

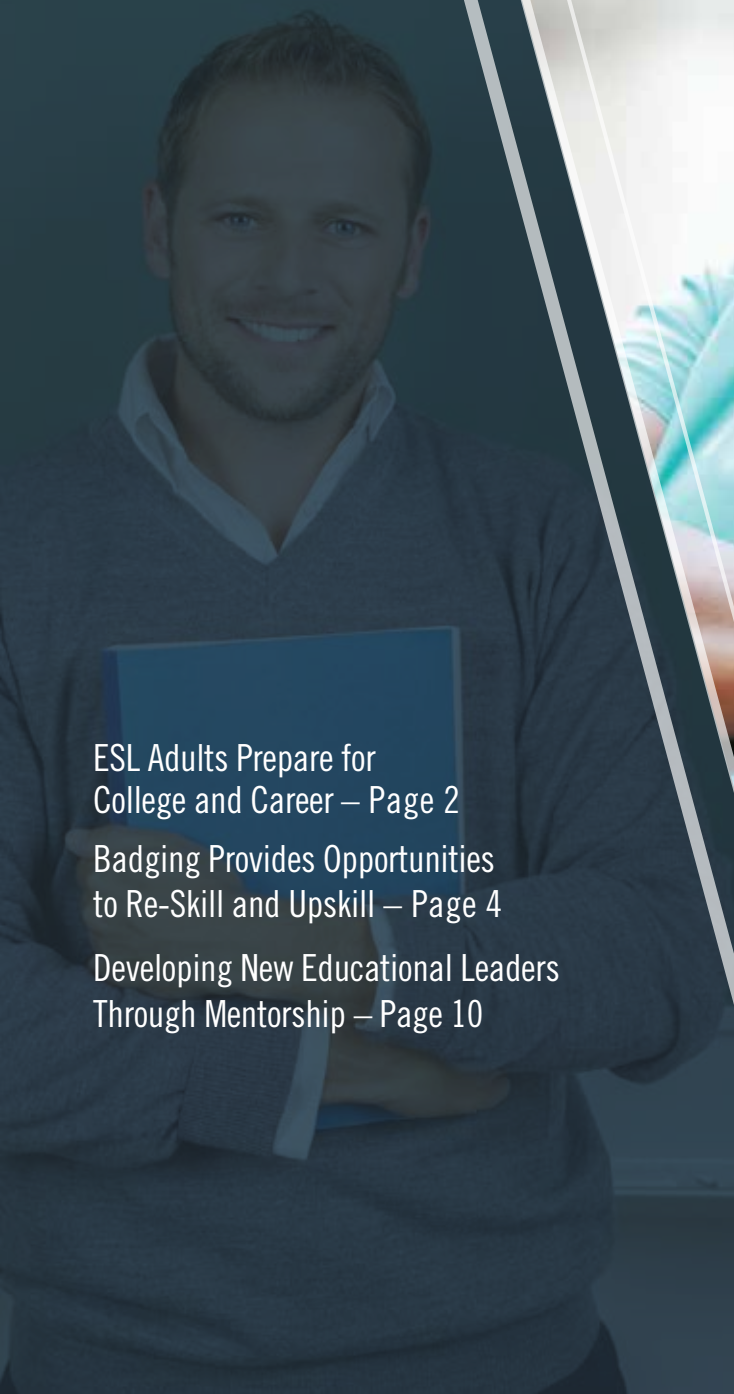
TRANSITIONS

Back to School

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Produced and written by Sharon Morrissey
Designed by Carollyn Hamilton



Welcome to Transitions



Amy Barsha

As we prepare for more life transitions—back to school, back to the office (for some), and back to on-site training and events (if desired), I am reminded of the pace of change this past eighteen months. The Illinois unemployment rate is steadily declining, but it's still almost twice what it was in March 2020 when the pandemic hit. Training to learn new skills or a new career is happening at record speed—and it must happen fast as families depend on it to find gainful employment. Employers need skilled workers now and are increasingly looking to upskill their proven existing team to fill business needs. SXL's customized training, convenient online career training programs and professional certifications fulfill these pressing needs for both *employers* and *employees*.

We've launched new technology, expanded our Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)- approved programs, partnered with schools to mentor new leaders and engaged educators in cultural competency training. We've added new workshops and career certificates, served seniors in the community during a very lonely time for many, earned accreditation for one of our most popular programs, and received some exciting news from Amazon.

On behalf of the SXL team, I hope you enjoy the read, and keep us in mind as your career needs change or your resume needs some polish to make you shine. ▲

Amy Barsha
Executive Director, SXL

ESL Adults Prepare for College and Careers



28 non-native English speakers are now on their way to either college or a new career, thanks to a \$456,000 state grant to help recruit and retain students hardest hit during the COVID-19 crisis.

One of nine schools to receive a competitive grant through the Illinois Board of Higher Education Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) Fund, Governors State is helping students to either enroll in college or stay the course towards degree completion. GSU's program serves two in-need groups— offering intensive English training, computer literacy, and mastering college concepts to ESL community members and providing additional support for foundational math classes to existing GSU students.

ESL community members receive 300 hours of Intensive English and Digital Literacy training offered

through the School of Extended Learning (SXL) including vocabulary, grammar, reading strategies, and other language skills. A growing number of students are learning and working online, so participants also receive assistance with web navigation, Microsoft Office, email, and other computer programs. To ensure digital equity, lessons come with a laptop that participants get to keep and Wi-Fi access for the duration of the grant program.

The ESL community members were selected through a competitive application process that weighed heavily considered their motivation to use improved English language skills to pursue college or career aspirations. Community partners including Spanish Community Center of Will County, Arab American Family Services, Prairie State College, Tinley Park School District 146, Chicago Public Schools, Workforce Development partners,

and others contributed to the recruitment efforts. The training is delivered in three cohort groups to allow for personalized instructor support and authentic team learning experiences.

Director of the English Language Learning Center (ELLC), Dr. Akiko Ota, says it's working. "Participants have already been accepted to two and four-year institutions, including GSU, Prairie State College and UIC. Many others are interested in pursuing career training and are being introduced to the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA) funding process, as well as an overview of career training opportunities. We are excited to see the positive impact of the program," Ota said.

The first cohort group reflected on their program experience, sharing:

- My first achievement was being accepted into this program. After my first semester of completion, I achieved friends, mentors, and finished the first semester successfully. I also reinforced my knowledge of navigation on the computer and programs like Microsoft, Blackboard, outlook, and more. My main goal was to lose my fear of speaking English and improve it.

- The first semester was very rich in academic learning material which allowed me to improve my listening and writing skills. My goal for English studies is to be able to pass TOEFL with a good score. The GEER program has been a huge help for me, and I intend to continue learning and improving my English through this program.
- My goals are the same, I want to be able to speak and write fluently. Also, I want to be able to better understand other cultures, especially the American. I think this program is complete. It offers so much that the only thing needed is time.

- My biggest achievement in Mastering College was to understand how digital learning works. There was more than one time that I thought I was not going to make it and I was going to fail, but I thank all the people that believed in me and helped me overcome those obstacles.

The grant's co-authors are encouraged by the results to date.

“Advancing educational equity was our core goal,” said Sharon Morrissey, Director of Strategic Initiatives for the School of Extended Learning. “We believe English is the key to academic and career-readiness, and the math



component not only helps our existing students with problem-solving skills, but also builds critical infrastructure for ESL community members and all students who enroll at GSU.”

CAS Dean Dr. Andrae Marak said mathematics proficiency is a key to student success: “The new interventions have helped our largely first-generation students succeed in Elementary Statistics and, as a result, their overall academic achievements.” One student shared, “I feel as though I have more of a better chance in passing Statistics because of this class and I appreciate that it has been recognized that students like me need that additional assistance. Math is difficult for me; it is more like a foreign language... but I am striving in my Stats class due to the extra couple hours (help) per week.”

For more information on English Language Learning Center opportunities, visit www.govst.edu/english-learning, or email Dr. Akiko Ota, Director of the English Language Learning Center at aota@govst.edu. ▲



Badging Provides Opportunities to Re-Skill and Upskill

SXL launched a digital badging program using the [Credly Acclaim platform](#) to upskill the workforce and remove barriers for adult student populations, including working parents, unemployed or underemployed adults. The largest group to drop out of the workforce in 2020 was working mothers. The Illinois Policy Institute reported female employment in Illinois declined by 15.1% in 2020, as compared to a national decline of 11.8%. Male employment fell 8% in Illinois compared with 6% nationally. These adult students need accelerated training solutions to re-skill or upskill for a shifting job market, and 97% of employers are seeking to hire those with credentials. Most of SXL's current badges are also WIOA-approved programs to assist with the funding of this re-training process, and SXL's badges are all online to be accessible for adult students balancing many life-demands at home. ▲



What is a Digital Badge?

A digital badge is:

- A digital emblem symbolizing skills and accomplishments.
- A description of earned skills and competencies
- Easy to share on social media.
- Verified by Governors State University—an accredited institution.

[See All Badge Offerings!](#)

Register at continuinged@govst.edu, or online at www.govst.edu/sxl.



New Training Programs for Today's Workforce

The School of Extended Learning (SXL) launched multiple new programs this fall to support employer needs and meet demand for today's job market. These programs focus on innovation and continuous improvement that keeps the customer front and center.

SXL launched a tailored version of one of its flagship professional certification programs—**Lean Six Sigma Green Belt** and Black Belt—just for the Healthcare industry. This certification gives healthcare professionals the tools to improve patient care delivery processes, quality of patient outcomes, and patient satisfaction through Lean and Six Sigma quality and process improvement methodologies. Real-world examples of lean thinking develop practitioners who define and implement strategies to improve healthcare delivery processes and identify opportunities to reduce discrepancies. Six Sigma methodology and various statistical tools for project planning are introduced. This program is for changemakers in the industry! **This program offers a digital badge** to showcase your achievement online!



Data Analyst and **Python Developer** are self-paced learn-by-doing programs are unique in the way they provide students with the practical experience, competency, and confidence required to qualify for job openings. Job seekers can prepare for roles in market research, sales, logistics, machine learning, artificial intelligence, business, finance, and more. And employers will be happy to know that they will now be able to upskill their existing proven workforce and locally recruit qualified candidates.

“We are excited to be partnering with NCLab, a Reno, NV-based e-learning supplier of self-paced career training to make these programs available”, states Amy Barsha, SXL Executive Director. “We look forward to supporting both local businesses and school districts to meet workforce needs and introduce or supplement curriculum with these valuable STEM skills. Individuals may also enroll for the training directly.”

In as little as 320 hours, the Data Analyst career training program prepares graduates to enter the workforce as job-ready Data Analysts. Course content includes SQL Fundamentals, Advanced SQL Introduction to Python for Data Science and Predictive Data Analytics. For those new to computer programming languages, an Introduction to Computer Programming is offered to introduce computational thinking. Similarly, in as little as 240 hours,

the Python Developer career training program prepares graduates to enter the workforce as job-ready Python Programmers. Average salaries in the U.S. range from \$78,176 to \$122,093, according to devskiller.com.

Upon successful completion of these courses, students are awarded certificates of completion and digital badges. They will also have a professional portfolio of real-world projects to demonstrate qualifications to employers.

Additionally, every organization needs a staff trained in “soft skills.” World-renowned leadership expert John C. Maxwell says if you want to succeed, you must learn how to connect with people. Anyone can learn how to make every communication an opportunity for a powerful connection. Learn the five principles and practices to develop the crucial skill of connecting:

- Finding Common Ground
- Keeping Your Communication Simple
- Capturing People's Interest
- Inspiring People
- Staying Authentic in all Your Relationships

Enroll in the next session, or request a customized group training for your team. ▲

Thornton Fractional Gives Financial Peace to District Families

“Do you know that 3 out of 4 Americans are living paycheck to paycheck, 60% of Americans can’t write a check for \$600.00, and bankruptcy amongst retirees is on the rise?” Instructor Dan Haduch asked. Haduch who owns DH Financial Coaching is an alumnus of GSU’s College of Business (MBA). He is also a Master Financial Coach from the Dave Ramsey School.



“I have a passion for this work. I was an average American just paying the monthly minimums on the credit cards, car payments, etc. Living paycheck to paycheck and not really concerned about anything. I had never written a budget, nor had my wife, and we were just kind of existing. Then one day, we were just tired of all the time and effort that had to go into managing money. We had enough. We started researching big players in personal finance like Dave Ramsey, Chris Hogan, Rachel Cruze, etc. and got super serious. We paid off almost \$80,000 worth of debt in a little over one year by just getting serious about properly allocating our money.

We loved the new lifestyle so much that I received a certification from Ramsey Solutions as a Master Financial Coach, and now I lead people on the same journey,” says Haduch.

Haduch’s workshop is making a difference.

“It was very important for our parents to hear this presentation because knowledge is power. Our parents believe that it is very difficult to have families afford for students to go to college, and they are very unsure how to tackle this issue so many just fall off (from having children attend college). This class was so important because it educated our parents about all the different ways that college could be attainable for their children and that there were many resources out there that they could tap into, such as grants, scholarships, etc.,” shared Tonya Reed, Parent Coordinator for Thornton Fractional School District 215.



District parents agree.

“The parents wanted more time and for him to come back so that they could ask more questions. They were incredibly thankful that they had a chance to meet him, and this gave them hope that they could find more resources,” Reed said. “Dan is a phenomenal speaker. He was not stuffy but very approachable. He gave parents very pertinent information.”

The district is hoping to share his version of financial peace with the students too.

“Dan’s presentation was amazing! I love his energy. I’d like to bring him back for multiple student workshops!” said Tammy Johnson, Thornton Fractional School District 215 Project Director, 21st Century Community Learning Center Grant.

Haduch wishes that he knew these skills that he is currently teaching when he was a young college student; “I wish I knew I could be a student without a loan and own a car without a note. Now I get the opportunity to guide others on this same lifestyle.”

What is the one thing he hopes people take away from his course?

“The age old saying ‘you can’t buy happiness’ is 100% true. Unfortunately, no matter how much money you have in the bank, life will still happen. Loved ones will pass away, you will miss people, you will lose connections to friends you thought would never happen. Money can’t change that.

But what it can do is assure some peace.

Know that when life happens, and misfortune comes knocking you will not have to stress because you will have a plan. If you find yourself in a situation of grief, you will only need to grieve—not grieve AND worry about how to pay for something.

What’s next for Thornton Fractional D215 parent training?

Reed shared, “We have a robust schedule for the calendar year, but we are always open to more ideas, especially through SXL. Some of the other ideas that we have had for parents include inviting in the Crisis Center for Parents to understand more about domestic violence and having speakers from programs like Upward Bound. We are always looking for ways to think outside of the box and provide more resources to our families.”

Email cstaples@govst.edu for information on this training for your district. ▲



GSU Teaches Cultural Competency to Neighboring High Schools

Written by Haley Walsh



Andrae Marak

Governors State University is spreading knowledge on Cultural Competency to local school districts to start discussions on equity, inclusion, and equality.

Dean of the [College of Arts and Sciences](#) Andrae Marak is working with Northern Illinois University Professor Joseph Flynn to run workshops on Cultural Competency for School District 215.

Currently on the third wave of the workshops, groups of 50— including superintendents, administrators, teachers, staff, and paraprofessionals — meet with Dr. Marak and Dr. Flynn for three sessions culminating in four and a half hours of training.

[The School of Extended Learning](#) at Governors State provided the first set of workshops to School District 215 for free as part of [the Healing Illinois Grant](#). The school district will pay for additional waves of training, with an estimated 400-500 total participants.

This training is unique, Marak said.

“There’s a range of professional development around equity, including racial, social, and gender justice, but oftentimes it’s voluntary and usually the same people show up in the room and end up talking to each other” he said. “This training ensures everyone is exposed to the same training.”

The workshops begin by defining terms such as implicit bias and

micro-aggressions. Defining terms at the outset allows participants to speak the language of cultural competency. With the groundwork laid, participants can better discuss topics such as positionality— the power dynamics in the classroom— and authentic care, a holistic approach where school professionals care about students as individuals instead of just as students.

For Flynn, the workshops are about teaching foundational knowledge.

“A lot of people know about slavery, but not how slavery had a direct impact on pretty much all of our institutions,” he said. “It dictated the drafting of the constitution and citizenship, how you could treat other humans. Slavery was an all-pervasive institution that continues to have reverberations,” he explained.

After the terms are defined, the workshops feature small group discussions, where participants discuss topics such as “Funds of Knowledge.”

Marak said these discussions create great classroom dialogue. “It’s about different people bringing different strengths to the table,” he said. “Sometimes we learn how to accomplish the same thing in different ways, and a good teacher will tap into this ‘Fund of Knowledge’ by bringing in the multiple perspectives in the classroom to learn from.”

This isn't the first time Marak and Flynn have run these workshops. In the past, the duo trained high school teachers and paraprofessionals in District 205. They have also worked on rewriting educational curriculum to provide more diverse voices in subjects like literature and history.

"We've worked with the leaders, assistant principals, and teachers to meet their student learning outcomes while using a wider range of voices in the classroom so the students can see a better representation of themselves," Marak said.

The goal of the workshops is that educators will work as change agents in their communities. For Flynn, schools are the best place to start.

"Schools are immersed in this context of a nation created around oppression," he said. "The teachers, staff, and administrators in schools learn the same messages, ideals, half-truths, and misrepresentations so we have to work with them on how the events of the past shape today before they go into classrooms so we can create more effective and engaging practices that can help the entire community."

At a minimum, Marak is confident that the workshops supply participants with the tools they need to help students.

"Our contribution is working in school districts where student demographics have changed, but the teacher demographics haven't yet caught up," he said.

"We create bridges for folks who have been there a long time to give them the tools they need to understand their students and create an environment where they can learn best."

At the end of the training, participants are eligible for a digital badge verifying their learned cultural competency.

"Participants are asked to reflect on how they may apply key learnings from the training in their classrooms. They are not required to share this with SXL or the district, but it is meant to encourage application of the skills and personal improvement goals," said Cynthia Staples, Director of Corporate and Community Education. ▲



To schedule a training for your district, email Cynthia Staples at [cstaples@govst.edu](mailto: cstaples@govst.edu).

Developing New Educational Leaders through Mentorship



Dot Jeter

Retired Principal Dot Jeter and R.J. Neal are a match made for Governors State University's New Leaders Mentor Program (NLMP) offered through the School of Extended Learning (SXL).

Jeter, who served in School Districts 149, 155 and 148 for 33 years, 24 years as an administrator, has always gone the extra mile to provide additional support to mentee Neal from Lincoln Early Learning Center School in Dixmoor.

An unquestioning believer in the power of mentorship, Jeter said the COVID-19 pandemic reinforced this belief "because of the uniqueness of the challenges presented to all of us."

Jeter, a Golden Apple Stanley C. Golder Leadership Award Finalist, and mentee R.J. Neal are part of the NLMP program, which pairs experienced school leaders (mentors) with new school administrators (protégés) to provide encouragement and address new leaders' needs for sustained professional partnerships.

Mentor-protégé teams communicate virtually or face to face for a minimum of 50 hours throughout the school year. Mentors and protégés may meet at the school building, by phone, or virtually to problem-solve and share successes.

"I will do whatever it takes to make my protégé successful," Jeter said, repeating a promise she has always made—even when she was in the classroom.

"You have to provide support and say what they can do to improve. It gives them something to work towards."

The program, which has been in operation through SXL for the past three years, added the virtual component in 2020 and grew participation by 49 percent. It now serves ten South Suburban Chicago school districts. The goal for the upcoming year is to extend hybrid mentoring services to Chicagoland and Northwest Indiana.

This is Neal's third year in the NLMP with Jeter as a mentor. Neal says she feels "grateful for the program for its wealth of knowledge." As principal of an early learning center, Neal has experienced new challenges each of the three years in the role—pandemic aside.

"To me, you get something new from the program each year. The first year, I was a novice. The second year progresses into other topics. Now, during the pandemic, there are things you might never think of. Dot has been through so many situations that she can share ideas for me to try or have connections who might be able to help," Neal says.

Jeter tells her, "If you have a problem and I can't solve it, I'm going to find someone who can help you solve this problem."



R. J. Neal

Neal is preparing her building for in-person learning. She says that her PreK and kindergarten students are managing fine remotely since they are technology natives. “People underestimate our young ones. This is their era.”

The program provides participants with more than mentoring. Monthly virtual professional development sessions during the pandemic focused on social emotional learning and self-care for the administrators and staff. Self-care was particularly helpful, Jeter thought, and she enjoyed teaching her own workshop entitled “Difficult Conversations.” Neal said that some of the most powerful advice she has received has been from this workshop.

“I learned to remove the personal response; it’s not personal. State the facts, stay calm, and don’t get off topic.”

Feedback from the workshop indicated that other participants found it extremely beneficial as well. They said they could now recognize past missteps and know how to correct them in the future. Jeter shared that you have to “walk a mile in their shoes. It’s not what you say sometimes, but how you say it.”

Other sessions offered included: Time Management for Leaders, Understanding the Framework of Poverty, Incorporating Equity in the School Improvement Process, How to Develop a Resilience Program for At-Risk Students, Refining Your Personal Leadership Style, and more.

“The program is, in a way, its own form of self-care because it gives you information you need to take care of your job, which in turn is taking care of you,” Neal said.

Jeter likes the NLMP for personal reasons too. “It keeps me abreast of current trends in education; keeps me on my P’s and Q’s.”

If you ask Neal what she will do when the program is over, she does not hesitate a bit. “I’m going to call Dot, whether she likes it or not. She is a lifelong mentor.”

To inquire about starting your own mentor or protégé relationship, contact Dr. Sandra R. Mickles, NLMP Coordinator at smickles2@govst.edu or Katie Rosales, Program Coordinator at Kkarstensen@govst.edu.

Visit www.govst.edu/educator-training. ▲



Enrichment Course Re-Unites GSU Faculty Emeriti with Former Student

Covid-19 has separated a lot of us for over 18 months, so it was a joy to learn of an instance where it did the reverse! The Knowledge Exchange (TKE) senior enrichment group that traditionally meets on campus on Fridays went virtual during the pandemic, enabling out-of-towners like GSU alumna Billie Hauser Lipe (Master of Public Policy and Administration, 1982) to attend.

What made her want to sign up now, almost 40 years later?

A passion for political theory and a familiar face leading the discussion.

Faculty Emeriti Carl Stover has been volunteering for the Knowledge Exchange since 2012. This spring he led a class on Great Political Theorists, and Billie couldn't resist.

"When I saw Carl Stover was leading a discussion on Great Political Theorists for the Knowledge Exchange, it looked like just the mental exercise and subject matter that my husband, an attorney, and I would enjoy doing together."

Recalling her past GSU experience with Stover's style of teaching Public Administration—a position he held from 1974-2010—Hauser Lipe shared...

"Carl's classes were always stimulating, especially his Constitutional Law. He could make the topics relevant to a host of issues, opening my understanding beyond expectation. Students eagerly engaged and participated

in discussions during his lectures, adding another dimension to our learning. This TKE class has been stimulating and, once again, filled with Stover's signature active class participation."

This power to ignite participation was likely what earned Stover GSU's Faculty Excellence Award three times!

"Carl Stover is a staple class leader as well as a member of the TKE Advisory Committee which oversees curriculum," said TKE Director Suzanne Patterson. "Carl has been leading volunteer classes for TKE since I started managing the program in 2012, just 2 years after he retired from GSU! His passion for continuing to teach what he knows and loves best and his commitment to TKE as a volunteer inspires me every day."

To catch Carl in action, join the 55+ enrichment group, and register for one of his courses:

- Constitutional Law
- [Supreme Court Decisions](#) (annually now since 2014)
- [Great Political Theorists](#) (featured this spring 2021 on zoom!)

Visit www.govst.edu/tke for updates. ▲



Carl Stover

About Carl Stover

B.A. Political Science Stanford University (1969)

M.A. Political Science, University of Minnesota (1973)

PH.D. Political Science, University of Minnesota (1978)

Major Fields: Constitutional Law and Judicial Behavior; Public Policy; Political Theory

Coursework at University of Minnesota Law School.
Dissertation Title: "Law in Action."

Post-doctoral coursework in law at IIT-Kent Law School and John Marshall Law School, Chicago.

University Professor of Public Administration, Governors State University (1974—2010)

Courses taught included undergraduate and graduate course in Constitutional law, Criminal Procedure, Administrative Law, and a variety of other Political Science-Public Administration subjects.

Governors State Veteran Alumnae Seeks to Serve as a Cannabis Responsible Vendor

Erica Mitchell is still dedicated to serving; a mindset she developed in the U.S. Army. As a veteran since 2014, she has been trained to support her fellow comrades, and that is a mission she takes to heart. Mitchell, who is one of the many female Veteran alumnae of [Governors State University](#), found an opportunity to build on that mission at GSU's [School of Extended Learning \(SXL\)](#).

She recently completed the [Illinois Cannabis Responsible Vendor Training \(RVT\)](#) self-paced certification course, achieving the first step on her path to owning a Wi-Fi Café that sells cannabis to veterans with medical issues. The course delivered, by Illinois Equity Staffing, is required for any vendor seeking to sell and distribute cannabis in the State of Illinois. The former four-hour Saturday workshop shifted to a self-paced online format for convenience and safety during the pandemic. Mitchell is happy that it did.

"I loved the format. I liked the slides that you could write on. I was able to pause and rewind as needed, so I could understand better and go at my own pace. I could reverse and ask questions. I have taken online courses before, but nothing like this," Mitchell said. "I have been recommending it to everyone I work with. It has notes about all the laws, and it is broken into three sections."

Mitchell currently works at [A Safe Haven](#), a female-owned organization battling poverty and homelessness; a place where people in crisis can find the food, shelter, treatment, medical care, education, job training and more.

Mitchell says there is a need for medical cannabis in the local veteran community.



Erica Mitchell

"CBD relieves pain, and I see veterans' self-medicate all the time. I want to take care of them. I do not want to see overdoses. We're going to do it medically and the right way."

Mitchell has reached out to the Illinois Department of Public Health to obtain her license. She is hoping that when her café is established that the veterans will refer other veterans to her.

She's even thought about the ideal location of her new business venture. "I'd like it to be convenient for the veterans. The VA does do transport, but somewhere between Hines and Jessie Brown would be good," she said.

What are Mitchell's next steps? "I am finishing the IRB process to complete my **Master of Public Administration/Political Justice Studies** at Governors State University." She is also looking to continue her medical cannabis education. SXL offers a new [Medical Cannabis Certificate Program](#), of which the RVT course is the first step, so she is part way there. She will need to learn medical terminology, in-depth medical cannabis information (uses, consumption, and legal aspects), details on the different types of cannabis, and undergo employment advising services. A [Cannabis Project Management Certificate Program](#) is also available for those working in larger corporate environments.

To register for cannabis courses, contact Michelle Sebasco at msebasco@govst.edu.

For information on GSU Veterans education and why GSU ranks "Best of the Best," visit www.govst.edu/Veterans.



About SXL

The School of Extended Learning (SXL) at Governors State University serves as the lifelong learning partner for the Chicago Southland region, offering programs that enhance career readiness and lead to purpose-driven work and life for adults of all ages, the military-connected and businesses. Skills training and hobby courses, test preparation programs, industry certifications, senior enrichment, military-connected services, onsite academic and certification testing, and convenient programs at off-campus locations provide accessible paths for adult learners to successfully realize career and life transitions. Programs are delivered through online, hybrid and face-to-face instructional formats, as on-campus, daytime classes are not always possible for all students because of work, family, or active military service.

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