Serving Those Who Served: Creating Programs for Veteran Student Success

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Veterans in College
Challenges for Student Veterans

• Time away from college
• Ongoing military service commitments
• Juggling families, employment and school
• Service-connected disabilities
  – It is estimated that 23% to 31% of those who served in OIF/OEF have PTSD symptoms and 20% have mild TBIs.
• Limited GI Bill benefits
• Stigma surrounding asking for help
• Insensitivity from peers and faculty

Cate, C.A., 2014; Jones, Young, & Leppma, 2010
THIS IS WHAT I FEEL LIKE USING THE GI BILL
Best Practices

- Central point of contact
- Top-down support
- Physical Space
- Admission, readmission and transfer considerations
- Funding
- Tracking and assessment

Toolkit for Veteran Friendly Institutions, 2014.
Initiating Campus Services
How to begin

• Talk to your students!!
  – Find student leaders and get their input from the beginning
  – Use student focus groups
  – Involve them in talking to administration
  – Assign tasks to eager students

• Acquire physical space
  – Look for underutilized space, preferably not in the student center, but in a central location
  – Cleaning crews and campus police often know about spaces that could be utilized
• Business plan
  – Create a business plan that will show your return on investment for these students
  – Include number of known veteran students, local population of veterans, impact of retaining veterans in $

• Secure donations/funding
  – Find veterans among faculty/staff and seek support (Human Resources may be able to provide you a list)
  – Accept all gift in kind donations
  – Work with University foundation to seek donor support for operating and scholarships
• Marketing
  – Mail postcard out to all known veterans on campus
  – Utilize e-mail to provide important updates on deadlines, scholarships, new services etc.
  – Word of mouth is the most effective

• Staffing
  – Apply to become a new work site through the Department of Veterans Affairs work-study program
  – Select qualified students with good schedule availability
  – Students are paid $7.25/hr, tax free and can work up to 25 hours per week
  – Allowed 1 work study for every 100 veterans
Wichita State Military and Veteran Student Center
Services offered

- Coffee bar
- Microwave and refrigerator
- Computers
- Free printing
- TV and lounge space
- Textbook lending library
- Flu shot clinic
Programs for Veterans

- Mentoring program for new students
- Tutoring partnership
- Social events (welcome back BBQ, family bowling night, baseball games, flag football)
- Career Services walk-in hours
- Library workshops
- Informal counseling
- Honor cords for graduating students
- Presentation at Orientation
- Study Groups
Friendly Front Desk
Lounge and Work space
Coffee Bar and Computers
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Future Programs

• Green Zone program
  – Provide training for faculty/staff on military culture and veteran student needs

• Community mentoring program
  – Partner with veterans in the community to mentor students toward a civilian career

• Paid campus mentor positions

• Military branch birthday celebrations

• Veterans Day programming

• Campus newsletter
Partnerships
Campus Partnerships

• Academic Advising
  – Degree Certification for GI Bill benefits
• Career Development
  – Resumes and internships
• Counseling Center
  – Single point of contact
• Student Center
• Adult/Online Learning
• Admissions
  – Mentoring
  – Military translation
• Financial Aid
  – GI Bill
  – Yellow Ribbon program
• Accounts Receivable
  – Tuition Assistance
Community Partnerships

• Local Department of Veterans Affairs
  – Work-Study opportunities
  – Warm referrals for VA services
  – Possibility of mobile VA unit

• Military units near campus
  – TAP (Transition Assistance Programs)
  – Education Liaisons

• Veterans Upward Bound

• Veteran and Fraternal Organizations
Military Friendly Campus
Military Friendly Considerations

- Yellow Ribbon program participation
- Deployment policies
- DoD MOU (Department of Defense Memorandum of Understanding)
- Assessment of retention and graduation rates
- Military Friendly designations
  - GI Jobs
  - Military Advanced Education
Resources

• American Council on Education Military Guide
  – www.acenet.edu/militaryguide
• Student Veterans of America
  – www.studentveterans.org
• Operation College Promise
  – www.operationpromiseforservicemembers.com
• Military Family Research Institute at Purdue
  – www.mfri.purdue.edu
• American Corporate Partners Mentoring
  – http://www.acp-usa.org/
• The Mission Continues
  – www.missioncontinues.org
References


Questions?

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