

September 29, 2017

Wendy Macias
U.S. Department of Education
1990 K St. NW, Rm 8013
Washington, D.C. 20006
Re: Docket ID ED-2017-OPE-0076

Dear Ms. Macias:

The undersigned veterans and military service organizations write to make the following nominations for upcoming negotiated rulemaking panels at the US Department of Education. These groups represent millions of service members and veterans who are directly impacted by the decisions of the Department. These representatives take seriously the honor and distinction of representing the diverse interests of this large and unique population with a non-partisan approach. Despite persistent myths that military-connected students carry no student debt due to their widespread use of the GI Bill, we have seen first-hand the significant impact of this issue on the population. The service member and veteran community recommends the following slate to be appointed to represent us:

For the Borrower Defense panel, we nominate Will Hubbard of Student Veterans of America as the primary negotiator, and Walter Ochinko of Veterans Education Success, as the alternate.

For the Gainful Employment panel, we nominate Ashlynn Haycock of Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors as the primary negotiator and John Kamin of The American Legion as the alternate negotiator.

Their qualifications follow:

1. Borrower Defense to Repayment Panel

a. Will Hubbard, Vice President of Student Veterans of America (SVA).

Will Hubbard is an expert on the question of veterans and military student interests in higher education and very knowledgeable about how borrower defense affects student veterans. Will represented veterans and servicemembers at the Borrower Defense Negotiated Rulemaking panel two years ago. Will has served in his position at SVA for several years. He is responsible for advancing the interests of student veterans to federal agencies and the Congress. Will has served in the Marine Corps Reserves (intelligence) since 2007. He is a 2011 graduate of American University where he majored in International Relations.

SVA is a 501(c)(3) coalition of student veterans groups on nearly 1,500 college campuses, representing a diverse population of 1.1 million student veterans. Its mission is to provide military veterans with resources, support, and advocacy needed to succeed in higher education and after graduation. When coupled with the visible and invisible wounds of war, a college degree can be an elusive goal for men and women returning from military service. SVA is dedicated to helping make that goal a reality. SVA had chapters at ITT Tech and Charlotte School of Law and helped to work with the students after those schools closed.

SVA is fiercely non-partisan, and regularly conducts surveys of members and groundbreaking research. For example, in March 2014, SVA released a report on veteran achievement in higher education. This report was a collaboration among SVA, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, and the National Student Clearinghouse. The report examines veteran student success as a result of GI Bill educational benefits. Currently, with funding from the Ford Foundation, SVA is also working on a report on veterans' student loan debt using a unique dataset.

b. Walter Ochinko, Veterans Education Success (VES)

Walter Ochinko is one of the nation's foremost experts on the question of veterans and military student loan debt. He is also an expert on veterans and military interests in Borrower Defense to Repayment. Walter served as the lead negotiator for veterans and military students on the Borrower Defense Negotiated Rulemaking panel two years ago. Walter is currently leading a national study on veteran student loan debt under the auspices of the Pew Charitable Trust.

Walter has been the Policy Director of VES since January 2015. He previously worked for the U.S. Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee for two years, where he focused on issues related to veterans' educational benefits, veterans' student loan debt, and the factors that contributed to such debt across all IHL educational sectors. While on the Committee, he authored a report on veteran student loan debt – drawing on a comparison of NPSAS 2007/08 and 2011/12 and extensive interviews.

Walter was instrumental in passage of a section of the FY 2014 National Defense Authorization Act requiring the U.S. Departments of Defense, Education, and Veterans Affairs to improve the Accessing Higher Education module of the Defense Department's Transition Assistance Program for servicemembers who are leaving active duty. Prior to working for the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs and VES, Walter served as Assistant Director at the U.S. Government Accountability Office where he supervised Congressionally-requested investigations of various federal programs. He is a graduate of Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service and Columbia University's School of International Affairs.

VES is a 501(c)(3) that provides free assistance to veterans and servicemembers who have been deceived or defrauded, and advocates for policies to secure the integrity and promise of servicemember and veterans educational benefits. Finally, VES conducts non-partisan academic research on veterans educational attainment and success.

Both Mr. Hubbard and Mr. Ochinko commit to participate in good faith. Both live in the Washington, D.C., Metro-region and can commit to attending all the negotiated rulemaking sessions and any associated subcommittees. The nominees' contact information is as follows:

- Will Hubbard, will.hubbard@studentveterans.org, (847) 987-7400, 1012 14th Street, NW, Suite 1200, Washington DC 20005.
- Walter Ochinko, walter@veteranseducationsuccess.org, (202) 657-1254, PO Box 71162, Bethesda, MD 20813-1162.

2. Gainful Employment Panel

a. Ashlynn Haycock, Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS)

Ashlynn Haycock is the Manager for Education Support Services for Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS). Ashlynn also serves on the VA's Advisory Committee on Education (VACOE). She is an expert in survivor and veterans educational benefits and the issues of student loans and student debt among veterans, servicemembers, their families, and their survivors. Ashlynn is the surviving daughter of US Army SFC Jeffrey Haycock, who died in the line of duty in 2002, and US Air Force Veteran Nichole Haycock, who died by suicide in 2011. She graduated from American University with a Bachelor's degree in Political Science in 2013. While at American University she was one of the first recipients of the Marine Gunnery Sergeant John Fry Scholarship.

Ashlynn has been involved with TAPS as a survivor for over 15 years. She has been on staff with TAPS for four years and was instrumental in creating the TAPS Education Support Services

program and online education portal. She is an experienced professional in all areas of education benefits for surviving children and spouses at the federal, state and private levels. Ashlynnne is regularly invited to participate in forums focusing on veteran and survivor education benefits, including testifying this summer before the House Veterans Affairs Committees on the "Forever GI Bill." She has assisted over 1,500 survivors in accessing education benefits worth over \$100 million in assistance since 2013. Ashlynnne was highly involved in growing the partnership with the Department of Veterans Affairs in 2014 to create a Memorandum of Agreement which was recently expanded in 2017.

The Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) is a 501 (c)(3) that has assisted more than 70,000 bereaved military families since 1994. TAPS is committed to providing compassionate care to anyone who is grieving the death of someone who died while serving in the military, regardless of circumstance of death, relationship to the deceased, or geography. Services are provided free-of-charge.

b. John Kamin, The American Legion

John Kamin is Assistant Director for Veterans Employment & Education at The American Legion.

In John's eight combined years serving with Student Veterans of America and The American Legion, John has developed a specialized understanding in the intersections between higher education and military service. In 2016, John coordinated The American Legion's advocacy and relief strategy in the wake of the Department of Education's termination of ACICS. In a matter of weeks, the crisis doubled with the sudden bankruptcy of ITT Tech.

In his work at The American Legion, John has led veterans and military organizations in roundtable discussions and other work. On the congressional side, John testified to both the House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committees regarding the Harry W. Colmery, Forever GI Bill.

The American Legion is America's largest veterans' organization and has existed for 100 years.

Both Ms. Haycock and Mr. Kamin are committed to participating in good faith. Both live in the Washington, D.C., Metro-region and can commit to attending all of the negotiated rulemaking sessions. The nominees' contact information is as follows:

- Ashlynnne Haycock, Ashlynnne.Haycock@TAPS.org, (571) 385-2569, 3033 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 630, Arlington, VA 22201
- John Kamin, JKamin@legion.org, (202) 263-5748, 1608 K Street NW, Washington, DC, 20006

It is imperative that only these true representatives of veterans and military service organizations are appointed to represent veterans and servicemembers' interests. We urge the Department to beware of other nominations it receives for the veterans and servicemember slots, as our community has heard that they may be industry posing as veterans, who will not represent the interests and perspectives of the broader veterans and servicemember community.

These nominations are supported by the following veterans and servicemember organizations:

Air Force Association

Association of the United States Navy

Air Force Sergeants Association

Blue Star Families

Air Force Women Officers Associated

Coast Guard Chief Petty Officers Association

AMVETS

Commissioned Officers Association of the US

Association of the United States Army

Public Health Service

Fleet Reserve Association

Got Your Six

High Ground Advocacy

Ivy League Student Veterans Council

*Jewish War Veterans of the United States of
America*

Military Child Ed Coalition

National Military Family Association

Navy Mutual Aid Association

Non Commissioned Officers Association

Reserve Officers Association

Student Veterans of America

Swords to Plowshares

The American Legion

The Retired Enlisted Association

Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors

Veterans Education Success

Veterans for Common Sense

Veterans Student Loan Relief Fund

Vietnam Veterans of America

Warrior-Scholar Project