

CHRIS O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Good afternoon, and welcome to another edition of Let's Talk Ed with Professor Chris. Today is gonna be another special one. We're, again, still trying to get help for all of our students. When I said today is special, we're talking about the men and women that do so much for us and the opportunity they have to get an education or, what I like to say, is another way to pay them back.

I have with me today Ms. Marilyn Terrill. But I really I'm glad to have this opportunity because I want to know more about Marilyn, and I'm sure she will tell us a little more about herself and the programs they have here. Welcome, Marilyn.

MARILYN TERRILL: Well, thank you so much for having me. I appreciate it.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: How are you doing?

TERRILL: Great.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: That's great. OK, so before we get started, I wanna make sure that you help me a little bit with the formalities of military style, right? My students, veterans and military, have told me never to salute them inside the room, the building. Please help me with that. True or false?

TERRILL: That's true. That's true.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: All right. Also, I cannot put on my hat when I come inside?

TERRILL: Take it off.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: OK, so since I can't do that, what's the best way to do the salute? I'm, I'm not gonna do it.

TERRILL: Right.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: I just want to know the right way to do it.

TERRILL: So, usually you have it so it's it down slightly, and in a salute, usually salute in the street or outside, and that is when you're, it's a form of addressing or respecting someone that outranks you.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Perfect. All right, so that being said, and I did tell the few friends that I know that are veterans, as well as some family members, that I'm doing this here. So, they want to make sure that I called them out. I want to give them the respect, so I do have Lt. Cano Acosta, who is a dear friend of mine that I work with, he's a reserve. I also do have Capt. Perez, and on the family side, I do have Sgt. Tomlinson and MSgt. – my own, yours truly sister-in-law – Tomlinson.

TERRILL: Well, thank them for their service.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: I will. I will, yes.

TERRILL: Because that's wonderful.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Thank you. Also, in addition, I wanna thank all people that serve our country for this opportunity. So, we're gonna see how we can actually help them. Maybe this information they already know or not. So, before we get into that, a little bit about yourself and your military background.

TERRILL: Oh, well, thank you, and again, thank you for having me.

So, I was raised in a military family. My father was in the Air Force. He was an Air Force fighter pilot, and when I looked at, got out of college and was looking around at what to do, I was, had great job on Capitol Hill, and I thought, "You know, I'd like to serve." So, I joined the military. I was, went to basic training. I like to say, you know, I I was Pfc. Terrell – Ready at the time – but then joined the service. I met my husband in the service, and we both served and retired in the Army. My daughter actually served. She is was in the Navy for seven years. She's now a Navy veteran pursuing her education, and my son was in the National Guard. So, we definitely are a military family, and it's been my honor and privilege to serve our great country.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Perfect. That's great. So, that being said, before I even get into the programs that we have here, whose great idea was it to actually offer education to a, the men and women that serve this country? When did it all start?

TERRILL: Well, it started after, oh, it's been a while, but the, but the GI Bill started to get veterans that were coming home an education. And so, of course, Wake Tech is a military-friendly college, and we are here to support our veterans in pursuit of their, veterans and their family members. Now, we have the Forever GI Bill, and they can use that for

themselves, or they can offer it to their family members. So, we have spouses here, we have children. Just before you got here, there was a, a veteran that's been here waiting for his daughter to finish class. So, we have great opportunities for our, our military and our veterans, and the GI Bill offers tuition assistance, it offers housing and it offers a book stipend. So, very helpful to our veterans.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Very good. I'm happy you mentioned the GI Bill because I was gonna get into that as to who qualifies for the GI Bill. Do you have to be active? A veteran? Who actually gets the GI Bill?

TERRILL: So, if you're active-duty, there's a separate program for you, but we have a great Veteran Services Department here at the college, and Mr. McLamb is the manager for that. And they will help you.

You know, the rules change. I don't wanna say a certain, certain thing going on. The rules change, but they definitely will assist every veteran or that veteran's family member when they wanna pursue their education.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: OK, all right. So, again, I'm still learning all the different areas of military and veterans. When someone's, like one of my friends, like I told that I worked with, he's a, he's a reserve. So, what does that mean?

TERRILL: So, you know, sometimes you say you're a veteran or military. We have the active-duty that are in the service, and they may be assigned around the world. They may be assigned, they're from Fayetteville, and they're assigned at Fort Bragg. But then we have a reservist, and reservists and National Guard work on the weekends, and usually it's two weeks a year, unless they're deployed. So, our National Guard here in the Raleigh area was deployed for a year to Kuwait, and they got back about a year ago, a little over a year ago. But they have it where, with a reservist, you're the person, you know, they may be a reservist that works on the weekend, but they may be on, they call active duty. So, they bring them on active duty for a time period, for a job, for a project or for deployment.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: All right. So, now, let's talk about school itself. I'm still trying to wrap my head around how somebody active could be enrolled. Do we have active military people enrolled?

TERRILL: So, we may have some here at Wake Tech. Probably not many. The ones that we normally have that are active duty are National Guard. So that they're National Guard, and

they had that weekend duty once a month, but they are not full time. They may be full time, and they're taking classes part time like our other adults that are, have full-time jobs, but also, we have a category of active-duty military. You're getting ready to leave the military, and they have a program now where if they request it and are approved, they will leave the service. They're still active duty, but their, their active-duty service job will let them start school. So, it might be that it's a Marine from Camp Lejeune. They say, "You know what? I heard Wake Tech is good. It has the program I want." So, they allow them to still be on active duty, but start that semester. It helps them.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: So, I think it is easier for a vet who's done to actually be enrolled. So, you have more of the veterans, correct?

TERRILL: Yeah, absolutely.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: OK.

TERRILL: Yeah, more of the veterans and more of the family members.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: OK, OK. So, now let's talk about some of the challenges that our vets that enroll in any academic program will face.

TERRILL: So, I can say there's a couple challenges. Maybe you talk to each, each veteran. They may give their own opinion, but there seems to be across the board, it's been a while since they've been in school. They haven't been in school for a while, and they're, they're learning how to learn. It's a whole different, they've gone through a transition. They're used to being in a more regimented lifestyle, so they want to be able to be successful at being a student. But it's been a while, and, you know, we have our own language, and we have, can you imagine the first time? You haven't been in in school in several years, and then you're in an online environment. Very difficult.

So, we do have Veterans Upward Bound, which is a program for our veterans. It's a federal program. There, they receive a small stipend, but they can receive tutoring. They can take classes in computers, mathematics, some areas that they might need some, a brush-up before getting back in the academic setting.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: So, I should share this with you because I have taught a lot of students back in Florida or Missouri before coming to Wake Tech. In Florida, I see my vets all the time, and they are, and it's not because I'm sitting with you today, but honestly, they are the

most disciplined. I mean, they will show up on time in all my classes. And, by the way, that's where I found out that I could not salute my veterans inside the building because, before the classes start, I know I'm always gonna have some vets in there. So, I will say, "Thank you all," you know, "for all you do, and I'm very happy to have you in my class" and then immediately do that. And I had one of my vets come to me after class. They're like, "Professor Chris you know, you're not supposed to do that inside a building." And I'm like, "Oh, I do apologize." And interesting enough, I went back again, apologized and still saluted. So, I, that's how I learned that lesson.

But I do definitely, just wanted to point out that those are my most disciplined students, and I appreciate their willingness to, to study. One very good example was when I told the class that, "Well, in this class, you have to know Calc I and Calc II," some of the fundamental math classes. And they raved about why, you know, they have to go back and relearn all this. One of my veterans came to me with the class and goes, "I don't know why they complain. I haven't done Calc I in 15 years, and I'm ready to go." So, I really admire and appreciate comments like that.

All right, so I know, and you've already touched on the challenges that some of them will have, it's probably reprogramming themselves to get back into the learning environment, to learn how to manage things. Now, I know sometimes it's a, a challenge and, unfortunately, I have one incident where a student came to class and really wasn't prepared. And I said, "Are you getting, are you getting help?" And I don't want to delve too much into that, but I know that's been a challenge you mentioned, the challenge of trying to get back into learning and, but I also know that they do, some of them constantly need to be seeing a counselor to get treatment as, you know, they go through the program. Here at Wake Tech, I'll use this as an example, do we have people in place that helps our vets with counseling? That is, yeah?

TERRILL: Well, we have our wellness counselors here at Wake Tech, and I'd like to point out we now have a veterans care team where we have academic advisors, we have wellness counselors, we have Veteran Services, veterans program. We're all a team to help our veterans. Now, we also have a way that, if a veteran tells me that they are, or someone might tell me, a veteran might, through another veteran, tell me that they're having housing issues or they're having problems of any kind, then I can, we have, it's a software program that we can put in all their data, and they can receive help.

The top three areas that veterans find they need is finances, housing and employment. And, of course, all those are linked. So, we are there to help them in a, in a caring

environment. We want to make sure, but we are a, this veterans care team that we have put together here at Wake Tech is one of the lead ones. We're one of the first teams, and we're here to help those veterans any way we can.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Good. So, all the five or four names that I gave, with the relationship I have with people in the service, I know every one of them took advantage of the GI Bill to pursue higher education, and I really admire them, again, in addition to what is done by really, you know, taking the next step to get into education. I'm not sure what the percentage is, but do we have military men and women veterans who really don't use the GI Bill at all or think education is not for them?

TERRILL: Well, we have some here at Wake Tech, and I'd like to say that our veterans show leadership and what, you know, things that you were talking about the classroom. But the other thing is veterans right now don't have to declare their intention when they come to Wake Tech. Some choose, they say, "You know, I'm going to get a bachelor's and a master's, and I know I only have this finite number of months. So, I'm not going to use it here at the community college," because we know we're a good value here. "I'm gonna save that money for N.C. State or for that master's program." So, they may decide not to use it.

So, if a veteran doesn't want to come forward, is not using veterans benefits, we may not know they're a veteran. But sometimes, they'll happen in to our Veterans Zone, where we are today, and they might say, "Gee, I'm enjoying it here. I wanna come back. I wanna have that camaraderie of being with my other veteran buddies."

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Is there a time limit on when a veteran has to use their GI Bill? Do they lose it if they don't use it?

TERRILL: So, it depends when they come in as a veteran. So, if they're an older veteran, I'm an older veteran, I can't use my VA educational benefits anymore. But now they have what they call the Forever GI Bill, so they can use it. They can come in and use it, and then, if they choose not to, the gentleman that was here this afternoon, he's having, letting his daughter use it. So, they can pass it on to their family members, and they now have an infinite amount of time if they're eligible.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: I think you've really answered most of my questions, but the whole idea for this is for the veterans and military people. I hope they see this interview to really see how to use that. Sometimes I think, maybe both the veterans and military really don't know that they have this opportunity. Oh, I'm sure everybody knows, "OK, I have the GI Bill.

But, you know, what do I use the GI Bill for? I can use it for school. I can use it for other things.” So, I think, hopefully this helps to kind of educate them on how to use that.

Is there any suggestion, well, let’s start with where people can find you.

TERRILL: Yes, and I was just gonna say, please, you may not remember everything that we talked about today, but I would like to say my name is Marilyn Terrell, T-E-R-R-I-L-L. I’m at, if you want to email me or call or stop by, right now, we’re at the Northern Campus. We have three Veterans Zones: one at the Northern Campus, one at the Southern and one at RTP. And we would love to meet you. We have, we have a lot going on. The end of the month, for example, we collaborated with the Foundation, and some of our veterans are gonna go see the Hurricanes. So, we have a monthly meeting with SVA [Student Veterans Association]. We’ve implemented a Salute, a veterans honor society, which is great for your record and as you transition because, of all of our programs, our top three of the four right now are university transfer. So, we have veterans that are going to go to another institution. That Salute will look great on your record, but it’s also a chance for you to get together with other veterans.

O’RIORDAN-ADJAH: So, Marilyn, I know you’re trying to be very, very humble, just like every military person that I know, don’t want to use their title. But what was your title? What was your title again, because I would like to remember that? What was your title?

TERRILL: My title in the military?

O’RIORDAN-ADJAH: Correct.

TERRILL: So, when I was in the military, I was in the United States Army, and I was a lieutenant colonel in the Adjutant General Corps, which means I did administration. And here at the college, I was a Business Administration instructor, but I was also the department head. So, definitely, there’s a lot of great jobs in the military, but that was a good one for me.

O’RIORDAN-ADJAH: Thank you. So, I, personally, would like to address you as lieutenant colonel. I think it’s great. I think you deserve it. And I promise I’m not gonna salute to you here. But when I see you outside, I’m definitely gonna salute you.

TERRILL: Well, I do wanna thank you for recognizing the veterans in your class because I know they appreciate that recognition.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Absolutely. OK, well, there we have it. I know this was quick, this was short, but another edition of Let's Talk Ed with Professor Chris. It's a great, great, great honor to be sitting here today with Lt. Col. Marilyn. It was a privilege. Stay tuned, subscribe. If there was anything that you need to know that was missed out of this interview, please reach out to make sure that we address it.

Thanks again, Marilyn.

TERRILL: Thank you.