

**ASU Public Service Academy**  
**Testimony to the National Commission for Military, National and Public Service**  
**Public Service Hearing: Improving Basic Hiring Processes**  
**May 15, 2019 | Washington, D.C.**

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**Introduction**

On behalf of the Public Service Academy (PSA) at Arizona State University (ASU), thank you for the opportunity to provide written and oral testimony on this issue of national importance. ASU is the first institution of higher education in the country to launch a Public Service Academy. We are honored to provide our perspective on the specific opportunity as it relates to the key question of how we maintain the quality and supply necessary of applicants for government jobs.

**Vision and Goals of the Public Service Academy**

The Public Service Academy at ASU has the goal of engaging more young Americans in consequential service to the nation. Our vision is to build a model for an academy, like the military service academies, that would train the next generation of public service leaders for our nation. At scale, our goal would be to have Public Service Academies at public universities around the country training future military officers alongside future public servants at the undergraduate level. The military officers coming from the existing ROTC programs and the civilian public servants coming from what we call the Next Generation Service Corps or NGSC. As needed the academy could respond to the training needs of the government workforce. For example, we will be launching a new component called the Emergency Management Corps in

the Fall of 2019 to train undergraduates with the practical skills necessary to go in to the field of emergency management. For another example we need to go back just a few years to when we were fielding Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in Iraq and Afghanistan. The Public Service Academy could be positioned to stand up a corps to train diplomats for the nontraditional and difficult work of the PRT's. When that was no longer needed that corps could go away. In short, the Public Service Academy will train the leaders we need for challenges we face as a nation. Expanding and contracting to the needs of the nation.

### **The Public Service Academy Today**

Now let me explain what we have built up to this point at ASU. Inside of the Public Service Academy we have three distinct programs that operate individually and jointly as needed. The ROTC, the NGSC and the VSP. The ROTC programs at ASU include Army, Navy and Air Force. At ASU those programs have approximately 600 cadets and midshipman at any one time. Next we have the Next Generation Service Corps, where we have spent most of our time innovating. Launched in 2015, we have gone from zero students four years ago to over 550 students today and 600 next year in the Next Generation Service Corps (NGSC). The final program is the Veterans Scholar Program (VSP) which has 57 student veterans in it and will expand to approximately 100 in the Fall of 2019.

To be clear the Public Service Academy, in its current structure, functions as an ecosystem within which all of these elements (ROTC, NGSC and VSP) interact. One of the main hurdles, that will be mentioned in my recommendations, is that the ROTC units are restricted

from completely integrating with their civilian counterparts by the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that is standard between the respective service branches and the university.

The Next Generation Service Corps (NGSC) is a four year undergraduate leadership program for students of all majors. The goal of the NGSC is to develop character-driven leaders with the courage to cross sectors, connect networks and ignite action for the greater good. In the program students study their chosen majors, do coursework (6 courses) in cross sector leadership, complete internships in the public, private and nonprofit sectors and engage in experiential learning through direct service in the community, collaboration with the ROTC units and at least one semester of direct leadership at the university or in the NGSC itself. Most students enter as first time freshmen but there is also a two year option for transfer students from community colleges.

The vision is that graduates will go in to all sectors with the skills necessary to contribute to their community through service and leadership at the local, state and federal level. Our first class graduated on May 4<sup>th</sup> and students are going in to all sectors. Of note students are going in to national service in a variety of AmeriCorps programs, the Peace Corps, Teach For America and the military. Students are also going to jobs in the public sector primarily at the state and local (city and county) level.

The Veterans Scholar Program (VSP) is a one year program for student veterans at any level at the university (undergraduate or graduate). The goal of the program is to enhance the academic and professional success of student veterans while transforming them in to civic assets through engagement in direct service in the community. This service takes place with the civilian students of the NGSC in order to foster the seeds for bridging the civilian-military gap.

### **Recommendations**

Based on our experience over the past four years in growing the first of its kind Public Service Academy please review the following recommendations:

1). Enable ROTC to function seamlessly with their civilian counterparts in the NGSC:

In order to bridge the civilian-military gap and to train future military officers and others (foreign service officers for example) to work alongside each other, it is critical to enable cadets and midshipman to train directly with their civilian counterparts. This could include periodic joint training exercises, shared coursework and shared national training.

2). Create more routes to national service through the Peace Corps, AmeriCorps and fellowships as well as a hiring incentive for Public Service Academy graduates:

Currently there are not enough slots for those that desire to take part in national service. As part of the Public Service Academy we would benefit from specific slots for our graduates to

compete for. Using the military model, where cadets compete for top branch assignments based on merit, we could have specific Peace Corps or AmeriCorps slots for our top graduates.

3). Enable the expansion of Public Service Academies:

Public universities could be incentivized to host Public Service Academies through a federal funding source and the above recommendations. This would allow the model to expand and truly meet the hiring pipeline needs of the nation and the goals of this commission.

### **Closing**

It is a true honor to host the first Public Service Academy in the nation and to have the opportunity to provide both written and oral testimony to the commission. By taking on the daunting task of launching this academy at ASU, with no federal funding or enabling legislation, we always hoped that it could provide a model for expansion. I believe the Public Service Academy could be an important element in both meeting our goal of engaging young Americans in service to the nation and meeting the needs of our nation to increase the number of competitive applicants for jobs in government.

Respectfully.

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