

A veteran and Berkeley alum gives voice to the challenges faced by student-veterans and funds ways for vets to increase success at Berkeley.

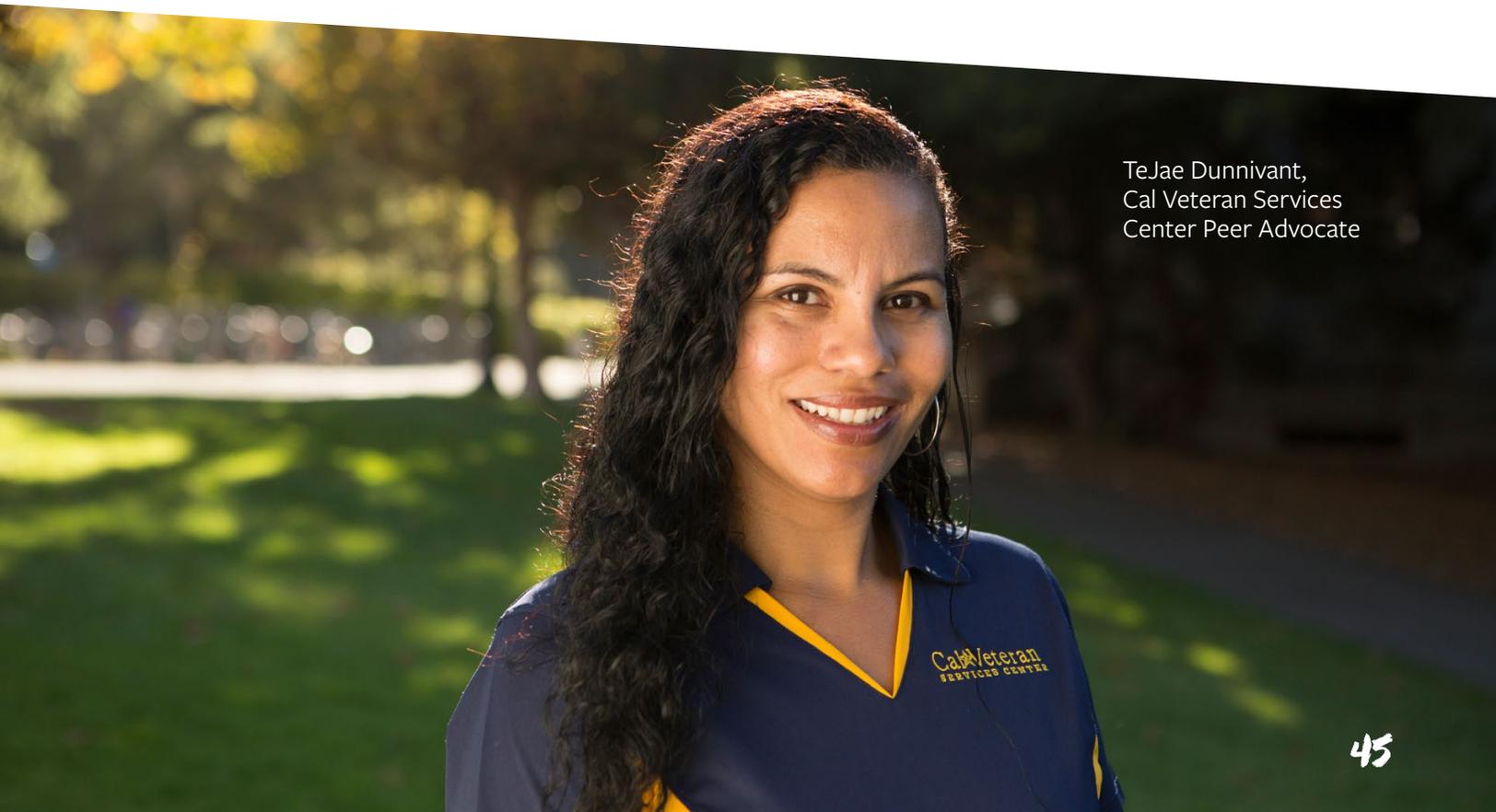
Serving Those Who Served

FOR MANY VETERANS, life after military service means adjusting to a new life and livelihood. And when veterans choose to pursue a degree in higher education, they often have an additional set of challenges to navigate. When Coleman Fung '87, a former US Army Supply Sergeant, attended Berkeley, there were no veteran services at the university. And rather than being recognized for their leadership and public service achievements, Fung felt that veterans were sometimes discounted within the Berkeley community.

Fung credits Berkeley with many things, including an outstanding education and nurturing the perseverance and courage that a sometimes overwhelming — or even inhospitable — institution can inspire. Perseverance and courage are things Fung

knows well, having emigrated from Hong Kong to New York City at 16 years of age.

After earning his bachelor's degree in industrial engineering/operations research at Berkeley, he earned his master's degree in industrial engineering from Stanford in 1989. By 1992, Fung had founded OpenLink Financial, a successful technology platform that transformed risk management for financial, energy, and commodity markets. After retiring from executive leadership at OpenLink, Fung co-founded Blue Goji, a startup actively developing a new field — gamified, behavioral wellness, and health — and became a leading social entrepreneur. Fung created and endowed two research centers at Berkeley, funded a number of university and grade school chairs, supported an integrated program to restore



TeJae Dunnivant,
Cal Veteran Services
Center Peer Advocate



Cal Veteran Services
Center students and staff

the watershed of the Chesapeake Bay, and provided financial support for veteran housing on the East Coast and in Austin, Texas.

Fung was committed to ensuring that Berkeley student veterans have better access to services than when he was an undergraduate. When he learned about Berkeley's nascent Cal Veteran Services Program that was created following a 2006 initiative establishing veterans services in every California institution of higher education as mandated by Governor Schwarzenegger, he was enthusiastic about improving and expanding the program. Fung was very aware of the massive withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan and Iraq that was expected to create the largest influx of student veterans since World War II.

"Student veterans strengthen Berkeley with their drive, work ethic, and leadership," said Gibor Basri, vice chancellor of equity and inclusion at Berkeley. In addition to their distinction as former military personnel, more than a third of Berkeley veterans come from underrepresented backgrounds, and many are the first in their families to go to college.

"Student vets bring with them experiences, sacrifices, and commitments that are most likely not shared by the main student body," said Fung. His goals included ensuring that vets have access to the wisdom of other vets on campus and that military personnel have access to better guidance about their educational options beyond what can be provided by the Veterans Administration. He was also concerned with the many for-profit colleges taking advantage of the tuition payments coming their way under the GI Bill. Financial motivation meant that not all institutions had the academic goals and welfare of veterans in mind.

Now, by making a gift exceeding \$500,000, Fung is taking steps to enhance the outreach to veterans. His gift will help enable Berkeley to expand upon the university's existing position as a leader in veteran support. "Coleman's visionary investment in the Cal Veteran Services Center expands access and support for returning service members to engage the transformative opportunities available through higher education," said Ron Williams, director of re-entry student and veterans services. "Expanding access to

a top-tier public research university such as Berkeley exemplifies public service for the common good and the warrior ethos of leaving no one behind.”

In honor of Veterans Day, Berkeley officially opened the doors of its new Cal Veteran Services Center on November 10, 2014. The opening celebration, attended by Fung, the Chancellor, and other campus dignitaries, included a flag-lowering ceremony in which Berkeley ROTC students lowered and folded the American flag while *Taps* played. While enlisted military personnel observe this ritual on a daily basis, it was a special opportunity to include other members of Berkeley’s community.

The new center made possible by Fung’s gift will provide one-stop access to an array of services such as veteran benefits information and counseling, academic counselors, career preparation and networking, community outreach, and more.

While temporarily located in Stiles Hall, a building adjacent to campus, the center will move to a permanent on-campus site. In addition to the new physical space, Berkeley will also expand its online space for veterans. A new, robust veteran services website is currently under development. The site will aid Berkeley’s current and prospective students and aims to emerge as a trusted source of information for veterans nationwide in exploring their educational opportunities and engaging with Berkeley. The website will provide resources that help veterans examine transfer options, public universities, graduate programs, and of course, Berkeley.

The new center and website will allow student veterans to both enrich their own lives and those of their fellow veterans. “I’d like to encourage Berkeley student vets to be ‘ambassadors’ to other vets in the Bay Area and offer them guidance on their educational options, especially on how to use their VA benefits,” said Fung. “With the website we are building, I would hope to see our effort become a model for other schools to adopt. The new space will be very conducive for our cohort to help and support each other.”

The Catalyst Moment

Veteran Coleman Fung’s experience showed him the benefits of Berkeley, but he also clearly saw the challenges posed by a “survival of the fittest” ethos on campus. Fung created this expanded center for veterans to help them flourish at Berkeley in a truly welcoming community.

Best Practices

- » Establish a clear mission statement and learning objectives that incorporate constituent feedback.
- » Create a dedicated space that offers camaraderie, services, and a place from which better engagement with the research university can begin.
- » Draw on collaborations and partnerships to provide an expanding variety of services, including local Veterans Administration, community-based organizations, and student groups.

Lessons Learned

- » Adaptability, patience, and cultivated partnerships are all needed. It took time to establish a new model of shared staffing to gain access to an expert in admissions who now dedicates half her time to outreach and educational services for veterans.

What’s Next

- » The program will launch the Veteran Outreach Peer Advocate program to include webinars and an array of additional online resources.
- » The resources available on the veterans website will be strengthened through a partnership with the national **Code of Support Foundation**.
- » In partnership with Berkeley’s Program for Rehabilitation Neuroscience, a veteran-specific section of a class focused on brain state training and attention regulation will be offered. This will leverage cutting-edge neuroscience for improved concentration and strengthened “mental muscles” to deal with the challenges of navigating through life after military service.