



Connecting Military Service and Workforce Preparedness  
National Defense University Foundation, Virtual NatSec Briefing Series  
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Panelists:

The Hon. John Lowry, Assistant Secretary for Veterans Employment & Training Service (VETS), USMC/USMCR service approx.. 1984-2009  
Dr. James Schmeling, President and CEO of NDU Foundation  
VADM Fritz Roegge, President of NDU (Introductory remarks)

*[Technical check-in and introductory remarks]*

Great. Thank you, Sir. I'm looking for, here we go – Excellent. Thanks very much for the introduction. I really appreciate it, Sir. And it's really an honor to be here with you. Let me just to elve with everyone, tell you about our agency. It's called VETS. It stands for Veterans and Employment & Training Service. And we're actually one of many different entities with the US federal government that helps support veteran employment. We have counterparts in the Department of Defense, Veterans Affairs, USDA, Department of Transportation, Small Business Administration, and elsewhere.

But we're unique in the sense that this is all we do. This is our core mission. And as such, we are the focal point within the United States government for this space. And that being the focal point puts in in sort of a different kind of situation than some of our partners. Let me talk a little bit about what the vision of the Agency is, and how that vision informs our priorities. For us, it's not just about finding jobs for veterans, because, just because you're in a job doesn't mean that you're making a full contribution, that you're happy, fulfilled on the job, that you're, you know, making the impact that you want to have, and that you're continuing to learn and grow – which we know is so important for veterans.

So our vision isn't about putting veterans in jobs; it's about helping all veterans reach their full potential in the workplace. It's about closing the gap between, sor of, what is, and what could be. And when you think about it, you know, when a veteran is using their full potential in the workplace, they're making, they're making incredible contributions to those organization they serve. And that's good for their well-being, both their emotional wellbeing, their economic wellbeing. It certainly helps their families, and their family situations. As I said, it helps the organizations they service. And then when you aggregate all of that, that's good for America. As the Admiral was saying, it's about our prosperity as a country, which obviously feeds into our security. So, we really do see that there's a national security element to our mission.

Cont. 08:25: So that vision of having people reach their full potential informs our two priorities. The first one being, is that we absolutely have to get the transition right, that transition from

military service into the civilian workforce. And then the second priority is that we have to have the right strategic partners to maximize our impact for the veteran. And let me unpeel those a little bit in opposite order.

The reason why the strategic partnership piece is so important to us – As I said, we're on of many organizations within the federal government, but we have something going for us, and that is, we are a focal point. So we need to use that clout, if you will, and make sure that we have the right partnerships. And I'm not just talking about partnerships within the United States government. I'm talking about government, non-government, for-profit, not-for-profit. As Admiral Mullen has talked about, there is a sea of goodwill out there, of organizations that want to support veterans and veterans' causes. So what we're doing inside VETS is making sure that as we look across that sea, that we're partnering with the right organizations. And for – a we're doing an inventory right now and for the organizations that are producing a good return to the veteran. We're doubling down on those, for those relationships that may not be yielding as much, maybe we back away from those. And, and then constantly look out over the horizon to see who aren't we partnered with who we should be partnered with.

So the other priority as I mentioned is we absolutely have to get the transition right – you know when, when we can crank a degree or two of extra slope on someone's career trajectory as they come out of the service and help them hit that slope, with a running start the compounding benefits of that over time are incredible. Right? Just think about it it's like the difference between starting to save for your retirement in your 20s versus starting in your 50s. Conversely you know if someone flounders at the transition and sort of bounces around for several years before they really hit their groove, that also has costs and there are opportunity costs. And so it's sort of the you know the the negative side of the coin. So let's basically get it right is what our vision is.

Where we spend our money as an agency, most of the money is actually spent on those safety net type programs that are meant to address sub-optimal outcomes, right? It's it's homeless veteran reintegration into the workforce type programs it's funding staff to help the veteran who's been out of work for many years and been maybe out of uniform for 10 or 20 years, but has been chronically unemployed or underemployed. To me if we can get the transition right, we'll have fewer unemployed veterans. We'll have fewer homeless veterans. It's the old, you know, ounce of prevention, is worth a pound of cure. So even though I just was talking about unemployed and underemployed and homeless veterans – that is not the narrative. And what the narrative is about veteran employment is a very positive story. Veteran household income on average or median rather median household income is 17.5% higher than their non-veteran counterparts. Unemployment is less for the veteran population than non-veteran population. And we're seeing that gap widen during this Covid-19 crisis, which suggests to me that employers want to hold on to their veterans, even more during a period of stress and duress.

Cont, 12:35: The participation rate for veterans if you look at the age groups from 20 to 64 and you cut that in five year increments every single one of those cohorts, the veteran participation rate in the workforce is higher than the non-veteran cohort and that only changes at the 65 and over group. Why? Because, you know those are the years that people typically want to retire, and

the veterans are in a better position to enjoy their retirement and don't necessarily have to work.

Veterans [have] better retention on average with their employers and they're also quicker to be promoted. So it's a very very good story and what I want to share with you know all of our partners – and certainly NDU is a partner in this because NDU is with the people that are still wearing the uniform and thinking about their transition, obviously not immediately or these students would be set to end, you right the military's not done with them yet – but someday they will become veterans and they certainly will lead people that are going to go through the transition. And all of us that are in this space and have an interest in this need to do everything we can to help those people make a successful transition. Because we know that the best recruiter out there is that successful veteran. And we will by helping our veterans and our transitioning service members have a good transition; we're going to be helping those recruiters of tomorrow replenish the all-volunteer force. So let me uh, just stop right there and turn it back over to James. And hopefully these introductory remarks were helpful in orient to orienting you to our agency.

James Schmeling, 14:25: Thank you very much secretary Lowry. I appreciate that. For me the reason that I think that you're a great partner for NDU is less about the folks who are in education right now and who are going to make their own transitions, and more about how they are thinking about preparing the national security workforce and the defense sector workforce. Both for the people who they lead while they're still serving but also for those who are going to make that transition and to ensure that the people who they're leading get the best education that they can that they apply that education to the defense of our country while they're serving that they get the best opportunities to pursue education and training. Whether that is through use of the GI bill or tuition assistance dollars, that they think about how they are going to continue to serve after they leave military service and the experience that they're going to take into that national security or defense sector workforce, that is going to inform how they are working and facing the threats that our nation faces.

When I think about their experience in the cybersecurity or operational environment, they're definitely more familiar than their civilian counterparts who have never served when I think about working on the equipment that is supplied by companies whether those are the Lockheed Martins or the Northrops or our partner Boeing, or working with firms like IBM and Leidos, and information security and technology, or working with the silicon valley companies like Google, and Microsoft and Amazon, and others – they're going to be better-prepared because they know what our military is working on. And when I think specifically about the colleges that are here at the National Defense University I think about the Eisenhower School and the work that they're doing on all of the industry tracks that their students study, and that their graduates work in that go on to manage programs and other things.

Cont, So to me labor is an ideal partner you're looking at what our workforce needs for the future and you're thinking about what sorts of educational preparation training apprenticeships and other sorts of things are going to lead to those successes that enable our business community and our national security and defense workforces to be successful but i think one of the things that we're not doing yet is really thinking about transition far enough ahead you spend your day every day thinking about that and dol vets thinks about it every day but our military service members

don't necessarily think about what's tomorrow because they're so focused on today's mission and what i want to do is think about how do we blend that preparation for transition with the preparation to do their job better every single day and how we can take a leadership position so anything you want to react to there

yeah no i think you're absolutely right james that we do not we tend to think about the transition as an event instead of a process now the good news is i know the va the department of defense department of labor we we are partnering together to figure out how do we reframe this in the minds of the service members that this isn't this isn't an event this is a process and it's a process that arguably begins when you stick your hand up in the air the first time and be begin your working life right because we we all are on a journey the veterans journey happens to begin with military service but it doesn't end with military service you know the vast majority of people will get get out and go on to do other things there are some good programs that are on the horizon within again as i said with va in dod mtc is one comes to mind where we're thinking more holistically about the journey and we're thinking about how do you leverage the skills that you're naturally acquiring in your through your moses through the works that you do every day and and augment those somehow so that they and develop the credential so that when you hit the transition you actually have a ready-made credential that will travel with you all the services have the credentialing opportunities online the cool platforms which is one way to get occupational credentials or occupational certs licenses put you on an apprenticeship path the military u.s map so the united services military apprenticeship program also lets people who are already working in their MOS move toward towards a journeyman's card that are going to allow them to to be successful on the back end

and i think to the extent that we can have touch points with that service member along the way and and not not necessarily to push them out the door because for some people don't you know they should stay 20 or 30 or 35 years but they would they should make the that should be an informed decision right they should be thinking about what's the opportunity cost to stay in what's the opportunity cost getting out what's best for me and my family and that vision of having those conversations and informing the service members earlier is the direction that we're headed and again we're moving away from an event and more towards a process and it's about a lifelong journey.

one of the things that i really like that's been happening with the department of labor and working with a variety of partners is the internship and apprenticeship programs and in many cases there are also some opportunities for industry fellows to go out and then bring back industry experience to the military can you add anything to that

yeah absolutely so you know the apprenticeship is just a wonderful avenue for service members or or non-service members frankly i mean if you think about it the average apprentice starting wages seventy thousand dollars and that's seventy thousand dollars that on top of the money you've made during your apprenticeship because most friendships are paid and you're not accumulating a bunch of college debt so in terms of you know the economic viability of apprenticeship it's a great thing and it's also something that military people tend to be particularly adept at it the apprenticeship model is is very analogous just the way we learn our mos

is in the military so they're naturally very good students you know it's a mixture of hands-on and classroom practical application type experiences and we are the department of labor right now really trying to avail more and more service members to these opportunities right now we actually have pilot program where we have two installations for each service dallas and travis for the air force cherry point and miramar for the marine corps norfolk and san diego for the navy and bliss and bragg in the army where we actually have apprenticeship counselors there to offer sort of one-on-one service to anyone who might want an apprenticeship and what we want to do is help them get vectored into the right trade or the right friendship for them and also land them in the location where they want to go so i would look and because we are in the department of labor which has its own office of apprenticeship we have enormous resources here to afford opportunities for servicemen and women one of the things that i learned a lot about and didn't really recognize is that apprenticeships are not just for the trades and that people are taking apprenticeships in a variety of industry sectors including computer science and cyber security and information technology and even consulting and other practices like that and that the apprenticeship model was an interesting way to trade experience between industry and the private sector and the military

i think there's some really interesting programs for instance with microsoft and the microsoft systems academy work that's being done and people who are learning anything that you want to add related to those sectors yeah absolutely so that so this is you know beyond those apprenticeship pilots i was talking about you know the microsoft program that you just mentioned is part of the skill bridge portfolio and we have more than 300 partner organizations mostly companies but also some trade organizations that as well that will come on the installations and allow people that are transitioning out to spend time in those last several months on active duty and getting hands-on experience and again vectoring them towards a job where they want to do it in the in the craft or or the area work that they're studying i would say you know for those commanders out there or future commanders who are between commands

please try to make these programs these skill bridge programs available to your men and women i know it's it's tough mission comes first and i know people don't want to let their folks go necessarily but i ask you to consider this is that you know 90 days 100 days from now. You're going to lose them anyway they made the decision to get out their contracts coming up you're going to have to get get you know accustomed to working without their presence and by letting them enroll in whether it's the microsoft program or one of 300 others you're letting them take that running start that i was talking about at their transition and you're letting them run up that that slope and you know that's a future successful veteran out there who's going to help our recruiting mission down the road i think that that's a really important component of it because that recruiting mission is really very important and thinking also about what the long-term career implications are for military service members who are well prepared

They're going to go on and be successful and when they're going on and being successful in the defense sector or the national security sector they're going to make a difference in our nation's defense i think that's a really really important component of it as well when they're doing well they're often going to also advise their family members to serve and they're going to be able to provide some guidance and insight onto career paths one of the things that i was interested in in your career as i looked at it is, you left the marine corps. You had a successful civilian sector

career, worked with among others harley davidson and and so on. But then one of the things that really i thought was interesting was your executive search career so you were helping place military members into executive roles. How would you say military members were doing as compared to their civilian counterparts there and what kinds of career opportunities can they look for in the long term?

but as i said before generally speaking the veteran the veteran does better in the workforce and i think there's there's a few reasons for that first of all it's you can't be a veteran if you haven't served and you and you can't have served unless you met the basic requirements to get in the first place and as we know you have to be well above average to be able to get in the military in the first place and then you have this wonderful experience in the military where you're learning all of these soft skills and hard skills along the way that have particular value you're also learning some cultural agility right because as you bounce around during your career you end up different locations with different sort of subcultures and you have to reinvent yourself throughout your career in the military and the other thing that's really important about military people is that they have a habit of continuous learning right so the you know the students at ndu right now are in a learning mode they're reinventing themselves to be the strategic leaders of tomorrow this is probably not the first time they've been to school they probably went to commander general staff college they probably went to a career course they started their their career you know going to school and then they've been punctuating those kind of formal passages through the the schoolhouse with picking up different schools whether it's our skills whether it's mos related or i'm sure there's a n ber of six several black belts out there in the audience and that ability that habit of reinventing oneself picking up new skills is what makes your veteran on average a lot more valuable and a lot more successful than the people that haven't been brought up and spent their formative years in those kinds of environments

i think it's also important to look at what kinds of other education opportunities there are as we were talking with admiral rogie a little bit earlier he talked about his civilian sector education and master's degrees and when i look at yours you've got a master's degree from stanford a master's degree from harvard and you pursued education in a way that was going to make you successful whether you were in the service or out of the service what would you say to folks who are thinking about education while they're in service now that is in addition to that professional military education component how does that impact their opportunity you know well you know a lot of people will ask for advice you you tell them what you did and i'm going to do that i did that i saw when i got the stanford degree i was on active duty and did it through tuition assistance it worked for me it was to me the point is the point is just be a continuous learner and if you're a continuous learner whether or not you're going through some kind of formal it'll get you a degree path or you're just reading and staying informed and trying to pick up new skills both of those bring an incredible amount of intrinsic value the one that leads to the piece of paper or the certificate however does give you a little bit of extra value

and i'll just give you a fun fact here that so when i was born i was i was born in 1961 okay in 1961 only one in 20 jobs in america required any kind of certificate or occupational license or journeyman's card or anything like that one in 20. today that n ber is one and four right and it's likely to be one and three and and the reason why this credentialing thing is becoming

so much more important sort of what the admiral was saying is that it's an increasingly dynamic world that we live in it's more competitive there's more people our our thoughts have evolved around professionalism in general our thoughts have evolved around workplace safety and of course a lot of these accreditations may ensure that workplace safety

but the the point of that is is that if you can on the sides around your normal training do some extra education and certification it's only gonna stand you in better state it's gonna help differentiate you from everyone else and and don't forget the real reason you do it is intrinsic value of what you learn thank you what do you think the importance is for the department of labor to work with business and industry and understand the future workforce needs and the future of work well i think i think it's very important for us because we can't you know our customer is the veteran right we we want to again enable every veteran to fulfill their potential in the workforce and if if we don't understand what the needs of the workforce are right we're not going to be able to fulfill our mission so we work very closely with industry

and you know some of what some of what i was saying about the importance of credentialing is direct feedback that we're hearing from the industry as admiral said this is becoming you know a more complex world rather than a less complex world. And it's going to be defined by disruption which of course is going to take you know many different forms.

we're living through a big disruption now this kind of disruption the covet is thankfully rare but the disruption that's driven by innovation is going to be very common going forward and they say that someone who joins the workforce today will likely have four distinct careers through their lives as the needs in industry change so our intent is to get out in front of what those evolving changing needs of industry are and then use that insight to sort of inform people to make help them make a better transition but I think i think we're past the days where someone thinks you know they're going to make a transition and whatever they go into right at right out of the gate is going. to be what defines the rest of their working life because i think the world's moving too fast for that to be a sustainable model.

i think you're right i think many of us are going to have multiple careers and one of the things that i think ties veterans together with the active service force is that they have a desire to serve that they want to contribute back to our nation and continue to be of service whether that's in their local communities or to the nation as a whole. and i think that that's an important distinction I also think it's very interesting when we look at what happens in the labor force across the country that the department of labor has a distributed workforce you partner with your regional offices you partner with the states and there's a distinction what do you see as the most important things that are trickling up from the states and the innovations that are coming from the states back up to the national level yeah a great great question so the what characterizes the relationship is a very strong partnership with our state workforce partners and they there's a national association of state workforce agencies naswa that actually has representatives from all the 50 states we plug into that organization as well and it's for best practice sharing so what we try to do is and again this is one of those strategic partnerships that i was talking about that's so important to us you know what we try to do is get the flywheel spinning as fast as we can on sharing of the best practices now there's lots of different constraints that get in the way of having a best practice identified and instantly populated out across all 50 states. But many of

those constraints we can overcome and so our relationship and our job as i see it is to help the state sort of overcome the friction that they have in their system certainly you know respecting the you know the state federal divide thing but be be a resource for them and we we're trying to give them as much flexibility as we can at the state level because we think that more flexibility is better than less flexibility in general

as such just i'll give you a quick example we we fund a number of people that work in the job centers that that are funded by state employees and when we had this massive spike of unemployment claims that came in just in the last couple of months we gave the states the flexibility to use some of the veteran related resources to help get through that backlog so that everyone could then support not just veterans but but all the population with employment services and and if we hadn't given them that flexibility they in many cases would still be working through the backlog so we try to partner with them and like i said the big thing is find the best practice and let's try to get that spread around the country as soon as possible

another interesting area that's happening that is really becoming more prominent is a focus on military spouses as a retention tool for the military and helping assist with that and of course all of the students who are here right now just dislocated from wherever they were to here for a year and then they'll leave here in a year and many of them have spouses what kinds of advice do you have for the students and for the faculty here thinking about how to help those spouses with employment and career development education or anything else that labor is focused on

right great so the good news is is that i think there's a widespread recognition that you know the military spouses situation is one where you know we talk about tap transition assistance program well that the service member is going through that transition once the spouse goes through a transition every time there's a PCS and there and there's a recognition that the spouses actually need some transition assistance so we are right now actually piloting a military spouse specific curricula for the military spouse to help them with those intermediate transitions and there are things that are just unique to their experience

for instance you know military spouses in general tend to be, have much more education than they're non-military spouse corps and yet they'll have these big gaps on their res... understandably because they've been following their military spouse around and so our curriculum is designed to help them convey the story explain it in a way that that conveys the value that they would add to the employer we're also partnered with us chamber and the hiring our heroes team has doing a lot in the military spouse space and you've probably heard second lady mrs pence this is you know this is the her topic you know and they all you know the first ladies and second ladies they'll pick a topic this is the mil spouse one is hers and it's personal for her because she's got a daughter-in-law and in the, let's say her son is in the marine corps. And she's married to someone and i think daughter i think is a military spouse so yeah we're so more help is on the way. there but we we recognize this is a this is a challenging environment for the military spouse well that's something that we'll follow up on and make available to our students here so they can make it available to spouses as well.



i think it's an important component of our long-term military service so one of the questions that was asked from an audience member and i'll let you interpret and answer it in the frame that you'd like but what's the new normal for interactions with employers and employees in the transition process particularly given the circumstances of covert remote interviews and and how do we prepare for that transition in a time like this?

right well hopefully this won't be the new normal to the end of time but I will say that we've been really pleased on how not just our agency but all our partners across US government and our corporate partners and our in our nonprofit partners have been able to toggle over into providing virtual services even though this is very much of a high-touch business we've been able to make that transition with very little disruption of service now that said the transitions you know a lot of people were given the latitude to opt out of really a hands-on transition experience that they could take courses online not not interactive courses like this but just self-paced courses online I personally think that that's a mistake because it's not it's not an adequate substitute to be able to interact live with an instructor and get that that kind of you know hands-on mentorship the services are now and we've had discussions with them or are you know encouraging their people to do more of the live interactive work and and now fortunately we're seeing some of the brick and mortar transition assistants you know coming back into four so they're doing these hybrid programs so they'll have a social distance classroom with some people online. I think longer term what the new normal is once once we get the pandemic behind us it's going to be as i said you know we have to see a goodwill out there we have a lot of partners that want the same thing what positive outcomes for the veterans so it's going to be people like us inside vets better harnessing you know the collective energies of that group to yield the outcome for the veteran or help enable the veteran i think silos are going to be knocked down

I think communication is going to be faster between the private sector and the public sector and you know again as admiral said things are getting more complex not less complex and that forces us to become more agile in this space and agility in my mind is all comes down to the speed of communication being in real time getting the right two parties connected at the time they need to be connected so that's what we're pushing towards and I think that's what we'll see in the future thank you in terms of the high demand workforce sectors are there any things that you want to share with this audience about where the highest demand is in our economy whether that is by industry sector or even geography yeah well i certainly there's a and you talked you mentioned cyber a few times certainly that's probably where there's a biggest supply and demand imbalance right now and the military is obviously just a wonderful talent pool for those kind of jobs because you know some some people are are doing that as part of their as part of their you know MOS even those who aren't because they have presumably a security clearance or would qualify for security clearance and again they have the intelligence and wherewithal to become a military person in general that that is a wonderful place to vector people to and because of the supply and demand imbalance there the salaries tend to be very generous so a service person coming out at any rank is going to have the potential within a matter of years to make you know multiples of what they were making in the military not that it's all about money but that's just you know a nice thing for people to know military people in terms of where they want to go it lines up fairly nicely with that so t sort of in general not just necessarily cyber security but it in general is a popular destination so too are building trades and manufacturing which is also lines up with the

needs of the country because people talk about you know factory closures and you know the you know dismal state of US manufacturing but i don't think that's really the story we're seeing not only it's more work coming back to the US not only is the sector rising but the sector the manufacturing sector has a crisis on their hands because the skill trades people in those plants the electricians the pipefitters the machine repair guys and you know list your trade they're all getting their retirement age so the average age of a skilled trade person right now is in their 50s so this represents great opportunity for someone who's coming out of the military and as you said you know those you know you join the military because you want to serve by going into one of these professions where we need a capability as a country we need a manufacturing capability this country you are serving you're serving by another means but it but it's a way to to promote our prosperity and our security I think advanced manufacturing is something that's not necessarily well understood in this country we still think about our parents manufacturing experience and and automotive assembly lines and things like that but advanced manufacturing in this country has become really interesting and the supply chains that are necessary for that have become really interesting and as i've been talking with companies in the defense sector they're talking about onshoring supply chains and the need to build those abilities to supply parts widgets advanced manufacturing technologies and other things into our defense sector suppliers and into advanced aircraft and hypersonics and all of those sorts of things so there's a great opportunity here to work with material science and go into that or to have a robust understanding of what our military is going to put out in the field and and adjust to that manufacturing I think a lot of them are members of trade associations like the national defense industry association or the aerospace industries association and others anything that you can say about the advanced defense sector advanced manufacturing or trade associations that you work with yeah i would just say you know i just underscore what you said it this is not only is it an important work but it's a place where you can build a a very satisfying lucrative and a career in which you're going to constantly learn and evolve because the technology doesn't slow down it keeps evolving and the people and again this is why military people do so well in these kinds of jobs because you're constantly having to learn new things reinvent yourself in new ways and you know position yourself to be of value if you will i do agree that the you know that the tides coming in on onshore and in the defense sector in particular there's you know just national security reasons why we would want to you know you know tighten those supply lines up a little bit but i would say in general i think it will never the ebb and flow of onshore and offshoring will never entirely be resolved because there's you know whether the free traders are in power the protectionists are in power that's going to come that's going to move back and forth over time and then those businesses right they're in the business of constantly about because they live in this dynamic world.

They're constantly going to have to evaluate what's the manufacturing footprint look like and when i say that i'm talking about the entire supply chain end-to-end supply chain looking at the Tier-1s, 2s, 3s, 4s, and so on all the way down to distribution and they need to optimize for lowest landed costs because you know they have the fiduciary responsibility to their shareholders and because they live in a dynamic world factories are going to close and factories are going to open and works going to move sometimes outside of the country sometimes back in to the country sometimes somewhere else in the country and all of that is causing disruption so the best thing that the veteran can do or the person who's employed in the space can do is make sure that they're not only proficient in what their what their job is today but anticipate what

learning they need to acquire for tomorrow so that they're going to be able to be viable and add value in sort of the next the next you know iteration of the of the footprint absolutely important to understand so broadly what we've talked about is this workforce demand the transition from military service to civilian service the preparation while you're in the military for the rest of your military career and and those other things that come afterwards what would you say are the most important lessons that you took from your service in the marine corps and then the transition into the civilian sector

yeah i think the most important lesson that i took was I learned the value of soul searching right I think too many veterans make the mistake are soon to be veterans right transitioning service members make the mistake of of thinking what can I do right and they kind of look they take an inventory of their skills and they're like well i could do you know these four things or these eight things and they limit themselves by doing that I think the the better question is what do i want to do you know don't don't limit yourself to what you think you can do start with what you want to do and then and then figure out okay well what's the gap between where i am today and where i want to be tomorrow and then go after you know closing that gap the value of asking what you want to do is it forces you to understand yourself right it forces you to understand what did i like about the military what didn't i like about the military what where did i get my energy when was I at my best what do I what do i value and as and as you as you ask yourself those questions all of a sudden you know possibilities of what a really great job might look like start to come into view I mean for me personally you mentioned I went to Harley Davidson I at the transition i had this this idea having done that soul searching that you know would be really cool would be to be a plant manager of a Harley-Davidson motorcycle factory right it was making something that i had passionate about as a product but it was people intensive it was operational it had the things about the marine corps that i really loved and never mind i didn't know anything about manufacturing right i didn't I wasn't a, you know, six sigma blank belt i wasn't even in engineering i studied english in college right so but i had a vision right of where i wanted to go and and albeit it was eight years later before i closed all the gaps to be qualified for a job like that but i was getting paid along the way and i was having fun along the way and i think people that are having fun and they're marching towards something that they get excited about are just going to do better right because it's not work.

It's an adventure, it's a journey and i think that's the biggest thing so don't my advice is don't start with what can i do first of all it doesn't matter because we're gonna have to reinvent ourselves all the time anyway well you know what you can do today might not even be relevant tomorrow so go and aim for something that you can get excited about and i think if we all did that we'd all have a better shot of you know reaching our full potential when i left the military i decided that i wanted to go to law school and i didn't know what i was going to do after law school but along the way fell in love with higher education and state and higher education for 20 years and and i would agree with you 100 you can find your way along the way and i think that's been an interesting component of your career as you look at what you're doing i think that's one of the reasons that i value higher education so much and whether that is higher education while you're in the military getting a bachelor's degree while you're serving as an enlisted member or immediately thereafter or an advanced degree if you've already got an undergraduate degree and thinking about what you're going to do with that degree and that network that you form being so

important and you know finding people who are doing things that are interesting and and so on so i think it's a really critical component and just a piggyback on that james that yeah the networking thing is really important because i i didn't go back to the harley-davidson thing once i decided i wanted to be at harley-davidson now i had to get hired by harley davidson and the only - my toe in the door was i looked in an al ni database from my business school and i saw there was a guy who had you know gone to school there and i just cold called them and you know that opened a door for me that otherwise wouldn't have been available so yeah I totally agree with you yeah one of my wife's law school colleagues actually is an attorney at harley Davidson so i think that is really important and i think one of the things that's really important to think about here is how you use tools like linkedin and al ni databases to find people who are doing something that you want to do to go back to your point and talk to them about how they got there and so i would encourage people to think about doing that as well well we're coming almost to the close of this so i want to give you a couple of minutes just to close out any thoughts that you have anything else you want to say about the Department of Labor or dol vets and any advice that you want to give to our leaders great thanks again well i i just want to thank you and just for having me on here and allowing me to to share some of the the good work that we're doing in the department of labor but what what you do for educating both the men and women in and out of uniform at NDU and what a valuable contribution you all make to our national security so thank you for that if i leave with you anything is please please do what you can this is a team sport get get these veterans are these soon to be veterans launched so please do what you can to support them on their journey and we certainly are here as an agency to support all of you on your journeys so again just thanks and it was a real privilege to spend some time with you today thank you very much i appreciate that secretary lowry so with that i'll say thank you i'm going to wrap up and i'm going to talk just for a minute about our next webinar we'll be bringing on christian bros who is the author of the kill chain defending america in the future of high-tech warfare he also was a senior aide to Senator McCain on the senate armed services committee and he's currently chief strategy officer of endural industries we hope that his lecture will be interesting to you and that you can register for that thank you again for participating in this webinar with secretary lowry you'll receive a follow-up within about an hour and information on where to take a look at this recording if there's anything you want to refer back to or share with the people who you work with and who are leading and need to understand what the department of labor does so with that thank you very much have a wonderful rest of your afternoon everyone

all right thanks james thank you