

VFW Welcomed on Second College Campus

Northeastern University's Post 12158 will focus on providing solutions to veterans facing housing, education and employment challenges

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Northeastern University expanded its commitment to student veterans on Monday afternoon, officially opening a Veterans of Foreign Wars post during a ceremony at the [Veterans Memorial](#).

The post is named in honor of Robert R. Pirelli, AS'01, an Army Staff Sgt. from Franklin, Massachusetts, who was killed in Iraq in 2007. It is the first post to be opened in Massachusetts since 2009 and just the second in the nation to be run by student veterans on a college campus.

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Max Spahn, [S'17](#), a U.S. Marine Corps veteran and former president of Northeastern's Student Veterans Organization, will serve as the post's commander. "We're one of the best schools for student veterans in the state as well as in the country," he said prior to the ceremony. "The fact that we are able to take on the responsibility of running this VFW post while juggling school and co-op shows how dedicated we are to helping each other."

Founded in 1899 by Spanish-American War veterans of the 17th U.S. Infantry, the VFW is the nation's oldest war veterans service organization. Its vision, according to its website, is to "ensure that veterans are respected for their service, always receive their earned entitlements, and are recognized for the sacrifices they and their loved ones have made on behalf of this great country."

Northeastern's post—dubbed the Robert R. Pirelli Post 12158—will function as a hub for veterans at Northeastern and beyond, Spahn said, offering membership to all active or honorably discharged service members who have served in a foreign theater of war. It will

focus on providing solutions to veterans facing housing, education, and employment challenges, he explained in his opening remarks at the ceremony, saying that he hoped it would “establish a model for other universities to follow.”

In February, Brian Martin, state commander of the VFW in Massachusetts, met with members of the SVO and asked them if they would like to run the post. Martin was impressed by the group’s popularity and productivity, Spahn recalled, and felt like Northeastern would be a good fit for the VFW’s next state post. “We get things done,” Spahn said, pointing to the SVO’s charitable efforts, “and we loving helping veterans.”

On Monday, Brian Duffy, the VFW’s national commander-in-chief, installed more than three dozen veterans as members of post 12158, including 12 students who will take on leadership roles as officers of the organization. “This is a very historic event,” he told the officers. “The torch has been passed,” he added, noting that it is now their responsibility to look out for the next generation of service members.

Post 12158 underscores Northeastern’s longstanding devotion to supporting service members on campus. The majority of the university’s student veterans participate in the federal government’s [Yellow Ribbon Program](#), which operates in conjunction with the Department of Veterans Affairs and currently provides scholarships to hundreds of veterans who have served in the post-9/11 era. In addition to the Yellow Ribbon Program, Northeastern offers student veterans myriad [on-campus resources](#) to help them achieve their educational and career goals. In 2013, Student Veterans of America recognized Northeastern’s Student Veterans Organization as its [top chapter](#) in the United States, ahead of 700 other student veterans programs.

“Northeastern student veterans are at the forefront of taking care of their peers,” said Andy McCarty, the director of the university’s [Center for the Advancement of Veterans and Servicemembers](#). “For Northeastern to have such a strong and vibrant student veteran community as a private nonprofit institution says a lot about the community and the quality of the work they have done.

Photo caption: Twelve Northeastern student veterans were installed as VFW officers at a ceremony on Monday. Photo by Matthew Modoono.

By Jason Kornwitz

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