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## OU veteran liaison takes the national stage at Politicon

By Oona Goodin-Smith

Flanked by former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich, a Disney producer and a Time journalist, Oakland University student Jason Hale took to the national stage at Politicon in Los Angeles last week to discuss the transition of veterans from the military to college.

“It was a real honor to be able to represent service members and talk about what we’re doing here at OU,” said Hale.

**Politicon** is a multi-day convention featuring panels centering on politics and entertainment. This year’s extensive speaker list included *Daily Show* host Trevor Noah, best-selling author Anne Coulter and 2003 *American Idol* finalist Clay Aiken.

“This was the very first year and the purpose was to bring both sides of the issue together to have deep, meaningful conversations,” he said.

For Hale, a veteran of both Iraq and Afghanistan currently pursuing a communication degree at OU, those meaningful conversations meant discussing what colleges can do to make campuses more “veteran-friendly,” easing the move from the service to school.

This fall, Oakland University was **recognized** by the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency as one of the most “Veteran-Friendly Schools” in the state for the exceptional support services it provides to student veterans, but Hale believes there is more to be done.

“We’re doing a lot of things really well here, but we want to be the best in the state,” said Hale. “Supporting the service members who have given up their civilian lives to defend us is not only the right thing to do, but it makes financial sense. Since 2009, vets have brought over \$10 million to OU in tuition.”



*Hale, third from right, speaks to the crowd at Politicon in Los Angeles about easing vets' transition from the military to college. Joining him on stage (from left to right) is former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich, Time political columnist Joe Klein, Walt Disney producer Jonathan Flora, American Sniper author Jim DeFelice and 33rd District California Congressman Ted Lieu.*



A liaison for veteran support services, Jason Hale speaks of the benefits of joining Oakland's student veteran group. *Photo credit: Kevin T. Ferguson*

Hale began working in the veterans support services office as a veteran liaison in May where he helps fellow vets, active duty military and their dependents navigate the journey to the civilian world through education and employment.

He also currently serves in the Army Reserves as a broadcast journalist with a public affairs unit in Los Angeles and owns the Hale Media group, LLC, a Detroit-based media production company. He's currently in post-production for a documentary he shot which follows the lives of National Guard service members and their families during a year-long deployment to Afghanistan.



Jason Hale ( *Photo courtesy of Politicon*)