

**Kiersten H. Downs, Ph.D.**  
**Health Science Specialist, Applied Anthropologist**  
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**Education**

University of South Florida, Tampa, FL

Ph.D., Applied Anthropology

Degree Confirmed December 9, 2017; GPA: 3.87/4.0

Dissertation: "Beautifully Awful"—A Feminist Ethnography of U.S. Women Veterans' Experiences with Transition from Military Service"

University of South Florida

Graduate Certificate in Women & Gender Studies, January 2014 GPA: 4.0/4.0

Nova Southeastern University

Graduated Magna Cum Laude

Master of Science (MS), Conflict Analysis and Resolution, May 2011, GPA: 3.92/4.0

Binghamton University, State University of New York

Bachelor of Arts (BA), Political Science, May 2008

**Technical Skills**

Microsoft Office Suite (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook); SPSS; ATLAS.ti; Qualtrics

**Work History**

Military Family Research Institute (MFRI) – Indianapolis, IN

Consultant

June 2016- Present, as needed basis

Program Development & Evaluation Consultant for the "Focus Forward fellowship", a 4 day leadership development program developed to engage military-connected women beyond the classroom

Assisted Program Director with program recruitment strategy; recruited 29 women veterans for two leadership fellow cohorts

Invited Speaker, Leadership Mentor, and Panel Facilitator; Facilitator for session called "The Value of Narrative Exploration"

Partnered with MFRI for 4 national conference presentations on topic of "Leadership Development with Women Veterans"

HSR&D Center of Innovation on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (CINDRR), Tampa, FL

Health Science Specialist, Applied Anthropologist

July 2015- Present, Full time 40 hrs/week

(Current) Co-Investigator "Action Ethnography of Traumatic Brain Injury and Caregiver Reintegration", PI Gail Powell-Cope, PhD, PI Karen Besterman-Dahan, PhD

Presented at 3 national conferences as part of research team for Traumatic Brain Injury and Caregiver Reintegration study

(Current) Qualitative Co-Lead on three program evaluations focused on assessing the effect of creative arts and Veteran reintegration and recovery; impact of community agricultural initiatives on Veterans reintegration; and peer support programming on Veterans reintegration.

(Current) Program Director for CINDRR Veteran Engagement Council and Traumatic Brain Injury and Caregiver Veteran Engagement Council; Responsible for ongoing recruitment; database tracking metrics; program implementation and event planning.

(Current) Serves on national HSR&D Veteran Engagement in VA Research Workgroup; HSR&D planning committee for 2019 Veterans Engagement summit

WUSF Public Media, Tampa, FL

Veterans Outreach Coordinator, Veterans Coming Home

June 2014- January 2015, 30 hrs/week

Oversaw grant-funded public broadcasting cooperation and website advertisement for a local National Public Radio station

Implemented a solid public relations and advertising program; independently managed, wrote and edited all website content with detailed updates for event planning and promotions

Developed project management databases; tracked all metrics to sustain organizational collaboration of events and reports; organized 4 community partnerships with local, state, and national level Veteran's service organizations

Orchestrated and promoted 5 community outreach events within a 3-month period; focused on Veteran Affairs resources and job fairs for 3,000 attendees

Traveled throughout 4 counties; conducted event participation, interviews, story outreach and partner collaboration; resulted in the production of 25 stories on-air and 4 web-only coverage's that spanned across 13 counties in Florida

University of South Florida (Departments of Applied Anthropology / Psychology) - Tampa, FL

Full-time student with administrative assistant roles in Teaching, Research and Quality Assurance

September 2011-June 2015, 40 hrs/week

Taught, instructed and mentored 300 students; coached students through the development of social justice action plans supporting cultural anthropology and cross-cultural diversity studies

Collaborated with cross-disciplinary research teams; performed rapid ethnographic assessment for Hardee County cultural and historical resource study; designed, researched and identified cultural factors that affected the implementation of sustainability programs in two multi-national biofuel corporations

Coordinated data collection with site managers from 3 field sites including Tampa, Miami and Northeast Florida with the Florida Youth Suicide Prevention Project; assisted with programmatic and data base management for federally funded grants; started student work group for campus mental health, wellness, and suicide awareness

Published 1 article, authored 2 collaborative writings and designed 3 presentations

U.S. House of Representatives, Office of Congressman Maurice D. Hinchey, Binghamton, NY

Congressional Staffer, June 2008- June 2011

Full time 40 hrs/week

Managed administrative and constituent service operations in Broome County, NY district office

Delivered administrative excellence in a dynamic, fast-paced environment; maintained meticulous detail in congressional casework, official memorandums and legislative research

Represented the Congressman at public speaking events; provided briefs on local current events and coordinated community public relations events, meetings, fundraisers and routine interface with local media

New York Air National Guard, Syracuse, NY

Administrative Assistant, 2005-2009

Part time

Maintained and audited personnel records for 150 staff members; administratively managed all assignments, promotions, testing, customer service, and personnel readiness and mobilization procedures

United States Air Force, Dyess Air Force Base, Abilene, TX

Weapons Armament Systems Specialist, 2001-2005

Full Time

Loaded, positioned, safely downloaded, and troubleshot conventional weapons on B-1 Lancer Aircraft; performed combat survivability procedures and contingency training

## **National Boards**

Serves on Board of Directors for Student Veterans of America (SVA), Washington, D.C.

2016 – Present

Member, Board of Directors

Serves as a trusted advisor to executive staff; Advises on strategic plan; Approves annual budget, audit reports, and material business decisions; Stays informed of all legal and fiduciary responsibilities

Contributes to annual performance eval of CEO; Partners with CEO and other board members to ensure that board resolutions are carried out Represents SVA to stakeholders; acts as an ambassador for the organization

Serves on task force for Board Member Recruitment and Diversity and Inclusion; Ensures executives staffs commitment to a diverse board and staff that reflects the communities that Student Veterans of America serves

## Overseas Experience

Study Abroad in Ecuador (summer 2010); Study Abroad in Dominican Republic (Summer 2010); Study Abroad in Bosnia-Herzegovina (summer 2007)

Deployed 3 times in support of Operation Enduring and Iraqi Freedom (Guam, 2004; Diego Garcia, 2005; Iraq 2006-2007)

## Volunteer Activities:

Student Veterans of America – Tampa, FL 2012 – 2014

President, University of South Florida Student Veterans Association

Conducted research and used data collected from interviews with 37 volunteer student veterans to develop Got Your 6 Student

Veteran Campus Success Network; Program used to instruct campus faculty and staff on military culture and best practices for student veteran engagement.

Conducted over 50 local and national news media interviews; advocated for Student Veterans of America (501c3) and Bike America: Student Veterans Ride for Education campaign

Engaged audiences as guest motivational speaker at the James A. Haley Veteran Hospital and keynote speaker at University of South Florida Board of Directors

Advised Student Veterans Association on strategic organizational planning, volunteer recruitment and community outreach goals to support enrolled veterans in transition assistance

Served on 3 conference panels for women, student Veterans, and national higher education and employment association

## Awards and Achievements

1 of 5 USF Doctoral Students Awarded Dissertation Completion Fellowship (2016-2017)

Awarded 2013 National Student Veteran of the Year at the 2013 Annual Student Veterans of America Conference.

Awarded the General Shaw New York Air National Guard Scholarship (January 2008).

Selected as Senior Airman Below the Zone (2004); Airman of the Year 7AMXS (2004); Air Force Achievement Medal (2004, 2007); 7 AMXS Maintenance Professional of the Year (2003); Airman of the Quarter; 7 AMXS, (2002)

## Conference Presentations and Papers

Peer Reviewed Articles:

Downs, Kiersten, H., and Amber Mathwig (2016) Veterans Knowledge Community: Supporting Military-Connected Students through an Intersectional Approach to Student Affairs Programming. NASPA Knowledge Community Annual Publication

Non-Peer Reviewed Articles

Downs, Kiersten, H. (2017) “Beautifully Awful” An Overview of a Feminist Ethnography on U.S. Women Veterans’ Experiences with Transition from Military Service

Downs, Kiersten, H. (2017) “Between Self and Service: Tensions and Contradictions of Embodied Gender as Experienced by Women Veterans”

Downs, Kiersten, H. (2017) “A Feminist Ethnographic Approach to Research Design with Women Veterans”

Downs, Kiersten, H. (2013) “From Student Veteran to Activist Scholar: A Community Based Approach to Program Development and Implementation”. Presented at 2013 USF Women & Gender Studies Annual Research Colloquium.

Downs, Kiersten, H. (2014) “We Are The Narrators of Our Own History: A Call for Student Veterans to Take Charge of Their Futures” Published 9/30/2013 in the Huffington Post [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/kiersten-downs/we-are-the-narrators-fof\\_b\\_4017364.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/kiersten-downs/we-are-the-narrators-fof_b_4017364.html)

Invited Speaking Engagements, Conference Presentations, and Panel Member Engagements

Presenter and Panel Facilitator, Student Veterans of America National conference, “The Importance of Leadership Development Programming for Women Veterans” January 2018

Presenter and panel member, American Anthropological Association Annual Conference, Washington, D.C.: “Beautifully Awful” An Overview of a Feminist Ethnography on U.S. Women Veterans’ Experiences with Transition from Military Service, November 2017

Presenter and panel member, American Congress of Rehabilitative Medicine, Atlanta GA: “Veteran Engagement in VA Research: Lessons Learned from a Study of Community Reintegration with Veterans with Traumatic Brain Injury”, October 2017

Invited speaker and Facilitator, “The Value of Narrative Exploration”, Military Family Research Institute’s Focus Forward Fellowship for women veterans, June 2017

Panel Member, “Supporting the Needs of Women Veterans through the Arts”, National Initiative for Arts and Health in the Military, February 2017

Poster Presentation, “Community Reintegration with Veterans with Traumatic Brain Injury: Perspectives From Community Event Observations”, American Congress of Rehabilitation Medicine Conference November 1-4, 2016

Poster presentation “From Our Perspective: A Community Based Approach to Program Design, Development, and Implementation”, Society for Applied Anthropology Annual Conference, March 2013. Received \$500 travel grant award from the University of South Florida Student Government to present at conference.

Panel member, “Embodied Veterans: Personal Appropriation, Bio-power, and Normative Fitness, AAA National Conference, Albuquerque, NM, November 2016

Presentation: “Rules of Engagement: Reaching and Keeping Veterans in the VHA”, Office of Rural Health, Washington, D.C., October 2016

Panel member, “Veteran Activism in North America”, November 2015, AAA National Conference, Denver, CO

Panel Member, “Women Veterans and Leadership”, Student Veterans of America National Conference, January 2015

Panel member, Student Veterans of America National Conference, January 2013.

Panel member Student Veterans in Higher Education, State of Pennsylvania Student Veterans Education and employment Conference, Pittsburgh University, March 2013

### **Professional Memberships**

Student Veterans of America Alumnae Association (SVA)

American Anthropological Association (AAA)

Society for Applied Anthropology (SfAA)

Society for Anthropology of North America (SANA)

American Congress of Rehabilitation Medicine (ACRM)