The VISN 17 Center of Excellence for Research on Returning War Veterans is accepting applications for a two-semester Research Internship for students going into their Junior or Senior years. The internship class begins in the Fall semester and requires a 10-hour per week commitment, eight hours of which is spent gaining hands-on research experience, another hour dedicated to attending didactic trainings, and another hour devoted to reading and writing activities.

ABOUT THE PROGRAM
This two semester program is designed to help students gain research experience in a clinical research setting. Each week students will be required to complete ten hours of work and attend weekly professional development seminars to review research articles and assist students in preparing for graduate school, medical school, or post-baccalaureate careers.

DUTIES
Past students have assisted with the following activities:
- Data entry
- Data cleaning
- Screening participants
- Reviewing research articles
- Observing diagnostic assessments
- Assisting in grant applications

REQUIREMENTS
Applicants must be currently enrolled at Baylor University, Tarleton State University-Waco, or McClennan Community College and about to enter their Junior or Senior years.

Go to your university’s online application portal to apply. Submit these documents with your application:
- Professional Resume or CV
- College Transcripts
- Personal Statement
- Letter of Recommendation

FOR MORE INFORMATION
Visit us at our website:
http://www.mirecc.va.gov/visn17/training.asp

Contact our Associate Director of Training, Dr. Richard Seim, with any questions
richard.seim@va.gov
ABOUT THE CENTER

The VISN 17 Center of Excellence for Research on Returning War Veterans (CoE) is a unified scientific and administrative center of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs designed to foster state-of-the-art, broad spectrum inquiry into the mental health problems associated with combat exposure.

The CoE tracks emerging trends in post-deployment responses to foster the best possible research and service development, to train the next generation of scientists-practitioners, and to guide the VA regarding evidence-based practice. The CoE utilizes shared resources of the Central Texas Veterans Health Care System and the Heart of Texas Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN 17), as well as faculty of Texas A&M Health Science Center, Texas A&M University, University of Texas, and Baylor University. The COE collaborates nationally with many other researchers, academic institutions, and VA systems.

CURRENT PROJECTS

Here is a sample of some of the current projects accepting research interns:

Project SERVE (Study Evaluating Returning Veterans Experiences)
This longitudinal research aims to evaluate trajectories of patient’s symptoms over time, to identify areas for treatment to be most effective in shifting trajectories that indicate severe symptoms that may be persistent or intractable without intervention.

Brain connectivity and TBI
Military veterans commonly suffer lasting effects of blast-related mild traumatic brain injuries (mTBIs), which damage the brain’s white matter pathways and so disrupt communication across large networks of the brain. Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) techniques such as diffusion MRI and functional MRI can be used to study how such disrupted brain networks can result in chronic physical and cognitive symptoms, including headaches, memory problems, anxiety, and personality changes. Through these techniques, it is possible to examine how disruptions of specific brain areas that are critical to integrating information in the brain network, called brain network “hubs”, may induce particularly widespread and disabling TBI symptoms.

Acceptance & Commitment Therapy for Co-Occurring PTSD and SUD in Veterans
Substance use disorders and PTSD are both common among Veterans and often occur together. This research aims to test the effectiveness of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) on treating these disorders simultaneously, as symptoms frequently do not improve when both disorders are treated separately.

Treatment of TBI symptoms using EEG Neurofeedback
Traumatic brain injuries (TBI) are a common problem among Veterans who have been exposed to explosive blasts or other high impact to the head. This can lead to many other investigating ways of using the brain’s electrophysiology to treat traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder. Regulating Oscillations in Brain Injury (ROBI) is the first double-blind, sham-controlled study using neurofeedback to treat neurocognitive disorder secondary to TBI. This study investigates whether teaching people to change the brain’s electrical fields has a lasting effect on the way that neurons are connected to each other, and, ultimately, whether this leads to a better quality of life.

Pilot Study of Concerned Loved One’s Addition to Safety Plan (CLASP)
This research will assess the degree of benefit to Veterans at risk for suicide of adding the safety planning of family members. Should this training decrease Veteran suicide, the next step will be to significantly increase the number of families involved in care planning.

Treatment of PTSD using TMS
Transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS) has been proven effective in the treatment of depression and has the potential to be an effective, non-invasive, and safe treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). PTSD affects between 20% and 30% of returning war Veterans, and many of these Veterans either will not participate in current evidence-based treatments or fail to improve following treatment. In addition, pre- and post-dTMS functional MRI (fMRI) can provide the means to better understand the mechanism of action by which dTMS affects brain circuitry implicated in PTSD symptomatology.