

The NDC Carolinas hosts From Boots to Suits: Empowering Female Veterans Transition into the Workforce

On October 7th, 2013, the Carolinas Chapter of the National Diversity Council hosted a new event, From Boots to Suits at the Omni Hotel in Charlotte, NC. From Boots to suits empowered recruiting professionals by providing a more complete picture of veterans, how to find and place them. Female veterans learned how to transition, navigate available resources, and network with local resources and recruiters. Despite rain delays and being on the first day of the government shut down, our event moved forward empowering veterans directly and empowered veterans through educating recruiting professionals in our area. Please see pictures [here](#).

"From Boots to Suits provided an environment where veterans and recruiters were able to discuss issues they face," Dennis Kennedy, Founder & CEO said. "Through the recruiting track, we were able to address cover military culture, reasons to hire veterans, as well as many best practices and guidance for how to effectively recruit and retain veterans."

Dennis Kennedy, CEO of the National Diversity Council, kicked off the event by welcoming guests, explaining the goals of the NDC, and elaborating on what made this event unique from other Veterans Summits we've had in the past. The recruiter breakout sessions were facilitated by Charlotte Advisor Debra Wallin. They featured presentations from Colonel Phil Foster gave an overview of military culture, took them on a military crosswalk of military to civilian resumes' and military skill sets. David A. Smith of Bank of America, and explained the benefits of hiring veterans as well as understanding fit. Andy Barnes of Wells Fargo gave best practices on finding, placing, and retaining veterans.

The Veterans' sessions were led by Charlotte Advisor Tia Balsamo. We began with a roundtable discussion featuring Cindi Basenspiller of Charlotte Bridge Home, Alohalani Pickett and Cheryl Rawls both of the Winston-Salem VA, Julie O'hara-Harvey and Kimberly Humphrey both of Wells Fargo. Julie O'hara-Harvey gave a presentation on creating civilian resumes while some veterans received one-on-one resume help. Dr. Robin Hurley of the W. G. Hefner VA Medical Center and Alohaline Pickett discussed disabilities and communicating needs in the civilian workplace. For the capstone, Cindi Basenspiller provided an overview of key differences between military and civilian cultures with pragmatic advice for adapting. The speakers provided valuable insights into recruiting veterans as well as help veterans increase their potential within the civilian.

Dr. Tara "T" Dixon was scheduled to give her amazing story detailing her experiences which led to unfortunate post-traumatic stress disorder, as well as her journey to overcoming barriers to employment the celebrated surgeon faced when returning home. Though Dr. Dixon was unable to attend because of illness, Paula Broadwell, a mentor of Tara's, was able to retell her story in all its richness, helping to point out many of the complex struggles and lessons from her experiences.

The NDC Carolinas Council would like to thank CPCC's Veterans Resource Center for their title sponsorship and help planning the event. Thank you UNC-Charlotte's Veterans Student Services, Divas who Motivate, and the Charlotte Omni. Thank you to Blue Cross Blue Shield of NC, PCL Civil Constructors, the Charlotte Omni, CPCC's Veterans Resource Center for donating so veterans would be

able to attend at no cost to them. Of course, we would also like to thank all of the resource tables, speakers, and attendees for making From Boots to Suits a success.

As we look to next year, we plan to open the event up to male veterans, cover the application process in more detail for veterans, and provide more best practices for recruiters.