

2025 GGU ANNUAL REPORT

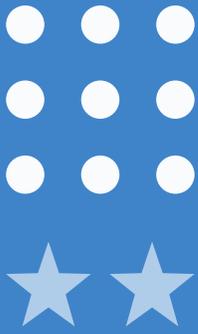
# Continuing the *Mission*: Supporting Those Who *Served*



THE HELEN DILLER CENTER FOR VETERANS OF U.S. MILITARY SERVICE



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“We will continue to strengthen the programs that help veterans transition confidently from military service to higher education and meaningful careers.”

*Brent White, GGU President*



# A Shared Mission

As GGU's new president, I look forward to extending the long-standing commitment of Golden Gate University to military and veteran students. Our university recognizes the unique needs of adult learners and strives to create an environment where service members, veterans, and their families can thrive both academically and personally. That spirit of purpose is one of the reasons I am honored to be part of this community.

The Helen Diller Center for Veterans of U.S. Military Service plays a *central role* in GGU's mission.

The Center helps students feel confident as they begin a new chapter in life, creates a sense of belonging at GGU, and ensures that every veteran has the support they need throughout their journey with us. In 2025, the team broadened access to career preparation for veterans, enhanced the Center's student onboarding processes, and expanded coaching for new and returning students.

As an institution, GGU is forever grateful to the Helen Diller Family Foundation for its dedication to student veterans in San Francisco and for its support of the University. The Foundation's partnership allows us to provide an experience that is both personal and practical for veterans - and the resources to adapt as students' needs evolve.

In 2026, I am excited to carry the Diller Center's work forward and to expand our enrollment of military-affiliated students. We will continue to strengthen the programs that help veterans transition confidently from military service to higher education and meaningful careers, especially in the San Francisco Bay Area. I am excited to work alongside the Diller Center team, our faculty and staff, and our generous donors as we build on GGU's firm foundation of support for military students.

Thank you for your investment in our veterans and for supporting the mission that makes GGU such a *special place*.

**Brent White,**  
President of Golden Gate University

# Our Story of Impact

This year was one of steady progress, close collaboration, and meaningful connections for the military-affiliated students *we serve*.

At the Helen Diller Center, our focus has always been simple: meeting students where they are, understanding their needs, and empowering them to achieve their education and employment goals. In 2025, that work expanded not only in scope but in depth, as we strengthened core services, expanded partnerships, and made sure each student felt supported throughout every step of their academic journey.

Across the Diller Center, our staff continues to deliver hands-on support during key transition points, including onboarding, academic coaching, benefit navigation, and career preparation. Students consistently tell us how much it matters to have someone reach out before challenges become barriers. Their words and their progress remain the most substantial proof of the importance of this work.

We also see meaningful engagement in our student leadership programs and community events. Our Veteran Ambassadors play a vital role in building connections across campus and helping their peers navigate university life. Events during Campus Weeks draw students and staff, creating opportunities for community building and shared celebration. Career resources have also expanded, and now include an interactive digital career resource toolkit and increased collaboration with employers who recognize the value that veterans bring to the workforce.

Our donors make this all possible. Their support enables us to launch new initiatives, refine our services, and respond promptly when students need assistance. Thanks to them, veterans at GGU have access to a level of care, structure, and community that reflects the respect and care they deserve.

Looking ahead, we are excited to work under the leadership of Brent White, who has a track record of unflinching support for the military community. We will continue to strengthen pathways from admission to graduation, deepen partnerships across the city of San Francisco, and expand opportunities that help veterans grow personally, academically, and professionally.

It remains an honor to serve those who have served. Thank you for trusting us with this mission and for walking beside us as we continue to serve the military community.

“Our donors make this all possible. Their support enables us to launch new initiatives, refine our services, and respond promptly when students need assistance.”

Jason Dempsey, *Director of the Helen Diller  
Center for Veterans of U.S. Military Service*





# Our Team

## Mission Support

At the Helen Diller Center, our mission to support military-connected students is advanced every day by a dedicated team. Each member brings experience, perspective, and energy, creating a network of guidance and care that ensures students can focus on learning, growing, and reaching their goals.



### *Marlena Blackman, Deputy Director*

Marlena strengthens the support that surrounds each student, from first-week check-ins to VA certification reminders and targeted retention efforts. She brings energy and creativity to Campus Weeks events, designing interactive experiences that celebrate students' identities and cultivate connection. Her work with cross-department teams and local veteran-serving organizations amplifies the Center's reach, helping to position San Francisco as a city that welcomes and invests in veteran education and employment.



### *Miles Dodge & Todd Farlee, Onboarding Coaches*

Miles approaches onboarding with a personal touch, combining proactive outreach with empathy drawn from his own military experience. Miles' ongoing service in the National Guard keeps him closely connected to current military culture and the experiences of those recently transitioning from service. He anticipates student concerns, addresses potential blind spots, and makes sure students are ready to succeed from day one. Miles has created training materials and guided incoming onboarding staff, ensuring continuity and a seamless student experience. This year, he has been transitioning the role to Todd Farlee, a recent GGU alum and U.S. Air Force veteran, providing mentorship and training to ensure that the next generation of onboarding support continues with the same care and dedication.





## *Jenna Piva Laramie, Career & Transition Support*

Jenna focuses on the next step in a student's journey, helping them translate education into meaningful careers. She leads personalized outreach, recently developed a new career website, and collaborates closely with faculty and the GGU Career Center to expand resources for military-connected learners. Her national work as Co-Chair of the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) Veterans Affinity Group brings innovative practices back to GGU, benefiting students with both local support and broader expertise in veteran career development.



## *Kellie Artis, Digital Community Manager*

Kellie shapes the Diller Center's digital presence to reflect the vibrancy and support of the in-person community. She manages online engagement, social media outreach, and the Center's digital communications, keeping students connected and informed, regardless of their location. From promoting events like Campus Weeks to highlighting student achievements and resources, her work builds a sense of belonging and community in the digital space. By creating timely, accessible, and engaging content, Kellie helps students navigate programs, connect with peers, and access the support they need to thrive academically and professionally.

# *Supporting Roles That Make the Mission Possible*

The Diller Center's work extends far beyond its core staff. A network of dedicated individuals and offices makes sure that military-connected students have access to guidance, resources, and advocacy throughout their entire journey.

## VA Ambassadors

Our VA Ambassadors serve as the first point of contact for students navigating benefits and entitlements. They provide guidance, answer questions, and help students understand their educational benefits, enabling them to focus on learning and growth.

## Student Veterans of America (SVA)

The SVA chapter on campus provides peer-led support, networking, and community-building opportunities. SVA creates spaces where veterans can connect, share experiences, and support one another, reinforcing leadership and engagement skills that extend into academic and professional life.

## Certifying Officials

Our certifying officials manage the enrollment verification process for students using VA education benefits. By maintaining accuracy and timeliness, they guarantee students receive financial support without interruption, keeping academic progress on track.

## Office of Accessible Education

The Office of Accessible Education works alongside the Diller Center to provide accommodations and support for students with disabilities or learning differences. Their expertise ensures all students can access learning fully and equitably.

## Career Services

Career Services collaborates with the Diller Center to prepare students for meaningful post-graduation opportunities. Through resume coaching, interview preparation, job placement support, and employer networking, they help veterans transition confidently from academic achievement to professional success.

## *Honoring Outgoing Leadership*

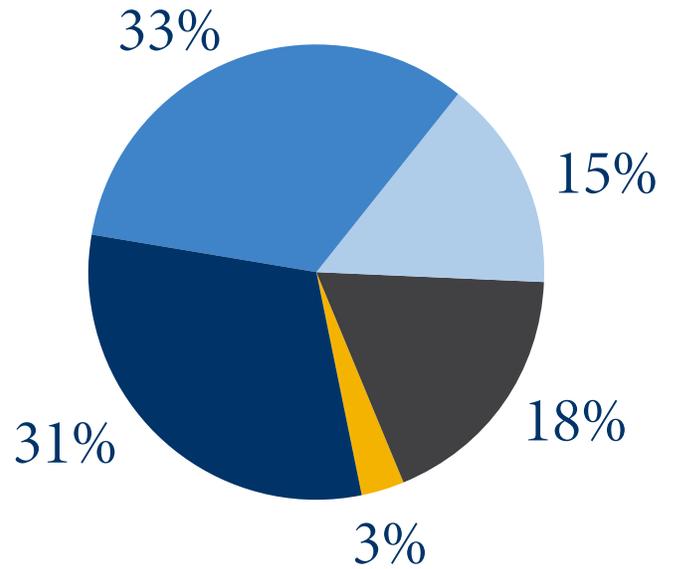
We extend heartfelt thanks to Dr. David Fike for championing the needs of GGU's military-connected students throughout his tenure as President. His leadership strengthened programs, expanded services, and ensured veterans remained a visible priority within the University. We wish him all the best in retirement and are grateful for the foundation he built for our continued work.





# Who We Serve

The Diller Center continues to attract veterans from around the nation to GGU. A majority, 53%, live outside of California, while another 17% live in the state but are more than three hours from campus. Approximately one-third, or 29%, live in the Bay Area. This reflects the draw of San Francisco and the flexible programming of GGU. This expansion of recruiting beyond the Bay Area has resulted in the student body no longer being as dominated by Air Force veterans as it once was.



While these veterans are still slightly overrepresented, the proportion is more in line with overall military demographics. In addition to drawing from local bases like Travis and Beale Air Force Bases, a significant number of students now report last serving in bases like Camp Pendleton near San Diego as well as large East Coast bases like Camp Lejeune and Fort Roland L. Bragg in North Carolina.



In terms of service, the vast majority, 90%, of veteran students at GGU served in the enlisted ranks and typically served for less than ten years. For these students, GGU presents a tremendous opportunity to complete their undergraduate and graduate degrees and transition to successful careers in the civilian sector. And, in keeping with the transformational potential of GGU, 83% are looking to do something different from what they did in the military.



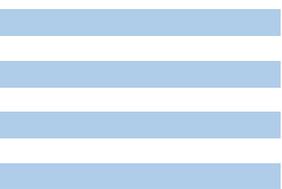
# *People Behind the Numbers*

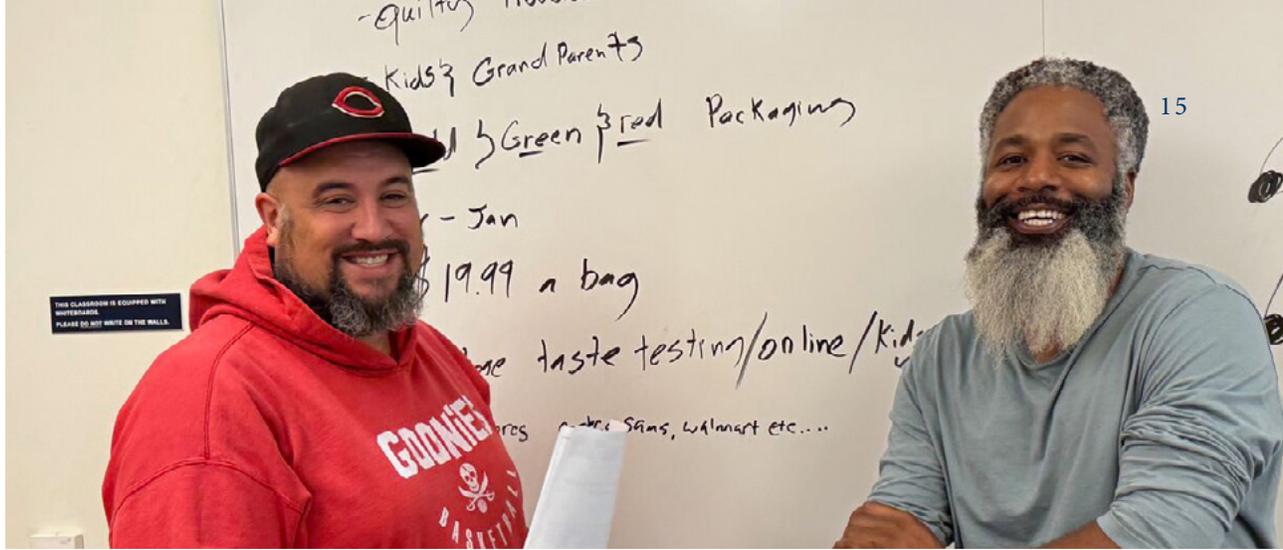
## *Xavier Jackson, Momentum in Motion*

After graduating from Texas Southern, Xavier Jackson was ready to keep moving forward, and GGU made it effortless. The small, flexible classes allowed him to dive right into his master's program, while the Helen Diller Center provided guidance that removed barriers before they could slow him down. As a Veteran Ambassador, Xavier supports fellow students with VA benefits, student accounts, and financial literacy, paying forward the help he received. In study groups, Career Services appointments, and Diller Center events, he's building community and connecting veterans from all walks of life. Xavier's mission is simple: grow, learn, and lift others as he climbs.

## *Wasiu Onaade, Turning Expertise Into Service*

When an injury ended his military career, Wasiu Onaade didn't let it derail him. Today, he blends his military experience with advanced degrees from GGU—an MBA in project management and a master's in financial planning—to guide colleagues, build businesses, and support others professionally. His year-long effort to become a Veteran Student Ambassador reflects his dedication to helping veterans feel at home and understood. At the Helen Diller Center, Wasiu finds the resources and community to support and uplift other veterans while advancing his own goals. Whether mentoring, sharing advice, or connecting peers with opportunities, he embodies the mission of learning, serving, and empowering others.





## *Brianna Henry, Leading with Heart*

For U.S. Navy veteran Brianna Henry, finding a graduate program that fit her life and family was key. GGU's Human Resources Management program offered clear, focused courses and a schedule that worked for her. At the same time, the Helen Diller Center created a welcoming space where veterans could connect, share advice, and feel supported. As Brianna continues her studies, she's eager to tap into Career Services as she prepares for a career in the HR workforce. For her, the real value lies in applying what she has learned to her work and life, while forming connections with fellow veterans. GGU and the Diller Center have given Brianna knowledge, community, and opportunities that she's excited to carry into her career.

## *Devon Jackson, Charting a New Mission*

After five years as an Army Combat Medic, Devon Jackson wanted to explore new opportunities outside healthcare. GGU's commitment to adult learners and flexible, practical classes made the transition possible, while the Helen Diller Center helped him translate military skills into civilian success. Career panels, resume support, and personalized guidance allowed Devon to plan confidently for his future. He has built connections through hybrid classes, campus events, and Diller Center programs, gaining skills and experience that make the next phase of his life clear. Devon's advice to fellow veterans is straightforward: stay involved, meet the staff halfway, and take full advantage of the support available to you.

# Headline Moments

## Partnerships: Strengthening *Connections* for Veterans

This year, the Helen Diller Center focused on building and deepening relationships with local and national partners to expand opportunities and support for veteran students. Highlights include:

### Veteran Support Working Group

**Engaged** representatives from local universities, veteran resource centers, and community-based veteran-serving organizations.

 *San Francisco VA Healthcare*

 *City College of San Francisco*

 *Academy of Arts University*

 *San Francisco State University*

 *Skyline College*

 *Berkeley Community College*

 *University of California, Berkeley*

**Hosted** an in-person meet-and-greet in downtown San Francisco, bringing together campus leaders to share updates and identify common challenges faced by student veterans.

**Strengthened** collaborative networks, creating a framework for ongoing communication, resource-sharing, and support.

**Advanced** the San Francisco Mayor's vision of making San Francisco a premier destination for veterans seeking high-quality education, comprehensive services, and meaningful employment.

### VetsInTech

**GGU was a sponsor** for the annual VetsInTech Gala, which Diller Center team members, along with Brent White, attended as representatives.

GGU then welcomed **Katherine Webster**, CEO and Founder of VetsInTech, as a speaker for our Veterans Pathways Career

Event in November, where she highlighted **career opportunities in technology** for veterans.

We're excited to continue exploring **future collaborations** to provide career pathways and mentorship for GGU students in tech and related industries.

These partnerships demonstrate the Diller Center's dedication to connecting students with educational, professional, and community resources that support their transition from military service to higher education and fulfilling careers.

## National Recognition: *Sustained Excellence* for Veterans

GGU's commitment to military-connected students continues to earn recognition, reflecting the consistent quality and impact of the Diller Center's programs:

### Military Friendly® Schools *Continued Honor*

GGU has once again been recognized as a Military Friendly® institution, Gold

designation, affirming the university's supportive learning environment, flexible programs, and comprehensive services for veterans.

Named the #3 Military Spouse Friendly® School in the nation—an extraordinary dual recognition that affirms the GGU's long-standing commitment to supporting military-affiliated students and their families.

GGU's Gold status places it as the #5 school nationwide in the category of private, non-doctorate schools.

This ongoing recognition signals to prospective students, alumni, and donors that GGU remains a trusted and veteran-focused institution year after year.

### Best for Vets *Ongoing Distinction*

For multiple years, GGU has earned the "Best for Vets" designation, highlighting policies, programs, and campus culture that make it a top choice for military-connected learners.

These repeated accolades reinforce the Diller Center's consistent impact in guiding veterans through education and into meaningful careers, and demonstrate the value of sustained support.

# Operational Support

## Equipping *Every Step*

The Helen Diller Center provides hands-on support that helps military-connected students navigate the university experience and plan for meaningful careers. This year, our focus on onboarding, student success coaching, campus engagement, career transition, and digital connection strengthened the veteran community and created a measurable impact.

## Community

GGU's commitment to military-connected students continues to earn recognition, reflecting the consistent quality and influence of the Diller Center's programs:

### Digital Communications and *Virtual Engagement*

Communications played an essential role in keeping military-connected students informed, supported, and engaged throughout the year. Across email, video, and virtual programming, the focus remained on clarity, consistency, and creating touchpoints that made students feel connected to the GGU community, regardless of their location or schedule.



## Virtual Events and *Community Touchpoints*

Seven virtual events were hosted specifically for military-connected students, drawing:

▶▶▶ **278**

465 registrations and **278 attendees**. With a 64% turnout rate and an average retention rate of 95%, these sessions proved to be a reliable bridge for students who benefit from flexible, accessible engagement opportunities.

## Video Production *and Storytelling*

Five new GGU videos were produced to highlight resources, share student stories, and strengthen awareness of Diller Center support. Together, they generated 382 total views and **11,613 impressions**, with 239 unique views and an average watch rate of 42%. These videos helped bring the GGU veteran community to life in a format that feels both personal and accessible.

## Email *Outreach* and Consistent Communication

Email remained a critical tool for sharing updates, reminders, and opportunities. Over the year, 24 targeted email campaigns delivered **63,948 messages** with a 42% open rate and a 3% average click-through rate—well above higher-education industry averages.

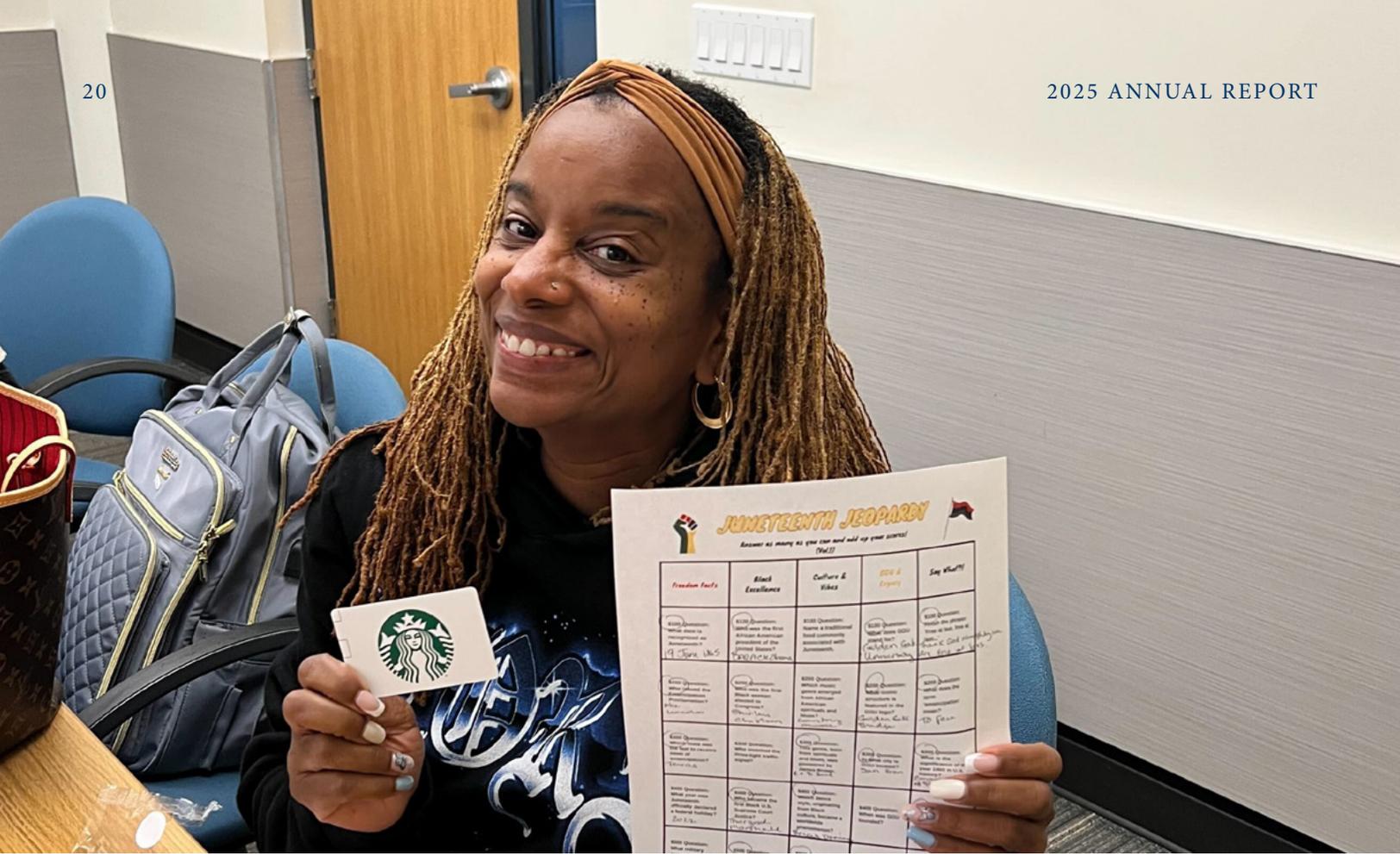
**42%**  
*Open Rate*

These campaigns ensured that students received timely guidance and stayed connected to the people and services ready to support them.

## *Military Alumni Newsletter*

GGU Military also launched the first-ever GGU Military Alumni Newsletter in the Fall of 2025. This effort to continue engagement with our alumni will become a twice-yearly initiative to help keep the community connected to resources and the network beyond graduation. The first issue

**45%** was sent to almost 1,200 alumni and saw a 45% **open rate**.



## Social Media

In addition to growing the GGU Military Facebook Group (399 members), the Diller Center also launched a LinkedIn Showcase Page that’s connected to the main Golden Gate University LinkedIn presence. We plan to continue posting career resources, news, and more for our career-seeking graduates and alumni on the platform.

## Campus Weeks

Campus Weeks continued to be a highlight for veteran students and GGU staff, offering connection, celebration, and learning opportunities. We held 39 events held with **455 students and staff participating.**

### New interactive activities included:

- 1 *Black History Jeopardy*
- 2 *Women’s History BINGO*
- 3 *Veteran “Represent Your State” Showcase*
- 4 *Veteran Appreciation Grab Bags*

Events created opportunities for students to connect with peers, Diller Center staff, and University leaders.

**Feedback was overwhelmingly positive,** with participants noting the activities were both fun and meaningful.

## Onboarding

Onboarding ensures military-connected students start their GGU journey with confidence and clarity.

# 1,270

- **Conducted outreach to 1,270 students** and held 95 one-on-one coaching appointments
- **Provided proactive guidance** to anticipate student concerns and address barriers to success
- **Developed training materials** and mentored incoming staff to maintain a seamless experience
- **Onboarding coaches act as a key feedback resource** for Admissions, Financial Aid, and Academic Advising
- Former students who benefited from onboarding, including Xavier Jackson and Todd Farlee, have **returned to mentor others**, building a cycle of support within the veteran community

## Military Student Success Coaching and University Engagement

- Student Success Coaching focused on proactive support for newly admitted students and retention efforts for those at higher risk.
- **First-Week Check-Ins:** Syllabus review, MyGGU portal guidance, and VA certification reminders
- **Retention Support:** Weekly reports identified students who had not logged into courses within eight days, prompting outreach to re-engage them
- **Cross-Department Collaboration:** Strengthened partnerships across academic and student-support units to create unified strategies and a connected campus community
- **Graduation Support:** Contributed to speaker selection for 18 applicant speeches and assisted with the Spring graduation ceremony honoring 68 veterans, presenting congratulatory gifts

## Transition and Career Support

- **Launched a career resource platform** for military-connected students, offering 24/7 access to tools and guidance. Features include:
  - Resume and cover letter submission for personalized review
  - Curated list of military-friendly employers
  - Events calendar highlighting career opportunities
- **Engaged 230 students** with proactive outreach
- **Provided direct career coaching** and guidance to 94 students
- **Partnered with faculty and GGU Career Center staff** to expand services campus-wide
- **Delivered presentations** in 10 classes and co-facilitated sessions during Campus Week
- **Led two webinars** with four major organizations to share best practices in supporting military-connected learners

“Thank you so much for reaching out to me. If it wouldn’t have been for you, *I would still be sitting here without a job, wondering what I should do.*”

Brittany, Navy Corpsman,  
BS Business Graduate

“It is so nice that the Diller Center reaches out to check in and offer services directly. *You have been so kind and helpful, and it is appreciated.*”

Marc, 28-year veteran



# Forward Operations

## *Growth and Innovation in Motion*

The year was marked by a series of strategic initiatives designed to strengthen community ties, expand our visibility, and position GGU for sustained growth, particularly as we prepare for a significant influx of student veterans beginning in Spring 2026. These efforts reflect a forward-looking approach that balances innovation with deepening relationships across the veteran ecosystem.

## *New Initiatives*

**GGU Military Family Tuition Assistance Grant Program (MFTAG) Relaunch:** The scholarship program returned this year, offering targeted financial support to military-connected students and their families to help reduce barriers to higher education.

**Partnerships with Local Employers:** Expanded collaborations provide students with internship opportunities, career development, and mentorship connections that strengthen the bridge from education to meaningful careers.

**Boots to Books:** Continued collaboration provided resources and educational support to help transitioning service members pursue degrees and achieve career readiness.

**Veterans Pathways Career Event:** The Center hosted a successful “Veterans Pathways” event, bringing together Bay Area student veterans, alumni, and employer partners for an evening focused on life after service and career opportunities across California. This gathering reinforced the importance of career readiness as a core component of the veteran student experience and deepened our partnerships with regional employers.

**Work with Veteran Readiness & Employment Office:** Reinforced collaboration with the VA’s Veteran Readiness and Employment office to ensure student veterans are supported in leveraging their benefits effectively while pursuing educational and career goals.

**VA Healthcare Partnership:** Extended partnerships with VA healthcare services to provide students and their families access to health resources and guidance, reinforcing the holistic support framework for military-connected students.

## Career Toolkit

Golden Gate University's Helen Diller Center for Veterans is proud to introduce the Career Toolkit, a comprehensive set of resources designed to help military-connected students transition confidently from higher education into meaningful careers. The Toolkit provides practical guidance, professional connections, and actionable tools, enabling every student to plan and pursue the next step with clarity and confidence.

- **Personalized Career Coaching**

One-on-one guidance tailored to veterans, helping students translate military experience into civilian career success, refine resumes, prepare for interviews, and set achievable professional goals.

- **Workshops & Career Events**

Interactive sessions cover a range of topics, including networking and job search strategies, salary negotiation, and career exploration. These events offer students the opportunity to practice their skills and meet industry professionals.

- **Employer Connections**

Direct access to veteran-friendly employers and organizations actively seeking military talent. Students can explore internships, entry-level positions, and long-term career opportunities across diverse industries.

- **Resource Library**

Curated guides, templates, and tools for building resumes, cover letters, LinkedIn profiles, and managing job searches. Everything is available online for 24/7 access.

- **Military Hiring Guidance**

Step-by-step instructions for navigating specialized programs, government initiatives, and corporate hiring practices specifically designed for veterans. Students gain insight into pathways uniquely suited to their background.

The Career Toolkit enables students to be fully prepared, confident, and empowered to turn their educational achievements into professional success. By providing structured guidance and professional connections, the Toolkit closes the gap between academic life and meaningful careers.

“The Career Toolkit helped me take my military skills and experiences and turn them into *something employers could understand*. I felt supported every step of the way.”

Student Veteran, GGU

# Development

## Strategic Support: *Strengthening Alumni, Philanthropy, and Insight*

This year marked a turning point in how GGU understands and engages its veteran community. Working closely with Advancement, the Center identified more than 1,200 veteran alumni, transforming what had been a broad, unfiltered pool of 70,000 records into a meaningful and actionable network. This foundational work now allows GGU to communicate with intention, reaching the right alumni with the right message at the right time.

November brought two significant milestones: the launch of the first GGU Military Alumni Newsletter and the debut of the Diller Center LinkedIn Showcase Page. Together, these platforms give veteran alumni new ways to stay informed, connect, and see themselves reflected in the University's ongoing story. Both will serve as essential channels as GGU ramps up alumni engagement efforts in the coming year.

Philanthropic interest also grew in measurable and encouraging ways. More donors chose to direct their giving specifically to the Diller Center, signaling increasing

confidence in the Center's mission and impact. One deeply invested donor has already expressed enthusiasm for building a bicoastal veteran alumni network, along with supporting a GGU veteran gathering in the DC/Maryland/Virginia region in 2026. These emerging opportunities point to the next stage of growth, one where alumni engagement becomes both national in reach and community-building in purpose.

On the insight side, early results from the Fall 2025 military-connected student survey offer one of the most promising indicators of all: 74% of respondents identified themselves as Promoters of GGU. This is the highest promoter score ever recorded for the Center. While the full report will be released in early 2026, this data point highlights the growing trust students have in GGU's approach, which is built on personalized support, responsiveness, and a genuine commitment to their success.

Taken together, these efforts position the Diller Center for a year of deeper connection and greater impact. With clearer data, stronger alumni pathways, and rising philanthropic momentum, GGU is building the long-term framework needed to sustain and expand the programs that matter most to military-connected students and their families.

# Closing

## *Charting the Course Forward*

The Diller Center is leaning forward to prepare for significant growth in the student veteran population in the years ahead. We are already seeing significant interest in GGU from the veteran community and anticipate a notable increase in student veteran enrollment beginning in Spring 2026, as previously set enrollment limits are lifted. With this growth, careful attention will be given to pacing services, outreach touchpoints, and resource allocation to guarantee that each student receives the guidance and support they need to thrive. By planning proactively, we aim to maintain the quality and personal attention that define the Diller Center experience, even as the student body expands.

As we look ahead to the coming year, the Helen Diller Center remains committed to strengthening the support we provide to military-connected students at every stage of their educational journey. Our goals include expanding outreach to prospective veterans, enhancing career and academic programming, and continuing to create opportunities for meaningful engagement both on campus and in the broader community.

Sustainability and long-term vision guide our planning. We are working to ensure that the Center's programs are not only impactful today but positioned to grow and adapt as the needs of military-affiliated learners evolve. By aligning initiatives with the University's broader goals and building strong partnerships with alumni, employers, and veteran-serving organizations, we are creating a resilient framework that will support future generations of student veterans.

We are deeply grateful to our stakeholders, particularly the Diller Family Foundation, whose generosity and belief in this mission make our work possible. Your support allows us to empower students, strengthen communities, and carry the torch forward for those who have served. Together, we celebrate the successes of the past year and look with optimism toward the opportunities ahead.



Thank  
*you.*

