

**Bonni:** [00:00:00] Today on episode number 202 of the Teaching in Higher Ed podcast Kevin Jones describes ways we can support our students who are veterans.

**Production Credit:** [00:00:11] Produced by Innovate Learning: maximizing human potential.

**Bonni:** [00:00:19] Hello and welcome to this episode of Teaching in Higher Ed. I'm Bonni Stachowiak and this is the space where we explore the art and science of being more effective at facilitating learning. We also share ways to improve our productivity approaches so we can have more peace in our lives and be even more present for our students.

**Bonni:** [00:00:47] Today I'm excited to be welcoming to the show Kevin C. Jones. Kevin works in higher education assessment and strategic planning. His writing and research has been published in a number of peer reviewed publications including the Community College Journal of Research and Practice and New Directions in Institutional Research. He's also the author of Collateral Damage: Stories from Press 53.

**Bonni:** [00:01:15] Before I start the interview with Kevin I wanted to make a quick mention of today's sponsor for the episode. Screencast-O-Matic. This is a tool that I actually - like all of the sponsors that we have - am using myself and have paid for a license on my own and just find delight in terms of ease of use and being able to screencast quickly.

**Bonni:** [00:01:38] There's a free plan which gets you started and gets you up to 15 minutes of recording what your recording is what's on your screen though you can also record what's on your webcam. I find it really effective to switch back and forth between a PowerPoint slide or some sort of demo I'm doing of a tool and then also be able to show my face and have expression.

**Bonni:** [00:01:59] The Screencast-O-Matic pro gives you the ability to not only create screencasts but also [to] edit them. You can draw and zoom. Be able to mix in video and MP for record the audio from your PC if you're on Windows. You can add overlays and

video effects and even background music so it's a great tool because you can just get started really easily and then as you learn more be able to easily incorporate some of these additional features in.

**Bonni:** [00:02:31] So thanks again to Screencast-O-Matic for sponsoring Episode 202. And now let's get back to my interview with Kevin Jones. Kevin welcome to Teaching in Higher Ed.

**Kevin:** [00:02:43] Well thank you for having me.

**Bonni:** [00:02:45] We had an unusual way of connecting but I think fortuitous because I was on Twitter and I can't remember exactly what kind of thread it was but you were engaged and I went and looked at your profile and thought we have yet to have a conversation about how to better serve our students or are veterans.

**Bonni:** [00:03:02] And here's a guy who really looks like he has a great amount of research in this area and I'm just so honored that you would come and spend a little bit of time talking to those of us who want to get better at our Teaching in Higher Ed and specifically at better serving our veterans students so thanks for being here today.

**Kevin:** [00:03:17] Well again thank you for inviting me. I'm always happy to be involved and to talk about veterans.

**Bonni:** [00:03:24] One of the first things that you and I started corresponding about because it just comes to mind so much with my work in serving our veterans students is just how many misconceptions there are. Talk about a few that come to mind for you of just how we get it so wrong when we allow these labels to persist.

**Kevin:** [00:03:45] Sure. I think that there's a few basic ones. One is the assumption that all veterans have served in combat or even deployed overseas which is not the case the vast majority of veterans have never served in combat. And a great number never even deployed outside the United States.

**Kevin:** [00:04:03] This is certainly more true now in 2018 as we speak than it was even three or four years ago. And that's the first one. The other one is - and this is related - veteran experience isn't monolithic. It's easy -like any stereotype - you can lump - you can use with veterans, too. They're all conservative. Or, they all like country music. They're all you know... I mean, you know, or the opposite: they're all - in a less funny way - they all have PTSD. Or, we all have to be very careful with them. You know veterans are cut from a broad swath of American society and they represent that.

**Kevin:** [00:04:40] They come from all different backgrounds it's something a lot of academics don't realize is that the vast majority of veterans who were enlisted which is the vast majority of veterans period. That is to say they did not have a degree did not serve as officers that are coming to college or coming to college for the first time. They are majority first generation students and they are by a huge margin attending community colleges, first.

**Kevin:** [00:05:04] A lot of the sort of a lot of the news that gets out and in different higher ed organizations about veterans usually highlights you know somebody who's going to an Ivy League school or even a big university like Arizona. And part of that is because that's as you know when we talk about higher ed everyone immediately starts comparing everything to Harvard and Yale and things like that where most of us work at you know North Compass Point State University doing a really solid work and that's where most of the veteran students go.

**Kevin:** [00:05:32] They go to a community college or maybe a comprehensive regional and they're putting in the work. The last one I would get into is there's sort of an assumption from the and this is more on the administrative financial aid side. There's kind of this idea that well veterans have the G.I. Bill so all their funding is taking care of everything is great they don't have to worry about anything.

**Kevin:** [00:05:53] And the truth is that for students on the G.I. bill they will get enough to cover tuition up to a certain point plus a stipend for living which isn't as much as some people think it depends on how long they were in and things like that it's around 1,500 to 1,800 a month which is pretty good. But a lot of these veterans have families a lot of them are coming from jobs where they were making \$40,000 or \$50,000 a year and had assistance with base housing and their rent and now they don't have that.

**Kevin:** [00:06:17] So they have a lot of the same issues that first generation students and or students who work do when it comes to retention and completion. They're balancing families. They may be balancing part time obligations on top of a job. They may still be in the reserves and have part time military duties. The G.I. Bill runs out after three years if they're going full time.

**Kevin:** [00:06:36] So you still have a lot of students even with the G.I. Bill who end up getting student loans and student loan debt and dealing with those issues too. So while they are as a whole performing better academically as far as grades and persistence and retention than you know students as a whole even with that assistance they still have the same sorts of issues that other students do.

**Bonni:** [00:07:01] So we want to be careful of these misconceptions and I certainly have seen it where students will share with me. Like you said everybody assumes I've got PTSD and they'll ask me such invasive questions and you talked about in our conversation earlier about everyone wants to know if I killed someone.

**Bonni:** [00:07:18] I mean it's so hard to fathom - that those would just be such inappropriate things to ask anyone about you with such personal health related information - but we do know and certainly you with your research know there are some common challenges that we might expect some if not all but some of our veteran students to experience because you talk a little bit about some of the difficulty of adjusting to civilian life.

**Kevin:** [00:07:45] Sure. And part of this is my own experience as a veteran. Years ago but more recently the veterans I've done research with a lot of it is mind set. So they're coming from an environment where on the one hand everything they do is precisely controlled.

**Kevin:** [00:08:00] You know when do you get up when you go to lunch when do you do your job. Things like that are very precisely controlled less so and in a more fluid combat environment but I mean broadly speaking their job is dictated at a level that people who have civilians cannot understand if they've ever gone through it.

**Kevin:** [00:08:17] But on the other hand they're given a tremendous amount of responsibility and autonomy within that restriction. At a very young age 18, 19, 20 years old you know in charge of 30 other people in the unit and making sure they get everything done they're working out every day. They're very driven.

**Kevin:** [00:08:33] It's a very type-A kind of place. I mean that in a positive way. And so when veterans come out and get into the classroom they've expressed frustration with the fact that colleges have all these opportunities for students and all of these things to do. And in their mind most civilian students aren't taking advantage of that. Like the veterans I've interviewed don't understand why. Why is somebody not showing up for class?

**Kevin:** [00:08:57] Why are they blowing off their homework? How are they not prepared? Because they're coming from a world where being unprepared is inexcusable. It's just not done. That combined with the fact that there is a certain amount and a lot depending on what branch you go in there's a lot of sort of acculturation in the military where you're better than civilians and civilians are sort of you know the joke is there are these sort of weak civilian pukes and that sort of thing.

**Kevin:** [00:09:22] Part of that is because you're building a team to get them together in the military starting with boot camp. The other part of it is when you're asking people to do very strenuous very difficult jobs it's good for them to have a really solid esprit de corps and sometimes the way you build that esprit de corps is to make them is to have an other.

**Kevin:** [00:09:38] You know when you're trying to break them of being a civilian and make them a soldier or Marine or a sailor an easy way to do that is to say you know don't miss what you were in the civilian world you're better than that now.

**Kevin:** [00:09:49] Well sometimes that can be taken too far or internalize to the point where veterans come out and they're already thinking look at these guys you know look at these guys who didn't do it. I've been over here serving overseas or I've been serving in North Carolina or Arizona or wherever.

**Kevin:** [00:10:04] And these guys have been here just goofing around. So part of that is part of the big process with higher education is not always an academic issue it's an acculturation issue it's getting used to adapting to the pace at which college moves and a lot of the veterans I've I've talked to you know they go to school. They do the work they do really well and then they go back to their home.

**Kevin:** [00:10:29] They're not associating with a lot of other students or getting involved in curricular activities because they feel like it's very difficult for them to relate to the other students on campus and this is true whether they're going full time with 18 to 25 year old students or if they're going back to school at night.

**Kevin:** [00:10:47] They just feel they have so much more life experience and maturity than their peers that it's hard for them to relate to that so that those are those are some issues there. Academically you still have issues that you see with first generation students in the sense that if a veteran was not great in say algebra in high school and joined the army they didn't get better in algebra four years later.

**Kevin:** [00:11:13] So then they have the issue of they take a placement test and they're told hey you might need some developmental education and you run into the same barriers you have with students who don't really want to take developmental aid in the first place. But you add on there are 22 or 23 they've been in charge of people. They're like I don't want to take that. You know the remedial class and so there's some pushback with that too.

**Bonni:** [00:11:35] One of the things that I know comes up so much to has to do with a sense of loss of identity. Could you talk about that experience for many of our veterans students.

**Kevin:** [00:11:46] Sure. As I mentioned earlier it takes a long time to build that military identity and the military is it's all encompassing it's it's it's not like a job. I remember hearing somebody explain that the Marine Corps was akin to joining the priesthood in the sense that it's not an occupation it's a calling. You can debate that.

**Kevin:** [00:12:06] I knew plenty of people that joined because they wanted the job. But at the same time depending on what branch you do and what you choose to do there is a certain sense that you understand or you understand very quickly.

**Kevin:** [00:12:17] This is all encompassing this is your life. You know when people talk about being a Marine for example I'm using as an example because I served in the Marine Corps they never say what do you do. Marines tell you who they are. You know I say I am a Marine. And then afterwards somebody might say well what your job in the Marine Corps. But usually it's just shorthand. What do you do.

**Kevin:** [00:12:34] I'm a Marine. Done. That's the conversation. And as we mentioned earlier that's a shorthand for them branding themselves as the same as the other 170000 marines are currently serving right now when in reality they're all very different. And that's sort of you know within the Marines that's kind of encouraged. We're all one. But then afterwards it's hard to get around that. So you lose that identity when you get out.

**Kevin:** [00:13:00] It's and it's hard to deal with. I remember I was in the Marine Corps I was in charge of about 30 Marines. I got out and I think a week later I was working like a Home Depot kind of store running a forklift and mixing paint. No not in charge of anything and sweeping the floor. And it was very humbling you know and it was kind of like hey nobody cares that you were in the Marine Corps.

**Kevin:** [00:13:23] And you know on the one hand it should be that way. I mean you move on and you and you go through those things. But it's definitely, definitely a challenge. And I don't have the numbers in front of you but I know that there have been a lot of studies in the American military and with the British military actually where people looked at how hard was it adapt up to civilian world depending how long you served.

**Kevin:** [00:13:43] You know and so if you got your first hitch four years it was OK if you had eight if you had ten. And then ironically there were people that did a full career full 20 years and retired and they in some ways had an easier time than people who did say

eight or nine years and got out because they had retired like they were mentally able to say I did that for my whole career.

**Kevin:** [00:14:02] I have retired now I'm going to do something else. Plus the fact that these people were only 40, 41 years old when they retired they always hung on to that, you know, "I was a soldier for 20 years" identity but they knew that they had retired and they had gone as far as they could go.

**Kevin:** [00:14:15] So, in some ways it was easier than the person who did say eight years and said I got to get out of this. And if you know you were in long enough to really cement that identity but now you have to start all over which is what it feels like. And college can be a place for that whether it's a bachelor's degree or you see this with officers who come back and take up a couple of years to get an MBA or something because part of that is sort of learning how the civilian world does things as a leader which is very different.

**Kevin:** [00:14:41] But yes the identity is it's an ongoing challenge for veterans to be able to say I'm proud of what I did. This is really good. What I did but I'm going to do 40, 50, 60 more years of my life here. And I have to trust that the most important thing I Everyday may not have been when I was 18, 19 years old.

**Kevin:** [00:15:02] It may have been you know maybe the most important thing you did was something really great in the military but that doesn't mean the rest of your life can't be fantastic, or you can't do just as important things. And for some vets and part of that is a matter of being young and part of it as a matter of military acculturation where they teach you that this is the most important thing you'll ever do realizing that you know hey I have to conceive of the fact that maybe someday I will do something great I will have another job that I like just as much or is just as important.

**Bonni:** [00:15:30] This idea of identity comes up in so many parts of our lives I treasure the conversations I get to have with our students who are graduating and say you know you've wrapped this identity as a student around you and we've done that too. I mean talk about acculturating.

**Bonni:** [00:15:46] We have joined you in that process and now some of them are going to go out and they might not get that professional job - the first one - that they think sounds right for having a college degree right way. That may take some time and some you know lots and lots of hard work and just what that wretched process that it is any time in our lives we experience it but boy what a time for learning.

**Bonni:** [00:16:11] The ground is fertile for what we can learn about ourselves and what we're capable of. But it's tough. I mean it's tough to go through. I certainly have gone through that process of having my sense of identity ripped from me at different times in my life and so I and I enjoy this season when I get to come alongside them and just talk to them and in fact I wonder if you would share a bed about just as educators. What are some ways we can better serve our veterans in our classrooms and also in our teaching and our mentoring?

**Kevin:** [00:16:38] One of the things that being a veteran of being in the military is the notion of service. And I think by focusing on service to others as opposed to military service. You know it's sort of deconstructing what it means to serve. Team Red White and Blue does that. Team Rubicon - which takes military veterans and takes them as volunteers and deploys them all over the country to help with like hurricane relief and things like that.

**Kevin:** [00:17:03] Very smart ways to do that. And I think what's happened with higher ed I've seen this certainly at the graduate level I've seen this but I see it increasingly at the undergraduate level is instilling students the idea of being a lifelong learner. So the idea that you know your education doesn't end when you finish your degree we're teaching you skills and teaching a mindset so that wherever you go after college you're still learning and adjusting which basically means you're not stuck in one identity your identity is constantly evolving you're not stagnant.

**Kevin:** [00:17:38] And so in higher ed when I talk to veterans and they've moved on to different things I've seen a lot of veterans that go into health care or they go into business but they want to do entrepreneurial work and they volunteer on the side. And the central focus there is even if they're making money they don't have to be all nonprofit like that.

**Kevin:** [00:17:57] But the idea that they're taking the skills they learned in the military how to work as a team in service of something greater than themselves in the military. Obviously it's their branch in the country. How do you do that as a civilian. Because those positive aspects that drove them I think will drive them to do well in college, do well first in the classroom and then to degree level and then go on throughout the rest of their life with the idea of you can serve something larger than yourself and you don't have to be in a uniform or you don't have to carry a gun or you don't have to. You know if you want to that's great but there's such so many broader ways to do.

**Kevin:** [00:18:36] And I think that works because a lot of veterans that come out of not necessarily career focused jobs in other words you know hey I fixed helicopters in the Army I'm going to get out maybe I'll fix helicopters but for some of the people there may



not be a direct skill set or there is but they're like well I don't want to go into law enforcement or even if the people who say well I did fix helicopters I don't want to do that anymore. I just wasted four years of my life.

**Kevin:** [00:18:57] Well you didn't. Because look at all the intangibles you learn. Look at how you learned to problem solve to work collaboratively towards a greater purpose. I think looking unpacking what military experience is and knowing enough to unpack it and then using that on a broader level will help students engage in the classroom and engage throughout their degree program in ways that they don't necessarily have to talk about military issues specifically you know.

**Kevin:** [00:19:28] In fact personally I think that if they are able to adapt their experience to broader issues that aren't military specific it'll be beneficial for them in the long run.

**Bonni:** [00:19:38] What a wonderful way for framing helping to frame for them how like you said people get into military service for lots of different reasons. But for those for whom that real value of a sense of serving my country to be able to help me translate that into other ways my vocation might be an act of service. What a wonderful way that you're helping them guide that and reshape that sense of identity.

**Bonni:** [00:20:05] But still that core value is really central in this transition for them. They are the first person I've ever heard describe that one of the things I wanted to make sure we talked about before we run out of time is I know some institutions are doing great things so we've looked a little bit about how we as individuals might better care for these learners what are some of the things that inspire you or should inspire all of us that institutions are doing to better serve our veterans students.

**Kevin:** [00:20:32] I think when you're looking at best practices for student veterans it needs to be in the same way you have a best practices commitment to diversity or best practices commitment to assisting first generation students.

**Kevin:** [00:20:44] In other words it has to be part of a holistic student affairs program and academic as well. And the schools that are doing really good things don't necessarily have the one big Veterans Center I've seen a lot of schools that have amazing veterans centers I. I've been to universities where they're branded like here's an Under Armour Veterans Center and they have all these computers and all that kind of stuff.

**Kevin:** [00:21:09] But that's a building. And most of the veterans I've researched don't necessarily use the VA. I mean if they need their G.I. Bill stuff certified they go there but they're not usually hanging out with all the other veterans trading war stories which is

another common misconception because veterans experiences like all of us are very different.

**Kevin:** [00:21:26] So it's good to have that. You know here's your veterans office in the student union but it's about how do we have a program to help everybody in the classroom and I think it comes down to if you if you cover the basics you know if you're doing everything you can to help students academically you have tutoring available you have counseling available you have advisers available real people they can talk to that that's going to help veterans just as much as they're gonna help everybody else.

**Kevin:** [00:21:52] The nitty gritty stuff with veterans is they mostly complain about is not necessarily academic. It's it's you know do I get my G.I. Bill can I get my paperwork. Are there people who understand what I'm talking about in the classroom.

**Kevin:** [00:22:03] I was in a classroom for eight years before when an administration. And I've taught specific veterans classes and veterans writing classes and things for combat veterans. The biggest thing is don't call them out on stuff like you may know somebody is a veteran but don't don't call them out on that.

**Kevin:** [00:22:19] You know if they if they want to write about their veterans experience great. If they don't, they don't. You know I had one student who really wanted to write about it he was in an attack and he got injured and he wanted to write about that. And that was great. The other thing is this was easier for me because I was a veteran.

**Kevin:** [00:22:35] The first few papers he wrote were terrible and I just said these are terrible. And I know that there's sometimes there can be I don't want to necessarily say this person's paper is bad because clearly he went through a lot and it's like if you're an English professor it's a bad paper you have to say it's a bad paper you know you can't let somebody in the same way you wouldn't do that if it was somebody of a different race or a different gender or they had an obvious disability.

**Kevin:** [00:22:57] You know you're there to teach your subject matter and they want you to teach your subject matter. And I know that there. I know because I met them. I know that there some faculty who want to while let me take a little easier because someone's been through something hard or let me treat this person differently and I would advise against doing that just because they're there to learn just like everybody else.

**Kevin:** [00:23:15] And sometimes that's difficult and it's difficult with anybody. Like I said in English people will write about traumatic experiences and you have to handle that however you choose to handle your class. But I've never you know I try not to have

assignments like everybody write about the worst thing that happened to you you know or everybody tell me tell me since your attic incident.

**Kevin:** [00:23:35] I've also seen colleges and I wish this wouldn't happen but unfortunately still does where they think they have the best their hearts in the right place. But veterans don't want to be used as props and I remember I was at a college and the president was like it will be great on Veterans Day.

**Kevin:** [00:23:52] If we had you know everybody who is a veteran like maybe they could wear their uniform or bring some stuff that we could have like a static display and they could you know have a booth or something and I remember telling him I was like they're not going to want to you know stand like an exhibit in the Smithsonian and for people to stare at you know I mean it's different if the student veterans organization says hey let's have a table out there but to have somebody suggest hey let's get with all of that and see if they want to do this thing very different.

**Kevin:** [00:24:21] But you know. So that's all. I mean I think we're at a point now where we've had the first wave of veterans researchers kind of come and gone and now were working on the second wave and they're still despite all of the really good research out there.

**Kevin:** [00:24:36] There's still not a whole lot of research there really asks the veterans hey what do you guys need? What are you looking for in a school? We have a lot of people from the top down saying let's do all these great things I've had to learn that that one project you might get a grant for because it's related to veterans. That's wonderful.

**Kevin:** [00:24:53] That might be not be what you're veterans on your campus actually need. And that's a hard conversation to have because we're all hurting for money. And it's hard to tell somebody Look I know that's hundred thousand dollar grant. But like I work with our veterans and they don't need that. You know we need this thing instead. But getting to know you know student affairs level getting to know the veterans and help them with what they need.

**Kevin:** [00:25:17] As a professor and as a teacher I would say you know just teach your class do you just teach your class and and understand that these students are there and they're going to bring strength just like any other group has had a variety of experiences and those are going to be good for your class and don't necessarily tiptoe around subjects. You know I've had people talk about...

**Kevin:** [00:25:39] I taught English so it was easier for me I know people to teach history and things like that and they're like, "Well, if we talk about war or this is it's going to be a

triggering moment for some veterans." I would use your policy however you use it now. You know if you're a school or you personally want to have some sort of trigger warning in there and say hey we may be talking about these things later if there's going to be veterans in your class have an alternate study for that.

**Kevin:** [00:26:01] But I've I've talked a lot with people at University of Maryland College University Virginia and Virginia Tech University of South Florida which has one of the largest veterans population in the country. Look at some of the schools like that to see what their best practices are because they've been dealing with this for a while and they have some really good entrenched Academic and Student Affairs recommendations.

**Kevin:** [00:26:21] And it's all, it's all public. They're very nice to talk to you. I'm friends with a lot of veterans center directors and academics doing veterans research through Twitter. And it's amazing how many people you can pick up on and find out that you're all kind of working on the same thing just in separate rooms so it's good to get together and share the best practices and everyone I've met has been really nice about it because we were all trying to have the same goal and that's you know help veterans the best we can.

**Bonni:** [00:26:48] You spoke earlier about how sometimes people just assume that you know your college professor or you must be. That must be just like being at Harvard or Yale or Stanford or was like No they're the most of us are doing a whole different kind of work. And in order to do that kind of work then we don't. Most of us aren't able to make the massive investments that would be you know some giant resource or whatever. But yet the one of the keys in retention research for our students.

**Bonni:** [00:27:16] Of course we want to be able to retain these students and see them succeed all the way through graduation is a sense of belonging. And many of the themes I'm hearing you describe as these examples would be instead of an either or approach. Either we're going to just try to find funding to create this mammoth Veterans Center or we're going to not really have any of that at all and then it's just going to be all that different career center.

**Bonni:** [00:27:40] And the different departments within a a smaller school we can do a both and approach so we can have that smaller community and like you said that's driving some of the decisions around how they want to honor veterans and how they want to have more community and sense of belonging and sometimes that is going to be necessary to have a smaller group of people where I can feel safer to talk about my own experiences and know that many of the people understand where I'm coming from.

**Bonni:** [00:28:08] But then also having that community that says look at all these great resources that are here a tutoring center a writing center a career center and making sure that too much of that sense of belonging doesn't prevent them from utilizing some of these other services in a smaller institution.

**Kevin:** [00:28:25] Absolutely. Especially in schools if you don't have your own foundation or like you said and I've been at. I've been in a large research university that had a lot of money and I've been to community colleges where we had to get really creative you know you can partner with local businesses and local philanthropic organizations. You know I'm sure you're well aware of this and so are your listeners you know work with the community you're in.

**Kevin:** [00:28:47] That goes back into the college being part of the community. I mean veterans are certainly you know emblematic of people who have left their community to serve and returned you know this is where you can make that work for you. So this is the opposite of what I said about you know treat everyone the same and all that veterans are a tremendous PR.

**Kevin:** [00:29:06] You know it's when you go out there and say we want to help veterans you know people are going to answer the phone and like you said it doesn't have to be some multimillion dollar thing. It can be you know we need a few thousand dollars for x you know. So everybody I think this is a whole other conversation but I think everybody in higher ed needs to be a bit of an entrepreneur right now.

**Kevin:** [00:29:26] Whether you want to or not whether you you're to research university or not like we're just in that world where learning to do grants learning how to do partnerships learning how to do community relations. I mean even if you're in the classroom that's a huge part of it. When I was at a private university in Tampa ten years ago there was no student veterans of America chapter and nobody knew what it was.

**Kevin:** [00:29:46] And I went directly to the SBA [Small Business Administration], got everything written up got with the students they wrote up the constitution then we had a charter and the first SBA group and we had several other campuses. And the next thing I know they had me on the phone saying hey congratulations you're the subject matter expert and I'm like, "I'm the English professor," and he said, "You're the only one who knows how to do this."

**Kevin:** [00:30:06] And so suddenly I was going to all these other campuses and other colleges telling them how to do this and it wasn't complicated. This is very good. But nobody had done it. Nobody had known about it and I said look the students didn't know what to do. And I was making phone calls to the Florida V.A. and saying, "Can you

come down here and talk to these guys about getting a job and about counseling because they want to hear from you?"

**Kevin:** [00:30:24] There was nothing. We had folding chairs in a classroom, after hours. You know and that's how it started. And so it's nice that it's much more formal than that. But at the same time it really comes down to you know you may be a math professor and think, "What am I going to do with this?" You may be the person that's talking to your students and sees a need that other people don't because they're not going to the regular channels and so you're in a position to help them get things going.

**Bonni:** [00:30:47] It's so true what you say too because it can't all land just on your shoulders and we really do have to think creatively about. And once we start talking about it - it's incredible what people want to do and how they want to help because these people have done magnificent things for our country and people want to give back in some way but they often don't know how and then we often don't know how to ask. So I just love that idea of us all becoming more entrepreneurial. I Like it.

**Bonni:** [00:31:15] This is the point in the show where we each get to give our recommendations and I am chuckling since mine has absolutely nothing to do with the topic but that's kind of how these recommendations go. Sometimes they relate and other times they do not. I was thinking recently about my my often reluctance or inability to really be present with my kids when we're in one place and they're just plain I find myself you know wanting to catch up on washing the dishes while they're playing and that's actually good because it's healthy for kids to have independent play.

**Bonni:** [00:31:48] But I was I was cracking up the other day because I was having more fun - and I can sit for longer periods of time playing with this particular toy than any other thing my kids have. It's the Dynamo Dominoes Construction set. There's a number of different sets that are like this where instead of dominoes that you play with the numbers it's just colorful tiles that are about the size and shape of regular dominoes but the pack comes with all these different accessories to turn it more into a Rube Goldberg machine.

**Bonni:** [00:32:17] Where you know it hits this bell and the bell rings and then that hits the next domino and then it creates this other stair step thing all the way around to this thing that spins around and knocks the domino over and it was just so much fun. So I would suggest that people if you wanna to I mean I think they're great toys for adults quite frank and I put a slow mo of the one that I created with my daughter. Let's be honest it was mostly me she was watching and the Rube Goldberg account on Instagram and commented on it.

**Bonni:** [00:32:49] Who knew there was even such a thing. So the second recommendation I have is to check out the Rube Goldberg account on Instagram because they've got lots of videos and I didn't realize there are contests to all over for Rube Goldberg machines and they're getting young students involved in these contests.

**Bonni:** [00:33:05] I just thought it was great fun. So a couple things when to play as an adult or if you're around children with kids and a second one to follow this really creative account and get inspired by other people's Rube Goldberg creations. And Kevin what do you have to recommend for us today?

**Kevin:** [00:33:21] So I don't have anything that fun which is I have small kids so I have a whole house full of fun goofy things that I didn't think about that but in related to what we were talking about especially since this is a teaching podcast and like I said my background is thoroughly academic not student affairs but I became well aware of student affairs by getting involved in veterans issues.

**Kevin:** [00:33:42] So I recommend that people follow or get involved with NASAP the National Association of Student Affairs Professionals. They have a subgroup just related to veterans and veterans they include dependents and family members of veterans as well. So that Twitter handle is NASAPVETS That's I think and you if you Google it it's part of the larger NASAP that's gotten so big that they have a separate conference just for the veterans and it's really big. It's over a couple of days. And it's not always in D.C. last time I think it was in Louisville Kentucky.

**Kevin:** [00:34:15] But even just going there for a couple of days even if you're an academic which is my background you get to really see a lot of best practices and a lot of really interesting work being done related to veterans. The other thing when researching veterans is look outside of just traditional higher ed journals student affairs or academic I've found a tremendous amount of work in nursing and psychology journals and other issues where it wasn't even related to medical issues like PTSD.

**Kevin:** [00:34:45] It was more of counseling and things like that but it was related to veterans and higher education but it wasn't being carried in a higher a journal it's such a broad based broad based group.

**Kevin:** [00:34:56] I found out accidentally when I was at a university that the paper I was working on somebody in the nursing department was working on almost the exact same thing but from a nursing standpoint you know there's a huge university. We never would have found each other except they had a Veterans Day thing at the school and the Student Veterans of America people were there and they were talking about research

and suddenly I ran into a bunch of people and we ended up you know working on some stuff together.

**Kevin:** [00:35:19] You really have to get out of your office and get with some other people to find out what's going on. But NASAP is a good place because people from all over the country working on stuff and Twitter you know there's so much terrible things on Twitter but there's a lot of really great things which is I'm. Bonnie and Heidi I've met some other really interesting people doing a lot of really interesting work. So yeah keep doing what you're doing because it's important.

**Bonni:** [00:35:45] Kevin Jones thank you so much for joining me today on teaching and higher ed and thanks for all these tangible ways that we can be learning even more ways to serve our veterans students.

**Kevin:** [00:35:57] Thank you so much it's been a pleasure.

**Bonni:** [00:36:00] Thanks once again to Kevin Jones for this inspiring conversation about how to better serve our veterans students. I also want to thank Screencast-O-Matic for your financial support for the show. Those of you who want to check out their software and how you could use it to do screen casting in your own teaching can go to [Screencast-O-Matic.com/highered50](https://www.screencast-o-matic.com/highered50) and get 50 percent off which is an exclusive offer for the Teaching in Higher Ed listeners. Thanks so much for listening today. We've got some great episodes coming up and for some of us we're moving into our summer season which I know for many of you means continuing to teach, but for some of you a little bit of something different, in terms of a season of your life. I hope you keep on listening and we all keep together finding ways to improve our teaching. I'll see you next time.

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