

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs



I transitioned out of active duty Marine Corps service in 2017, knowing that I wanted to pursue a graduate degree. I was accepted into the school and program I wanted, but felt unsure about what it would be like to reintegrate among students. I was moving to a new city without the network that a change of duty station would afford me for the first time and was not sure how civilians build a social network. I liked my classmates, but felt somewhat of an outsider, and was not sure if I ever wanted to talk about my military service. It felt embarrassing to wonder, “I’m an adult woman, but how do I make friends who understand me?”

I learned about the VITAL program and was eager to participate in their work-study program. In helping connect other student veterans to services and resources, I met several women who I now count as good friends. I feel there is a reluctance to engage in veteran organizations or services, but it has been a great way to find others who understand my experience and can relate to the weirdness of going back to school. I highly encourage connecting to VITAL, if only to learn about amazing events going on and opportunities to volunteer, meet others, or be of service. For example, on March 8, 2020 Claymore Vets hosted “ReCLAYmingYour Goddess.” Claymore Vets is an organization founded by Marine Corps veteran and artist Maria Salazar, whose intent is to encourage connection and creative exploration for veterans through clay and the arts. To the right is a picture of Kymberly (Army veteran) and I enjoying the event, which I only learned about through my connections in VITAL.



For more information about VITAL or to learn how to connect to other student veterans, please contact Dr. Yvette Branson at Yvette.Branson@va.gov.