



## TRANSITION GUIDE 2023

# Climb the Executive Ranks

Put your leadership skills to work in the private sector.

Whether you have been in the uniformed service for a few years or are retiring after decades in the service, you likely have grown accustomed to the military way of life. Pondering a move into the civilian workforce may seem daunting. Whether it's networking, writing a résumé, interviewing, or negotiating compensation, these tasks may seem foreign.

MOAA can help you pick up the job-hunting skills you need, while also allowing you to polish the skills you already have. This guide can put you on the road to success in the civilian world.



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# CULTURE SHOCK

Entering the civilian workforce may feel like a minefield. Here's how to disarm the differences when transitioning.

By Charlsy Panzino

**F**inding a new career can be a grueling process for anyone, but servicemembers transitioning to the civilian workforce may face unique obstacles.

Knowing what to expect during uniformed service can be more straightforward. In the civilian sector, however, transitioning servicemembers must learn how to network, articulate their value, and negotiate.

“Too often, servicemembers look at their military career as a pinnacle of success,” said Col. Brian Anderson, USAF (Ret), MOAA’s senior director of Career Transition and Member Services. “But that only prepared you to now go into your civilian career and find that next level of success.”

PHOTOS: JOHN HARMAN/STAFF

**'WHAT YOU DID IN THE MILITARY IS NOT AS SIGNIFICANT AS HOW YOU DID IT.'**

— Col. Brian Anderson, USAF (Ret)

There are ways to help ease the transition and mitigate the culture shock some servicemembers feel as they start a new civilian career.

**TOP TIPS FOR ADJUSTING**

**Networking.** Connecting with others can help you find a job, but it also helps to hear about other veterans' experiences so servicemembers aren't blindsided when they make the transition to the civilian world.

When Cmdr. Erin Cardinal, USN (Ret), MOAA's program director of Transition Services and Family Programs, asks servicemembers how they feel about networking, the response is usually that they feel uncomfortable or disingenuous.

Cardinal likes to share a quote about how networking should be thought of as farming instead of hunting: It's about cultivating relationships, not just looking for something and leaving.

Even before leaving the military, servicemembers should share their story.

"Don't make assumptions that family and friends know what you want to do or did do in the military," she said.

**Translate your value.** In the military, fellow servicemembers can get a clear picture of someone's role just by knowing their duty title and rank.

"You've never had to worry about translating your value because it's already part of the customs and the culture of what you're doing," Anderson said.

Many people in the civilian world won't fully understand your skills, strengths, and accomplishments just based off those military details. Instead of listing military-specific duties on a résumé, Anderson said it's important to know what to present to hiring managers and recruiters.

"What you did in the military is not as significant as how you did it," he said. "And what are those things that you have, such as problem solving, decision making, whatever that may be, that really make you unique?"

"Civilianizing" your résumé, using language

anyone can understand, is the first step.

Project management, for example, can be talked about in a general way, whether it's planning and organizing, delegation, teamwork, or leadership, said Capt. Pat Williams, USN (Ret), program director of MOAA's Engagement and Transition Services.

"If I start talking about battalions or brigades or troop authorization, they're going to be like, 'What?'" Williams said. "Jettison all the jargon and speak plain



language that any business person would understand."

**Negotiate.** Negotiating your salary and benefits package is not something most servicemembers have needed to do. To become more familiar with the civilian sector process, transitioning servicemembers should do their research.

As you network and talk to veterans, ask what someone with the same knowledge, skills, experience, and education would be compensated at companies within that industry and sector, Anderson said. It's also important to consider that overall compensation isn't just about salary — take a good look at the benefits package to determine the true value of the offer.

**FACING CHALLENGES**

Working in the civilian world brings unique challenges, whether it's connecting with colleagues who don't have that military knowledge or working for a younger boss.

Col. Wyn Elder, USAF (Ret), landed a job at Apple when he retired from the Air

Force in 2016, but there were some bumps during the interview process he didn't expect.

Elder had served as the senior executive assistant to the vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff — a title that didn't quite



translate to the civilian world.

"I was interviewing with someone pretty senior at Apple, and he said, 'Someone told me you had a pretty nice career, but were you a secretary?'" Elder said. "They don't have job titles like that, so 'administrative assistant' is what he was thinking in his head."

Elder, who lives in Charlottesville, Va., and now works at Box, a cloud storage company, had mentors who gave him a heads-up about questions like that, along with advice on how to make the transition to a civilian career. There should be more training on articulating value to companies and translating experience into plain English to

tell a story that aligns with what the business is trying to accomplish, he said.

Capt. Mary Jo Sweeney, USN (Ret), worked at USAA after retiring from the Navy in 2003, but it was still an adjustment learning how to demonstrate her business worth.

Sweeney, of Crownsville, Md., said she learned from other veterans and focused on "corporate literacy" by taking internal professional courses that helped her understand how USAA did business.

"And, most importantly, I listened a lot," she said.

In addition to working with colleagues who don't have military experience, finding yourself working for a younger boss can also be a surprise for veterans who are used to certain hierarchical structures, but breaking out of that mindset can be helpful.

Williams highlighted the benefit of reverse mentoring and getting rid of stereotypes to be more receptive to what someone else has to offer.

"It also speaks to your sense of belonging and your ability to assimilate into an organization," she said.

**A TWO-WAY STREET**

It's important to make sure an employer is the best fit for you, even if that means not taking the first offer.

People don't always spend enough time on themselves doing introspection, Anderson said. Questions to ask yourself include: What did I like doing? What working style did I like? If I could get paid for doing something, what would that be?

"Try to explore those opportunities and what they are, and then come up with what are your non-negotiables," he said.

Also, don't worry about asking for more, whether it's a higher salary or another benefit.

"Don't be afraid to advocate for your self-worth and the value proposition you bring to the workplace," Cardinal said. ■■■

*Charlsy Panzino is a writer based in Idaho.*

**Leadership skills** that prepared you for the battlefield can also propel you to success in an executive boardroom.

PHOTOS: LEFT, ARMY CAPT. TRAVIS KIRCHNER/ARMY; RIGHT, TARA MOORE/GETTY IMAGES

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# THE ELEMENTS OF NEGOTIATION

A West Point program breaks down the art of negotiation into a science.

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By Kipp Hanley

**N**egotiating is a skill that you can sharpen. And fine-tuning that skill can serve you well as you embark on a civilian career — whether you are negotiating on behalf of your employer or negotiating for yourself.

While negotiation may often seem like an art, the West Point Negotiation Project looks at the science behind the skill and teaches participants how to hone their abilities to negotiate. Lessons learned can be put to use during military service, but they can also help transitioning servicemembers succeed in the civilian workforce.

The impetus for the West Point Negotiation Project was to teach officers how to better communicate in complex situations during war and peace time. Launched by the U.S. Military Academy in 2009, the project provides a formal structure of negotiation for future Army officers. Those negotiations tactics are also now being taught as part of Civil Affairs training at Fort

**SPONSORED CONTENT**

## Big Frog T-Shirts Fits to a Tee for Veterans

Following his grandfather's footsteps, Ethan Corbin chose the military life and honed many core skills during six years in the U.S. Air Force.

Upon his exit, Corbin channeled a creative passion and printed T-shirts as a side hustle in his basement with friends. When Big Frog Custom T-Shirts & More popped onto his radar, he went all in, opening his own shop in Sioux Falls, S.D., in 2019. His dad, Ryan, is his business partner and helps manage the financials.

Today, Corbin manages four employees and, thanks to Big Frog's community support focus, gives back to his neighbors, regularly supporting veteran groups, like Calm Waters Veterans Village & Retreat Center and other fundraisers.

"With family-friendly hours, owning this Big Frog shop is a perfect way to call the shots in my own business, give back, but definitely not be alone," he said.

Through September 2023, Big Frog is offering a significant incentive for other veterans, military spouses, National Guard/Reserves, and first responders. Depending on the location, qualified candidates could realize a \$15,000 benefit including waived royalty fees for one year and a 20% initial investment discount at the time of franchise agreement.

"With strong leadership and adaptability skills, veterans make successful owners and we're hoping this generous incentive encourages other veterans, like Ethan, to consider joining us," said Big Frog Franchise Group Co-Founder, President & CEO Tina Bacon-DeFrece, who comes from a military family.

Her father is a U.S. Coast Guard Commander, so she understands military life and the valuable skills veterans bring to franchise ownership.

For more information, visit [bigfrogfranchise.com](http://bigfrogfranchise.com).



Bragg, N.C., and they are being implemented across the country in the academic and corporate worlds.

*Military Officer* breaks down the elements of the West Point Negotiation Project and how they can help you in your professional endeavors.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF RELATIONSHIPS

The project includes two classes, Military Leadership and Negotiations for Leaders. During the courses, West Point cadets are taught the seven elements of principled negotiations, created by late Harvard professor and author Roger Fisher: communication, relationship, interests, options, legitimacy, commitment, and alternative.

In the classes, cadets learn effective two-way communication. In order to do so, an individual must first establish a relationship with the other party. Whether it is someone you deal with on a frequent basis or someone you may never meet again, active listening and empathy are critical to the start of a successful negotiation.

"If you don't trust the other side of the table, then you haven't found the ability to build relationships," said Maj. Travis Cyphers, USA, director of the West Point Negotiation Project.

### FIND THEIR INTERESTS

Once you establish a relationship in a negotiation, then you can appeal to your party's interest. Former Capt. James Oswald, USA, a 2012 West Point graduate, learned the hard way how not gauging your party's interest can ruin a negotiation, even when you have already established a relationship.

As an investment advisor for Leading Edge Financial Planning, Oswald shared how his assumptions of a mentor ruined the chances of securing a potential client. Oswald and his colleague tried a hard-sell approach with an individual who had a sales background, instead of establishing what that person's interest may have been. That approach backfired, and he never signed up.

"Our problem was he is not a client, he needs to be a client ... instead of really asking him the right questions [like] what motivates him, what are his fears when it comes to finance, [are] there any gaps where he feels like he needs help," Oswald said.

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**'THERE IS MORE THAN JUST SAYING WHAT ... I WANT TO GET OUT OF IT. THE RELATIONSHIP PIECE IS CRUCIAL.'**

— Capt. Jacob Caudle, USA

It's also critical to know the distinction between the other party's interest and position, said Maj. Tim Dwyer, USA, a former cadet who helped Cyphers write the negotiations curriculum for the Civil Affairs program at Fort Bragg.

To explain the distinction, Dwyer used a hypothetical example of an overseas partner force commander asking for new trucks. The acquisition of vehicles is his position, said Dwyer, but his interest is enhanced mobility. Instead of just denying his request, you might offer him the option of additional mechanical support or proposing cross-training mechanics in lieu of acquiring new vehicles. These options may be more legitimate or realistic than the purchase of new vehicles, said Dwyer.

"Explaining that the trucks are old, but with the right parts and mechanical support, we can get them up and running for operations is a creative solution that gets to the underlying needs and wants of the partner force commander," Dwyer said.

"Instead of getting caught up in the demand and position, we teach cadets the why behind it," Cyphers said.

By exploring options in a negotiation, you may avoid making a commitment that may not be beneficial to you or your organization. For instance, when it comes to salary negotiations, do your research on the company and don't jump at the first offer, said Cyphers.

The final element of negotiation is creating an alternative or BATNA (best alternative to a negotiated agreement). If you don't establish the lowest threshold you are willing to accept, you can walk away from the bargaining table missing out on a potentially good deal or accept a deal that you shouldn't be making.

"Cadets are often their own worst enemy in negotiations," Cyphers said. "We limit the scope of what is possible before we enter negotiation."

#### GROWING THE PROGRAM

Since its inception, more than 1,300 cadets have completed negotiation classes at West Point. In addition to the classes, West Point offers cadets

#### »» NEGOTIATING TIPS IN PRACTICE

Former Capt. James Oswald, USA, shares these tips from his work as an investment advisor. Keep them in mind as you conduct negotiations throughout your post-military career.

**Be humble:** "Unlike the hard sell or the classic sales approach, it takes humility to really listen and understand the others' interests. If you don't consider their interests in my profession, trust will never be built."

**Consider all options:** "In our world, there is a lot of regulation, and the longer you are in the profession, the quicker you get to solutions because you usually have seen this scenario before. [But] there are always unique cases and new problems that come up for people to manage their money the most efficiently. This is where exploring a few different options with them will help them come to their decision."

**Communication is key:** "One of the 7 elements of negotiation is communication. While this one seems like a simple one, communication is crucial for every field, but especially in my industry. If someone has gotten to the point where they are willing to trust us with their finances, we didn't get there without excellent communication and a plan on how we will communicate in the future. Being proactive in communication rather than waiting for problems to come to you is what separates you in the service industry."

and midshipmen workshops, which have featured well-known, successful business leaders, such as NBA Commissioner Adam Silver and former professional baseball agent and bestselling author Ron Shapiro.

The program also offers on-site instruction

for officers in the field looking to improve their negotiation skills.

Capt. Jacob Caudle, USA, recently took the course at Fort Bragg as part of his Civil Affairs training and walked away with an appreciation of the formal structure of the class.

"People think they need to get X out of this meeting, and this is how I'll go do it," Caudle said. "There is more than just saying what ... I want to get out of it. The relationship piece is crucial."

Outside of the military, the principles of the West Point Negotiation Project are being taught at academic institutions such as Dartmouth College. Formerly the director of Leadership Programs at the Air Force Academy, project co-founder Lt. Col. Aram Donigian, USA (Ret), teaches a negotiations class at Dartmouth's Tuck School of Business.

Donigian always asks his students three ques-

tions: Who are you negotiating with, what are you negotiating over, and what makes those negotiations challenging? The answer to the third question is inevitably the same, said Donigian, and the elements of negotiations he teaches become applicable to all scenarios.

"Whether it is a cadet at West Point, whether it is a Navy SEAL, or any of the business contexts you can imagine, [the answer to the third question] is consistent[ly] the same because that [involves] people and organizational problems that you are negotiating," Donigian said. "... There are limited resources, there are hard timelines, there's costs when we don't get [negotiations] right. People's livelihoods, promotions, and performance reports are affected by what we do." ■■■

Kipp Hanley is MOAA's staff writer.



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EOE



# Transition at the Executive Level

MOAA's program helps participants transfer their skills to civilian leadership roles.

By Kathie Rowell

Capt. Kellie Clelland, USPHS (Ret), spent almost 25 years in information technology roles with the Public Health Service before retiring in 2016, then she spent six years as a military spouse to her active-duty Coast Guard husband, moving four times.

When they landed permanently in San Antonio, Texas, Clelland, who had started a part-time business, decided she wanted to find full-time employment.

But she had a challenge.

"I didn't know how to go out in the private sector and look for a job," she said. "Do you use headhunters? How do you do your résumé? All that stuff. I had no clue where to start."

She signed up for MOAA's Military Executive Transition (MET) program, designed for senior leaders going from military to civilian careers, veterans in civilian careers looking for advancement, and military spouses.

Unlike the transition assistance programs offered by the military, MET sessions are laser focused on the most crucial aspects of transition, such as identifying key priorities and developing a transition mindset, said Col. Brian D. Anderson, USAF (Ret), MOAA's senior director of Career Transition and Member Services.

He said transitioning servicemembers often

believe that their military career dictates their civilian career. If they were a pilot, for instance, they may think they are destined for a civilian career in aviation or aerospace.

"However, they can do anything they want to, utilizing those intangible skills that they have, such as leadership, management, communication," Anderson said. "We want to really open their aperture to 'What are your personal priorities? What are your passions? What are jobs that are going to give you value now into your second career, or potentially third career, or fourth career?'"

Interactive virtual workshops, held every other month on the Microsoft Teams platform, cover topics that servicemembers have likely never had to focus on before: résumés, LinkedIn profiles, net-

working, 30-second elevator pitches, job interviews, and salary negotiation. Each remote workshop lasts two half-days and includes a moderated panel of servicemembers who have successfully transitioned to the civilian workforce. Among other benefits, the nominal

registration fee includes access to MOAA's Career Center. Find more details about upcoming events at [www.moaa.org/MET](http://www.moaa.org/MET).

Attendees also participate in a coaching session focused on developing a resilient mindset, led by Cmdr. Erin Cardinal, USN (Ret), MOAA's program director of Transition Services and Family Programs.

"It's an important attribute to have because we can feel helpless, powerless, and like a victim when we abdicate our responsibility for our thoughts and emotions," Cardinal said.



## SUCCESS AFTER SERVICE FOR GUARD/RESERVE

A new supplemental three-hour program called Success After Service focuses on the unique challenges and differences in transition for Guard/Reserve servicemembers. Among the topics covered are career advancement, retirement, and legal and financial issues.

Learn more at [www.moaa.org/events](http://www.moaa.org/events).



For instance, she said, servicemembers can have a million different thoughts about their DD-214.

"One servicemember might be super excited about that day, and another one might just be in fear," she said. "Those two different thoughts result in different sets of actions. Obviously, being excited will lead to somewhere more productive, and fear could result in paralysis, stagnation, rumination."

### FINDING A NEW ROLE

Clelland participated in the May workshop. In July, she moved to San Antonio and started a new job, which she found through her network, as a client executive with NTT Data Services.

"MET made it a lot less daunting because I kind of knew what to expect," she said.

She believes the advice she got on salary negotiation helped her obtain a much higher paycheck.

Col. Myles Caggins III, USA (Ret), participated in the July MET workshop as he looked ahead to retiring from his 26-year military career in December 2022.

He hopes to translate his experience as a spokesman for the global coalition to defeat ISIS in Iraq and as the Army's fellow at the Council

on Foreign Relations, a think tank based in New York City, into a job focusing on geopolitics with a large financial firm. He's also starting a company that will focus on cross-cultural communication and specialized linguist and translation services.

Caggins signed up for MET because he thinks being prepared from many different perspectives is helpful. And, as a newly elected MOAA board member, he wanted the experience to help him become a more effective board member and ambassador.

His most important takeaways?

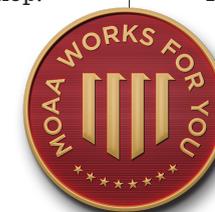
"I am not alone. There are other people who are transitioning at the same time and, oh, by the way, there are millions of people who transitioned prior to my transition. And all of those people can potentially be a resource," Caggins said.

"Networking is supremely important."

After 10 years of presentations with more than 1,000 participants, Anderson said presenters know what does and doesn't work.

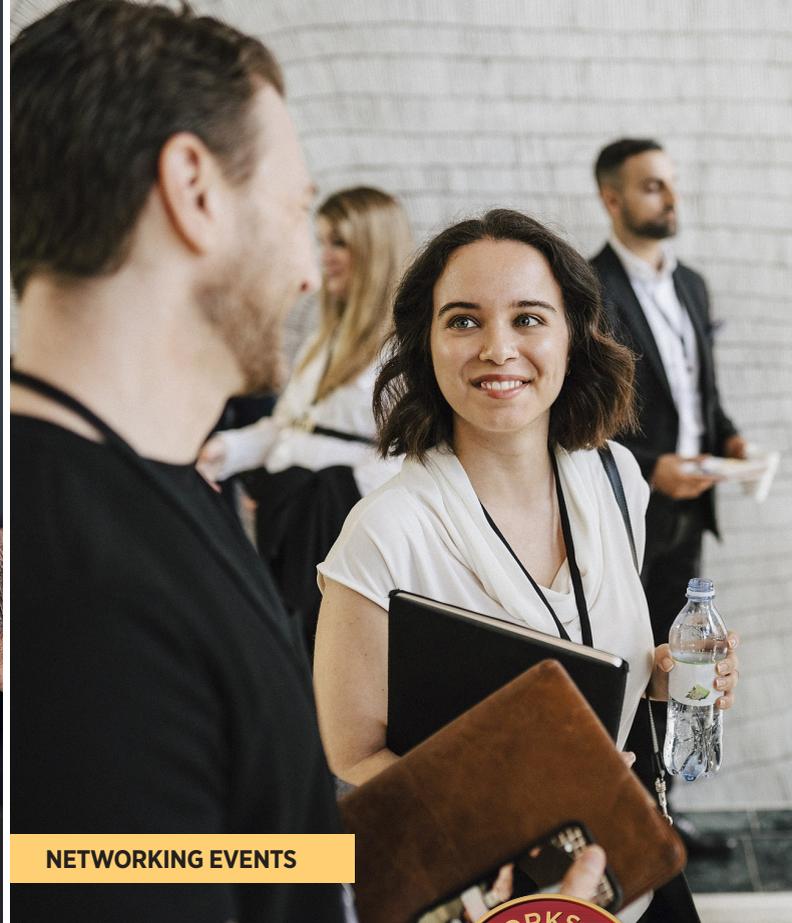
"We want to take away a little bit of the myth and mystique. You are going to land successfully," said Anderson. "It's just a matter of how long that's going to take." ■■■

*Kathie Rowell is a writer based in Louisiana.*





WEBINARS



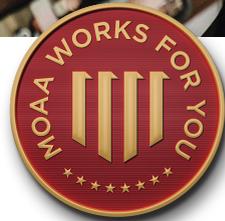
NETWORKING EVENTS



VIRTUAL EVENTS



RÉSUMÉ REVIEW



# Tools You Can Use

MOAA offers a wide range of career transition resources.

Thanks to The MOAA Foundation, MOAA's career transition consultants support uniformed servicemembers, veterans, military spouses, and surviving spouses with making sound career and life decisions.

Now these award-winning programs are being shared directly at select military installations worldwide through the Department of Labor Veterans' Employment and Training Service (DOLVETS) Employment Navigator and Partnership Pilot (ENPP). Initiated by DOL to assist transitioning servicemembers and their spouses by leveraging the services and expertise of the many non-governmental organizations, the pilot affords MOAA the opportunity to deliver valuable career assistance information and resources through seminars, workshops, webinars, and virtual career fair events with the transitioning uniformed services community.

**Seminars and workshops.** These interactive sessions are designed to help you activate a resilient mindset that will serve you throughout the ups and downs of your transition (and any other life circumstance). With guidance from MOAA experts, you will learn how to:

- Build a stronger and broader network to accelerate your job search.
- Maximize your self-marketing tools, including your résumé and LinkedIn profile.
- Understand and take advantage of your TRICARE and VA benefits.
- Prepare for your next interview, or your next salary and benefits negotiation.

**Webinars.** MOAA's Transition Center regularly presents educational webinars offering in-depth analysis on finance and benefits, valuable advice on careers and transitioning, and information on your earned veteran benefits. You name the topic,

we probably have a webinar on that. Find the MOAA archived productions here: [www.moaa.org/webinar-archive](http://www.moaa.org/webinar-archive). (Note: Some webinars are available after initial broadcast to Premium and Life Members only.)

**Networking and hiring events.** MOAA offers a variety of in-person and virtual professional development and networking/hiring events. These are great opportunities to get connected with industry executives, talent acquisition professionals, hiring managers, and resource specialists. Check out our upcoming events at [www.moaa.org/events](http://www.moaa.org/events).

**Federal job resources.** If you are considering civil service, see [www.moaa.org/FedJobs](http://www.moaa.org/FedJobs) for information on working for the government.

## RESOURCES FOR MILITARY SPOUSES

Thanks to the generous support from The MOAA Foundation, MOAA has a series of transition resources available to all military spouses:

- "Keeping a Career on the Move" Military Spouse Symposia: [www.moaa.org/spouse-symposium](http://www.moaa.org/spouse-symposium)
- Military Spouse Employment Guide, available for free download at [www.moaa.org/spouseguide](http://www.moaa.org/spouseguide)

## MAXIMIZE MOAA MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

As a MOAA member, you have access to a full suite of membership benefits, including several options to help you with your career transition. Our award-winning team of experts provides these personalized services for Premium and Life members:

- Get a jump-start on the competition through a career consultation session, professional résumé critique, and LinkedIn profile review. Email [transition@moaa.org](mailto:transition@moaa.org) for more.
- Get your questions answered. Contact MOAA's health care, financial education, and military/veterans benefits experts at [beninfo@moaa.org](mailto:beninfo@moaa.org).

Stay up-to-date with the latest career news and tips at [www.moaa.org/careers](http://www.moaa.org/careers), which now includes archived guidance organized by subject along with the latest transition news, event updates, members-only materials, and more information.

So, what are you waiting for? Whether transitioning from uniformed service, finding employment, or taking advantage of your earned benefits, let MOAA's team of experts guide your journey with trusted advice and decisional support. IIII

— MOAA staff

## PAYING IT FORWARD

The MOAA career transition events that are free and open to all in the uniformed service and veteran communities are made possible by The MOAA Foundation. [www.moaa.org/donate](http://www.moaa.org/donate)



# Meet Your MOAA Transition Team

The MOAA Transition Center provides trusted advice and guidance to assist with life and career decisions for currently serving members of the uniformed services, veterans, military spouses, and surviving spouses. Along with free community support afforded by The MOAA Foundation, MOAA members have exclusive access to our suite of personalized resources and services.



**Capt. Jim Carman  
USN (Ret)**  
Vice President,  
Council/Chapter  
and Member  
Support



**Col. Brian D.  
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**Kimberly Bruce**  
Event and Program  
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