Career Pathways boosts Sac State’s veterans services

Jeffrey Weston, director of Sacramento State’s Veterans Success Center, is determined to provide vets with the two things they want when coming to Sac State: an excellent education and a shot at getting a good job.

The center is among the finest in California and nationally because it focuses on graduation rates and getting those who have served their country into the workforce.

A case in point is Career Pathways, a new program to help ensure that veterans who earn degrees can get well-paying jobs upon graduation.

Thanks to a $75,000 grant from Wells Fargo, the center selected a cohort of 80 new and current students to take part in a phased training program to make them more employable. The program emphasizes interviewing skills, résumé writing and tips on choosing a career to their liking, all of which makes the students especially attractive to employers.

The pilot program will be overseen by Weston and graduate students Monica Daniel and Brad Zivov, who are specializing in career counseling and have created the program’s new website, www.csus.edu/vets/VCPP/index.html. Daniel, the dependent of a disabled Navy veteran, wants to give something back to the men and women who have served their country. Zivov is committed to that cause as well and has published a paper citing the need for veteran-focused counselors.

The program was launched in October with a regimen of speed interviews and a résumé review to acquaint the student veterans with interacting with prospective employers, providing scenarios and feedback. Participants learned how to present themselves and their experience in a way that would make them more marketable.

The Soft Skill Workshops taught them how to communicate effectively in the workplace with a positive, enthusiastic attitude; teamwork; critical thinking and problem-solving; professionalism; and networking.

This sets the stage for a job-shadowing process from October through Dec. 5 that enables participants to get a practical feel for the workplace. They interact with professionals who hold positions to which the participants aspire. This experience will provide mentorship, networking, and personal and professional development opportunities.

The Career Networking Mixer in mid-November is designed to home in on conversing with local employers to sharpen the social skills necessary to capitalize on career contacts that can create all manner of possibilities.

And the Etiquette Dinner on Friday, Dec. 12, features a three-course meal during which participants practice socializing with prospective employers in a formal setting.
Weston’s ultimate goal is to select 20 or so vets for spring internships that will lead to employment. The focus is on job skills training and financial planning opportunities, and will include a monthlong professional placement relevant to the participant’s career goals. This hands-on training will help participants find employment in line with their academic interests.

“I believe our program will help veterans get good jobs,” Weston says. He hopes to secure additional funding to continue giving veterans and their dependents the tools to succeed in an increasingly competitive job market.

For media assistance, contact Sacramento State’s Public Affairs office at (916) 278-6156. – Alan Miller