

Student Services
Departmental Goals and Assessment Plans 2011-2012

Department Name: Veterans Center

Department Goals for 2011-12

1. To hold a New Veteran Student group orientation. The intention is to have veterans attend the orientation to have the opportunity to meet other veterans, review policies and procedures for using Veteran Benefits and also to invite various departments to make short presentations on their services and be available for veterans to visit with at the end of the presentation.
2. To celebrate and highlight each branch of the service on the birthday of that organization. We will have a birthday cake for each branch and information to highlight their contributions.
3. Successfully implement the AmeriCorps volunteer program through the Veterans Center. I will be coordinating 30 volunteer positions for participants to serve Veterans or their dependents.
4. Complete, publish and distribute the training manual which talks about working with Veterans returning to college after deployments. I was asked to work on this project with 4 people from the VA Community. Also to assist with the filming and editing a video to accompany the manual.
5. To be funded for an additional full time employee to assist with the increased requirements from the VA to process the claims and track pay from the VA to the college.
6. To have my position and pay upgraded to that of a Director as my job responsibilities are those of a Director and not a Manager.

Project (Assessment) Title: 2011-12 Implement Pilot program 'March to Success' an online tutoring program to assist Veterans to improve their Math skills.

College Priority & Objective

- **Priority II Objective II A** Increase student participation in varied and integrated learning pathways that meet their needs for flexible delivery and scheduling of higher education.

Background: Veterans receive 36 months of educational benefits for their military service. If a veteran test into remedial classes, they can take them and be paid but taking those classes lessens the total months of benefits available towards completion of their actual degree.

If the veteran could improve their Accuplacer test scores and start at college level English and Math classes, they would have more months of benefits to use towards classes that will count in their major towards graduation.

- A. Veterans will take the Accuplacer test to determine where they would currently be placed in English and Math. Then use the March to Success online tutorials to complete tutoring sections assigned based on their scores to improve their English and math skills. Theory is if the student can understand basic English, they will have a better chance to succeed in math. If they don't understand basic English they will struggle with math.

- B. By using the 'March to Success' online tutoring program, students placing in developmental English and or Math classes will receive free online tutoring and support as they work through the program sections and improve their English and math skills.
- C. We will know this program is successful if the student completes the English and Math sections they retake the Acuplacer and test into a higher level of math or English than placed into previously.

Methodology (Plan/Timeline/Method):

Plan: This program will begin Fall Semester 2011.

1. We will run a list of Acuplacer test scores for Veterans beginning Fall semester 2011-2012 to determine which Veterans to contact based on their test scores and invite them to participate. We will request they not begin remedial classes until after taking the English and Math portions of March 2 Success.
2. We will train 1 person per 10 participants as monitors and I will oversee all of those participating and monitoring.
3. Those monitoring will participate in 2-hours of one-on-one training before we begin and will complete the training themselves before they begin to monitor students to be familiar with the program and what the students may be experiencing. Monitors will be college employees or AmeriCorps volunteers.
4. Veterans will begin with a module on English skills to determine their skill understanding basic English and reading skills. Once complete with the English modules with passing scores, they will then complete the Math modules.
5. We will monitor and track success on completion of each module. If a student does not pass either the English or math modules, they will be allowed to repeat the module one time.
6. Each person assigned as a monitor will review each veteran's success, interact and encourage the participants they are assigned to. They will score modules and read the weekly essay students are assigned to complete.
7. At the end of the program, we will track the success of participants in future Math and English classes completed at SLCC.

Phase one of this project will be complete at the end of Spring 2011. We will continue to monitor students over a two year period or until they complete their math requirements.

Student Services Learning Outcome Priority II- Acquire knowledge; Objective A- Master subject matter; Objective B- Apply knowledge

Results/Findings

Identify the program and projections for success

Going into this assessment I had no reason to think we would not be able to be successful in implementing this program for the benefit for our Veterans. With the limit of months available for them to complete their education and the fact that so many enter college needing remedial classes in math and or English. To register for the remedial classes, they must use their benefits shortening the time they have available to complete their education. I thought they would be interested in participating in this program to assist them in improving their skills thus being able to start at a higher math or English

class. Also, this program is being used at a college in Idaho and has been successful there, so I thought it would also be successful here for our Veterans and would be a great resource for them.

Identify what we did to prepare for it

To prepare for the program initially I looked at test scores and identified the number of returning veterans requiring remedial classes. I sent out a survey to those requiring remedial classes and asked them if they would be interested in participating in a test program that would allow them to review English and math through a free online program and then at the end, take the placement test over and have a possibility to place in a higher class to start while using their education money.

I mailed out and passed out questioners to 75 students either on the list and to those submitting test scores to us showing low test scores. We received 26 questioners (35% return) back and 20 (77%) of the students said they would be interested in participating in this program.

With that support, I moved forward to prepare for the programs implementation.

Canvas

I contacted the distance education people to have a canvas platform set up to be able to run the program through the college Canvas site. We needed to have a way for the tutors to communicate with the students and for the students to submit writing assignments.

Working with the Canvas staff, I identified the links we would need, wrote the syllabus for the program, identified lessons and writing assignments. The Canvas staff assisted me and designed our site and had it ready for us to move forward when I gave them names and S numbers for participating students.

Tutors and Training

I identified the number of students we would allow in the first and second group of our test group of students. Based on that number, we needed to have two tutors/monitors for the 20 maximum students in the test groups.

To insure we always had coverage for the 20 students, I decided to train three tutor/monitors. This would provide coverage if one of the tutors requested a week off or became ill. The tutors/mentors were volunteers from our AmeriCorps-Veterans Service group and were going to provide this service for their volunteer hours. All three were students at the UOU in their Sr year towards completing their education. The two main volunteers were majoring in English at the UOU.

The director from the Army, who also was the instructor for the March 2 Success program at the college in Idaho, came and provided two sessions of training for our tutor/mentors to ensure they were comfortable with the program and the requirements for the program. He was confident the volunteers I had selected were ready to begin the program.

Flip charts for students

To ensure the test groups were not out any money to participate in our test groups, I purchased the required flip charts to give to the participating students. I wanted to ensure their success and willingness to participate and taking the cost out of the picture, I felt that might motivate them to participate with no barriers.

Mailing & email letters to invite veterans to participate

Once I knew we were ready, I ran a list of veterans in Spring and Summer terms taking the placement test within the past 2 semesters. We reviewed the list and identified those with scores requiring

remedial classes. We then reviewed the list to identify those who had registered for either of the math or English remedial classes.

I wanted to be able to compare those who had were completing the remedial classes and those completing the March 2 Success and the success of each. My plan was also to watch each group through their math classes through the college math requirement to determine if those in our test group completed at a higher completion rate and or with better grades.

We made a list of the students that were already in the math or English remedial classes. We emailed a letter to 30 veterans on the lists not currently in a remedial class. I explained the program, the reasons participation in this program could be a benefit to them, how the program worked, let them know I had purchased the books they would need, they would have a tutor/mentor available to them and that the class was completely on line and could be accessed 24/7. I invited them to participate in our first groups to determine the benefit of this program to future veterans. We also talked to new veterans submitting their paper work in our office and invited them.

Of the 30 veterans contacted, only one stated they were interested in participating. I was confused with the response this time because of the interest that was expressed before. Wondering if the students perhaps did not see the email, I resent the letter and sent a letter in the mail to each of them inviting them to participate. I decided to offer a participation prize this second try to get participants so also identified the addition of the prizes for participation and completion of the English and the math components.

I received 7 responses via email and from a couple of veterans coming into the office. The responses to why they did not want to participate were:

- They did not have time to add one more class
- They did not do well with classes on line
- They could not add another class with their work load, family and other classes they were registered for
- If they were going to add another class they would do it through the college so they could use benefits and get the living stipend for the class

I contacted students in the Fall semester that I had not contacted previously to attempt to get participation from students in that term. Again, I received no one interested in participating and the few responses I received identified the same reasons for not wanting to participate.

Other comments:

I tried many different ways to encourage our veterans to participate. We did not experience the response I expected. We were prepared to begin the program, but it ended up to not being something our veterans wanted to participate in at this time. I was disappointed with the results and the lack of willingness to participate by the Veterans after having positive responses with my first survey to see if they would be interested and participate.

With the success at the school in Idaho that we looked at who were using this program I thought it would work here. However, one big difference between our two programs is the school in Idaho makes

participation mandatory to participate in the March 2 Success program to get into the college level classes for students placing in lower division classes. We were making it voluntary participation. Another thought I had about the lack of willingness to participate was that the group I had surveyed with positive results had already begun their schooling and had enrolled in Math and English classes. The students I was attempting to enroll in the program were not the same students because of the lead-time to put this program in place.

We have the program set up, monitors trained and the flip charts purchased. We will attempt to spark interest again in this program. I still feel the program has value and could benefit our students. I also I feel it is important to look at different possibilities to assist our veterans to complete their remedial classes and successfully complete their degrees at SLCC with benefits to spare to continue towards a higher degree.

Project (Assessment) Title: 2011-2012 Research demographics, number of major changes, and retention and completion rates of Veterans attending SLCC and compare that with the general student body.

College Priority & Objective

Priorities II Objective II E Improve student completion of desired educational goals: certificates, degrees, and successful transfer to four year colleges and universities.

Methodology (Plan/Timeline/Method):

We will run reports and gather information from the general student body and compare the information to the veteran population. We will be comparing graduation rates, hours per term, number of major changes and time to complete program. We will also compare the number of students vs. veterans who drop out and have not completed their degree.

I want to determine if the rate of completion and non completion of veterans is higher than with general student population. This will allow me to know the degree of the problem of veterans not finishing. This portion of the study will be complete by December 2011.

January 2012 we will begin contacting students by email and phone to determine why they stopped attending school. We will contact those who attended during the 2010-11 school year but stopped attending for this assessment. I hope to determine what factors are standing in the way of our Veterans completing their college education. With this information, I plan begin to address those roadblocks as identified by the veterans by increasing services, finding additional resources for the veteran or other ways to assist them. This project will be complete by June, 2012.

Student Services Learning Outcome Priority: 3 Display Practical Competence and Intrapersonal Skills. A. Achieve personal and academic goals; include degree attainment, and/or further education.

Results/Findings:

Fall Semester I hired a work-study employee who previously had experience collecting data and working with statics to complete the data collection part of this assessment. We found information that assisted

us in taking a closer look at some of the basic dynamics of our new entering and graduating veterans and in a few areas to take a comparison between veterans and the general student body.

The data we were looking at:

- Test scores of our entering Veterans
- Graduation comparisons between Veterans and non-veterans
- Number of major changes graduates make during schooling
- Number of Credit hours upon graduation
- Which degree has the highest completion
- Average ages of Veterans and non-veterans

Test Scores

We found that in a group of 199 veterans taking the placement test when entering SLCC

- 37% required at least one remedial class.
- 12% required both English and Math remedial classes.

These results let me know there is a need to have resources available for our veterans for tutoring in Basic English and Math. We will continue to promote our Veterans Upward Bound program, continue to attempt to get our March 2 Success program started and promote labs and tutoring available at SLCC for all students.

Graduation numbers

The data comparing those Graduates in the General Student vs the Veteran population is:

- They take the same amount of time to complete their degrees.
 - Full Time took 7-8 semesters to complete
 - Part Time took 12 semesters to complete

Discussion around the nation has been concerned at the number of terms it takes our Veterans to complete their degree compared with those of the General Student population. This information shows that at SLCC, there is no need for concern. Our Veterans are completing at the same rate as their counterparts.

Major changes

Another concern that has been part of discussion nationwide is that Veterans change their major many times, not focusing on a degree thus not completing in the time allowed. Our results do not support this concern.

We found that of the graduating class of 2012, the data shows that all students change their majors an average of 1 time while pursuing their degree.

Credit hours at graduation

A result I was not too surprised about was that Veterans have more total credit hours at graduation. A concern my Veterans have voiced often is that often many credit hours are transferred in from military transcripts thus making it hard for the Veteran when they need to select electives. This result shows this may be true.

I think that because of this finding and the change in Financial Aid rules and the discussion of the possibility of having a credit hour cap and the use of the GI money, I will investigate this finding further. I would like to see what the source of the higher hours.

Most completed degree

In reviewing the graduation data, it was surprising that 74% of degrees awarded to the class of 2012 was an AS degree with the second highest was 17% receiving an AAS degree. Many of the graduating Veterans also graduated with High Honors and Honors.

This information tells me that we are doing a good job with our Veterans and also that the majority of Veterans who complete their degree, may be planning on a 4 year degree. I see that we need to step up working with our students to ensure they are ready to transfer

Average age of graduates for 2012

- Non-Veterans age is 30 and Veterans age is 34

This static does not surprise me but can help me as I plan events and workshops to assist our students.

Conclusion

We will begin running reports for up to 3 years past to develop a tracking of what the history has been for our Veterans. From the information I got from this study, I have many directions we can go. Because of many changes that are happening within the VA and FA, it is important for us to assist our veterans to focus, be prepared for schooling both at SLCC and if they desire to transfer, to be ready to transfer. I feel we are doing a good job now, but now I get to look at what can we do better.

To start this step to improve, I have a AmeriCorps volunteer that has years of customer service experience who will begin next week working in our office two days a week calling the veterans who have not returned to school to ask them a series of questions to determine why they stopped attending. If it was because of problems in school or their VA benefits, she will inform them that we have our VetSuccess On Campus Counselor available in our office to assist them with many aspects of their VA benefits. She will ensure they understand they may qualify for Financial Aid and review the other services we now have available in our office that may assist them to complete their degree: Veterans Upward Bound, DWS- Vet Rep, Veterans Education Support Counselor (Mary from DRC) and we will have a VA Counselor from the hospital on campus one day a week and the other many resources available through SLCC.