

NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: 5.22.23

CONTACT:

Shannon Nickinson

snickinson@IHMC.org

Phone: 850-525-2116

IHMC supports veterans' transition to civilian work through SkillBridge program

PENSACOLA – The transition from military to civilian life comes with challenges, including how to translate that experience into the civilian workplace.

The Florida Institute for Human and Machine Cognition (IHMC) is proud to be part of a U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) program to help close that gap.

SkillBridge is a DoD program to give military personnel civilian work experience in the last 180 days of their service career – a bridge from one world to the next. This spring, IHMC renewed its commitment to the program becoming a SkillBridge worksite.

The DoD covers salary and benefits while in the program, which allows IHMC to train and leverage highly skilled service members in preparation for permanent roles at no cost, said Ryan Tilley, IHMC's director of strategic program execution and innovation.

"SkillBridge gives IHMC early access to the experience, skills, and unmatched work ethic service members bring to the table," Tilley said. "It's a huge benefit to us."

The SkillBridge partner vetting process was updated in January 2023. As part of that process, IHMC had to craft a comprehensive training plan and model the job description for the role that the service member may fill.

That included details such as job description, length of training, detailed timeline, defined training modules, specific learning objectives, instructional models, instructor qualifications, assessment/grading rubrics, as well as goals and training outcomes, Tilley said. Once approved, IHMC executed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the DoD to formalize its program approval.

A SkillBridge internship was the perfect way for Meredith Yeager to transition from a 24-year career in the U.S. Navy to a role at IHMC.

Research Associate Meredith Yeager led a Science Saturday session recently.



Yeager, who retired as a captain, is now a senior research associate, parlaying her experience in program management and process improvement into a similar role with the human performance research team.

As an SkillBridge intern, Yeager worked with IHMC Senior Research Scientist Jeff Phillips on studies to counter the impacts of dehydration and hypercapnia on aviators; to develop a pressure-resistant, diver mask-fitted oculometric neurologic assessment tool; and other human performance research projects.

She gained insight into proposal writing and the research process while leveraging her skills in managing multiple government contracts including financial management and administrative contract support.

Yeager says the experience eased her transition with very little stress and helped her develop ties to a new organization.

“I couldn’t have asked for a better experience and I am very thankful for the opportunity at IHMC,” she said.

SkillBridge is just one part of IHMC’s commitment to and connection with the military community. Dr. Kenneth Ford, IHMC’s founder and CEO, is a U.S. Navy veteran.

“The skillsets that veterans have brought to our organization are innumerable, and we are grateful for the chance to help our military members be successful in their encore careers,” Ford said.

In 2021, IHMC was recognized by the U.S. Department of Labor with a 2021 HIRE Vets Medallion Award for the research center’s commitment to employing veterans. To be eligible for the award, 7 percent of a company’s workforce must be veterans. That year, nearly 13 percent of IHMC’s workforce were veterans. In 2022, that rose to 17 percent.

IHMC is a not-for-profit research institute of the Florida University System where researchers pioneer science and technology aimed at leveraging and extending human capabilities. IHMC researchers and staff collaborate extensively with the government, industry and academia to help develop breakthrough technologies. IHMC research partners have included: DARPA, the National Science Foundation, NASA, Army, Navy, Air Force, National Institutes of Health, IBM, Microsoft, Honda, Boeing, Lockheed, and many others.



