



2023 WACRAO Veterans Conference Agenda

Western Technical College
Lunda Center
319 7th Street North
La Crosse, WI 54601

Monday, June 05, 2023

7:00-10:00 AM	Continental Breakfast
8:00-8:55 AM	System Meetings- UW System-Room A, WTCS-Room B, WAICU-Kwik Trip Conference Room
9:00-9:55 AM	Welcome and Updates from WDVA-Chris McElgunn, WDVA Deputy Secretary, April Heim, WDVA CSW, Director-Welcome and WDVA updates.
10:00-10:55 AM	WIGI BILL & Veteran's Grant Panel-UW System, WTCS, HEAB, WAICU, WDVA-Moderated by Jeremy Hanson-Fox Valley Technical College Panel of representatives that will address questions about WIGI Bill and the Veteran's Grant. Covering eligibility, reporting & processing.
10:55-11:10 AM	Break
11:10-11:55 AM	WDVA SAA-, Andrew Martin, Education Consultant State Approving Agency- Overview of approvals, program changes updates, At Risk Surveys and who to contact for help,
12:00-12:45 PM	Lunch- Served in Atrium Seating in Room A
	"NEW SCO" WELCOME- Breakout for New SCOs with less than 1 year experience Room B
1:00-1:50 PM	Legislative Panel Discussion- WI Legislators-Mike Panaro-Veteran Services- UW Madison (Virtual) Wisconsin is home to some of the most generous education benefits for veterans, service members, and their families. Recent proposals have looked at expanding the Wisconsin GI Bill, elimination application fees, increasing support for staff serving military-connected students on campus, and more. Engage with a panel of policy makers in a discussion on ideas, legislation, and policies that impact our military-connected students.
2:00-2:45 PM	Veterans Outreach of Wisconsin (VOW) - Zach Zdroik-VOW Executive Director. Based in Racine, WI, Veterans Outreach of Wisconsin (VOW) works to make a difference in the lives of at-risk Veteran households. The program expanded in 2017 to include a village of 15 tiny homes, a food market, and trauma-informed programming.
2:45-3:00 PM	Break & SNACK
3:05-3:50 PM	LGBTQ Suicide Prevention - Sierra Phillips-Local Recovery Coordinator, LGBTQ+ Veteran Care Coordinator, Peer Support Clinical Supervisor, VISN 12 Lead POC for Local Recovery Coordinators-Mental Health Service, Tomah VA Medical Center
4:00-4:45 PM	Veteran's Outreach and Rehabilitation Program (VORP)- Chandler Miller-VORP Southern Program Supervisor. (VORP) connects Veterans to community services and provides case management and support with a special focus on treatment and recovery.
5:15 PM	"Take Me Out to the Ball Game" Meet & Greet Social - Logger Game & Picnic + Gift Card Giveaway! (Kwik Trip, Amazon, Culvers, Kohls, Walmart, Duluth Trading & gift basket from Downtown La Crosse!) (Free to all that sign up) Trolley will pick people up at Lunda Center 5:15 pm and again at 5:30 pm and take the group to Copeland Park and Logger Field! Trolley will pick up for return from Copeland Park at 9:30 pm & 9:45 pm and drop off at either Lunda Center or downtown Radisson Hotel area.



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Tuesday, June 06, 2023

7:00-9:00 AM	Hot Breakfast Buffet- Lunda Center
8:00-8:10 AM	Opening Remarks & Welcome
8:10-9:00 AM	SFC Alyson Swanke G1 Education NCOIC– WI National Guard- Overview of WI National Guard Benefits/ kickers, enlistment contracts and records.
9:05-9:45 AM	National Guard Grant – Jessica Wagner, Grants Specialist -Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs Overview of the Wisconsin National Guard Tuition Reimbursement Grant
9:50-10:15 AM	Wisconsin Veteran’s Museum- Chris Kowalski- Director of the Wisconsin Veteran’s Museum- (Virtual)
10:15-11:05 AM	Keynote- Dr John Hall “Who Serves and Who Cares: A Historical Perspective.”
11:10-12:00 PM	Sharma D. Wolfe, M.A. Education Services Specialist, Sherrita Ried, North Carolina Army National Guard Education Services Specialist, Tom Bolin, Georgia Army National Guard Education Services Specialist, Josh Fenner, Michigan Army National Guard Education Services Specialist Federal Tuition Assistance and ArmyIgnitED. - What FTA pays, how Soldiers apply, and invoicing from the school's point of view along with an overview of resources that are offered to schools should they need support with navigating ArmyIgnitED. (Virtual Session)
12:00-1:00 PM	Working Lunch (12:00- 12:15-Grab lunch) 12:15 PM-1:00 PM-Enrollment Manager Session – Joe Preisser, VA National Training Team- (Virtual) Enrollment Manager platform updates and review.
1:05-1:45 PM	VA Debt Management Center Management- Julie Lawrence, Chief of Operations, Treasury, Education, External Relations- VA Debt Management Center (189)- Debt process and procedure overview
1:50-2:30 PM	Chapter 31 VR&E Veteran Rehabilitation and Employment Program – Anne Sobota, M.S. Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Department of Veterans Affairs- VR&E Program overview and updates
2:30 PM	Give Away & Closing Comments Safe Travels! – “Taste of La Crosse Cooler”

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS & CONTRIBUTORS!!





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Keynote Presenters:

Deputy Secretary

Christopher J. McElgunn



The Deputy Secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Veteran Affairs, is responsible for day-to-day operations, as well as directing and coordinating the Department's strategic planning and program development. Christopher is a Navy veteran with more than a decade of state civil service experience. He served on active duty in the United States Navy and as a member of the Naval Reserve from 1991 to 1999, with assignments at home and deployment abroad. He began at the state of Wisconsin in 2012 as a Senior Policy Analyst at the Department of Workforce Development. In 2014, he transitioned to an Executive Budget and Policy role at the Department of Administration where he guided budget and policy development for multiple state agencies, including the Department of Veterans Affairs, Department of Military Affairs, and Department of Health Services.

From 2017 to 2019, he served as Legal Counsel to the Board on Aging and Long Term Care. Christopher served as an Assistant Attorney General with the Wisconsin Department of Justice in the Civil Litigation Unit from 2019 until assuming the DVA Deputy Secretary position in February 2023. Christopher received his Bachelor of Science degree from Northwestern University and his Juris Doctorate Degree from the University of Illinois Chicago School of Law. Christopher lives in the Madison area with his wife and two sons.

John W. Hall - Ambrose-Hesseltine Associate Professor of U.S. Military History.



I am a military historian broadly interested in the ways in which societies have organized violence to pursue and defend their interests. I am especially interested in the ethnohistorical study of military conflict and cooperation between the Native peoples of North America and European colonial powers. More generally, I am interested in Native American and early American history with particular emphasis on the Revolutionary Era and the Early Republic. Within the field of military history, my research has focused on "small wars" involving irregular forces and U.S. defense policy. I am currently working on a military history of Indian Removal in the southeastern United States.

A past president of the Society for Military History, I am also a retired U.S. Army Reserve colonel with past assignments as a historian to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, U.S. European Command, U.S. Central Command, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff.