

***“A Desire to Assist Others So They Can Be Their Best”***

Dr. Debra Wales

Counseling Program Manager for The Army  
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*"The doctorate program at CSU allowed me to complete my research of studying Veterans as they leave the military and transition into higher education."*



Debra is the Counseling Program Manager for the Army's 147 Education Centers throughout the world. She provides aligned program and education counseling guidance to team members across Army installations. This alignment allows the counselors to provide consistent educational services for the men and women who serve our country. Additionally, Debra is the Career Program (CP) 31 Manager for Apprentices, a program that recently graduated master's students in the field of Counseling and Education. These students complete a two-year government training program and receive the designation of 1740 careerists. Apprentices are placed in Education Centers within the United States to backfill or replace retiring careerists. These assignments add talent and develop leadership from within the Army continually.

Debra's drive is the desire to assist soldiers, their family members, and others to realize their potential. "Education has no time limit, and no one can take it away from you once you achieve your goal." In Debra's role, as she trains and supports Counselors and Educators who serve our military members, she often reminds the counselors that they may be the only person cheering for that service member, maybe the only person who told them, "You can do this!" It is the best part of my job."

Debra has always believed that education opens doors, so it was natural for her to pursue a bachelor's degree in psychology and a master's in counseling and Education. The completion of her master's led Debra to be the Director of Counseling at a private Catholic high school in California, where 98% of our graduating students attended college. In this role, about 10% of Debra's students wanted to pursue military service; this included attending the different Military Academies, Army, Navy, and Air Force. It was here, in this role, where Debra's passion for working with military members, future, present, and veterans developed. "The men and women who step up to serve in our all voluntary military are the best of the best." They join the military for pride in their country, to be a part of something bigger than themselves, and for the educational benefits awarded for serving. Columbus State University recognizes this and supports those who are serving and those who have served.

Debra was first in Columbus in the late '80s when her husband was attending Airborne School. As a military spouse, Debra decided to start her doctorate at Columbus State for its proximity and connection to Fort Benning. She wanted to attend a college that understood the military and would be supportive of the veteran community.

"The doctorate program allowed me to complete my research of studying Veterans as they leave the military and transition into higher education." Through her research, Debra was able to identify barriers veterans experience in the application and enrollment process and make recommendations for improvement. In her current role as Counseling Program Manager for the Army, Debra can use the

data from her research to effect change and remove barriers. An example of this is having a Veteran/Military Orientation; "less than 40% of colleges have specific orientations for our military members." Most colleges put military members in Freshman Orientation with 18 yr olds whose life experiences are vastly different from combat veterans. CSU responded to the recommendations of my research and implemented a Military/Veteran Orientation to serve their students transition best.

#### Debra's Achievements

##### Education:

- BA-Psychology
- MA-Counseling & Education with a Pupil Personnel Services (PPS) Credential
- EdD-Curriculum & Leadership, Higher Education.

##### Awards:

- Army Civilian Service Commendation Medal
- Service Army Achievement Medal for Civilian Service
- Army Certificate of Achievement-Leader of the Quarter
- Educator of the Year

##### Publications:

- How JST credits can be applied to your transcript, Barrier affecting Junior Enlisted Soldiers from degree completion.