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Foreword

The purpose of this guide is first and foremost to serve the needs of student veterans that are attending higher education institutions in Pennsylvania. This guide is intended to serve as a resource at all colleges and universities in Pennsylvania. The items illustrated in this guide have proven effective at institutions of higher learning that have been documented as being veteran supportive.

With expansion of educational benefits that veterans receive from the Post 9/11 G.I. Bill, veterans have been enrolling into higher education institutions in robust numbers. Veteran supporters, educators, and state and national government leaders agree that additional programs and services are needed to assist them as they transition from their military service to college. Statistically, a veteran supportive campus increases graduation rates, which will ultimately lead to more veterans obtaining employment, thus boosting the Commonwealth as a whole.

Veterans bring a unique lifestyle and leadership experience to a college environment that will not only benefit the college, not to mention the millions of dollars that post-secondary education institutions receive annually. Over the last two years these institutions received approximately \$200 million in Post 9/11 GI Bill Benefits from veterans. With an increase of veteran supportive campuses in Pennsylvania, veterans will be more inclined to enroll and be retained by these institutions.

Introduction

As military service members transition to college it is often a difficult time for them. Oftentimes veterans face financial, mental health, family, and a vast array of other concerns. When veterans begin to transition into a college environment they often feel a lack of camaraderie that they were accustomed to while serving our great nation.

During this difficult time veterans have a difficult time finding proper resources and additional benefits that they have earned. Campuses from around the country oftentimes provide information to student veterans pertaining to only to education, but don't fully recognize that other resources, information, and additional assistance that is available free to veterans.

With the numerous amounts of additional benefits that are available to veterans information should be easily accessible to veterans. Furthermore, support needs to be provided to veterans throughout their college career all the way until they receive employment. Some colleges have explored veteran alumni programs and we encourage each of you to be creative as you begin your journey to provide a military and veteran supportive campus.

Background

Each year veterans transition from the military and enter into college campuses across Pennsylvania in overwhelming proportions. In 2010, there were approximately 22,000 veterans utilizing benefits and approximately 12,000 veterans using Post 9/11 GI Bill benefits alone.¹ Currently across the nation 870,000 veterans are attending higher education institutions.²

With the current drawbacks of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars the Census Bureau projects more and more veterans to transition from the military into a college environment. As veterans transition from the military they often lack the camaraderie they once had, may face financial crisis, or deal with mental health issues. As a college institution it's your moral duty and responsibility to give back to those who have sacrificed so much for our freedom.

General Statistics

- ❖ There are about 22.6 million living veterans, close to one million reside in Pennsylvania³
- ❖ There is an estimated 2 million veterans who have served in Afghanistan/Iraq⁴
- ❖ The percentage of Americans with college degrees increased from 4.6% in 1945 to 25% in 1970 largely due to the GI Bill⁵
- ❖ “Unemployment rates for veterans with higher levels of education were lower than those with less education⁶

¹ Department of Veterans Affairs Education Program Beneficiaries by Geography “National Center for Veterans and Statistics,” <www.va.gov/vetdata/docs/Utilization/EducNation_2010_v2.xls>

² Kelly Ann Holder and Prepared by the National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics, *Profile of Veterans: 2009; Data from the American Community Survey* (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, January 2011), 16, <http://www.va.gov/vetdata/docs/Special Reports/Profile_of_Veterans_2009_FINAL.pdf>.

³ U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, “National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics Home,” <<http://www.va.gov/vetdata/>>.

⁴ U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, “National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics Home.”

⁵ Charlotte Vitale, “The Question of Accepting Veteran Educational Benefits”, March 11, 2008, 3, <<https://portfolio.du.edu/portfolio/getportfoliofile?uid=106402>>

⁶ Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment Situation of Veterans Summary (U.S. Department of Labor, March 11, 2011), <<http://www.bls.gov/news.release/vet.nr0.htm>>.

Why the Need?

Veteran's Issues & Concerns:

Focused Support: There is no question that the transition process for a veteran is often a huge culture shock for them. As they begin to delve into a college environment, education is just one thing that is on their mind. Often they have to maneuver through campus departments and other off-campus organizations to find information of resources and benefits. Student veterans must sometimes cut through extensive amount of red tape to complete simple requests unique to their needs such as financial requirements or military transcript assessments.

A Complex Array of Information: There are many difficulties in finding and applying for benefits from various government agencies, corporate entities, and non-profit organizations. Benefits and resources include, but are not limited to: scholarships, grants, home loans, medical care, financial assistance, service-connected compensation and unemployment benefits. As a result, available resources and benefits are administered by many different segments of government and associated entities, confusing the transitioning veteran.

Accessibility to Information: Information specific to student veterans is often obscured or organized with bits of information spread across many sources. Additionally, sometimes the information in the various sources is contradictory and may cause difficulties for the student veteran in the application of his/her benefits.

The Transition Process: Veterans face many poignant readjustment barriers including psychological reintegration when transitioning to civilian life. Difficulties might include issues associated with PTSD, physical impairments, mental health, family issues, and a preclusion to ask for help.

The Need for Understanding: Understanding a student veteran's unique needs such as the physical and mental health issues, academic preparation, and past military credits/experience is critical to the veteran's success. The absence of adequate services may directly contribute to the veterans' disenrollment.

Lack of Central Focal Point: The lack of a specific area where student veterans are able to seek benefits, meet or congregate, seek academic support services and do homework is frequently cited as a need for both campuses and student veterans.

The Need for Camaraderie: Student veterans have been in an environment wholly dependent on camaraderie and cohesiveness. The training unique to student veterans must be understood to facilitate a successful transition to civilian life. Hence, these students need to connect with their peers and support each other in the quest to integrate into the campus community and partake in social activities with fellow students.⁷

⁷ Student Veterans of America, *Creating a Veteran Friendly Campus: A Guide for College and University Administrators*, <http://www.studentveterans.org/resource/library/documents/CreatingaVeteranFriendlyCampus_AGuideforCollegeandUniversityAdministrators.pdf>.

Prior to Attending College

Recruitment

Veterans bring a unique lifestyle to a college atmosphere. Their leadership, dedication, determination, and above all sacrifice for our country should be reasons enough to recruit veterans to your campus. Their qualities without question benefit traditional college students tremendously. Below are some possible ways to begin recruiting veterans.

- ❖ Each year a list of service members that are returning from overseas are available from Fort Indiantown Gap. College campuses are encouraged to send letters to these veterans discussing the services that they provide to veterans.
- ❖ Advertisements in institution publication material for veterans to include services provided.
- ❖ Attend veteran specific events, such as post deployment and family support events.
Link: <http://www.jointservicessupport.org/OSD/Default.aspx>

Admission Procedures

In order to provide the most effective programs and services for veterans the first step is to identify who is and who is not a veteran. There are many approaches to streamline procedures for veterans, such as:

- ❖ Offer guaranteed acceptance into college with 36 months of active-duty services.
- ❖ Include on the application a check box for veterans to determine who is and who is not a veteran.
- ❖ Provide the Schools VA Certifying Official and the Veteran Office Director a list of accepted veterans, so they can begin to outreach to student veterans.
- ❖ Reduce or eliminate application fees.

Transfer of Military Credit

Veterans are often confused about whether or not any or all of their military experience is going to transfer. ACE accreditation is crucial to a veteran to assess their college program. In order to streamline procedures for veterans we recommend the following:

- ❖ Implement recommendation from the American Council on Education's website: <http://www.acenet.edu/Content/NavigationMenu/ProgramsServices/MilitaryPrograms/index.htm> or Service-member Opportunity Colleges (SOC) guidelines.
- ❖ Provide unofficial preliminary reviews of the students transfer credit at no cost.
- ❖ Inform veterans of what credits will transfer based of their degree choice.
- ❖ Communicate to the veteran the policies and procedures for transferring military credits through print and online material, as well as counsel the veteran.

Student Housing

In most situation veterans are typically older than the traditional college student who possess a much different perspective on life. Furthermore, veterans have a difficult time finding information on student housing that is specific to them. We have identified possible solutions for your college to implement:

- ❖ Provide online and print resources to student veterans about VA home loans and off campus housing options.
- ❖ Allow student veterans the option of living on campus or off campus.
- ❖ In the situation that the veteran lives in student housing group veterans together (i.e. same floor).

Mentor Program

As mentioned previously veterans often lose the sense of camaraderie that they once were accustomed to in the military. A mentor program is a great way for newly enrolled veterans to connect with other veterans on campus. As veterans transition into college your campus can match them with an upper class veteran for the first semester to act as a mentor by providing valuable information, resources, and benefits that may be available.

Enrollment

Due to ongoing expansion of education benefits and other programs the VA is often under staffed and can potentially result in veterans receiving benefits late. In order to eliminate veterans dis-enrolling from college because of non-payments; we encourage your college to delay the drop date (for non-payments) to be consistent with the VA's educational benefit payment policies.

Tuition Rates

A veterans education benefits is just 36 months in length, which is equivalent to approximately 4 years of college. Both veterans and traditional students may want to switch their major. Unlike the traditional student, if a veteran changes their major they will ultimately add additional time that they have to spend at college. This could potentially cause a veteran to exhaust their educational benefits. As a way of decreasing financial constraints that a veteran may have we suggest the following:

- ❖ Offer discounted tuition rates.
- ❖ Offer in-state tuition for out-of-state veterans.
- ❖ Participate in the Yellow Ribbon Program.
- ❖ Offer priority registration or class scheduling.
- ❖ Create veteran specific scholarships.
- ❖ Create a fund (alumni, foundation, or VSO supported) to protect students in case their VA benefits are still pending.

Orientation

It's encouraged to include orientation programs on your college campus that is specific to veterans. Although the traditional orientation programs assists veterans in various areas they don't address what veterans want to know as they enter college.

Speakers/Presenters

It is highly encouraged to invite speakers from throughout your area to speak to incoming veterans about resources, benefits, and services that are afforded to them. You can request speakers from, but are not limited to:

- ❖ **VFW:** <http://www.vfw.org/oms/findpost.aspx>
- ❖ **American Legions:** http://www.members.legion.org/CGI-BIN/lansaweb?webapp=MYLEPOST+webrtn=wr_dsplcr+ml=LANSA:XHTML+part=TAL+lang=ENG
- ❖ **Vet Centers:** <http://www.vetcenter.va.gov/>
- ❖ **VA Medical Centers:** <http://www2.va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp?isflash=1>
- ❖ **Family Readiness Groups:** <http://pa.ng.mil/offices/Pages/FamilyProgram.aspx>
- ❖ **County Veteran Affairs Directors:**
http://www.dmva.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/county_directors_for_veterans_affairs/11384

Benefit and Information Briefings

The goal of your college institution before veterans leave orientation is for every veteran to know exactly what they are eligible for. Being aware of education benefits is just one component of what the VA offers, but there are several other resources that are available to veterans. It's essential to provide information about the following benefits:

- ❖ **Educational Benefits:** <http://www.gibill.va.gov/benefits/index.html>
- ❖ **Scholarships:**
https://www.nationalresourcedirectory.gov/education_and_training/additional_scholarships_tuition_assistance_and_financial_aid/scholarships_and_grants_for_service_members_and_veterans
- ❖ **Employment:** <https://www.nationalresourcedirectory.gov/employment>
- ❖ Include information about on and off- campus services

Workshops

Workshops are a great way to help a veteran transition into the college environment. Some workshops include, but are not limited to:

- Job workshops
- Encompass information about VA programs and services
- Adjusting to College Life

Create a College SERV Program

The Supportive Education for the Returning Veteran program (SERV) is a program designed to assist in creating a more veteran supportive college campus environment for our returning OEF-OIF service-members⁸. Section T of the Higher Education Opportunity Act calls for Model Programs for Centers of Excellence for Veteran Student Success). SERV helps overcome the hurdles of going to college from the very first walk through on campus. The goals of the SERV Program include:

- ❖ Assist deployed, post-deployed, and veteran students transition smoothly into college
- ❖ Assist with academics, work, family, and other social settings.
- ❖ Teach interpersonal skills and techniques for managing Military Readjustment Transition Issues.
- ❖ Assist with managing stress, combat reaction stress, operational stress, and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- ❖ Improve overall health, resilience, and readiness for deployed/post-deployed troops

For more information on SERV visit: <http://servprogram.com>

⁸ SERV Supportive Education for the Returning Veterans Research Team, “What is SERV and Why it is Needed,” <<http://servprogram.com/SERVatClevelandStateUniversity.aspx>>.

Develop a Veteran Upward Bound Program

Veterans Upward Bound (VUB) is a FREE program that offers a comprehensive program of support that includes rigorous academic training and counseling that enable veterans annually to pursue a post-secondary education. The VUB program provides comprehensive support systems that assist all veteran participants in achieving academic excellence and inspire lifelong learning relevant to a changing global society. In order for a student veteran to be eligible for participation in a VUB program, a student veteran must meet the following criteria:

- ❖ Be a low-income and/or first-generation college (meaning that neither of their parents have a four-year college degree) student,
- ❖ Served at least 180 days of active military service, and
- ❖ Have a discharge that is other than dishonorable.

Currently, there are 46 VUB programs nationwide, in Puerto Rico, and Guam ready to serve veterans. Below is a list of areas in which VUB programs assist student veterans⁹:

- ❖ Academic Instruction In:
 - Mathematics
 - Science
 - Reading
 - Foreign language
 - Various other subjects
 - Tutorial and study skills assistance
- ❖ Other Services May Include:
 - Intensive basic skills development
 - Short-term remedial or refresher classes for veterans
 - Assistance with applications to the postsecondary school of choice
 - Assistance with applying for financial aid
 - Career Counseling
 - Exposure to cultural events, academic programs, and other educational activities

For more information about this program please visit the Pennsylvania programs website at: <http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/#/vub/>

⁹ "Welcome to Veterans Upward Bound," <<http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/aap/vub/>>.

Availability of Information

Online and Print Resources

❖ The resources listed below should be available to veterans at a centralized location on the home page of your college or university website and also available in a designated office. The list of information provided is a comprehensive list that should and must be available to veterans in order for all veterans to succeed in higher education. This list includes.

➤ On and Off-Campus

▪ Some suggested places to begin include:

- **National Resource Directory:** www.nrd.gov
- **Military.com:** www.military.com
- **PA Department of Military and Veterans Affairs:**
<http://www.dmva.state.pa.us>
- Include information on admissions such as:
 - **Admission Guidelines**
 - **Applications**
 - **Course Catalog**
 - **Degree Offerings**
 - **Enrollment**
 - **Registration**
- **Disability Claims**
 - **How to file for disability:**
<http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/compensation/>
 - **PA Disability Office:** <http://drnpa.org/>
 - **Veteran Service Officer referrals**
- **Employment Opportunities**
 - **Department of Labor Vets Program:**
<http://www.dol.gov/vets/programs/main.htm>
 - **State Employment Offices:**
<http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt?open=514&objID=691642&mode=2>
 - **Available Internships**
 - **Local Opportunities:** <http://localcareers.com/>
 - **Job Search Engines:** <https://recruitmilitary.com/>
 - **Work Study Openings**
- **Family Assistance**
 - **Champ VA:**
<http://www.va.gov/hac/forbeneficiaries/champva/champva.asp>

- **Operation Home Front:**
<http://www.operationhomefront.net/>
- **Tri Care:** <http://www.tricare.mil/>
- **Additional State Services:**
<http://pa.ng.mil/offices/Pages/FamilyProgram.aspx>
- **Financial Aid**
 - **Student Grants**
 - **Student Loans**
 - **Scholarships (general and veteran specific)**
 - **VA Educational Benefits**
- **Financial Assistance**
 - **American Red Cross**
 - **Operation Home Front**
 - **Salvation Army**
- **Housing Assistance**
 - **On Campus**
 - **Off Campus**
 - **VA Home Loans:** <http://www.benefits.va.gov/homeloans/>
- **Mental Health Assistance**
 - **Suicide Prevention Hotline:**
http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide_prevention/
 - **Combat Stress**
 - **PTSD:** <http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/PTSD.asp>
 - **Women Veterans:**
<http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/womenvets.asp>
 - **VA Medical Centers**
- **Veteran Service Organizations:**
http://www.dmva.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/veterans_online_resource_directory/12971#Service

Please note that list of resources noted above are a comprehensive list. If and when your campus creates a Veteran Center that will be discussed later in this guide then all the resources should be made available at that centralized location.

Veteran Task Force

Establish a Veterans Task Force

In order for a veteran's task force to be truly successful requires top down support from the president's office all the way down through administration departments. Oftentimes veterans are hesitant to voice their opinions while attending college, thus a veteran task force is necessary to help support veterans.

- ❖ Include members from academic and administrative departments. Also include members of the college community who are veterans to assist the task force with identifying issues that student veterans are facing.
- ❖ Encourage veterans to be part of the task force to provide feedback.
- ❖ Assess the number of veterans on campus and the types of educational benefits they currently utilize. Identify and tally any veteran's eligible, but not receiving benefits.
- ❖ Conduct a student veteran survey on current support services offered.
- ❖ Create an advisory board with outside agencies to be part of your veteran task force. The advisory board along with the task force can meet 3-4 times a year to address the needs of student veterans.
- ❖ Establish a need assessment based on feedback and committee recommendations. Once the committee makes recommendations begin to fix the problems that student veterans are facing.
- ❖ Recommend suggestions to improve current veteran services and school policies.

Veteran Organizations

Student Veteran Organizations

By far a student veteran organization serves as a great way of fostering success of all veterans that are attending higher education institutions. According to a Rand Corporation survey, 61% of their sample reported that their fellow veterans were “quite or extremely helpful in pursuit of their educational goals”. Some ways to create a student veteran group on your college campus include:

- ❖ Emailing out fliers, letters, and any other publications attracting interested student veterans.
- ❖ Host an initial meeting to discuss:
 - Mission and Goals
 - The needs of student veterans
- ❖ Typically 4-5 veterans are necessary to create a student veteran group. If enough members are interested host a follow up meeting to:
 - Implement a Governing Document, define organization and roles.
 - Elect Group Officers & Advisors.
 - Please visit <http://www.studentveterans.org> for more detailed information on starting a student veteran organization on your campus.
- ❖ Ensure the student veteran group has access to all the resources available to other student organizations such as funding, marketing materials, and meeting spaces.
 - An institution may be eligible for additional federal government or private foundation assistance for setting up a veteran specific center.
- ❖ Use the student veterans as a conduit for information & peer mentoring
 - VA Benefits Seminars
 - VA Benefits Counseling
 - Student Outreach & Awareness
 - Student Veteran Orientation
 - Pre-Professional Networking

Veteran Centers

Create a formal Veterans Center which fully integrates all facets of your student veteran support services, VA programs, state services, and student veteran organizations in one location. Staff these either full time, or set a schedule for regular periods as needed. Some programs that the veteran center can implement include:

- ❖ Schools Services
 - Academic
 - Peer to peer tutoring
 - Career Services
 - Job Postings
 - Veteran career fairs
 - Workshops
 - Disability Support Services
 - Advocate for disability services to recognize the needs of student veterans.
 - Coordinate visits occasionally to provide support to student veterans.
 - Counseling Services
 - Advocate for campus counselors to be trained in areas such as PTSD.
 - Coordinate visits occasionally to provide support to student veterans.
 - Student Veterans Organizations
 - Listing of events
 - Veteran Liaison
 - VA Work Study Positions
 - Assess the number of those receiving benefits to determine the need of how many work study students that are needed.
 - File for the work-study position using Form 22-8691
 - Link: <http://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/22-8691.pdf>
 - Utilize work study students to assist current and prospective veterans and military personnel with associated VA benefits, such as educational benefits and available university and/or college support services.
 - Referrals
 - VET Centers
 - VA Medical Centers
 - VA OIF/OEF Coordinator
 - County Directors of Military and Veterans Affairs
 - Pennsylvania Department of Military and Veterans Affairs

- Online & Print Resources (Refer to the Availability of Resources Section of This Guide)

Setting Up the Space for a Veteran Service Office

- ❖ Establish an office space for your Veteran's Liaison Office.
- ❖ Place this office space in a central site, in close proximity to student support services.
- ❖ Dedicate an area where student veterans can meet congregate, seek academic support services, or do homework. It may be helpful to make available:
 - Lounge
 - Computers
 - Desks
 - Telephone
 - Meeting Areas

Veteran's Services Coordinator/Director

- ❖ Establish an independent position at your institution to be the single point of contact and coordinate veteran services, provide referrals, create programming, and advocate for students with issues related to their military experiences, veteran benefits and student status.
- ❖ Coordinate and address the needs and issues of student veterans, military members and their dependents such as application procedures, financial aid, and enrollment.
- ❖ Provide office space and information technology resources as needed.
- ❖ Provide training and assistance to campus departments on veteran and military issues.
- ❖ Serve as liaison to external state and federal organizations such as the VA and Department of Labor.
- ❖ Analyze pending state and federal legislation that affect student veterans and service personnel (and their dependents) and advise campus administration of potential impact on programs and policies.
- ❖ Work closely with the VA Certifying Official, volunteers, veterans club, and VA work study students to analyze and determine additional needs of student veterans.
- ❖ Perform related student veteran research and make appropriate recommendations.
- ❖ Develop processes for the activation and deactivation of students to and from active duty service, to include Annual Training for National Guard and Reserve members including enrollment status, refunds, and ensuing grades.
- ❖ Create outreach programs and publications to increase veteran awareness.

Potential Veteran Center Funding Sources

Although there are costs involved with opening a veteran resource center on your campus; the benefits associated with the center outweigh the cost involved. Many institutions miss out on this opportunity and just look at the initial cost involved. In all actuality, by opening a veteran resource center more veterans enroll, graduate, and obtain jobs after graduation. Universities benefit from the additional revenue received by veterans and veterans benefit by receiving the support that they may need.

Department of Education of Excellency for Student Veteran Success Grants:

Subject to the availability of appropriations, the Secretary of the Department of Education shall award grants to institutions of higher education to develop model programs to support veteran student success in postsecondary education. A grant awarded under this section shall be awarded for a period of three years. To be considered for a grant under this section, an institution of higher education shall submit to the Secretary an application at such time, in such manner, and accompanied by such information as the Secretary may require.

In awarding grants, the Secretary of Education considers these factors:

- ❖ The number of student veterans enrolled at an institution of higher education; and
- ❖ The need for a model program to address the needs of veteran students, including the need to provide:
 - An equitable distribution of such grants to institutions of higher education of various types and sizes;
 - An equitable geographic distribution of such grants; and
 - An equitable distribution of such grants among rural and urban areas.

For more information about this program, please visit the U.S. Department of Education's website at: <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/cevss/index.html>.

Campus Training

College and university faculty and staff members serve as main points of contact on their campuses and it is imperative that they can identify with military language. By being able to understand veterans they will be able to assist them more efficiently.

- ❖ Incorporate aspects on student veterans into your routine annual training programs. If there are no programs currently in place it is highly recommended that you do so. Ensure the school's counseling and disability resources are fully capable to handle veteran issues.
 - Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
 - Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)
 - Combat Stress
 - Service Connected Injuries
 - Community Resources
 - Integration & Adjustment
- ❖ Ensure faculty, staff and even students are able to recognize student veterans struggling with the above issues and know where to refer those students for assistance.
- ❖ Implement training that covers military culture. You can contact your local Vet Centers, or other service providers that was noted earlier in this guide. This training can include a wide variety of topics, such as what is and what is not appropriate to discuss with a veteran.

The above list should not be limited. We encourage you to expand on this list, where you feel is appropriate. For example, you can also train faculty and staff members on school policies pertaining to veterans.

Outreach Programs

Tutoring Programs

Study groups or tutoring programs serve as a great way for veterans to regain the sense of camaraderie or teamwork. This program serves as a buddy system and allows veterans to continue to serve one another. Additionally, tutoring programs serve as a safe and comfortable place where veterans can come together and study. Some examples of programs include:

- ❖ Peer to peer tutoring
- ❖ Faculty or staff tutoring teams
- ❖ Online platforms for tutoring services

Benefit Counseling

Oftentimes as veterans' transition into a college environment they don't fully understand what benefits they are eligible for. Throughout a veterans college experience it's crucial to their success that they are able to full advantage of all their benefits. When counseling veterans on their benefits make sure to discuss with them:

- ❖ What his/her interests are.
- ❖ Determine what previous classes they have taken and request their transcript.
- ❖ Make sure veterans know what their financial liability is going to be throughout their college career.
- ❖ Educate the veteran on their expectation and requirements to graduate.
- ❖ Discuss veteran services in the area.
- ❖ Inform veterans on the benefits that they are eligible for, such as VA home loans.

Veteran Specific Counseling and Disability Programs

Veterans have been trained to not ask for help such as counseling and disability services. The suicide rates among veterans continue to rise, thus it's critical for college campuses to reach out and support veterans. Some suggestions to improve your campus counseling and disability programs include:

- ❖ Educate student veterans on their rights.
- ❖ Integrate yourself into the veteran culture by getting to know the veteran population.
- ❖ Go to on campus and off campus training sessions (See Partnership Section).
- ❖ Include information for veterans on your website.
- ❖ Don't label veterans as having PTSD.
- ❖ Make yourself available to veterans.

Career Transition Services

As veterans near closer to graduation finding employment can often be a daunting experience for them. Veterans often don't even know where to begin to search, or have difficulty translating their military experience to the civilian sector. As a way to alleviate the frustrations that veterans have college should include programs and services to assist veterans with finding a job. Some of these programs include:

- ❖ Job placement programs that assists veterans with every stage in finding employment.
- ❖ Resume workshops aimed at translating military experience to civilian experience.
- ❖ Provide networking workshops.
- ❖ Partner with off-campus organizations.
- ❖ Offer career counseling.

Called to Service

Oftentimes military service members are called to serve overseas, respond to Pennsylvania emergencies, or required to report to training events. Especially when service members are called upon to serve in harm's way it can often be a confusing time for them. We highly recommend that if your school does not currently have a policy regarding service members being called to service that your institutions implements one and to make that information available both on the veteran website and in a centralized location. Also include a step by step process that the veteran needs to take in case he/she is called to serve. Some additional recommendations include:

- ❖ Include information on what a veteran should do if he or she is called to serve in the class syllabus. This can also apply to veterans who are struggling with mental health or other veteran related issues.
- ❖ Offer incompletes to student veterans who are called to serve.
- ❖ Allow the veteran to complete coursework that is equivalent to the remainder of the class.
- ❖ If and when the student veteran does deploy overseas it's important to not forget that they are still a big part of your college or university. It's encouraged to send deployed service members care packages and letters. When they near the end of their tour send them information about the process they need to take for attending college the following semester.

Program Evaluation

Evaluating programs and services that you offer veterans on your campus is crucial for your college or university to implement. Annual evaluations makes your campus aware of possible outcomes, allows you to compare veteran success with the general population, and overall it's a more systematic approach to providing the most efficient and adequate services to veterans.

- ❖ Develop a plan to monitor and track the key indicators of student veteran enrollment and success. For instance:
 - Number of applications received
 - Number of students accepted
 - Number of students enrolled
 - Number of students assisted by office
 - Types of services provided
 - Retention rates
 - Persistence rates
 - Graduation rates
- ❖ Additional quantifiable indicators can be obtained via surveys, student feedback and/or veteran task force/committee recommendations. Include veterans when evaluating the programs and services provided by the veteran office. They will be beneficial with further improving and advancing the office.
- ❖ Collect and analyze results.
- ❖ Adjust your plan & guidance accordingly.

Additional Resources

ACE: Toolkit for Veteran Friendly Institutions:

Link: <http://vetfriendlytoolkit.org/>

ACE: Resource Tools for Colleges and Universities

Link: www.acenet.edu/militaryprograms/resourcetools

American Corporate Partners

Link: www.acp-usa.org

America's Heroes at Work

Link: www.americasheroesatwork.gov

American Psychiatric Association: Post- Traumatic Stress Disorder

Link: www.dsm5.org/ProposedRevisions/Pages/proposedrevision.aspx?rid=165

Career One Stop

Link: www.careeronestop.org/

Career One Stop: Service Locator

Link: www.servicelocator.org

Career One Stop: Explore Careers

Link: www.careerinfonet.org/moc/

Call of Duty Endowment

Link: <http://www.callofdutyendowment.org/>

The Mission Continues

Link: <http://www.missioncontinues.org/>

Military.Com

Link: <http://www.military.com/>

Department of Veterans Affairs: Counseling Veteran Students

Link: www.mentalhealth.va.gov/College/

Department of Veterans Affairs: Helping a Family Member Who Has PTSD

Link: www.ptsd.va.gov/public/pages/helping-family-member.asp

Department of Veterans Affairs: Returning from the War Zone: A Guide for Families of Military Personnel

Link: www.ptsd.va.gov/public/reintegration/returning-war-zone-guide-families.asp

Give an Hour

Link: www.giveanhour.org/skins/gah/home.aspx

Goals Plans Success: Life Plan

Link: www.gpslifeplan.org/mnscumilitary/

Good to Go: Preparing to Resume Civilian Life

Link: www.areyoug2g.com

Half of Us

Link: www.halfofus.com

Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America

Link: www.iava.org

Student Veterans of America

Link: www.studentveterans.org

Military.com: GI Bill Calculator

Link: www.military.com/gi-bill-calculator/

Wounded Warrior Project

Link: <http://www.woundedwarriorproject.org/>

Remind: Bob Woodruff Foundation

Link: <http://remind.org/>

Joining Forces

Link: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/joiningforces>

Department of Defense Transition Assistance Program

Link: <http://www.turbotap.org/>

E-Benefits

Link: <https://www.ebenefits.va.gov/>

Military One Source

Link: <http://www.militaryonesource.com/MOS.aspx>

National Resource Directory

Link: www.nrd.gov/

Pennsylvania Department of Military and Veteran Affairs

Link: <http://www.dmva.state.pa.us>