
2020 ANNUAL REPORT

NAIMES

National Association of Institutions for Military Education Services

“educating our people in uniform”

FEBRUARY 3, 2021

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF INSTITUTIONS FOR MILITARY EDUCATION SERVICES
naimes.org

Table of Contents

Letter from the NAIMES President.....	1
NAIMES Contact Information	2
NAIMES Newsletters	2
Mission, Vision, Principles and Practices	3
NAIMES Long-Term Strategic Goals	3
NAIMES Executive Officers.....	4
NAIMES Institution Members	4
Committee Reports	5
Nominations and Elections Committee Report.....	5
Scholarship Committee Report	5
2020 NAIMES Student Spotlight Awards.....	6
Policy and Issues Committee Report.....	7
Annual Report Committee Report.....	8
Strategic Plan Committee Report.....	8
Promotional Materials Committee Report.....	9
The Way Ahead	9



Letter from the NAIMES President **John Aldrich**

Dear Friends,

2020 has been a year to remember! Some years are pivotal in our history, and I have no doubt that 2020 will be one of those years. Like other organizations facing the global pandemic, NAIMES adjusted our “way of doing business,” holding our first virtual annual meeting and converting our quarterly coffee chats to ZOOM, all while still in support of military service members, their families, and Veterans. Congratulations to all for your perseverance and for your optimism.

NAIMES continues to advocate that the Veterans Administration treat all veterans equally when it comes to Post 9/11 education benefits, specifically related to full military housing allowance for online learners. NAIMES met with Congressman Gus Bilirakis, 12th district of Florida, about this oversight by the VA, and the Congressman introduced [HR 3897](#) that proposed amending Title 38, U.S. Code. HR 3897 has not been scheduled for the House or Senate at the time of this report. NAIMES will prepare to socialize the NAIMES white paper through supporting Veteran Service Organizations in 2021.

NAIMES developed a position paper on the military tuition assistance cap. Military tuition assistance caps remain at the levels set over 18 years ago, despite increasing institutional financial costs to develop high tech and STEM programs. In support of our white paper, NAIMES met with Mr. Fred Drummond, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Force Education and Training in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Readiness. OSD offered several suggestions that are currently under review, and NAIMES will continue to advance the cause in 2021.

Another area that we are particularly excited about is our introduction of scholarly work. NAIMES has established a scholarly work committee to launch this new initiative, and we look forward to having this new resource to utilize in our efforts to support service members and Veterans.

On December 31, 2020, I will complete my 2-year tenure as president of NAIMES. It has been my honor to serve this organization and our collective community of learners. Alisha Miller from Thomas Edison State University is the incoming president of NAIMES. Please give Alisha a warm welcome and your support as she begins her presidency at NAIMES.

Sincerely,

John P. Aldrich

John P. Aldrich
President, NAIMES

NAIMES Contact Information

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NAIMES Newsletters

The NAIMES organization publishes a periodic newsletter distributed to the military voluntary education community. Key components of the newsletter include a Message from the President, an update from one or more regional ACME (Advisory Council on Military Education) organizations, Spotlight on Best Practices within the Vol-Ed community, special articles from collaborative partner organizations, and updates on scholarship opportunities and awards. The 2020 newsletters are found on the [NAIMES website](#) or accessed directly at the following links:

[2020 Issue 1 NAIMES Newsletter](#)

[2020 Issue 2 NAIMES Newsletter](#)

Mission, Vision, Principles and Practices

Adopted December 8, 2017

Vision Statement

To advocate for and influence decisions that impact policy, legislation, and practices that safeguard the academic success of military-affiliated students. (Voted upon, SEP 20, 2017)

Mission Statement

NAIMES is an organization dedicated to excellence and advocacy for military-affiliated students. (Voted upon, AUG 17, 2017)

Our Beliefs

- Sharing and advocating for institutional best practices in education.
- A collective voice of reason is more powerful.
- Making a positive difference requires mutual respect and collaboration.

Our Practices

We promote and advocate for best practices b institutions serving military-affiliated students.

We recognize diversity is an asset essential to accomplishing our mission. Membership is comprised of various types of educational institutions.

We collaborate with professional colleagues through transparency and mutual respect to build, and best ensure, student success.

NAIMES Long-Term Strategic Goals

The NAIMES Strategic Plan, unanimously adopted on December 8, 2017, identifies the following strategic lines of efforts toward the long-term goals for the organization:

1. Advocate for the military student
2. Be productive and relevant
3. Increase transparency
4. Facilitate a collaborative dialogue with higher education organizations
5. Establish and maintain partnerships across the higher education enterprise

NAIMES Executive Officers

President: John Aldrich, American Military University

Vice President/ President-Elect: Alisha Miller, Thomas Edison State University

Treasurer: Dr. David Harvey, Central Michigan University

Secretary: Eric Ryan, University of Phoenix

Immediate Past President: Kelly Wilmeth, University of Maryland University College

NAIMES Institution Members

2-Year Public Institutions:

Central Texas College

Coastline Community College

Pikes Peak Community College

Private Non-Profit Institutions:

Brandman University

Campbell University

Columbia College

Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University

Park University

Saint Leo University

Wayland Baptist University

Webster University

Southwestern College

4-Year Public Institutions:

Central Michigan University

Thomas Edison State University

Troy University

University of Oklahoma

University of Alaska System

University of Maryland Global Campus

Private For-Profit Institutions:

American Military University

Capella University

Grantham University

University of Phoenix

Committee Reports

Nominations and Elections Committee Report

The six-member Nominating Committee is a standing committee of the organization and is charged with soliciting nominations for officer positions for annual elections.

For the 2020 year, there were 3 positions that were up for election (Secretary, Treasurer, and Vice President/ President-Elect). The remaining two positions are to be filled by succession (VP becomes President, and President becomes immediate past President).

Due to the current pandemic situation we are all faced with, preparation for this election year was done remote and using modern technology. During our annual meeting, members of this committee supervised the nominations and selection process for three vacant board seats up for elections this year. On 10 Sep 2020, membership casted one vote for each vacant position. The following selections were made with the positions effective 1 Jan 2021.

- Vice President/ President-Elect: Keith Hauk
- Secretary: Eric Ryan
- Treasurer: Dr. David Harvey

Membership Committee Report

NAIMES Membership remained at 22 institutions as no new institutions were added in 2020. The institution mix continues to be a broad representation of higher education with four 2-year institutions, six 4-year public institutions, eight 4-year private, non-profit institutions and four 4-year private, for-profit institutions.

The Committee conducted the annual review of current membership in accordance with the NAIMES By-Laws and provided the assessment to the President for review and consideration.

Standard operating procedures for evaluating and mentoring new member institutions were implemented; future recommendations for new member institutions will come from current members in accordance with NAIMES By-Laws.

Scholarship Committee Report

The Scholarship Committee is a 10-member committee from NAIMES membership institutions responsible for the process and procedures associated with the application, selection and awarding of the annual Student Spotlight Awards. The committee develops the application questions, uses an agreed-upon rubric for objective scoring, makes the final selections and announces the winners. The scholarship applications are typically posted on the NAIMES website in late spring and the application remains open until the end of September. Winners are notified by letter from the Scholarship Committee Chair and the names of the winners are also posted on the NAIMES website. The winners are invited to the Annual CCME Professional Development Symposium to be recognized and receive their award. Applicants can be from any DOD MOU institution; eligibility is not restricted to NAIMES member institutions.

Established in 2005 and first awarded in 2006, the NAIMES Student Spotlight Award provides five scholarships annually to recognize and celebrate the academic achievements of our nation's military-affiliated students. We would like to thank MBS Direct/Barnes and Noble College for their many years of support and contribution to our scholarship program. Beginning in 2020, the [Veterans United Foundation](#) became our new scholarship sponsor, and NAIMES is fortunate to be partnered with this great organization. The award categories include active-duty undergraduate students who have earned less than 60 semester hours; active-duty undergraduate students who have earned more than 60 hours; active-duty graduate students; military spouses; and veterans.

[2020 NAIMES Student Spotlight Awards](#)

Active-duty undergraduate student (less than 60 hours) Award: Mason Grissett

Mason is currently in the Marine Corps working as a combat engineer. He is attending American Military University pursuing a degree in Counter-Terrorism. Mason is applying to become a Military Security Guard assigned to guard embassies around the globe hoping his degree will assist him in having a greater situational awareness of any embassy assigned to. Mason would like to serve as a wrestling referee or gymnastics coach at a local community organization at his next duty station.

Active-duty undergraduate student (60 or more hours) Award: Audrianna O'Bryant

Audrianna is currently attending National American University studying Business Management. Upon graduation she is hoping to continue her studies obtaining her MBA with an emphasis in Human Resources. Audrianna, in her free time, enjoys the art of writing and spending time with her family.

Active-duty graduate student Award: Rebecca Leathers

Rebecca is an active duty Servicemember in the Air Force as a laboratory technician. She obtained her Bachelor of Arts degree in Anthropology from Clarion University in 2013. Rebecca is pursuing her Masters in Forensic Psychology from Walden University. Her goal is to understand how to help her fellow service members to deal with the stress and anguish inherent to military service. As a career psychologist in the Air Force, Rebecca feels strongly about using her personal experiences and education to bring light and peace to the military community.

Student Veteran Award: Katrina C. Fordham

Katrina is this year's Air Force veteran recipient and is in her second year as a doctoral student pursuing her degree in Health Sciences. Her overall goal is to become a Director of a crime lab. Katrina is attending Nova Southeastern University in Ft Lauderdale, FL. hoping to graduate in December 2020.

Military Spouse Student Award: Emely Nunez

Emely is married to an active duty soldier with the hopes of one day becoming a nurse. After several deployments and now back in the U.S. Emely is studying Health Care Administration at the University of Maryland Global Campus. After graduation, Emely hopes to work as a Hospital Manager. Emely enjoys spending time with her family and son.

[Policy and Issues Committee Report](#)

The NAIMES Policy and Issues Committee, chaired by the Immediate Past President, reviews current and emerging issues and events on behalf of the membership and makes recommendations on policy statements and White Papers. The policy landscape within both the DoD and the VA throughout 2020 continued to be subject to federal and state government fiscal pressures, evolving educational constraints among the services, and stagnate tuition assistance levels when compared to inflation and the rising cost of higher education. These issues all occurred alongside the global pandemic, creating unprecedented uncertainty among academic institutions and organizations that provide programs and services to military-affiliated students. The global pandemic resulted in military base closures across the globe in concert with full-scale lockdowns, resulting in extreme pressure on academic institutions to figure out how to maintain enrollments and student services from remote/at-home locations. Emergency federal and state government stimulus packages and VA legislation to ensure Veteran GI Bill benefits remained protected combined to guide institutional response to operations. As a result, the Policy and Issues Committee remained involved in active discussions regarding this landscape with both NAIMES membership and key stakeholders, and ultimately accomplished the following actions in 2020.

Summary of 2020 Work

- Finalized a White Paper on NAIMES position to level Monthly Housing Allowance (MHA) payments for recipient of Post 9/11 GI Bill across all learning modalities
 - Monitored Congressman Bilirakis' bill Introduced 17 July 2019 as 2020 election played out
- Finalized a NAIMES White Paper on raising the Tuition Assistance cap to keep up with inflation and the rising costs of higher education, and distributed to Mr. Fred Drummond, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Force Education and Training, for his review and recommendation for next steps to distribute to appropriate key stakeholders.
- Monitored the creation of the U.S. Navy Community College and provided updates via the NAIMES Newsletter on the Navy's solicitation efforts to partner with Academic Institutions to provide academic instruction.

- Shared best practices among NAIMES membership on their individual institutional response to COVID-19, specifically having to convert to 100% remote operations, institutional ability to absorb the costs associated with PPE at each physical location, and how social distancing has impacted onsite instruction.
- Met with Dr. Gary Schaub, Acting Director - Voluntary Education, and Mr. Fred Drummond at the annual NAIMES meeting on 10 September 2020. The topics listed below were discussed and information disseminated to the Vol Ed and Veteran community via the NAIMES December 2020 Newsletter:
 - Potential impact on Navy tuition assistance with the establishment of the U.S. Navy Community College
 - The current TA cap which has not changed for many years
 - Academic institution responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, fiscal implications and enrollment impact
 - DoD's new MilGears initiative
 - The status of DoD's Credentialing Assistance Program and roll out DoD-wide
 - Year three of the DoD Institutional Compliance Program

Annual Report Committee Report

The purpose of the Annual Report Committee is to collect information on actions and activities accomplished by the NAIMES organization over the past calendar year. The Report includes a year in review by the President, committee reports, information on NAIMES membership and newsletters. The first annual report was accomplished for 2017; all annual reports are available on the [NAIMES website under Publications](#).

Strategic Plan Committee Report

The Strategic Plan Committee removed Strategic Priority 3 - Strategic Partnerships, from the annual plan resulting from the dissolution of the Strategic Partnerships Committee in 2018. The remaining priorities are as follows:

- Strategic Priority 1 – Advocacy For the Military-Affiliated Student
- Strategic Priority 2 – Serve as a resource for educational institutions
- Strategic Priority 3 – Strengthen communications and presence among decision makers in government, legislation, higher education and industry/business employers

Throughout 2021, the committee will review the strategic plan, identifying areas for improvement and success by developing an assessment tool to track the progress of NAIMES

adopted strategies. Through the review, edits will focus on the current state of higher education along with outdated language or statements. Committee members will work toward presenting the revised document at the CCME Symposium meeting in June 2021.

Promotional Materials Committee Report

In 2020, the Promotional Materials Committee edited the NAIMES trifold brochure to remove mention of the MBS collaboration with our Student Spotlight Award scholarship, as that partnership came to an end. The Committee arranged for the printing of 1,400 copies of the brochure and inclusion in the CCME 2020 Professional Development Symposium attendee welcome bags in Philadelphia, PA in March; and for distribution at other conferences and events throughout the year. The Committee also provided standardized language to the membership regarding our scholarship application to aid marketing via social media outlets or emails to member institution students.

Academic Research Committee

The committee identified researchers in military education, Drs. Meghan Pifer and Jeffrey Sun from the University of Louisville, and met with them. They requested that NAIMES members share their institutions' data maps to identify what data is available for analysis, but several committee members were unable to obtain requested data. Following the advent of COVID-19, the committee came up with a specific idea for research: to examine the effect of the change in the Military Housing Allowance (MHA) due to COVID-19, because the differential in MHA has temporarily been eliminated for online versus seated courses. This natural experiment allows us to examine whether there is a link between the MHA for a particular program and students' enrollment and persistence behavior.

We propose to compare enrollment and persistence behavior of students who qualified for a full MHA before, during, and after the pandemic provisions were active. If the differential in MHA is truly an independent variable influencing student behavior as the dependent variable, this analysis will be able to model that relationship as the circumstances change over time. The committee drafted a proposal to share with the researchers in 2021.

The Way Ahead

As incoming President of NAIMES, I'd like to take a moment to extend my sincere gratitude to John Aldrich as he exits his tenure as President for the past two years. John's leadership, guidance, vision and passion for military and veteran students and their success has driven our progress on several important initiatives and ensured NAIMES was not stagnant, even thru some very tough times. Although 2020 has been a year that has caused much turmoil and change, NAIMES continued to forge on with advocating for and influencing decisions that impact policy, legislation and practices that safeguard the academic success of military-affiliated students.

In 2021, we will continue advancing our initiatives to treat all Veterans equally in regard to their Post 9/11 GI Bill housing allowance benefits and working with the Services regarding a potential increase in the military per-credit tuition assistance cap. I am hopeful that our Scholarly Work Committee will make strides in the coming year in collecting and analyzing data to help us better understand the actions and outcomes of our military-affiliated students in higher education. In addition, I plan to have our membership revisit the NAIMES Strategic Plan and dig deep on assessing how we have met, or fallen short, of our goals and how we can improve upon the strategic priorities we have set forth to accomplish.

While we anticipate another year likely full of virtual meetings, we hope to extend our reach and collaboration with Veteran Service Organizations and to also build upon our relationship with the Department of Defense Voluntary Education Programs to continue advocating for the best policies for, and treatment of, our military and Veteran students and their families in pursuit of education. I look forward to serving this amazing organization in the two years to come and can't wait to see what we are able to accomplish.

Alisha Miller
Incoming NAIMES President