



**Overview of U.S. Army Women's Foundation 3rd Annual  
Army Women in Transition Symposium**  
*Held Wednesday, March 17, 2011 in the U.S. Capitol Visitors Center*

Several members of Congress and staff were able to join us on March 17, 2011, for our annual symposium. In this, our third year, we were truly honored by the number of people who took the time to participate as we discussed challenges facing women veterans transitioning from “the battlefield to the home front.”

The Symposium included a special address on female veterans' healthcare and two panels that described current programs assisting servicewomen's transition from active military service to a civilian life of that includes not only personal and/or family adjustments, but also career decisions, educational pursuits, and medical care needs.

- **Education** addressed the social networks and institutional support systems available to returning veterans interested in adult and distance learning colleges and universities.
- **Workforce Development** addressed the programs and resources established within national businesses and federal agencies for the attraction and retention of veterans pursuing civilian jobs and career change.

Reviewing the day, we found themes that particularly resonated from all presenters:

- ▶ The number of servicewomen accessing veterans' healthcare services has doubled within the past decade, underscoring the need for a retooling of a healthcare system originally designed for servicemen only, as well as a need for changes in active duty health care that better prepares servicewomen for post-military life.
- ▶ All veterans can get the most “bang for their educational buck” by first gauging their own interests and then finding a “right fit” college or university – for example, portability (online course with 24/7 accessibility, credit for previous college courses and work experience, and express appreciation and value for their military service), convenience and availability of desired classes (evening and weekends), financial accommodation for drop or postponement for changes beyond your control, and advisors with military experience to better assist your navigation through your options to best-result decisions.
- ▶ Students with resources such as “combat to classroom” social networks are typically more successful, but women veterans are statistically less likely to participate, due to active duty experiences of physical assault, male-dominated environments, or ostracism.

- ▶ “Corporate America” and federal agencies have adopted workforce strategies specifically designed to accommodate the interests and needs of returning veterans – “matrix translators” that identify military experience that matches “civilian speak” for similar experience, weekly online “live chats” hosted by a military-knowledgeable staff member for veterans in job search, and recruitment campaigns that identify values in common with military experience – strong work ethic, core competencies, and leadership,” training programs that include a veterans’ spouse and family members, and various special programs for women veterans (notably the Small Business Administration, which noted that veterans are the highest demographic group of the self-employed – at 13%).
- ▶ “Soldiers helping soldiers” networks of military professionals deploy themselves as volunteers to help veterans find success in civilian life, with a mission of “get mentored or mentor others.”
- ▶ Very significantly, the word “veteran” is commonly misunderstood as applicable only to someone who has served in war or in combat. In fact, a veteran is any one who has served in any branch of the military for any length of time. Attention to the actual definition of “veteran” will help to attract, invite, and welcome greater numbers of eligible service members to the support resources available for successful civilian life. Indeed the “combat to classroom” programs, the mentoring networks, and the corporate military outreach and retention strategies described here are for “veterans.”

The U.S. Army Women's Foundation is the premier center for educational excellence, the national network for today's Army women, and a dynamic advocate for telling the history of Army women.

Through its programs, research, and scholarships, the Foundation honors the service of Army women and supports the U.S. Army Women's Museum. Originally established in 1969, the Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and is headquartered in Fort Lee, Virginia. For more information, please visit [www.awfdn.org](http://www.awfdn.org).

We hope that you will consider the Foundation a resource for you on matters related to both active duty servicewomen and women veterans, as well as a resource for your constituents who are transitioning from military to civilian life.

Sincerely,



Dee McWilliams  
Major General, USA (Ret)  
President



Peggy Trossen  
Executive Director