ECSU program helps veterans

By TIM MANKO
Special to the Chronicle

WILLIMANTIC — The transition from government and military writing to writing a five-paragraph essay for an English class is a lot tougher than many people think.

Eastern Connecticut State University student Eric Alan is all too aware of that fact.

After being in the U.S. Coast Guard for eight years, Alan, a senior English major at Eastern, is now providing writing tutoring services at ECSU’s Veterans Educational Transition Services (VETS) Center.

Alan volunteered his services at the VETS Center during fall 2011 while simultaneously working at Eastern’s writing center.

“I do six hours in the writing center on Mondays and I work here,” said Alan.

Alan has constructed his tutoring services based on the writing center’s model, as well as through his own research and experiences.

“I am determined to make lives better for veterans,” said Alan. “It’s difficult adapting to college life.”

The purpose of the tutoring services said Alan is to help veterans become students again.

Most veterans are used to doing fitness reports and technical writing, which is very different than the academic writing most college students are expected to do.

Alan said he treats his veterans differently, based on their experiences.

“Normal tutors are well trained, but trained to deal with people coming out of high school,” said Alan.

Alan explained that the people using ECSU’s (ECSU program, Page 4)
ECSU writing program helps veterans

(Continued from Page 1)

writing center are kids, while he is tutoring people who, in some cases, are 40 or 50 years old—with one student being in his 70s.

The writing center funds the project in order to reach out to the veteran population at Eastern.

The VETS Center provides comprehensive support services to prospective and current students who are or were members of the U.S. Armed Services, many of whom have served 20 years and come from all branches.

Over the past three years, Eastern's veteran population has grown said Alan.

“We started at 50 veterans three years ago, and now we are at 250,” he said.

More than 20 veterans used Alan’s writing tutor skills last fall. This semester, he has already worked with eight, but says once midterms start, he gets much busier. The services are made possible through a Project Compass grant with the support of Carmen Cid, dean of the school of arts and sciences.

Project Compass supports efforts to increase retention and graduation rates for minority, low-income and first-generation college students.

“By the VETS Center being here, we can help make the transition for the veterans easier,” said Alan.

Interested veterans can make appointments through the writing center’s web site, http://www.easternct.edu/writingcenter. Alan’s office hours are from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Tuesday and from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Thursday, as well as by appointment.