Improving Veterans Services on Your Campus

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Veterans Initiatives on Three College Campuses
“What we learned & how we reacted: Assisting veterans as they transition from military to academic life.”
What We All Learned

Survey of Student Needs

- Difficulty returning to the community
- Lost support of friends & comrades
- Financial stress
- Sense of place
- Loss of structured environment
- Civilian environment has a general loss of respect
- Separation of families
- Guilt of separation
How We Reacted
University of Iowa

Bosnian War, Kosovo Conflict, Iraq Coalition
  ▪ Communal Space
  ▪ Maintained Email-Remote Access
  ▪ Recognized them as Student Organizations
  ▪ Developed Faculty Support
  ▪ Women’s Clinic – 33% are Women
  ▪ Newsletter and Website Support
  ▪ Quarterly Events – Shared Experiences
  ▪ Work Study
  ▪ 4-6 academic credits awarded for service
  ▪ VA Hospital Connection
How We Reacted
University of Iowa, cont’d

Reintegration Office
- Veteran Peer Counseling

Student Veteran Organization
- 2 Offices – Computer support & access
- Biweekly meetings for 30 member organization
- Faculty Support
- VA Hospital Counselor
- 3 work study students
- Communication Materials - Newsletter, Email, Benefit pamphlets
How We Reacted
University of Iowa, cont’d

Women Veteran Services
- Ages 60-85
- Women’s Health Clinic Contact
- Mental Health Assistance – stress, violence, cost, access, gynecology
- Financial Assistance – financial aid, loans, charge card
- Weight Control Program
- Alcohol
- Women’s Veteran Group Meeting
  - Reintegration party & a way to share common experiences
  - Professional and financial counseling available
  - Discuss family issues
  - Women advocates
How We Reacted
University of Minnesota

- Restructured the Veteran Certifying Official Position & added a Coordinator position
- Created a veteran One Stop Web site
- Published communication materials: Brochures, Veterans Connection newsletter, automatic emails
- Established one-day processing of applications to be forwarded to the regional Veteran Administrative Office
- Track & report education benefit programs available to determine how many of our students participate
- Continue to monitor our processing time in One Stop and with the Dept. of Veteran Affairs
How We Reacted
University of Minnesota, cont’d

- Monthly enrollment monitoring for compliance
- Provided office space and staff support for the metropolitan regional coordinator for the Minnesota Department of Veteran Affairs
- Surveyed currently enrolled & former veterans on their University experience
- Developed relationship with the Veteran Transition Center to facilitate communication and improve services to current veterans
- Assembled a Veterans Advisory Committee
How We Reacted
University of Minnesota, cont’d

- Created a reintegration training program for faculty & staff
- Developed a tracking system to monitor the veteran certification process
- Worked closely with Admissions to track incoming veterans
- Created an orientation program for incoming veterans
- Had our first annual Veteran Appreciation Day with an F16 Flyover
- Created a Veteran Certification Office separate from our One Stop
How we Reacted
North Hennepin Community College

- Restructured Veteran Affairs
  - Director
  - Advisor
  - Certifying Official
- Veteran Resource Center
- Veteran and Family Book Charging Program
- Registration Assistance Day
- Keys to Success checklists
- Community Outreach
How we Reacted
North Hennepin Community College

- Veteran Student Association
- Spouse/Significant other support group (planning stages)
- Resident Tuition Waiver Program
- Application Fee Waiver
- Scholarship Search Support
- Oral History Collection
Do’s & Don’ts of Welcoming Returning Veterans

**Do’s**
- Welcome the soldier home
- Express your appreciation, their service & sacrifice
- Provide a welcoming environment
- Offer Help
- Offer support with patience – LISTEN
- Recognize that loud noises & sudden situations can startle and evoke over-reaction
- Understand that returning to normalcy can take a while

**Don’ts**
- Be offended or pressure them about sharing specifics about their services they choose not to share with you
- Minimize the challenges
- Condemn because of your personal political/foreign policy opinion
- Single out without prior approval
It’s Ok to Ask the Right Questions

**Do Ask**
- What did you do in Iraq/Afghanistan?
- How are you and your family doing?
- Let us know if you need any financial aid help, we are here to help you?

**Don’t Ask**
- Did you kill anyone? Did you see anyone die?
- Are you glad you are back?
- Do you have to go back?
- Do you think we are winning?