



The Lumina Foundation  
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## Letter of Inquiry from the Warrior-Scholar Project

### Problem:

The central leadership at Warrior-Scholar Project (WSP) believes that our nation's enlisted military veterans have honed skills and attributes while in military service that, if supported properly, can provide the type of civic leadership our nation desperately needs at this time in its history. Our enlisted veterans learned to become team-builders and problem-solvers. They have experience making decisions under stressful conditions. They hold technical skills and have learned to be highly adaptable. In short, they are civic assets that, if provided a pathway toward the achievement of a top-tier college education and the empowerment that comes with it, can become the civic leaders of tomorrow. However, over two-thirds of our enlisted veterans who enter higher education after leaving the military are first-generation college students and are often ill prepared for this type of transition. A big reason for this is that the Department of Defense does not adequately prepare these amazing young men and women to successfully transition from the military to the vastly different culture, norms, and expectations required for success at a top-tier school. This lack of preparation manifests itself in the fact that some 40% of all post-9/11 GI Bill funds are currently being directed toward the coffers of the for-profit college industry. WSP addresses this gap in veteran transition services by building a skill-bridge from enlisted service to a top-tier college curriculum, by increasing the academic confidence level of our participants, and by ensuring each of our warrior-scholars leaves our program as a better-informed consumer of higher education.

### Solution:

WSP uses a boot camp model as the vehicle to successfully transition enlisted veterans "from the battlefield to the classroom." In this way, WSP has created an effective, innovative approach to assisting recent military veterans who, building on their military training and experience, seek to complete baccalaureate or graduate degrees at high quality colleges or universities. In accordance with Lumina Foundation's Goal 2025 objectives to improve postsecondary opportunities for adult students, including the many military veterans who also belong to underrepresented groups, WSP seeks funding to expand, disseminate, and improve its program of academic boot camps. Extending this successful program to include a larger proportion of military personnel who separate from service each year and to attract participation by a greater cross-section of institutions of higher learning, WSP intends to generate a positive impact on the lives of veterans and on society at large. We know that coupling the unique skills and attributes vets have developed through military service with a top-tier education will provide the foundation that will allow them to assume leading roles in society, in their respective careers, and the civic arena.

*What are the intended outcomes, and how will the work achieve them? How does the work accelerate progress on Lumina's overarching goal (by 2025, 60 percent of the population in the United States will hold a high-quality postsecondary degree or credential)?*



The intended outcome of WSP is to help veterans complete degree programs by improving their academic confidence, supplying them with basic skills necessary for success in college courses, and helping them become better-informed consumers of higher education. To achieve this outcome, WSP conducts academic boot camps during the summer months. Regular, and tenured faculty from WSP's partner institutions provide instruction in analytical reading, critical thought, and college-level writing skills. In addition to the initial week's focus on the liberal arts & humanities, WSP is now expanding its successful *STEM Initiative* by adding a second week devoted to STEM skills in order to meet the need of the 74% of participants who desire to major in fields related to science, technology, engineering, or mathematics.

Further, WSP seeks to increase the number of veterans who are accepted at top-tier institutions, thereby enhancing top-level educational opportunity for a more diverse population. In WSP's 2016 cohort, 17% identified as female and 83% identified as male; 29% identified as 'Hispanic of any race'; 39% identified "Minority (Native American, Asian, Black/African American, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, or Other)"; 56% identified as "White"; and 4% chose not to identify. Most WSP student veterans are first-generation college students, and most come from families of very limited financial means.

WSP evaluates the success of its program via participant and alumni/ae surveys, evaluations conducted by instructors and staff, and longitudinal tracking of the academic and employment success of program participants. Although WSP's mission is restricted to assisting veterans, we believe that the techniques developed for this population can also succeed in helping other highly motivated adult students to make a successful transition from prior employment or educational contexts to a college or university setting. In this regard WSP has achieved significant success in its outcomes, as some 42% of its alumni who are enrolled at a four-year school are attending a US News "top twenty" ranked school. This compares very favorably with the general student veteran population, where only 1% of undergraduate student veterans are attending a US News "top twenty" school.

*Why is this work important to pursue at this time?*

Some 200,000 veterans separate from military service each year. It is important to reach as many of these veterans as quickly as possible since they often encounter difficulty in making the transition to civilian life, especially if they attempt to earn a college or university degree. Often, veterans fall prey to the aggressive recruiting tactics of for-profit institutions and exhaust their GI Bill benefits before completing their program. Beginning with nine student participants at Yale University in 2012, WSP expects in 2017 to serve 265 veterans at 15 campuses—figures that are constrained by lack of resources. The present need is great, and the large number of veterans who could benefit continues to increase with every year. Now is the time to scale up the effort.

*What special qualifications does the organization bring to this effort?*

WSP was founded by veterans and is staffed at every level by veterans or by military spouses. Frequently, participating faculty at our partner institutions are veterans or have a strong professional interest in veteran affairs. On every collaborating campus, WSP has a veteran alumnus/a of the program who serves as campus program coordinator. Regular faculty who serve as instructors are drawn from relevant disciplines and are published scholars in their fields. In recent years, instructors have met to refine the curriculum of the boot camps and to make the learning experience more consistent across campuses. Such a structure also supports



WSP alumni/ae when they enroll in collaborating colleges or universities. In sum, the personnel and the organizational structure that has been developed ensures a high level of success.

*What other organizations are involved, if any? How will they contribute to the work?*

WSP is fortunate to collaborate with and enjoy the support of the following institutions: Yale University, Harvard University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the University of Michigan, Amherst College, Georgetown University, Syracuse University, Cornell University, the University of Oklahoma, Texas A&M University, the University of Chicago, the University of Arizona, the University of Southern California, Notre Dame University, and Princeton University. Regular faculty from these institutions serve as instructors for the boot camps. By serving WSPs Board of Academic Advisors and as consulting instructors, faculty members from participating institutions are intimately involved in leading this effort. They are clearly involved in helping to discover which approaches are more effective in achieving the program's objectives.

*How does the proposed work relate to the applicant organization's mission?*

WSP's mission is to assist veterans in acquiring the confidence, skills, and necessary information to succeed in navigating the application process, building upon the skills they were taught at WSP, and then earning a baccalaureate from a top-quality institution of higher learning. The work for which we seek financial support is fully congruent with that mission.

*What is the geographic scope of the proposed work?*

The geographic scope of this work is national. Currently, WSP partners with 15 campuses across 11 states plus the District of Columbia.

*What is the total cost of the effort?*

The total WSP operational budget for 2017 is \$1.5m. Based upon 2016 accounting data, it costs our organization approximately \$7,000 to support each student who participates in our 2-week STEM program. As a result, we are projecting (assuming all funding arrangements with host campuses remains constant) a total cost of \$735,000 to host 7 STEM programs in 2018; a total cost of \$1,050,000 to host 10 STEM programs in 2019; a total cost of \$1,365,000 to host 13 STEM programs in 2020.

*What amount do you seek from Lumina Foundation and for what period of time?*

WSP seeks 3 years worth of support from the Lumina Foundation. Assuming other funding sources are secured, this will allow WSP to expand its STEM Initiative by 3 campuses per year. As a result, WSP will ask for the following:

\$250,000 to help support 2018 expansion from 4 to 7 campuses (Oklahoma, MIT, Yale, Arizona, Texas A&M, Notre Dame, and USC).

\$450,000 to help support 2019 expansion from 7 to 10 campuses

\$650,000 to help support 2020 expansion from 10 to 13 campuses.

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*What resources will other funders or organizations provide?*

Some of WSP's generous funders for 2017 are:

- a. The Diana Davis Spencer Foundation
- b. The National Endowment for the Humanities
- c. The Carnegie Corporation of New York
- d. The Bob Woodruff Foundation
- e. The Stavros Niarchos Foundation
- f. The Teagle Foundation
- g. The Paul E. Singer Foundation
- h. Linda and Glenn Greenberg
- i. Arne and Ruth Sorenson
- j. Frank Sica
- k. Nicholas Brady
- l. Charles Johnson
- m. Fred Smith