

Independence Blue Cross Foundation

Service Scholars Program

Joining forces for veterans to become nurses

The Independence Blue Cross (IBX) Foundation is dedicated to improving healthcare access, strengthening the health workforce, and enabling solutions for better health. Announced in 2023, the IBX Foundation Service Scholars Program (Service Scholars) is a novel education pathway program to accelerate student veterans to become nurses.

Program overview

Select local nursing schools receive funding from the IBX Foundation to enhance the educational benefits provided by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Yellow Ribbon Program. Additionally, the IBX Foundation provides schools with dedicated resources to support the success of student veterans beyond the academic setting.

Service Scholars appeals widely to schools and student veterans.

In its first year, Service Scholars included five nursing schools in Southeastern Pennsylvania: Community College of Philadelphia, Gwynedd Mercy University, Montgomery County Community College, Thomas Jefferson University, and Villanova University. Service Scholars will expand to West Chester University and Drexel University in its second year.

The initial cohort consisted of 18 student veterans representing four active-duty military service branches, the National Guard, and the Reserve component: U.S. Air Force, U.S. Air National Guard, U.S. Army, U.S. Army Reserve, U.S. Army National Guard, U.S. Marine Corps, and U.S. Navy.

Service Scholars supports student veterans' success in higher education, eases the transition to civilian life, and addresses a growing shortage in the health workforce. This program complements and reinforces Task Force Movement. Launched in 2022 to support a White House priority, Task Force Movement is a national initiative that focuses on eliminating barriers for veterans pursuing civilian employment opportunities.

Supporting student veteran success in higher education



Establishing or expanding a U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Yellow Ribbon Program agreement



Referring to the American Council on Education (ACE) Military Guide for evaluating college credit for military training and service



Lowering out-of-pocket expenses for essentials



Allowing flexibility to meet academic requirements while on duty



Providing resources for mentorship and career preparation



Fostering partnerships between higher education and health employers for work-study and career opportunities

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Additional background

Financial cost of an education

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Yellow Ribbon Program offers colleges and universities a dollar-for-dollar match for institutional funding committed to student veterans. In addition to private philanthropy, colleges and universities can charge the in-state tuition rate for all student veterans to further reduce educational costs not covered by veteran benefits.

Non-tuition-related expenses

Compared with traditional college students, veterans often have greater non-tuition financial and familial responsibilities. Non-tuition stipends for G.I. Bill-eligible veterans can help reduce essential expenses such as childcare, housing, transportation, food, and clinical supplies.

Identifying student veterans

Colleges and universities should track the progress of student veteran recruitment, enrollment, and matriculation to best support academic progress and assist active-duty students through learning disruptions when mobilized for military service.

Mentorship and career preparation

Mentorship, career readiness, and professional development are necessary to support veterans through the transition from military to civilian life. Collaboration and partnership with off-campus veteran service organizations and prospective employers creates access to a larger population of prospective students for colleges and universities and can serve as a catalyst to build a direct pathway to a career upon graduation for student veterans.

Academic credit for military training

The American Council on Education (ACE) Military Guide supports academic institutions by translating a veteran's training record into equivalent college credits based on their training and military occupational specialty.

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