Saddleback College to Celebrate Veteran Success with Noted Speakers, Reception

Student Veterans to Host “Veterans Week”

Mission Viejo, CA – On Tuesday, November 12th Saddleback College will celebrate five years of veteran success and the opening of the college’s newly-renovated veterans center that offers comprehensive services for veterans including benefits assistance, counseling, and other services to help veterans transition to civilian and college life. The event will be held from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. in the Saddleback College Student Services Center.

The keynote speaker of the event is Secretary Peter James Gravett of the California Department of Veterans Affairs. Secretary Gravett is a retired major general of the United States Army and is the highest ranking official of veterans services in the state. Gravett retired with more than 40 years of service in the U.S. Army and California National Guard, and served as commanding general of the 40th Infantry Division and became the first African American National Guard division commander in the 225-year history of the National Guard in the United States. Additional speakers include David J. Davis, acting director of the Department of Veterans Affairs regional office in San Diego, and Jack Williams, an Iraq War veteran of the Marine Corps and alum of Saddleback College who is now in his third year of law school at the University of California, Irvine. Additional student veterans, as well as college administrators and staff, will offer remarks.

Dr. Tod A. Burnett, president of Saddleback College, stated, “Saddleback places a high priority on providing comprehensive services to veterans to help them succeed at the college and beyond. I am very proud of the work of our faculty and staff who each day help our more than 1,300 veterans in their transition to civilian life. This event will not only celebrate the accomplishments of our student veterans, but also those at the college and in our community who dedicate themselves to ensuring that our veterans get the support they deserve.”

The event will feature the First Marine Division Band, and the Southern California Army Recruiting Battalion will serve as Color Guard. John Huntington, associate faculty in the
college’s division of fine arts and media technology, will sing the National Anthem. Additionally, an American flag flown in Kabul, Afghanistan will be presented to student veterans.

As part of the festivities, the college’s Veterans Club will be hosting “Veterans Week,” which will include opening day festivities on Tuesday, November 12th, featuring a performance by the Marine Corps Band. This event will include a $5 entrance fee and lunch will be provided. On Wednesday, November 13th, a “Warrior Challenge” will include an obstacle course and the opportunity to win a free t-shirt, and on Thursday, November 14th a military gear show will give guests the chance to meet Saddleback veterans, who will display the gear they used in the military. All Veterans Week events will be held in the quad from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Saddleback College’s wide-ranging services for veterans were recently augmented by a recently-signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to provide VetSuccess on Campus (VSOC) services, allowing the college to host an experienced VA vocational rehabilitation counselor to assist students in achieving their educational and career goals through the Post-9/11 GI Bill and other education benefit programs. This landmark MOU, which created a partnership between the VA, Saddleback College, and Irvine Valley College, has made the colleges two of fewer than 100 colleges nationwide to offer VSOC services.

Located in Mission Viejo, Saddleback College provides quality higher education and training to the greater south Orange County community. Having served more than 500,000 students since 1968, Saddleback College offers more than 300 degree and certificate programs to help students reach their personal, career, and educational goals. For more information, please visit www.saddleback.edu.

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