

Faculty Council of Community Colleges
Best Practices for Student Veterans
Tips for Students and Colleges

Military provides life and leadership skills, but for enlisted personnel it doesn't do it all. The GI Bill can act as a great equalizer, especially as college tuition rates continue to rise. The GI Bill was created in 1944 and has undergone a number of changes, but at the time of inception about 1 in 12 people served, now it's about .7% of the U.S. Population. This means there are greater barriers due to lack of understanding.

What should we encourage Student Veterans to do?

1. Choose quickly: The law changed so as of July 15, 2015 Vets have 3 years to determine residency for the purposes of school. So they need to get to the state where they want to go to school. (Previously, veterans were considered "in-state" for tuition purposes from whichever state they joined the service. For example, if a person joined from Florida, they would be "in-state" for Florida schools. Now, veterans can choose any state in which to live within three years of separating from the service and the state in which they choose to live will provide in-state tuition.)
2. Read the Dept. of Ed's "Eight Keys" website which are keys for Student Veteran Success. The web address is Eightkeys@ed.gov over 1300 schools have signed on, watch out for those who haven't.
3. Talk to their buddies. Peer-to-peer advising via personal friends or through groups like Student Veterans of America <http://studentveterans.org/> can help guide decisions about where to go.
4. Join or start a Student Veterans Organization. The peer support can help filter barriers to success.
5. Steer clear of for-profit school: More Vets than Non-Vets attend them and fewer Vets than Non-Vets complete (Research from David Goldrich of the Gallop organization. Want to follow up? Dave_goldich@gallop.com)
6. When you are getting close to graduation make sure to work with career center to be able to discuss military skills and develop a resume using military service in ways civilian employers will understand.
7. When applying for jobs ALWAYS check to see if the employer has a "Veterans Initiative Office" or similar group that works with potential employees, and frequently links them with current employees who are also Vets. Many employers have these. Examples include Google, Raytheon, Prudential, Home Depot, Disney, Bank of America, General Dynamics, and Deloitte. Employers are available across a number of sectors of the economy, and the Veterans Affairs Administration is also a huge employer of vets.

What can schools do?

1. Start or strengthen their Veterans Affairs offices. Make sure there is a paid employee who runs a Vets Center, then apply for federal funding for student aids – and hire Vets to work there. Schools should have dedicated resources coordinators, certification officials, and advocates for veterans and their families.
2. Sign on to the Eight Keys Initiative if they haven't already. Keep following up and re-evaluating what we can do better.

3. Start a Veterans' Service Organization such as Student Veterans of America (SVA) with a dedicated lounge as a meeting space and location veterans can use when they need time with their brothers and sisters at arms, away from the general college population.
4. Consider starting a chapter of SALUTE, an honor society for Veterans at both two and four year schools across the U.S. <http://salute.colostate.edu/>
5. Work with college Foundations/Associations/Grant Writing to develop veteran-specific scholarships.
6. A New Student Orientation specifically for veterans that would ensure incoming students knew where the Veterans Services offices and Officials can be located, the people with whom they will work for GI Bill Certification, any specific counselors they may work with and the location of the Veterans' Lounge.
7. Develop classes specifically for veterans as learning communities that can address veteran specific concerns. Types of classes this might be specifically useful for would be "Freshman Seminar" type classes, English classes focusing on writing, specifically autobiographical writings, Communication classes such as Public Speaking, and Business Classes that focus on resume, cover letter, interviewing, and business communication. Other classes may also be quite useful and could be included.
8. Encourage professors to be mentors and demonstrate an atmosphere of caring.
9. Develop a Veterans' Advisory Board with stakeholders from across the college, Veterans' Service Officers, administrators, faculty, staff, and student veterans and have regular meetings of the Board.
10. Help Student Veterans overcome perceived Barriers to success such as:
 - a. Finances: family obligations if/when VA money runs out
 - b. Comfort/discomfort at school
 - c. Age difference
 - d. Economic differences
 - e. Family structure differences
 - f. Managing time (providing priority registration for Vets can really help to make the most of GI Bill; SA Resolution 1617-SC03: *Military Conflict with Restrictive Class Meeting Times* specifically references the importance of this issue).
 - g. Implement recognition
 - i. Give recognition Honor cords for graduation
 - ii. Recognize family members (Spouses and Children) as well as Vets
 - iii. Do these things as ongoing projects, not just on Veterans Day.
11. Point Transfer Offices, Career Centers, and Student Veterans to the American Council on Education website <http://www.acenet.edu/news-room/Pages/Military-Guide-Online.aspx>
This can help students understand how to translate their skills and offer suggestions on how military training should be considered for transfer course credit.
12. Remind front line staff, administrators, and faculty more than 4 million of the current generation Vets joined *knowing* they would be likely to be sent to war. Over 2 million were, many on multiple tours. The Student Veterans are likely to be leaders on campus and interested in service and should not be feared for violence etc.