



CENTRAL EAST CONFERENCE BIOS

Edward M. Chavis III, is a civilian employee for the US Army working as a Suicide Prevention Program Manager on Fort Bragg. He received his Bachelor Degree from Campbell University in Sociology and a Master Degree from Webster University in Human Resource Development. Mr. Chavis retired from the Military in 2010 after 28 years of service, in both the US Marine Corps and the US Army. He began his civilian employment on Fort Bragg in 2011 as a Risk Reduction Program Coordinator helping Commanders/Command Teams with mitigating high risk behavior within their organization. In 2015, he transitioned to his current position as the Installation Suicide Prevention Program Manager at Fort Bragg. Mr. Chavis states, "This position has provided me the opportunity to work with and build relationships with people that care about helping our Fort Bragg/Community with ensuring resources are available to helping those in need. Most importantly it has provided me with an opportunity to take care and assist with helping our valuable resource "people". Though the Active Duty Soldiers/Military Members, Family Members and our Civilian workforce that works on the installation to support the mission is who I have the opportunity to work with the most, I look at the larger community and our Veterans to ensure that they have access to programs and resources to assist them with issues and problems they may be experiencing as they transition from military service and continue with their life."

Wilfredo Davila is the Transition Patient Advocate (TPA) for the Transition Care Management Team of the Fayetteville VA Medical Center. As the TPA, he serves as the point of contact to assist transitioning Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation New Dawn (OND) Veterans and their families. He acts to resolve problems, expedite services, or implement necessary corrective measures within established facility policies and where appropriate. Mr. Davila has been an employee of the Department of Veterans Affairs for 20 plus years. During this time, he has held numerous administrative positions such as Administrative Officer of the Day (AOD), Patient Services Assistant as a Benefits Advisor, and Transportation Assistant. He is also a Duke University trained Integrative Health Coach. Mr. Davila is also an Army Veteran, retiring from the active military with 21 years of honorable service prior to joining the VA family. His last assignment was with the 82d Airborne Division, in the 3rd (Panther) Infantry Brigade.

Colonel (ret) Jay S. Fitzgerald is an Education Program Specialist at the North Carolina State Approving Agency (NC SAA), and a frequent speaker at North Carolina's senior/junior colleges and vocational institutions. During his 28 years in the US Air Force, COL Fitzgerald served in a variety of roles, including Professor at the University of Massachusetts, Commander of Air Force ROTC in the Southeast US, Commander of Air Force Recruiting in the Eastern US, and concluding his career in 2012 as the Commander of Air Force Technical Training Operations. After managing a Target store in Columbia, SC for a year following retirement from the military, he decided to leave the carefree life and short work hours of retail management and return to where his heart always was—education and training. He joined NC SAA in 2013, and currently manages over 160 of North Carolina's finest schools and apprenticeships. He holds a bachelor's degree in Meteorology, and a master's degree in Public Management.

Melissa Fox is a Registered Nurse Case Manager at the Fayetteville VA Medical Center in the Transition and Care Management Program. Her primary role is to assist new Veterans as they transition from Active Duty to civilian life and ensure they are appropriately connected to care. She has been a registered nurse for over 18 years and is nationally recognized as a Certified Case Manager by the Center for Case Management Certification. She has practiced in multiple settings including hospital acute care, home health and hospice, chronic disease case management, insurance case management, and ambulatory care. Ms. Fox received her Associate's Degree in Nursing from Fayetteville Technical Community College in 1999 and her Bachelor's Degree in Nursing from Fayetteville State University in 2014. She is actively pursuing her Master's Degree in Nursing at Capella University with a concentration in Care Coordination. Increasing interdisciplinary collaboration in health care and decreasing health care system fragmentation are her professional passions. Melissa is happily married to a retired, disabled USAF Veteran, and together they have 4 children.

Katrina Kilmartin served active duty in the US Army and presently serves as a Prevention Coordinator for the Department of the Army as a civilian. She has worked for the Army Substance Abuse Program (ASAP) for four years at both Fort Drum, NY and Fort Bragg, NC. Among the populations served are active duty service members, their family members, retirees, and family members, as well as government employees and family members. In addition to serving on Fort Bragg, she serves the larger footprint of the Fort Bragg area within the communities and schools providing outreach, campaign, and marketing of ASAP services.

Michelle L. Louisville, LCSW, CAP, ICADC is currently the Substance Abuse Treatment Program Coordinator at the Fayetteville Veteran Affairs Medical Center. She began her federal employment working with Department of Army soldiers stateside and overseas. She received her Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and Marketing from Syracuse University and her Masters of Social Work degree from The University of Georgia with an emphasis on Community Empowerment and Program Development in 2000. Upon graduation, she worked at a Non-governmental Organization, then she worked with the Department of Children & Families in Florida as the Children's Mental Health Coordinator in the Substance Abuse & Mental Health Office and a Treatment Team Coordinator at the State inpatient psychiatric hospital. Ms. Louisville has over 15 years' experience working in clinical and program management with an emphasis on multi-disciplinary treatment, reviewing systems of care delivery to consumers, and accountability of practitioners. She has a specialization providing services to patients with co-occurring disorders and substance use. She is also passionate about leadership and change management processes, community outreach, program development, and evaluation.

Randy Smith is the Director of Veteran Services at Methodist University, a private non-profit institution of higher learning, with a total student population of 2500, about 20% of which use some type of VA education benefit. He has been at MU since he completed his degree (using the Montgomery GI Bill) in 2005 after retiring from the US Army in 2004.

Matt Thewes, M.Ed., is a retired Air Force Master Sergeant who served for over 21 years. In the military, he started as an aircraft mechanic, then trained to be a loadmaster, and finished as a weather observer and senior program manager. Mr. Thewes used military tuition assistance to complete his master's degree in education. He is a highly decorated Veteran with seven deployments and numerous accolades for valor and hard work under his belt. After retiring in August 2012, he worked full time at Excelsior College as an admissions counselor/career coach/ evaluator at the Fort Bragg education center. In January 2014, Mr. Thewes accepted a position at Fayetteville Technical Community College (FTCC), where he the All American Veterans Center, which opened its doors on June 16, 2014. Currently, Mr. Thewes is the Director of the Veterans Upward Bound program. This program is a renewable 5-year grant through the US Department of Education that focuses on helping Veterans return to and complete college.

Susan Watkins, MSW, LCSW is a licensed clinical social worker and has an extensive background in the field of posttraumatic stress disorder and military sexual trauma. As the Transition Care Management (OEF OIF OND) Program Manager for the Durham VA Health Care System, she serves as a case manager and point of contact for over 15,000 returning Iraqi and Afghanistan Veterans She is also the Lead Program Manager for VISN 6. She is active in working with Post Deployment Health Reassessment Activities with Guard and Reserve units in the State. Ms. Watkins has provided educational seminars nationally to enhance knowledge and skills of professionals working with Returning Combat Veterans and in Case Management Programs. Since 2014, she has served as a Co-Chair for NC STRIVE (Student Transition Resource Initiative for Veteran's Education) and has been instrumental in increasing awareness of military culture, transition-related issues, and potential behavioral health challenges in higher education.

STUDENT PANEL BIOS:

Jarret Vogler is attending Wake Tech Community College and is a **Coast Guard** veteran with 5 years of services. Originally from Siberia in Russia, Jarret is working on a dual major in International Business and International Management and plans to operate his own company.

Armando Mejia-Alonso, a native of Anaheim, California retired from the US **Army** after serving 20 years and receiving numerous awards. He has three children ranging in the ages of 14 and 4 years of age. Armando graduated with honors from Fayetteville Technical Community College receiving an Associate in Arts and General Education. He is currently a student Veteran at the University of North Carolina at Pembroke working toward a Bachelors in Social Work. Armando has participated in the VA Work Study program since 2016 and continues to work in the FTCC Veterans Services Office.

Emily Tanner is senior at Methodist who will graduate next month with her degree in Nursing. She hopes to work in the field of Pediatrics. She was in the **Army** for 3 years and received an Associate at George Washington University. Emily's husband remains on active duty with the Army and together they have a two year old son, Charlie. Between deployments and raising an active toddler, the limited amount support due to living away from family has been Emily's biggest challenge in completing her degree.

Natalie Nelson is a Biology major en route to a medical degree in Pathology. She served 11 years as a tactical aircraft maintenance craftsman on F-16s and 3 more years a command and control operator on active duty in the **Air Force**. She is currently serving as a command and control operator in the Air Force Reserve. She attends school in the morning and afternoon. She works part-time doing work-study at MU's Student Veteran Center. Her husband is currently enlisted with the Army as a Combat Medic and is enrolled at FTCC to continue his training as a Paramedic.