

# MCC CARES Exceptional Collegiate Programs

## Engage Students AGES 18 TO 24



## MCC's Veterans Resource Center Serves Those Who Have Served Us

Student Michael Saunders (left), a veteran of the U.S. Army, talks with Rick Reppucci, coordinator of the Veterans Resource Center, in the Bedford center.

**W**hen U.S. Army veteran Michael Saunders returned home from serving his second tour of duty as a Combat Engineer in Iraq, he started working a number of odd jobs.

"I took any job I could find," he said. "Night shifts, security work, I even worked in a lumber yard. For seven years, I got up like a normal functioning person, went to work, went to parties, and then one day everything just stopped. I was angry all the time.

I was going to bed with a racing mind and a pounding heart."

Suffering the effects of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Saunders began treatment at the Bedford VA Hospital. One of his counselors suggested he look into going to college when he felt ready, and one day he worked up the nerve to call Middlesex.

"They immediately put me in touch with Rick Reppucci at the Veterans Resource Center,



(VRC)" said Saunders. "He invited me up that day and took the time to show me around and go over how to get started.

"I had a lot of questions, like 'What do I do if I can't do this?' 'What if I have a meltdown

### **INCLUSIVE CONCURRENT ENROLLMENT (ICE):** Creating Opportunities for Disabled Students

**Mission:** The Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment (ICE) Program is a dual-enrollment opportunity for high school students with intellectual disabilities. ICE students receive specialized enrollment, registration and academic advising, community-based employment and career support, plus educational coaches and peer mentors. They have access to MCC student activities, and academic and support services.

**Community Served:** Public high school students ages 18 to 22 who have intellectual disabilities and live in Lexington, Arlington, Bedford, Burlington and Belmont.



**Leader/Director:** Dawn Gross, ICE Program Coordinator

#### **How does your program impact the community?**

Evidence shows students benefit academically and transition to young adulthood more readily when they have the opportunity to engage in college-related activities.

#### **What do you like best about your program?**

I enjoy helping students transition to the college environment. Students often experience growth in self-determination and become leaders of their individual college experience. They often experience an increase in independence and confidence, gain social, employment and communication skills, build friendships and networks, enjoy campus life, and gain a greater sense of wellness and accomplishment.

# When 'traditional' college students – those ages 18 to 24 – enroll at Middlesex, we want them to flourish and succeed, regardless of their background or abilities.

“I’ve heard stories from veterans who go to other schools across the country and they don’t have anything close to what Middlesex offers. ...College is supposed to be about success. If you’re not doing all that you can to make sure your students – especially veterans – are successful, then you’ve failed.”

– Michael Saunders  
MCC Student, U.S. Army Veteran

in the middle of a class? Middlesex had the answers. That was all I needed to know.” He enrolled in the fall of 2013.

“Middlesex works very hard to create a welcoming environment for our more than 450 veterans, active military and their family members on our campuses,” said Pam Flaherty, Dean of Students. “Rick and Maryanne Mungovan are on the front lines to support our veterans in any way they can to help make the transition from military to civilian life easier.”

Thanks to the extensive services of the VRC, and other special veterans services, Middlesex is currently ranked sixth on a list of military-friendly community colleges nationwide. Additionally, MCC has been designated a Military Friendly School by Victory Media every year since 2011.

Established in 2008, the VRC offers a place where veterans can access information about college resources, as well as outside support services for military personnel and their families. On-campus resources include access to resource advocates to help veterans navigate the MCC system, often providing specialized advising, career and transfer counseling, and disability-support services.

Through the VRC, the college also provides a number of wellness-centered programs, including free acupuncture sessions and a free “Resilient Warrior” course. It is designed to help veterans and service members manage stress, sleep better, and



improve communication with family members.

Veterans at MCC have become more engaged on both campuses, said Flaherty. Veterans help one another through peer-mentoring programs and are engaged in a variety of Veterans Club activities. Activities include Q&A sessions about veteran benefits, and a number of recreational events, like horseback riding, sailing, and golfing programs. Each semester the Veterans Club and the VRC host Heroes Among Us, a speaking program that provides an opportunity for an MCC veteran to tell his or her story about their service (see sidebar page 11).

The VRC also helps veterans connect with a number of off-campus resources and programs, including the statewide Home Base Program. This partnership between the Red Sox Foundation and Mass General Hospital provides education and clinical care to veterans and their families.

“The VRC will always be a place where veterans can go to get peer-to-peer connections, and get answers to questions

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## **TRANSITION:** Helping Students Find Workplace Success

**Mission:** Designed specifically for students with significant learning disabilities, MCC’s nationally recognized Transition Program is a two-year, noncredit certificate program that teaches consumer and business skills, as well as independent living, and personal and social development skills.

Three days a week, Transition students attend classes. When students are not in class, they work as interns in competitive employment situations in office and business support environments.



**Community Served:** The program serves young adults with significant learning challenges who would find traditional college-level academics too challenging, even with extensive support services. Students are drawn from Middlesex County, the Merrimack Valley, Southern New Hampshire and the Boston, and South and North Shore communities.

**Leader/Director:** Susan Woods, Associate Dean of Student Support Services; & Pamela Orne, Transition Program Coordinator

**How does your program impact the community?** The program helps students achieve their potential. It serves as an opportunity for students leaving high school to find success in college and in the workforce.

**What do you like best about your program?** We take pride in watching our students grow and succeed using the skills they have learned.