2018 Pacific Northwest Regional Student Veteran Conference
Featured Keynote Speakers

Opening Keynote Speaker
Matt Kress
Veterans and Military Affairs (VAMA)
Starbucks

As the lead for the Veterans and Military Affairs (VAMA) program at Starbucks Coffee Company, Matt Kress focuses on strategic relationships and national partnerships. Prior to his position at Starbucks, he served in the Marine Corps for 22 years as an enlisted Marine and commissioned officer in both active duty and reserve assignments. After leaving active duty, he spent 10 years as a Firefighter/EMT in Southern California while specializing in crisis and disaster management in the Marine Corps Reserves. Matt has an MBA from the Anderson School of Management at UCLA and a Masters in Strategic Planning for Critical Infrastructures from the University of Washington.

Banquet Keynote Speaker
Jared Lyon
President and CEO
Student Veterans of America

As President and CEO of Student Veterans of America (SVA), Jared Lyon leads the national organization’s efforts to support student veterans to, through, and beyond higher education.

Since his appointment in January 2016, Lyon has overseen SVA’s growth to now include a network of more than 1,500 chapters on campuses in all 50 states and four countries representing more than 700,000 student veterans. During his tenure, he co-authored the National Veteran Education Success Tracker (NVEST) Project research, the first comprehensive study of student veterans using the Post-9/11 GI Bill, and in 2017 led SVA’s commitment to pass the “Forever GI Bill,” the largest expansion of college aid for military veterans in a decade.
Prior to becoming CEO, Lyon was SVA’s Chief Development Officer and Executive Vice President of Operations where he implemented plans to ensure organizational sustainability.

A veteran of the U.S. Navy, Lyon served as a submariner and diver, taking part in multiple deployments in support of the Global War on Terrorism. Upon separating from the military in 2005, he became an electronic-systems administrator at Northrop Grumman, and went on to manage Florida operations for the Washington Nationals while working on an Associate of Arts degree at night from Eastern Florida State College.

After five years in the private sector, Lyon returned to higher education full-time, earning a Bachelor of Science degree from Florida State University. As an undergraduate he served as president of the school’s SVA chapter and was recognized as the National Student Veteran of the Year by SVA in 2011. Lyon then served as National Program Manager for the Institute for Veterans and Military Family’s Entrepreneurship Bootcamp for Veterans with Disabilities.

Lyon holds a Master of Public Administration from the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University, where he is an adjunct professor at the Whitman School of Management. In addition to serving on the SVA national board of directors, Lyon is the Vice Chair for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Veteran’s Advisory Committee on Education, a commissioner for the American Council on Education’s Commission for Education Attainment and Innovation, and sits on the FSU Veteran Advisory Board. He is currently a 2018 Presidential Leadership Scholar.

He and his wife Chayla live in Washington, D.C. with their two dogs, Penelope and Madilynn.

Closing Keynote Speaker
MSG (R) Leroy Petry
Medal of Honor Recipient

MSG (R) Leroy Petry was born on July 29, 1979 in Santa Fe, New Mexico. He enlisted in the United States Army in 1999; something he wanted to do since he was seven years old.

After completion of Infantry One Station Unit Training, the Airborne Course, and the Ranger Indoctrination Program at Ft. Benning, Georgia, he was assigned to 2nd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment. He served as a Rifleman, Grenadier, Squad Automatic Rifleman, Fire Team Leader, Rifle Squad Leader, Assistant Operations
Sergeant, Weapons Squad Leader, and Liaison Officer for United States Special Operations Command Care Coalition-Northwest Region, providing oversight to wounded warriors, ill and injured service members and their families.

He has deployed eight times in support of the Global War on Terror with two tours to Iraq and six to Afghanistan.

His military education includes the Airborne Course, Combat Life Saver Course, US Army Ranger Course, Warrior Leader Course, Jumpmaster Course, Advanced Leader Course, Senior Leader Course, and Combatives Level-1 Course. He earned the Ranger Tab, Combat Infantryman's Badge, Expert Infantryman's Badge, Basic and Senior Parachutist Badges, and Canadian Parachutist Badge.

His awards and decorations include the Medal of Honor, Legion of Merit, Bronze Star Medal (1OLC), Purple Heart, Army Commendation Medal (2OLC), Joint Service Achievement Medal, Army Achievement Medal (1OLC), Army Good Conduct Medal (3rd Award), National Defense Service Medal, Afghanistan Campaign Medal with 3 Combat Stars, Iraq Campaign Medal with Three campaign Stars, Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Non-Commissioned Officer Professional Development Ribbon (Numeral 3), Army Service Ribbon, Overseas Service Ribbon (Numeral 2), NATO Medal, Joint Meritorious Unit Award, and the Valorous Unit Award. He was also inducted into the Distinguished Members of the 75th Ranger Regiment and the Ranger Hall of Fame in June of 2017.

MSG (R) Petry and his wife Ashley have four children, Brittany, Austin, Reagan and Landon. He is currently enrolled in college with goals to earn a degree in business management and own his own business. In addition he is on several boards: GE Veteran’s Network (advisory), Boulder Crest Retreat, Medal of Honor Museum (advisory), Patriot Project, and works as a warrior liaison for Feherty’s Troops First Foundation all geared to improving the lives of veterans and our military.