commercialization and Office of the CFO where his guidance created a roadmap for change resulting in \$650 million of savings over a five-year period and identified private resources to advance university technologies.

His numerous accomplishments garnered him the 2012 Mayor's Award for Patriotic Service, The Ohio State University Alumni Association Distinguished Alumni award, and award for service to students presented in the name of Josephine Failer.

Miller's passion for veteran affairs inspired him to support the launch of the Major Lawrence Miller Veterans Community Advocacy Program at The Ohio State University and a number of other programs in honor of his father aimed at helping connect veterans and families to resources and experiences that will ensure our veteran students accomplish their mission of academic and professional success.



Kevin Cullen

Colonel, US Air Force (Retired); Assistant Vice Provost & Director, Military & Veterans Services, The Ohio State University

Kevin P. Cullen, Colonel, US Air Force (Retired) is Ohio State University's Assistant Vice Provost and Director for Military & Veterans Services supporting the 2,300+ military, veteran, and family member students attending the university, including the Navy/Marine, Army, and Air Force/Space Force ROTC units.

Prior to his military transition, he served as Ohio State's Department Chair for Aerospace Studies and the Commander of the Air Force ROTC Detachment 645. Additionally, Kevin consults for Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory as a Senior Professional Staff Strategic Systems Analyst specializing in nuclear operations.



Melissa Shivers

Senior Vice President for Student Life, The Ohio State University

Dr. Melissa Shivers has dedicated her nearly 30-year career in higher education to removing barriers to student and staff success, serving her community, and contributing to the world in ways that help to advance the health, safety, and security of others. As the Senior Vice President for Student Life at The Ohio State University since January 2020, Dr. Shivers serves on the university's senior administration team and

provides leadership and strategic oversight on matters related to the student experience. She is proud to work alongside an extraordinary team that serves more than 60,000 Buckeyes on six campuses throughout the state of O-H-I-O! The team's foundational aspiration is to challenge and inspire students and staff to take every opportunity to engage, learn and thrive throughout their time at Ohio State, and beyond. Dr. Shivers has broad leadership responsibility for numerous university operations affecting students outside the classroom, including the residential experience, dining services, the Ohio Union and student activities, student leadership and service, mental health support, career development, recreational sports, health care and wellness programs, disability services, belonging and inclusion strategies and education, off campus and commuter student engagement, the student judicial process, student advocacy and crisis intervention.

Before becoming a Buckeye, Dr. Shivers was a Student Affairs leader at the University of Iowa, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, University of Georgia, Clemson University and Georgia Southern University. Dr. Shivers has held faculty appointments at multiple institutions and also served as a faculty member for NASPA's Institute for Aspiring Senior Student Affairs Officers/Vice Presidents for Student Affairs.

A proud first-generation college graduate and member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated, Dr. Shivers holds a BS from Georgia Southern University in Communication Arts, a Master of Education, Counseling and Guidance Services degree from Clemson University and a Doctor of Philosophy, College Student Affairs Administration from the University of Georgia.



Andrea White

Ohio State Representative, 36 House District *State Representative Andrea White is serving her third term in the Ohio House of Representatives. She represents the 36th House District, which includes Kettering, Moraine, Oakwood, Belmont, and portions of Dayton in Montgomery County.*

A long-time resident in the 36th District, White graduated from Centerville High School and received her bachelor's degree from Wright State University. She served as the Clerk of Court for the Kettering Municipal Court from 2004 until she was elected to the House in 2020. While Clerk of Court, Representative White focused on reinventing processes, leveraging technology, and returning millions in revenues and cost savings to improve how government serves its citizens. She also worked on criminal justice issues locally and statewide as legislative co-chair and president of the Ohio Association of Municipal/County Court Clerks.

Session 2: Military-Connected Students on Campus



Facilitator: Major General (Ret.) Deborah Ashenhurst Director of the Ohio Department of Veterans Services

Governor Mike DeWine appointed Maj. Gen. Deborah Ashenhurst (U.S. Army, retired) Director of the Ohio Department of Veterans Services on Jan. 14, 2019. Ashenhurst retired from the U.S. Army and the National Guard in October 2015 after more than 37 years of service. In that time, she served at all levels of command.

In 2011, she was appointed by Ohio Gov. John Kasich to the cabinet-level position of Adjutant General of the State of Ohio, commanding the 17,000 service members of the Ohio National Guard, the Ohio Naval Militia, and the Ohio Military Reserve. She served as Adjutant General until January of 2015. Her career culminated by serving as a Special Assistant to the Vice Chief, National Guard Bureau in Washington, D.C.

Gen. Ashenhurst resides with her husband, Col. Jim Ashenhurst (U.S. Army, retired), in Hilliard, Ohio.



Susan Edwards President, Wright State University

As president of Wright State University, Dr. Edwards is committed to ensuring that her students have every opportunity to combine academic knowledge & experiential learning, directly linking them to employment opportunities. She collaborates closely with Wright-Patterson Air Force Base and regional military contractors to ensure a seamless workforce pipeline.



Randy Spade Executive Director of Veteran Services & Undergraduate Admissions, Ashland University

Randy Spade is the Executive Director of Military & Veteran Services at Ashland University, where he has served since 2015. He has a bachelor's degree in political science and a master's degree in American government. His career has been dedicated to improving the lives of military-connected students in higher education through programming, resources and advocacy.

Session 3: Military-Connected Students in the Workforce



Facilitator: Major General John Harris, Jr. Adjutant General, Ohio National Guard

Major General John Harris served as the Assistant Adjutant General for Army since January 11, 2011. He began his military career in 1981 when he enlisted in the Ohio Army National Guard. He received a commission in 1984 through Officer Candidate School.

General Harris has commanded at the platoon detachment, company, and squadron levels while serving in staff assignments at the battalion, squadron, and joint force headquarters level. Recent assignments include Chief of Staff (Joint Force Headquarters), Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel (Joint Force Headquarters), and Commander of Task Force Lancer in Kosovo.

THE ADJUTANT GENERAL commands the Ohio Army National Guard and the Ohio Air National Guard with approximately 17,000 members. These units can be mobilized at any time by the Governor of the State of Ohio in his capacity as Commander in Chief upon the declaration of a state of emergency. Over 27,000 Ohio National Guard members have been called to federal service in support of overseas contingency and homeland security operations since September 11th, 2001, highlighting the dual role of the Citizen-Soldier and Citizen-Airmen.



Ryan Blackburn
Project Director, Military & Federal, JobsOhio

Ryan Blackburn is a native of central Ohio and a United States Air Force veteran. While serving on active duty from 2004-2010 as an Operations Intelligence Analyst, Ryan deployed to Iraq twice and once to Afghanistan, supporting F-16 tactical operations.

After completing his service to the Air Force in 2010, Ryan utilized his post-military education benefits to pursue a bachelor's degree at The Ohio State University in Business Administration and then a graduate leadership certificate in Public and Non-profit Leadership from the John Glenn College of Public Affairs.

Starting in 2022, Ryan now serves as the Director of Projects and Programs with JobsOhio, supporting Ohio's statewide efforts to preserve, protect, and expand its military and federal installations. Ryan currently serves as Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors for Honor Flight Columbus, a nonprofit organization dedicated to honoring America's veterans with free trips to Washington, D.C., to visit their service and war memorials.



Joseph Giffen, IV
Associate Director, Career Exploration and Development, Kent State University

Dr. Joe Giffen is a dedicated educator and career services professional with a focus on supporting student veterans and enhancing career counseling practices. He earned his Doctor of Education in Leadership for Organizations from the University of Dayton, where his research centered on the needs of both student veterans and career practitioners during career counseling appointments. His work advocates for targeted interventions to help veterans transition from military to civilian careers, and for improved training for career counselors working with this population. Dr. Giffen's background as a former Sergeant in the U.S. Army National Guard, combined with his academic expertise, uniquely positions him as a leader in the field of veteran career services.



Garet Kuecher
Senior Associate, Corporate Technology Financial Analysis, JPMorgan Chase (Former MCA)

Garet enlisted back in 2008 straight out of high school. He served six years active-duty Army as a Forward Observer and served with the 173rd Airborne Brigade, deploying to Afghanistan in 2009 with them, and then served in 101st Airborne Division until 2014. After his transition, Garet enrolled into college and attended The Ohio State University. During his tenure at Ohio State, he was a fellow MCA in Athletics during his senior year and graduated in 2018 with a bachelor's degree in Finance. Garet has worked at three Fortune 500 companies in Columbus, Ohio, and currently serves on the leadership team of JP Morgan Chase's Veterans Business Resource Group (BRG). In this role, he helps enhance employee experiences, fosters networking opportunities, and creates value within the organization to support the veteran community.

Presentation of Awards:



Chancellor Mike Duffey **Ohio Department of Higher Education**

Governor Mike DeWine appointed Mike Duffey the eleventh Chancellor of the Ohio Department of Higher Education (ODHE) in January 2024. As Chancellor, he oversees the state's two-year and four-year colleges and universities and Ohio Technical Centers. In addition, the Chancellor provides policy guidance to the Governor and the Ohio General Assembly and carries out state higher education policy.

Prior to being named Chancellor, Mike Duffey served ODHE as Senior Vice Chancellor for five years, collaboratively working on policy proposals for the administration, including tuition guarantees, transcript release, student debt relief, short-term credentials, Ohio's new merit scholarship, increases to need-based aid, and support for innovation and technology commercialization, among other topics. Before the DeWine-Husted administration, Duffey served eight years in the Ohio House of Representatives, where he chaired the Higher Education and Workforce Committee, vice-chaired the legislature's Joint Committee on College Affordability, and co-chaired the Ohio Tuition Trust Authority.

Duffey has a Master of Business Administration from The Ohio State University and a bachelor's degree in political science from the University of Michigan. He graduated as a Weidler Scholar at The Ohio State University. Prior to serving in the legislature, Duffey was twice elected to Worthington City Council and worked in the private sector in external relations, communications, and journalism.

Award Recipients:



Brian Stewart **State Representative, Ohio House of Representatives; Veteran and Former Military** **Connected Student**

Brian Stewart is currently serving his 3rd term as State Representative for Ohio's 12th District covering all of Pickaway and Madison Counties, and a portion of western Franklin County. He is a practicing attorney with the Law Office of Brian Stewart in Circleville, a former Pickaway County Commissioner, and an infantry veteran of the Iraq War. In the House, Representative Stewart serves on the Health and Judiciary Committee and is Chair of the Finance Committee.



Andrea White **Ohio State Representative, 36 House District**

State Representative Andrea White is serving her third term in the Ohio House of Representatives. She represents the 36th House District, which includes Kettering, Moraine, Oakwood, Belmont, and portions of Dayton in Montgomery County.

A long-time resident in the 36th District, White graduated from Centerville High School and received her bachelor's degree from Wright State University. She served as the Clerk of Court for the Kettering Municipal Court from 2004 until she was elected to the House in 2020. While Clerk of Court, Representative White focused on reinventing processes, leveraging technology, and returning millions in revenues and cost savings to improve how government serves its citizens. She also worked on criminal justice issues locally and statewide as legislative co-chair and president of the Ohio Association of Municipal/County Court Clerks.

Closing Remarks:



Bill Johnson President, Youngstown State University

Bill Johnson began his tenure as the 10th President of Youngstown State University in January 2024. President Johnson has a wealth of leadership experience spanning impactful roles in various and diverse industry sectors, from a very humble beginning on a rural family farm to a distinguished 26+ year military career in the United States Air Force, to founding and leading successful high-tech business ventures, to serving as a Chief Information Officer for a global publicly traded manufacturing company, to a 13-year career serving as a Member of the United States Congress representing Ohio's 6th Congressional District.

Bill Johnson's interests and dedication to investing in the next generation align with the university's focus on securing a sustainable future for YSU and leveraging the institution's strengths in emerging technologies, academic excellence, workforce education, and innovation. President Johnson and his wife, LeeAnn, have a son, Nathan, who is an undergraduate at Youngstown State University.

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSOR

Thanks to our incredible sponsor, *Oplign*, for their generous support of IUC's 2nd Annual Military Connected Student Symposium. Oplign's partnership is vital to the success of this event and we are deeply grateful for their commitment to our mission!

Sponsor Brief:

OPLIGN

Oplign was founded by U.S. Special Operations Veterans with extensive industry experience in identifying, quantifying, and deploying talent around the world. We work the problem before we get worked by the problem.

Gone are the sleepless nights coming through resumes, using antiquated methods to find, manage, and report on relevant labor data. Oplign is an all-AI-enabled application that gathers all market data for streamlined workforce configuration, employee optimization, and organizational design.

Simply put, their mission is to "Get America Working."