

Borne the Battle

Episode # 126

David Cote, Katherine Pratt, and Wesley Wilson – Student Veteran of the Year finalists
<https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/54698/william-daniels-army-veteran-actor/>

(Text Transcript Follows)

[00:00:00] Music

[00:00:11] OPENING MONOLOGUE:

Timothy Lawson (TL): Tuesday, January 8, 2019. This is *Borne the Battle* brought to you by the department of Veterans' Affairs. I'm your host, Marine Corps Veteran, Timothy Lawson. This is the first of a set of three podcast episodes that we will feature Student Veteran of America's Student Veteran of the Year finalists. I sat down with three groups of them, little round table discussions. We talk about wins they had in 2018, challenges they faced with outreach, how to get student Veterans to participate in activities, and a number of other things surrounding best practices for Student Veteran chapters, and S.V.A. chapters at universities. Today we will feature Wesley Wilson, Katherine Pratt, and David Cote. Enjoy.

[00:01:03] Music

[00:01:09] PSA:

Man 1: I served in Vietnam.

Man 2: I served in World War II.

Woman: I served in Afghanistan.

Man 1: And V.A. serves us all.

Man 2: No matter when you served.

Woman: No matter if you saw combat or not.

Man 1: There are benefits for Veterans of every generation.

Woman: See what V.A. can do for you.

Narrator: To learn what benefits you may be eligible for, visit www.va.gov. That's www.va.gov.

[00:01:34] Music

[00:01:40] INTERVIEW:

(TL): Alright, very well. We're with three of the ten, right? There's ten Student Veteran of the Year finalists? It's pretty incredible. Let me tell you; I have read some of your bios. I got to talk to the class of 2018 last year. It just blows me away at how much value student Veterans bring into their campuses and their community each year. We're just gonna go around the horn. I need your branch of service, your- uh- the school you're going to, your year, your position in your chapter there. Wes we'll start wi—oh and name, as well, if you haven't-

Wesley Wilson (WW): Yeah probably important.

(TL): People don't know who I'm talking about, talking to. Name is probably important too; Wes go, go ahead.

(WW): Yeah sure, my name is Wesley Wilson. I'm from Lexington, South Carolina. I served in the Army from 2012 to 2017 as a military police officer, got out, found my way to Fordham University and really got involved with Student Veteran chapter there, and I took over as president of the Fordham Veterans Association in April of this last year. It's been a great ride.

(TL): Ok. What year did you say you were in?

(WW): I'm a senior, studying organizational leadership. I graduate this spring.

(TL): Gotcha, okay. Uh, Kat?

Kathrine Pratt (KP): My name is Kathrine Pratt. I'm a Ph.D. candidate in Electrical and Computer Engineering at the University of Washington in Seattle. I was an officer in the Air Force from 2008 to 2012, and I have formally been the treasurer, vice president, and president of Husky Veterans at the University of Washington.

(TL): Very cool. Dave.

David Cote (DC): Tough act to follow.

(WW): (Laughter). Yeah, right?

(DC): Dave Cote, Boston College, I'm an M.B.A. student. I graduate this spring. May 2019 is coming up fast. I served as an officer in the U.S. Marine Corps for 15 years active and I'm a drilling reservist now in Massachusetts. And, I serve as the president of our newly-formed two-year-old S.V.O. at Boston College.

(TL): Very- Oh. Boston College, just two years ago, huh?

(DC): Yeah.

(TL): That really surprises me.

(DC): But, we've done well in a short time.

(TL): Yeah.

(WW): Lot of opportunity there to grow it.

(TL): Yeah. Absolutely.

(DC): Exactly right.

(TL): Yeah, so you said you're getting your M.B.A.?

(DC): Correct.

(TL): So are you using G.I. Bill benefits?

(DC): Sure am.

(TL): Did you have a degree going into this or. . .

(DC): Yes.

(TL): Ok.

(DC): Yeah. So this is my second master's degree. I got my first as an active-duty Marine officer at the Naval Post Graduate School at Monterey,

California. But, thankfully B.C. participates in the Yellow River Program. I have full eligibility for G.I. Bill, and then they kicked in some scholarship money, too.

(TL): Yeah, okay. That's, that's incredible. Semper Fi, by the way.

(DC): Thank you.

(TL): Yeah. There used to be a Marine that did communications here for S.V.A. And, every year at NatCon, Jared Lyon would always make a crayons joke. He'd be like, "We always keep the fridge stocked with cray-ons for Barrett." But now Barrett's not here anymore,-

(WW): Oh yeah, apparently. (Laughter)

(TL): -so that joke is no longer used. So that's a thing of NatCon past. Alright we're gonna start- We're gonna back around the other way, starting with you, Dave. Uhm, let's talk about a big win that your chapter had this past year. And you know, feel free to talk about any challenges you had in getting there,-

(DC): Yep.

(TL): -or, you know, the real value that came in after you accomplished that.

(DC): Definitely, we definitely stand on the shoulders—my predecessor who was really this founding president of our S.V.O. chapter, who has since graduated, doing great things with his M.B.A. Here at B.C., we are proud of bringing to the attention of the administrators at B.C., the Office of the Executive Vice President, our intention to elevate awareness for Veterans' issues. And so what we did is we wrote a charter. And we're really proud of this accomplishment because it involves departments and divisions from across Boston College- not just an S.V.O. chapter and the Veterans, student Veterans, but administrators from admissions, in athletics, and- uh- an Equal Opportunity Diversity Office- to bring attention to the total student Veteran experience but also, the Veterans who are employees of Boston College to enhance their experience. We're really proud of that.

(TL): Yeah, what made you choose Boston College?

(DC): So, we were talking before with Wes. Uh, strong Jesuit Catholic tradition of service and education. We were talking about how the founding saint, Saint Ignatius of Loyola, was indeed a soldier before he was injured-

(TL): Yeah.

(DC): -and then, uh, and then pursued education. So, we're living that legacy right now, a couple folks here on this podcast. But, my father graduated B.C. in 1968. He served in the Peace Corps, uh, instead of Vietnam at that time, and I went and served in a different corps, the Marine Corps. And so, I'm proud of that legacy. My brother, Steve, a graduate of B.C., undergrad, grad-

(TL): Ok

(DC): - And so it's in our blood.

(TL): Yeah, very cool. Kat, what made you choose U.W.?

(KP): So, I chose it because it's where my husband has a job. So my husband works just south of Seattle, and when I separated from the Air Force I was like, "Welp. If I'm gonna go to school, this is a really good one in the area." But, I say that slightly flippantly because University of Washington has a fantastic neural engineering program. We have, it's now the Center for Neurotechnology, formerly the Center for Sensory, Motor, Neural Engineering, and it is a multi-university research group funded by the N.S.F., dedicated to neural engineering and research. So brain-computer interfaces, the ethics they're in, etcetera, etcetera. So, I ended up in the electrical engineering department because that sort of was the home of neural engineering when I got there.

(TL): Very cool, and tell us about a big win you guys had in 2018.

(KP): Okay, so we combined with our Office of Student Veteran Life. We put on a Memorial Day event every year. And so the very first year we did it, we put out as many flags as we could. In the past years, we've tried to put out the number of flags for those killed in action in Iraq and Afghanistan. We did one flag for every ten killed in Vietnam. And this past year, it was slightly controversial, but we decided to do flags for Veterans who committed suicide-

(TL): Yeah.

-to raise awareness for Veteran suicide. And, there were some people who were really not happy with that. But if we're gonna talk about what it means to be a Veteran, we have to talk about the mental health issues that come along with it to sort of get rid of that stigma, so we can actually have these conversations and save some lives because we have had Veteran suicides on our campus. So-

(TL): Yeah.

(KP): -it's sadly something that I've had to deal with as a chapter president and as a member of the student Veteran body. And if we could never have to do that again, I would be very, very happy.

(TL): Yeah abso—yeah that's. . . We get a lot of chapters that talk about the struggle of mental health on campus. 'Cause there're some student Veterans, and we'll talk about outreach in a second, but there are some student Veterans that get to campus and they don't want anything to do with the Veteran group on campus. And so it's difficult to stay connected and stay aware of sort of what the Veterans on campus are experiencing. Uhm, Wes. Why Fordham?

(WW): Yes, so it's a really funny story. I don't, again I don't have any background in Catholicism or the Jesu—Society of Jesus. But, basically in high school, I had a 1.6 G.P.A. You know, I wasn't doing very well; I was completely failing out. And, you know, I ended up going through the foster care system and inevitably joined the Army. And while I was in the Army, I was going to school full-time, trying to, you know, use up that, burn up that T.A. And then while I was—and I maintained a pretty good G.P.A.; I had like a 3.78- and I realized, "Hey man. I'm not as stupid as I thought I was." So, I was like, "I really want to go to a top-tier school. You know? It'd be kinda cool. Like, I come from a trailer park. I'ma go, I want to go to Colombia or N.Y.U or something like that." So, I was stationed at West Point, started looking at schools and went to N.Y.U. and Colombia first. Unfortunately, my tuition wasn't covered fully. Uhm, you know their Yellow Ribbon programs didn't cover it all. Found my way to Fordham, and not only was it covered and everything, but then again, as we were talking earlier, those Jesuit ideals and the values... They really- and as you interact on campus- they really live those values. There was just a cognizance of between who I was, another top tier school, hit every box that I wanted. I found my way to Fordham and absolutely love it.

(TL): Very cool. Tell us about that big win you guys had this year.

(WW): Yeah so, my big win actually would make it seem like Fordham isn't as good as I just made it out to be. But...

(TL): (Laughter)

(WW): This probably wasn't our biggest challenge, but to me, it was my most fulfilling win. Most of our Veterans are housed at the professional school, and it's really a common narrative for those top-tier schools where Veterans they get a different pipeline, they go to like a school of general studies or professional school. And basically what would happen, what was happening is that the... The school of Professional and Continuous Studies was... They weren't going to participate in commencement. They weren't going to have the same graduation procedures. Commencement is on a Saturday, and it's this huge, big spectacle. And they weren't going to participate in that. So, what we did, is we created an online petition, and we said, "Hey, we met with the administrators. 62% of Veterans are first-generation college students. This isn't a piece of paper to them; this is a transcendence of their entire family lineage." So, I mean, what's great is that they listened to us. They completely altered all the graduation procedures. Pursued, like they moved the professional school to participate in commencement, and not only that- and that's all I asked for- but not only that, the president of Fordham University himself personally delivered all the diplomas to the graduating Veterans. So, that was something we were able to do, and I'm extremely proud of it.

(TL): Very cool. One of the things that every student Veteran group has a challenge with is outreach, right? And uhm in two, in two ways- we'll go one by one here- the first, of course, being how do you let people know that there is a group and that they should be part of it? And the second part, once they're a part of it, how do you get them to actually commit to participate in things? Kat, we'll start with you. What has been your outreach efforts look like and what are some of the more successful ways that you've found to bring in Veterans that are maybe new to campus or unaware of the group or maybe even shy of joining the group? How are you getting them into the group?

(KP): Okay, can I answer this question as a broader-

(TL): Yep.

(KP): -Veteran population? Ok.

(TL): Yep.

(KP): So, this is something that I'm incredibly proud of. So I will preface this with when I left the military, I was like, "I am not a Veteran; I am just someone who served in the military. My dad who's a twenty-year retired Air Force colonel, he's the Veteran."

(TL): Yeah.

(KP): Uhm, and it took me several years and also looking at the official reg. definition of what Veteran is, to say that that I could, "Oh! I can check this box in my graduate applications." There's this narrative that a lot of times woman don't self-identify as Veteran or people who were discharged under "Don't ask, don't tell". There's this narrative of people who don't want to associate with it. And so on our campus you'll find that a lot of people that come to the Student Veteran Center tend to be the more, you know, stereotypical Veteran types. You know, a lot of white dudes. You know, we try to make it as welcoming as possible-

(TL): White guy with beard with 511 pants and a hat.

(KP): Wait, how do you know all these people?

(TL): (Laughter)

(DC): You like the beard.

(KP): No, uhm (Laughter). And so, you know, at the University Washington, over 50% of Veterans are graduate students. And we actually, I think someone said Washington is like top three Veterans... Top three Veteran population in the country. So, we have a high density of Veterans. And so, my friend Selendi Church and I sort of, out of what actually had gotten me involved in the Veteran space, which was diversity committee within the S.V.A. chapter. We started our own nonprofit, Minority Veterans of America, and we now have, I think, north of 700 members in, like, nationwide. We have meetups in various cities where we have members. We do events. Like we did Upped Outside with REI the day after Thanksgiving. But, finding ways to find Veterans who don't normally think of themselves as Veterans and then help them with that intersectionality and the identity. So, we had a

panel earlier here about the eras of “Don’t ask, don’t tell” and what it meant for people to serve under “Don’t ask, don’t tell”-

(TL): Yeah.

(KP): - before, during, and after, and Lindsey put it very well. It was a fracturing of her identity to sort of put her sexual orientation in the closet to serve, and the betrayal of the LGBTQ community to do that. And now that she’s out, what can she do? And so, how can we help people reconcile with that and what are the ways we can welcome our people into the Veterans’ space. So that’s sort of our outreach of finding people online, finding ways to find people who don’t normally think of themselves as Veterans.

(TL): Yeah, wonderful. Wes. Outreach.

(WW): Yeah so, I think one of the first things we did is we realized that we had to try to catch these guys and gals as they come through the gate. So we worked with our admissions guides, our admissions councilors, our, uh, some of the administrators and say, “Hey, they need to come to us.” And, what we did is, there was a orientation that was offered to incoming student Veterans, so it was just like an hour in length. And basically what it was, what it is, it outlined how your G.I. Bill works. You’re gonna get paid on this day, this is when you register for courses, that kind of thing. So we said, “Yeah, this isn’t enough.” So we scrapped that and we said, “We’re gonna make it a full-day event and we really want to get you not only included in the university, but then also get you included in the student chapter here and really try and build that sense of community.” So, we had a number of different people present. Basically all the offices from Fordham that we thought you needed to know that you kind of overlooked. So, the Office of Prestigious Scholarships. I don’t know why Veterans overlook that thing because we should be murdering those prestigious scholarships.

(TL): (Chuckles) Yeah.

(WW): Uh, career services, study abroad, all those things that I think student Veterans just kind of overlook. We included them. Then we also included a number of Veteran Service Organizations. So, there’s 41,000 organizations that self-identify as a Veteran Service Organization, and when you are transitioning out, that number can be overwhelming. So we picked the ones that we felt that would benefit you the most during your time right now. But, where we really built that sense of

community, and where we facilitated that outreach, is at the end of it all, we tour them around campus, and we just went to a local bar right off post. Right off post, geez. Uh,-

(TL): (Laughter)

(KP): (Laughter)

(WW): Right off campus. I do it all the time, sorry.

(TL): Oh my goodness.

(WW): We went to a local bar. We sung karaoke, we had a couple drinks, we hung out. And, we just kind of showed that, "Hey this is a community. We're friends here, you know?" And while that professional development stuff is very important, and, you know, we're trying to get a job, we're also just here to make friends and that's just as much as important. And the other thing that we do to get people to build that sense of community, I think where we're really special at Fordham, is there's 465 Veterans at Fordham. There's almost 13,000 in New York City. So, whenever we host an event, we open it up to N.Y.U. and Columbia, the communities and all those other schools so that they can get some of the action, too, because if one of us is winning, then we're all winning. And that's really where I think we're special and that's kind of how we've facilitated outreach at the F.V.A.

(TL): You guys have a good relationship with Colombia?

(WW): We talk smack to them but. . .

(KP): (Laughter)

(TL): Yeah alright.

(WW): No no, we have a good relationship. (Laughter)

(TL): Alright, I'm gonna send an audio clip to a few of the Columbians.

(WW): I mean, they're inferior but like...

(KP): (Laughter)

(DC): (Laughter)

(TL): (Laughter) Very good, uh. . . Dave, how are you guys approaching outreach? You guys are young.

(DC): We are, yeah. I was just gonna say, not as strong of an answer as Kat and Wes, but I would say that outreach for the undergraduates is what I would call a growth area at Boston College. But using my business school hat, I would say our competitive advantage is for the graduate students who are interested in the M.B.A. What we're finding right now from our data, from what we know about our student Veteran population, is that a lot of them are using G.I. Bill, and they want to get that M.B.A. And so, our outreach is word of mouth through the officer corps at that mid-career officer level who are transitioning out of active duty, and they're looking to get a next degree, certification, an M.B.A., specialized degree in order to enter the job market. So we, we smother them in affection and love and attention when they are contemplating a school like Boston College. We get them on campus; we take them to a tailgate. I think Wes is spot on. We try to give them a fun experience that is memorable, meaningful. So, we do have our tailgates, and we have our hockey games and football games. And we do that, uhm. . . I would say, though, that employers in Boston, the City of Boston, is an attractor for folks who want to enter the business sector industry, and that can be financial services, it can be pharma. And so, those folks that want to relocate in Boston and move their family and call Boston home, greater Boston home, want that degree. So, we're outreaching to get to them to then sell B.C., so that they can then call Boston home and stay there.

(TL): Yeah, very cool. So, the next part of that, right, is ok, now they're in the group, now they're hanging out in like either the Vet Center or the lounge, whatever, wherever place you have where you guys organize uh. . . You uhm. . . I don't know if you happen to do any events, but we would try to do like happy hour, try doing volunteer things, try doing events on campus, you guys did like the flag stuff uhm. . . How do you get people to not only show interest in doing those things, but then follow up and actually show up? And I know that this is a valuable conversation for chapters to have because when I was president at American University, I asked, "Hey-" We had a huge issue with people actually like doing stuff. We had like meetings and that was about it, right? And so I was like, "Just tell me what you want to do, and I'll organize it." And everybody said, "We just want to have a social happy hour, we just wanna hang- This is Washington, DC. Let's just go and hang out." And like, "Okay." One of our friends, one of the people who

was in the chapter, was a bartender. He was like- he worked it out with his manager; they had a little area at the bar for us. He was bartending. We made a Facebook event, had everybody like, say if they were gonna go. 13 people decided and said that they were going, zero people showed up. And when I grilled every one of them, I was like, “Why would you say you were going?” “Oh thought it’d look good to show that people were going.” No, it only looks good when people show up. Then I started, I was blasting everybody over text until I had people showing up. But, it was, it was kind of embarrassing, right? And so, everybody has this, a lot of people have this problem. Wes, we’ll start with you. When it comes to anything, whether it’s social events, or volunteer events, or whatever it is that you try to do activity-wise as a group, uhm. . . What are some ways that you’ve—How do you get people to actually commit to the participation?

(WW): Yeah so, I think the first thing to acknowledge is that this isn’t just a student Veteran organization.

(TL): Right.

(WW): Every office in the school has this issue. Whether you are the Entrepreneurial Office at Fordham, they have a different name but I can’t remember. They can’t... They buy pizza, they do the writing workshops, they try and get as many students engaged, just non-Veteran, just traditional students, and they can’t do it.

(TL): Yeah.

(WW): So, I think what I’ve tried to do is I’ve really tried to give them a reason to come and show value in those events. I don’t think we can make the assumption that, “Hey just because this is an event hosted by the Fordham Veterans Association, that they’re just gonna show up.” They need a reason to show up.

(TL): Yeah.

(WW): Uhm, so we, one of the things we kind of standardized the events that we host. So, we do a Veteran-specific orientation full eight-hour day. We host two information seminars on various different career paths and things like that. We host a student Veteran-specific internship fair, and we host a social. We do that every semester. So, orientation: you need to know these things to get on, to . . . be successful on campus. Information seminars: a lot of you guys said that you don’t know what

you want to do. These are different business professions, and we ask them. We take surveys. We say, “Hey, what career paths are you? What are you majoring in?” So, if the majority of people are majoring in finance, we brought people in from J. P. Morgan, things like that. Show that value. Internship fairs: we stress the importance and everybody on campus stressed the importance of internships as it relates to being a student Veteran. And we’ve showed value that as, “Hey, you can go to the career fairs that Fordham offers but understand there’s gonna be a zoo. There’s gonna thou—like hundreds of people. There’s gonna be hundreds of people there. This is very tailored; there’s only gonna be maybe a hundred people there, and you have all these vendors.” And, then the social is great because one, we invite everyone, not just the student Veterans. We even invite our faculty. It’s really just an excuse for us to drink with our professors.

(TL): Sure. (Laughter)

(WW): But we invite them, and it’s fun. It’s a good time. I look forward to going to the social. Last, the last social that we hosted at like 9:00, people were dancing Bachata, you know? So, I think just by demonstrating that value and giving them a genuine reason. And then also if, you know, hopefully our culture and our community is good-is well enough, what I’ll do is I’ll send a very personal letter to everyone. And, I’ll say, “Hey,” you know, “my name’s Wesley.” Like I would really... It’s highly personal to where I really try and connect with the reader, and then sometimes I’ll just sit out in the lobby and, you know, book a space and sit out there, and put my little Fordham Veterans’ Association banner up and just talk to people and tell them, “Hey you should come to these events.” And, you know, that’s kind of worked out. We still have some work to do on that front, but that’s kind of what we do.

(TL): Yeah. Very cool. Dave? What’s your experience with this type of thing?

(DC): Sure. You know, a little bit of what you said, Wes, did resonate with me, and I think step one would be a good listener. So, as leaders and anyone on this podcast who is listening, you know, just good leadership is just trying to understand what the needs of the unit, the population who you want to serve and how you can help them achieve their goals, right? So for us, you’d be seeing kind of a different population. I’d call them more, right now, graduate students. Uh, their need, their innate kind of inherent demand right now, is to be competitive in the job market and the job field, right? So, what we can do to appeal to that, and get Veterans to activate, is to talk about—we have a networking

event with employers. And, I'll give all the credit to a B.C. graduate who's a Marine officer, who graduated many ago. He started in the city of Boston a once-a-month professional networking event that is sent out to, and it's written in Courier New Font-

(KP): (Laughter)

(WW): Yeah.

(DC): -This is classic. And you get the emails like it's written on a typewriter, Courier New 12-point font. Uhm, and he has invited professionals from all industries across Boston, and then all the schools in Boston. So in that email, he'll have for Boston College, my name is hyperlinked and for Northeastern, there's another name, B.U., another name... So if you want to be added to this list, Mike Petta, give him credit. Shout out. And I would encourage big cities that have a lot of schools to do this, for your listeners on the podcast. And so, that gets people to come out. They're networking in an atmosphere where they can enjoy an adult beverage if they want, and they're trading cards, they're building networks, they're building relationships, and people have been offered internships and jobs. And, that's how we get to serve what they really want,-

(WW): Right.

(DC): -underpin what they want.

(WW): Power of the glass, man.

(DC): Yeah.

(WW): Power of the glass.

(KP): (Laughter)

(TL): Yeah, absolutely.

(DC): It's an idea that other chapters can do in a big city: Phili., wherever, Chicago.

(WW): Right.

(DC): You can do this.

(TL): Yeah, absolutely. Uhh... Kat.

(KP): So, we've tried the food thing. One of the unique events that I was able to do focused around helping the next generation of leaders. So, I'm an R.O.T.C. graduate, and I've known a lot of enlisted student Veterans on campus tend to have negative feelings towards the, you know, the officer cadets or candidates running around because it's like, "You're wearing the uniform and you're getting all the benefits. Why are you standing on the football sideline getting the Veteran salute when we're up in the stands?" etcetera, etcetera. So, there's a lot of hard feelings, and justifiably so. There's sort of this separation between what the Veterans experience and what the cadets are experiencing. And so, I went to the Honor Leaders Society, which is an honor society within R.O.T.C. at the University of Washington and said, "Hey, how about I bring in some enlisted student Veterans, and we'll have them talk to your, you know, R.O.T.C. students, and we'll tell you what it's really like to be in the military so that when y'all come on to active duty, you're not jerks to your, you know, senior enlisted and your junior enlisted?" And they're like, "Yeah that's a great idea." So, I send this email, and I'd heard enough griping from the enlisted student Veterans on campus. I was like, "Here's your chance to come and change the next generation." Next generation... They were all like 20 or whatever,-

(TL): Sure.

(KP): -but here's your chance to impart some knowledge. Like, what are the things that you see officers doing that's terrible? What's something an officer does that makes you not want to trust them anymore? You know, what are the things that maybe an officer's done that you really appreciated? And, you know, I bought pizza because that's what you do, and we had I think six or seven student Veterans come in from various career fields, and we had, you know, 20 cadets. And, we had a good time where they actually got to talk to the enlisted because, you know, I had great N.C.O.s when I was at my unit, uhm, but there's a certain level of Kool-Aid that they have to sell it, like they want you to be there, they want you to commission, they want you to do all these things. And if you can just get someone to tell your straight like, "Look here's how it's gonna be when you get on first Evac to do when you're a new maintenance officer and you have 50 people under you and like one just got pulled over for D.U.I. and the other one's over, you know, doing god knows what else." Like, this is what you need to know and

how can we help you become a better officer by learning from your enlisted. So, starting their process early.

(TL): Yeah, absolutely.

(DC): Can I add something?

(TL): Yeah, of course yeah.

(DC): Yeah so two more things I just want to add. One is, a lot of Veterans, this is not new to us, but we want to give back to our community. So another way I get engagement for B.C. is a volunteer project, right? So we do this 5k run. It's in Boston, it ends in Fenway Park. It's super fun. So Veterans show up for that. The other one that's more aspirational, I'd say, that we're trying to get there at B.C., and it's on our radar. We want to do this. It's because we have more of our Veterans at the grad level. We actually want to establish like a mentor program.-

(TL): Mhmm.

(DC): - We want to have our graduate student Veterans pair up with, or mentor with,-

(WW): Yeah.

(KP): Uh-huh.

(DC): -an undergrad student Veteran who, where as your older Veterans in the grad schools have a little more life experience, maybe they're officer, doesn't matter, but they've done different things. They've got that grad degree or they're pursuing their grad degree in business or social work or whatever, and those undergrad students have those goals, too, in their life to develop themselves professionally. And we have seen some preliminary big successes, I would say. Where these grads... So some of my friends here are fellow M.B.A. students, and we have pulled in, a guy I'm thinking of right now, Dominic, who is an undergrad, Army-enlisted, uh uh, student Veteran at B.C., and he is now surrounded with five M.B.A. students who are just giving him tons of mentorship-

(TL): That's amazing.

(DC): -and, he's loving it, and he's now. And I can ask Dominic to go pull five more of his friends to our next event.

(TL): Yeah.

(DC): Yeah.

(TL): That's incredible.

(DC): And, I'll shout out to S.V.A. because we got Dominic and our friends to go to the Raytheon-sponsored Patriot's game that S.V.A. was present at-

(TL): Oh very cool.

(KP): Nice.

(WW): Oh yeah, great.

(DC): -against Green Bay.

(TL): Yeah.

(DC): And Dominic was there with a bunch of our M.B.A.s and he loved it and he's still talking about that.

(TL): That's amazing.

(DC): Thanks to S.V.A. and Raytheon for that one.

(TL): Yeah, at American University, we attempted to do something that was like a mixture of those two things. We had R.O.T.C. kids. So we have a strong R.O.T.C. participation in our club there. And, we were thinking like, "Well why not have the, why not have the student Veterans here like, actually... Instead of just hanging around being this like cursing, drinking influence on them, actually give them some sort of like life?" — but of course, the problem that we had was getting people to commit to the idea, right? And so, it sort of happened unofficially, right? Everybody sort of had the R.O.T.C. students that they enjoyed being around and just sort of naturally, uhm. . . It was always interesting to see, too. When we were in- we had a little Veterans' lounge- and in the midst of all of this like typical, you know, Veteran banter, yadda yadda,

having jokes, poking fun at people, we would hear R.O.T.C. students come up with a problem they had or a life situation, and (Snap) immediately everybody turns into the leader that they want to be.-

(WW): Yeah, that's true.

(TL): -It was amazing to see the whole conversation turn on a dime, become like this moment of instruction for this person. And, their eyes just lighting up like, "Holy smokes, like all this information is just". . . It's, it's always impressive to see how quickly people in general, Veterans especially, are willing to stop what they're doing and quickly move into this mode of, "I want to make sure that you have the guidance that I can provide you to be a better version of you." In 35 seconds or less, a goal you guys have, that your chapter has going into 2019.

(WW): We want to completely integrate and make Fordham a Veteran-inclusive campus. A Veteran-inclusive school- that's something I kind of stole from Jared Lyon, but... How do we uh, how do we—what does Veteran-friendly mean? We want to be included, Veteran-inclusive, so make sure that you're getting the full Fordham University experience. The, "what you, what you came for",-

(TL): Yep.

(WW): -How do you get involved, and, you know, get that top-tier education that you're seeking.

(TL): Absolutely. Kat what are you guys doing 2019?

(KP): Hoping to make the chapter the best that it can be with as many students as we can. So, upping the engagement.

(TL): Very good. Dave what are you expecting out of Boston College?

(DC): Definitely B.C. I want to operationalize what we're learning here at this NatCon because it's so many great ideas, and if I can move it a baby step forward than what my predecessor made, that's a win for us. But, I want to build on Veteran-friendly. I want to build—we don't have a space. Maybe I can set groundwork for a space; we don't have that. But I also want to build more on this workout program; we didn't have a chance to talk about, but we got personal trainers to set up a workout program, and Veterans can go workout for free with trainers. You want to talk about a place where the Veterans feel comfortable was in the

gym. And so, that's bringing Veterans out of the woodwork. I want to build on to that, too, and get more participation into that program.

(TL): Yeah. Very cool. Dave, Kat, Wes, thank you so much for joining me.

(WW): Thanks for having us.

(TL): Thanks for being on *Borne the Battle*.

(KP): Thanks. Appreciate it.

(TL): Absolutely.

[00:32:32] Music