Club bolsters Sac State’s vibrant veterans program

The Student Veterans Organization (SVO) is a campus-based club that provides another venue where Sacramento State veterans, active-duty personnel, reservists, their families and others can meet, share information and plan activities. It is also designed to emulate the camaraderie that military personnel experienced while in the service.

All that can be seen from 9 a.m. to noon Saturday, Nov. 8, as the club’s Vets in Volunteer Service helps strengthen the University’s ongoing commitment to the community.

SVO personnel and their families will work with the City of Sacramento and community members to help clean up the Sam and Bonnie Pannell Community Center in south Sacramento. A barbecue station will serve food to volunteers.

SVO complements Sacramento State’s vibrant Veteran Success Center (VSC), which has grown exponentially since its inception eight years ago.

Today Sac State serves more than 1,200 veterans and their dependents attending the University, providing them with financial assistance and guidance. It is the second-largest veterans program in the California State University system. In addition to helping veterans get their G.I. benefits, navigate the admission process and register for courses, the center’s overarching goal is to help student veterans access campus resources and get involved in leadership activities.

SVO Vice President Luciana Curtis, an Air Force vet, is determined to help ensure that those who have served their country do not fall through the cracks. “They did their bit,” she says, “and now it’s time they have the opportunity to make the most of their potential academically, socially and in the workplace.”

Her proactive approach reflects Sac State’s veteran-friendly philosophy. SVO is a veritable beehive of activity. Chris Cobbett, on a Principal Financial Group scholarship, with the help of area financial institutions collected scores of coats, dress shirts and trousers to hand out to needy vets. Suits for Soldiers are available at the VSC.

Meantime, Navy vet Bill Salisbury is shepherding Sigma Delta Omega, the first coed fraternal organization in the 23-campus CSU system for vets and others who wish to strengthen the spirit of camaraderie.

That spirit pervaded a charity golf outing last May and a bowling event in mid-October, where Curtis was able to get food donations from local merchants. The forthcoming Christmas celebration should be no less festive.

Professor Beth Erickson’s innovative leadership and mentoring class serves as the feeder for the development of the SVO. Her veteran mentors, including Curtis, are
required to create events that the club uses to reinforce a sense of community and service. The atmosphere that pervades her class is not unlike the platoon buddy system structure wherein members look out for one another.

“I have learned so much from them,” Erickson says. “My objective is to help them translate the training and leadership they learned in the service into measurable civilian skills.”

Little wonder that Sacramento State’s multifaceted services for student veterans and their families have gained national recognition.

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