Nearly two million U.S. soldiers have served in Afghanistan, Iraq, or both. Now, returning veterans are looking to rebuild their civilian lives. A new office at Pitt is key to that renovation, and it’s led by a woman who knows firsthand the sacrifices required by military life.

Her shopping cart overflows with groceries. Three dozen eggs, two loaves of bread. She knows the order by heart. A gallon of milk, some orange juice. It’s a habit or maybe muscle memory that guides her through the aisles of the neighborhood store. Two pounds of lunch meat, a few bags of chips. It isn’t until she turns her packed cart toward the cash registers that she remembers what she can never really forget: She’s no longer shopping for two people.

Her husband is on his way to Afghanistan. He left the city just a few days ago to prepare for deployment—his third war-zone assignment in 10 years of service as an Army reservist.

She stands alone in the store. “What now?” she wonders. “Put everything back? Act like nothing’s wrong?” She moves quietly to the check-out line, thinking that she will need to host some dinner parties to use all this food.

The war has come home for Ann Rairigh. But it’s also true that the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq have never been abstract for her, never been about nameless soldiers or other people’s families. As the director of the University of Pittsburgh’s Office of Veterans Services (OVS), Rairigh finds herself on the home-front lines every day. After all, her job is to help vets negotiate their way through the maze of government benefits and academic challenges faced by returning soldiers eager to resume their careers and civilian lives.

Nowadays, there’s no shortage of work to be done.

**Personal Mission**
Military Advanced Education (MAE) is a 150-year-old house, putting a Pitt diploma on the wall, and pursuing a career involving the U.S. justice system.