

Rick DeChant

Executive Director, Veteran Programs & Services



Rick DeChant, the Executive Director of Veteran Programs & Services for Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C) brings to Tri-C over 35 years of experience in crisis management, public affairs, military affairs and governmental affairs. In his current capacity Rick is responsible for providing overall leadership, direction and coordination for all Veterans Services initiatives within Cuyahoga Community College. Under his leadership the College was recently awarded the ranking of a “Military Friendly Institution for 2014” in a national survey conducted by *GI Jobs Magazine*. Only 15 percent of colleges and universities across the country earned this recognition. This is the fifth year in a row that Tri-C has earned this honor.

Just recently Rick was asked to Chair the White House Commission initiative in Northeast Ohio known as *Strong Cities/Strong Communities*. This initiative, run by the U. S. Department of Labor, is looking for best practices in developing a seamless transition for veterans looking for employment, and employers looking for veterans to hire. He was the only representative from Northeast Ohio higher education asked to serve on this Commission

Rick joined the Tri-C family following five years of service with Department of Homeland Security as its Assistant Federal Security Director for TSA Operations in Northeast Ohio. During his tenure with TSA he was awarded both the Department Homeland Security Heroism Award and the Cleveland Police Department 2006 Citizen Heroism Award for helping to subdue an armed gunman at Cleveland Hopkins Airport who had shot and wounded a Cleveland Police officer.

He is retired Commander with 21 years of service in the Coast Guard Reserve, including combat tours in the Middle East for Gulf War I and again when he served in Iraq and Kuwait for Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003/2004.

Rick is active in numerous veteran organizations including the Greater Cleveland Fisher House. He has also been a featured speaker at national student veteran seminars including SOC Annual Campus Veterans Directors Conference (2013), Cornell University (2009), the Ohio Brain Injury Annual Conference (2008 & 2009), the National Midwest College Forum (2010), and the Ohio Association of Two-Year College Administrators Annual Conference (2010, 2011 & 2012).

Rick holds a BA in Communications from John Carroll University in Cleveland, Ohio. He and his wife of 30 years, Sharon, reside in Fairview Park, Ohio and are the parents of two grown children.

Speech Topic:

- **Veterans Services:** *The current environment for veterans utilizing their education benefits as well as recent veterans services developments at the county, state and federal levels.*