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Statement of Allison G. Jones, Assistant Vice Chancellor
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Introduction

Chairman Akaka, Ranking Member Craig, and members of the committee, thank you for inviting me to discuss California's "Troops to College" initiative and the role played by the California State University in the program, which is designed to provide educational opportunities to active duty men and women serving in our armed forces and to veterans who have served their country. The California State University commends the Committee for its attention to exploring ways to provide enhanced educational access to these men and women, many of whom have served with distinction in Afghanistan and Iraq, by ensuring that all who choose to do so can pursue a postsecondary education.

Today, I am pleased to share with you information about California's Troops to College initiative, which was announced by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger in March 2006. Led by system Chancellor Charles B. Reed, the California State University system has taken a particularly aggressive role in this initiative, whose mission is to make California the nation's leader and model in providing educational opportunities and assistance to active duty service members and veterans. As part of this effort, the California State University has been working with the full range of stakeholders throughout the state to expand its outreach programs, academic advising, and financial aid advising in addition to providing on-base classes and distance education opportunities. My remarks will detail California's Troops to College initiative, the challenges California has faced in implementing this program, the progress to date, and the exceptional achievements California State University campuses have made in expanding their outreach and education programs to active duty personnel and veterans.

To place into context the role of the California State University, I would like to begin by sharing with you information about our university system and students.

The California State University

Background

Few, if any, university systems can match the scope of the California State University system. The California State University is the largest four-year university system in the country, with 23 campuses, approximately 417,000 students and 46,000 faculty and staff. Its 23 campuses are distributed throughout California to ensure access to the largest number of students. The

California State University's mission is to provide high-quality, affordable education to meet the ever-changing needs of the people of California. Since the system's creation in 1961, it has awarded about 2 million degrees. We currently award approximately 84,000 degrees each year.

The California State University plays a critical role in preparing outstanding candidates for the job market. Our graduates help drive California's aerospace, healthcare, entertainment, information technology, biomedical, international trade, education, and multimedia industries. The California State University confers 65 percent of California's bachelor's degrees in business, 52 percent of its bachelor's degrees in agricultural business and agricultural engineering, and 45 percent of its bachelor's degrees in computer and electronic engineering. The California State University also educates the professionals needed to keep the state running. It provides bachelor's degrees to teachers and education staff (87 percent), criminal justice workers (89 percent), social workers (87 percent) and public administrators (82 percent). Altogether, about half the bachelor's degrees and a third of the master's degrees awarded each year in California are from the California State University.

One key feature of the California State University is its affordability. For 2007/08, the California State University's systemwide fee for full-time undergraduate students is \$2,722. With individual campus fees added in, the California State University's total fees average \$3,215, which is the lowest among any of the California State University's comparison public institutions nationwide.

California State University Students

California State University students are not necessarily the traditional 18- to 22-year-olds. A recent survey of California State University students revealed the following about students enrolled at the California State University:

- The average undergraduate age is 25,
- About 88 percent are commuters,
- 44 percent are independent from their parents,
- Nearly 25 percent have dependents,
- Four out of five have jobs, and 36 percent work full time,
- Nearly 30 percent of the students are the first generation in their family to attend college,
- 40 percent come from households where English is not the main language spoken, and
- 54 percent of California State University students are students of color.

The California State University prides itself on its ability to provide college access to students across California's increasingly diverse population. The California State University provides more than half of all undergraduate degrees granted to the state's Latino, African American and Native American students.

Additionally, California State University students are closely connected and committed to the communities in which they live. More than 185,000 California State University students participate in community service annually, donating nearly 30 million hours, the minimum wage equivalent of \$200 million.

The CSU and the Economy

In today's economy, higher education is more important than ever. According to the Census Bureau, a college graduate's lifetime earnings (\$2.1 million) are almost double that of a high school graduate. But a higher degree is more than just a ticket to a better job. It can improve the economic situation of both individuals and their communities. That's why it is in everyone's interest - communities, businesses, and educators - to help students succeed in school and pursue the highest degree they can. In fact, we cannot state this fact strongly enough: The future success of our country's economy is inextricably linked with the educational attainment of our students.

Given this conviction, the California State University recently sought to measure its impact, economic and otherwise, on California's businesses and communities. A comprehensive study of the California State University and its campuses found that California State University-related expenditures create \$13.6 billion in economic activity, support 207,000 jobs and generate \$760 million in state taxes in a year. The report also found that the state of California reaps a four-fold benefit from every dollar it invests in the California State University. This study further cemented our belief that the California State University's work is tightly bound to that of our local communities and economy. Essentially, we see ourselves as building bridges - building continuity across the spectrum from education, to the economy and workforce, to the community.

All of these characteristics of the California State University have positioned it to provide exceptional access to active duty service members and to veterans.

Troops to College: A California Initiative

California Military Demographics

California is home to an extraordinary number of veterans and service members. For example, the state leads the nation in the number of veterans: approximately 9.2% (2.2 million) of the nation's 24 million veterans reside in California. Of active duty men and women in the U.S. Armed Forces, 11.7% (170,000 of 1.45 million) are from California. Over 12% of all active duty personnel are stationed in California (175,000 of 1.45 million). In addition, more than 20,000 active Air Force and Army National Guard are stationed in California, over 3,000 of whom are currently deployed worldwide.

The Montgomery GI Bill education benefit is a principal reason American men and women enter the U.S. military. Each member of the military who either serves in California or is a California resident is a potential candidate for admission to one of California's 109 California Community Colleges, 23 California State University campuses, and 10 University of California campuses.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) estimates that 27,000 veterans migrate to California annually. According to USDVA, the average age of these exiting veterans is 27.3. Eighty-four percent are male, and sixteen percent are female. Ninety-six percent of exiting veterans are enrolled in the Montgomery GI Bill. According to the USDVA, approximately 70% utilize some portion of their benefits, but sources at military.com have estimated that fewer than 50% actually use their education benefits toward the completion of a degree. According to USDVA, just 41,000 veterans are currently using such benefits in California.

While current usage of benefits is difficult to pin down precisely, it is clear that veterans (and active duty service members) are underutilizing the outstanding and affordable public educational options available to them in California. The California Community Colleges, the California State University, and the University of California represent tremendous untapped opportunities for exiting veterans, both for California residents and for service members stationed in California.

California Public Colleges and Universities

California is uniquely positioned to serve the nation's veterans and men and women on active duty. There are three public systems of higher education in California.

The California Community Colleges provide educational, career and technical education, and transfer programs to over 2.5 million students in its 109 community colleges. See <http://www.cccco.edu/>. As described above, the California State University provides low-cost, accessible and affordable education to over 417,000 students at its 23 campuses. See <http://www.calstate.edu/>. The University of California provides world-class undergraduate and graduate education through the doctoral level to over 209,000 students at its 10 campuses. See <http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/>.

State Benefits for Veterans and Service Members

California law waives the state's non-resident tuition for active duty men and women and their dependents who are not California residents and who enroll in college while stationed in California. Non-resident tuition is also waived for veterans who were on active duty for more than one year immediately prior to discharge. Non-resident tuition is waived for their dependents as well. Thereafter, it is expected that veterans and their dependents who enroll in California public universities will become California residents (a relatively simple process); thus, effective with their second year of enrollment they would continue to be entitled to pay only the in-state fees.

This is an important benefit. At the California State University, for example, all students, both California residents and non-residents, are required to pay the undergraduate California State University State University Fee of \$2,772. California State University non-resident tuition (an additional \$10,170) is waived for qualified non-California residents.

California's Troops to College Initiative

Because of California's role in leading the nation in the number of veterans and active duty personnel and the availability of California public higher education, in March 2006 Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger charged the California Community Colleges, the California State University, and the University of California, working in collaboration with all military branches, and the California Departments of Veterans Affairs, Education, and Labor and Workforce Development to expand education opportunities for active duty service members and veterans to achieve his vision that California will become the nation's leader and model in providing them with educational opportunities and assistance. To achieve this outcome, the California Community Colleges, the California State University, and the University of California will

expand their respective outreach programs, academic and financial aid advising, and admission opportunities for active duty service members and eligible veterans, in addition to providing on-base classes and distance education.

To oversee the development, implementation, and evaluation of effective programs, the Governor appointed a committee to review the status and achievements, and to establish the future goals of Troops to College. The oversight committee provides policy direction and guidance to both state and military organizations on key active duty and eligible veteran's issues. The Oversight Committee includes the California Secretaries of Education, Labor and Workforce Development, and Veterans Affairs, the chancellor of the California State University, the chancellor of the California Community Colleges, the president of the University of California, and the following military commanders: Commander Marine Corps Installations West; Commander Navy Region Southwest; Commander Space and Missile Systems Center (Los Angeles Air Force Base); Commander National Training Center (U.S. Army, Fort Irwin); Commander U.S. Coast Guard, Pacific Area (Alameda); and the Adjutant General, California National Guard.

The day-to-day implementation of the Troops to College is overseen by the Veterans' Workgroup chaired by Colonel Bucky Peterson, USMC (Ret.), the former Vice President for Development at Sonoma State University, who is now the Liaison to California's Secretary of Education and Special Assistant to the Chancellor of the California State University on matters pertaining to active duty and veterans post secondary education. Allison G. Jones, Assistant Vice Chancellor, Academic Affairs, Office of the Chancellor, the California State University, provides Colonel Peterson and the initiative with broad support from the Chancellor's Office and expertise on all facets of student academic support.

Implementation

A number of challenges faced the group as efforts began to implement the Governor's vision. These included improving communications among all the stakeholders, and especially increasing understanding in the higher education community about relevant military and veteran matters, and conversely, improving understanding in the military community about California's public institutions of higher education.

Under the aegis of the Veterans' Workgroup lead by Colonel Peterson, California higher education began to implement programs to support the Troops to College initiative in May 2006. Five issue and program areas were identified that needed special attention, and a task force was assigned to each area to develop and implement programs that would support this initiative. These five task forces and the achievements to date are outlined below.

Communications, Marketing, and Website Task Force

This task force developed and implemented a veteran website template for use by colleges, universities, and the military, including links between the military and colleges and universities, military.com, and the Office for Veteran's Affairs. All campuses established a "Vets Corner" on their respective campus websites in support of providing timely information to active duty service members and veterans interested earning a baccalaureate or graduate degree. Information about college admission requirements, costs, transfer of military credit, and other

campus veteran support programs is included on these websites, and this information was also distributed to all Education Service Officers (ESO).

Veteran's Outreach Task Force

The Veteran's Outreach Task Force developed and implemented information outreach programs targeted to those on active duty and to veterans about educational opportunities at California public colleges and universities. Community events, organizations, and agencies that work directly with veterans, in addition to county veterans services and veterans hospitals, were identified and provided with information about the Troops to College initiative.

This task force has provided information to active duty and veterans about education requirements for careers related to military experience, implemented the Hire a Hero, Hire a Vet Initiative, incorporated "Troops to College" into the California Department of Veterans Affairs training program, and provided outreach briefings to Veterans Service Organizations and County Veterans Services Offices. Participation in the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) was identified as an effective means to introduce information about California public colleges and universities in a more focused way.

While outreach to veterans was initially addressed, it became clear early in the implementation phase that California needed to reach active duty personnel well before they began to transition out of the military. As a result, the task force turned its attention to identifying and implementing programs to reach men and women on active duty. To achieve this outcome, all colleges were asked to join the Servicemembers Opportunity College (SOC) and to become active in GoArmy and in the Education Support Center (National Guard). College and universities were encouraged to invite all Education Service Officers to their campuses and to conduct Montgomery GI Bill education benefit workshops.

Admission and Financial Aid Task Force

Conversations between military and university representatives quickly highlighted the areas of confusion about university admission policies, including the transferability of military credit. As a result, the task force is reviewing The American Council on Education (ACE) Guide on acceptance and transferability of credit and service experience and with the goal of providing a seamless transition between the military and higher education and shortening the veteran's time to earn a baccalaureate degree.

The Admission and Financial Aid Task Force is also engaged in reviewing the Armed Forces Vocational Aptitude Test (ASVAB) in order to develop an SAT equivalency. The ASVAB was originally designed to predict future academic and occupational success in military occupations. Numerous validation studies indicate the ASVAB assesses academic ability and predicts success in a wide variety of occupations, and there is interest from some colleges and universities to use the ASVAB for admission purposes.

Residency provisions contained in the California Education Code for members of the armed forces need to be reviewed and modified as necessary to provide greater access and waiver of non-resident tuition for all members in the Armed Forces, including the National Guard. On July

5, 2007, the Los Angeles Times reported that Governor Schwarzenegger will continue to seek ways to include support in the state's budget to provide assistance with college tuition to "the 27,000 active duty and National Guard members returning from overseas."

Finally, the task force is identifying policies and/or waivers currently available to help increase admission to and better transition of active duty personnel and veterans to public colleges and universities in California in addition to identifying financial assistance packages available to increase their access to higher education campuses.

Partnership Matrix Task Force

The Partnership Matrix Task Force has identified contacts at each California military base and college campus, implemented active on-base university outreach programs, developed regional service centers consisting of military bases and campuses to provide services, increased communication between military bases and campuses, developed policies and protocols for access to military bases and access to university campuses, and developed a college counseling corps consisting of veteran college alumni to work with active duty servicemen and women.

Best Practices Task Force

This task force has effectively identified models of best practices among campuses and military services that support education for veterans in California public universities, and it is encouraging all universities and colleges to implement these practices in order to reach out more effectively to active duty and veterans. As examples, this task force has developed education fair guidelines to conduct successful education fairs on military installations, developed veterans support teams to assist "soldiers" to transition to becoming students, and developed and implemented effective outreach programs that include participation in job and education fairs, campus veterans support teams, and websites.

The task force has identified a new program, "Boots to Books" that was developed at Citrus College, a California Community College located about 30 miles east of Los Angeles. This innovative program is designed to help veterans transition to civilian life and the college environment. It is the first of its kind in the nation to provide a positive transition step for combat veterans. Taught by a VA counselor who is a combat veteran, all veterans and their families may enroll in this course which is about combat stress, post traumatic stress disorders, and other issues affecting veterans returning to civilian life. The curriculum is specifically designed to increase the student veteran's academic, work, and social success. The class will teach participants interpersonal skills, methods of adapting to civilian life and work careers, and techniques for managing military operational stress. For fall 2007, this course will be a hybrid with an existing counseling course on a trial basis, but it is hoped that the course will become a stand-alone course in the near future. The Troops to College workgroup is exploring ways to expand the availability of courses like this one elsewhere in the state.

California State University Activities to Date

The California State University has taken the lead in implementing the Troops to College initiative. All 23 California State University campuses have established campus veterans support teams that include the deans/directors of enrollment management and admission, directors of academic outreach, campus veterans' liaison (certifying official, military volunteer (retiree), veterans' work-study program), directors of disabled student services, directors of health services and psychological services, and directors of career centers.

In addition, all California State University campuses have implemented veterans' web sites, identified a campus contact person and office that active duty personnel and veterans can contact for individual advising, and implemented regional partnerships with military bases. Campus teams are meeting regularly with military education service officers and regularly visiting military bases to provide on-site counseling and information and analysis of military personnel transcripts. The California State University is also developing distance education programs that will serve active duty men and women.

The Best Practices Task Force identified the following best practice models developed and implemented at California State University campuses that have been recommended for implementation at all campuses: transition programs (San Diego State University), veterans affairs specialists (California State University Sacramento), regional partnership development (California State University San Marcos), outreach (Humboldt State University), and web pages (Humboldt State University, California State University Sacramento, California State University Chico).

The California State University recently met with the American Council on Education's (ACE) Director of Program Evaluations, Center for Lifelong Learning, to discuss ways that the California State University can partner with ACE to provide advice to campuses on how to use more effectively the ACE Guide to the Evaluation of Educational Experiences in the Armed Services to assess military courses and experience. For more than a half century, ACE's Guide to the Evaluation of Educational Experiences in the Armed Services has been the standard reference that colleges and universities use to evaluate learning acquired in military life. With ACE's assistance and guidance, the California State University will be reviewing military courses and experience to determine if work that has been historically been acceptable as elective credit might satisfy campus general education and lower division major prerequisite courses. This would shorten the time to the degree. The California State University has accepted ACE's offer to send ACE representatives to California to meet with campus transcript evaluators to discuss how to assess credit on the basis of the course descriptions. Because the acceptance of academic credit involves faculty, ACE has offered to send faculty from other universities who more routinely use the ACE guide to meet with California State University faculty to explain the content and rigor of the courses. ACE has been successful in helping faculty at other universities understand how to make informed decisions about credit for courses taken in the military as well as credit for experience.

As a result of the Troops to College initiative and discussions between the California State University chancellor and presidents with military leaders, CSU has confirmed ACE's findings that the men and women who serve in today's military frequently recognize that they are capable of handling college-level work after their training, regardless of their high school academic

record. Moreover, much of the training received in the military is heavily grounded in science, mathematics, and technology. Therefore, the California State University is exploring with its administrative and faculty leadership the possibility of developing a new admission requirement for active duty personnel and veterans that recognizes recent training and coursework received in the military, rather than basing admission solely on a high school academic record.

The California State University is also working with ACE and military personnel in California to provide academic advising and education opportunities to severely wounded soldiers.

ACE has indicated that the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs data suggest that 82% of those with a 20% disability rating enroll in postsecondary education. ACE is planning a series of web-based seminars for military vocational rehabilitation counselors who provide information about academic planning and advising. The California State University will participate in these seminars.

Next Steps

To build upon the achievements to date, the Troops to College initiative will continue to implement the following programs:

- Expand advertising and promotion;
- Expand regional partnerships;
- Expand consistent use of ACE Guide in the evaluation of military training for academic credit;
- Develop statewide veterans' website;
- Expand student veterans clubs;
- Explore services to wounded veterans;
- Pilot for distance learning program;
- Support California State University-sponsored legislation (Assembly Bill 950) to expand California's tuition waiver for graduate students; and
- Support national legislation to provide enhanced educational benefits to National Guard.

Proposed Legislation Regarding Education Benefits for Veterans

The California State University is deeply concerned with the affordability of a college education for all students, and is committed to ensuring access to our nation's active duty personnel and veterans. The California State University strongly supports legislation aimed at increasing and improving benefits for veterans, and believes that efforts to enhance educational benefits for the Reserve and National Guard in particular would help broaden the scope and success of initiatives like Troops to College.

Summary

The active and constructive collaboration between the State of California, the U.S. Armed Forces and veterans' entities is already yielding results. More active duty personnel and veterans are exploring high quality, affordable public educational opportunities in California as a result of the increased partnerships between all stakeholders in California. More classes are being offered on base to active duty personnel. State institutions are offering improved advice and services to veterans and military personnel. The California Community Colleges, the California State University, and the University of California are becoming the schools of choice for active duty service members and eligible veterans.