

# Veterans Services Program Review 2013-2014

## Self-Study Report May 2014



since 2011



since 2010



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## I. INTRODUCTION TO VETERANS SERVICES

This self-study of Veterans Services is part of a program review process designed to provide a comprehensive assessment of individual departments within Student Services at Salt Lake Community College. Program review is a reflective process that allows departments to assess their functions and services and identify areas that are performing well and areas that need improvement. It consists of three stages: the self-study, a site visit and report by outside reviewers, and the development of a plan of action outlining priorities and directions for the future.

The self-study was written by Darlene Head, Veterans Services Manager with input from Eric Weber, Assistant Vice President of Student Enrollment Services. As Veterans Services Manager, I would like to acknowledge the staff who provided support and inspiration while I worked on this project and who work hard to serve veterans at SLCC: Vanessa Elliott, Christina Campbell, Jon Jackson and Chris Hurskainen.

### History

When Utah Technical College was founded in the late 1940's, many of the first students were veterans using the newly created Montgomery GI Bill, which paid a stipend for attendance at colleges across the nation. Our institution has a long history of serving veterans using their GI funds.

Since the 1970's, the College has had a dedicated School Certifying Official (SCO), located in the Registration Office, whose only duty was to certify the benefits for those using VA benefits. There were no additional services offered veterans for support while attending school. Veterans were treated as any student would be.

In 2001, after the 9-11 attack on America, the nation entered into conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. The number of Americans serving in the military drastically increased. With these new wars, many of our National Guard and Reserve members were deployed to active duty in a theater of combat, sometimes serving in multiple deployments, in numbers never experienced in American history.

The Veterans Office in 2005 consisted of one full-time supervisor and one part-time employee; the office was responsible only for students using one of the five types of veterans' educational benefits. The full-time employee was the only SCO and all claims processing was completed by paper copy, which was faxed and mailed to the VA. No records had been scanned into the College's archive system and very little information was available on the Veterans Office web page.

In October 2005, another full-time employee, a Specialist from Enrollment Services, was moved to the Taylorsville Redwood Campus to assist with processing and updating claims. Quickly, the Specialist taught herself the SCO processes, began to manage the Veterans Office and worked to bring the records into VA compliance by correcting many errors in previous certifications. To complete the work, correct the errors and bring the office into VA compliance, the Specialist worked many overtime hours.

Within the first two months in the office, the new employee also identified 45 possible changes to improve information and processing and began implementing changes. Major changes included scanning thousands of files into the College's Noliweb system, updating the website, changing the

filing process, writing new student documents, and communicating and tracking veterans' statistics. The online VA certifying system was set up to speed up claims and VA work-study employees were hired.

The Specialist contacted local VA organizations and invited them to provide services on campus to help all veterans and dependents attending SLCC. She arranged the schedule and rooms for them to meet with students. Some services were successful and others not.

In June 2006 the Supervisor left the College and her position was not filled for more than one year. Instead of hiring a new employee to replace the vacant supervisory position, the new employee, who was a specialist, was tasked with the supervisory duties and the additional full-time position was given to another area in Enrollment Services despite the pleas from the Specialist, who saw the need for two full-time employees to do the work. Eventually, the supervisor position was posted and the Specialist was hired as the new Supervisor.

In 2007 a new VA benefit (the 7th type) was established for Reserve and Guard members returning from war. Many veterans were returning from the 'War on Terrorism' with injuries and disabilities such as posttraumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury. Given its proximity to the state's VA regional office and to a major VA hospital complex, SLCC experienced an increase in enrollment of veterans returning from war, many with disabilities.

February 2007, the new SCO had the opportunity to hear the president of the National Association Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA), Gwen Dungy, speak to the National Association of Veteran Program Administrators (NAVPA) board members. Dungy expressed concern that colleges across the nation were not preparing for veterans who were beginning to return to school from the current wars. The SLCC SCO began evaluating why veterans were not completing classes and were dropping out of school and why so few completed degrees. By reviewing the statistics we had been compiling since 2005, we began identifying possible challenges for our veterans. With that data we worked to address the needs by creating connections with the VA community and by bringing additional services to campus to help.

In April 2007, the SCO submitted a proposal to the VP of Student Services and the AVP of Enrollment Service to create a one-stop shop (or center) to provide additional support on campus for veterans. The proposal addressed the needs and concerns, suggestions for changes, the possible benefits of making the changes and the support promised for our veterans by the community. This proposal was supported and embraced by Student Services administrators who quickly moved forward with the plan.

In 2008, we moved from the 178 square foot office to our current location. The College provided start-up funds and office space of over 1500 square feet to open a comprehensive and inclusive Veterans Center on campus. This was the first center for veterans in an institution of higher education in Utah. It included a study room complete with computers and a printer and another room for a lounge for all veterans and their dependents with a comfortable recliner and couch. The center contained office spaces for the Supervisor and SCOs and an office to house VA support services from outside agencies. Our Veterans Center has been recognized by many in the state and across the nation as a model center and has been an inspiration for schools in the state to also create a center for their veterans.

Through 2009, the Veterans Center Supervisor reported to the Registrar in Enrollment Services, however, the Supervisor had administrative responsibility for all operations of the office, which included managing a small budget, making budget requests through the Informed Budget Process, defining yearly goals and completing assessments. Given the growth and success of the Veterans Center, including its expansion of services and its developing partnerships with VA agencies, the AVP of Student Enrollment Services changed the organizational reporting line. The department's name was also changed to Veterans Services and began reporting directly to the AVP. The new department was given an operating budget and the Supervisor became a budget center Manager. This change allowed us to begin offering additional activities and events for our students.

In the fall of 2009, processing procedures changed at colleges around the nation with passage of the new Post 9-11 GI Bill benefit by Congress with three parts and different requirements for each. The new benefit was complicated with time-consuming processing requirements and unclear rules. SLCC saw a dramatic increase in veterans attending school. Veterans Services was given money to hire an additional full-time employee (paid from the VP's budget) and two part-time employees (paid with stimulus money).

In August 2010, SLCC was one of eight schools selected to host a new VA pilot program, VetSuccess on Campus, which provided a VA counselor on campus to provide support, information on benefits, education and employment services. SLCC was the only community college selected. We were required to provide an office for the counselor, which the Student Center administration provided (Veterans Services is now 1800 square feet.)

Summer of 2011, SLCC participated in another VA test program –VITAL, which places a VA health care professional on college campuses. The counselor is shared among the University of Utah, Weber State University and SLCC. The VA health care representative helps our students with signing up for VA health care benefits, counseling and by serving as a health care liaison.

As of 2012, Veterans Services has been responsible for processing and/or monitoring 18 different groups of veterans, dependents and benefits. We have grown from 350-425 students using benefits to 850+ students using benefits each semester. VS provides services for all 1300 students attending SLCC, including planning events and workshops, and coordinating various services and partnerships for our veterans.

In 2012, the department was given additional office space on two other campuses and hired an additional full-time employee to serve veterans in the north region. We now have the opportunity to serve the needs of and provide resources for students on three campuses.

We noticed that few veterans were using the services of the Disability Resource Center so we created a closer partnership in August of 2012. We renamed the position of the DRC Advisor to Veterans Accessibility Counselor and set up regular office hours in the center to work with veterans. As a result, the usage of DRC services has increased more than 50 percent in less than one year.

Based on numbers from the State VA Office, SLCC serves the largest group of veterans, servicemembers and their dependents and has become well known by many in the state and nation for the way veteran students are served. We participate with the State VA Office on many events serving veterans. In state meetings, SLCC is often held up as the flagship for our state and is used as the state standard for serving veterans.

## Mission and Goals of Department

SLCC Veterans Services is committed to providing timely and inclusive support services to all veterans, servicemembers, and dependents. We strive to ensure students are able to maximize their educational benefits and receive support to be successful in their educational endeavors by utilizing the many resources available at the College and in the community. We empower and support SLCC veterans to reach their educational goals of preparing for employment or transferring to a university.

\*NOTE: For this review, veterans, servicemembers and dependents will be referred to as 'students' to indicate this specific group of our student body.

The overarching goals of the department are as follows:

- To provide support to empower our students to successfully complete their education and continue moving forward with their life, either through further education or employment
- Each year our goal is to pass our federal audit with no write-ups due to incorrect certifications or late submissions of paperwork.
- Each semester our goal is to complete certifications in the order we have received them and complete them with no errors.
- Each year our goal is to provide quality events and programs to support our students.

## Theories and Philosophies that Inform Programs and Services

Our institutional philosophy and guiding theory in all we do in Veterans Services is to acknowledge the service of our veterans, to encourage and support them as they re-adjust to their civilian life and most of all, succeed in their college experience and goals. As we address our veterans' needs, we look at them as we would other special populations on campus. We have identified that veterans, servicemembers and/or family members:

- have special needs with their re-entry into civilian/academic life,
- look to an office or person on campus they can count on being there for them,
- need to have a place to decompress and get away from the chaos of college,
- are a minority group at the College with special needs,
- may have disabilities, many are invisible
- need to have a connection other military peers,
- lack knowledge of benefits available to help them succeed,
- need improved benefit delivery,
- have a unique language that all who have served in the military speak and their family members understand, and
- need to have improved connection to college resources such as Disability Resource Center, Health and Wellness, Clubs, Multicultural Initiative, Financial Aid, and Registration.

The main source of guidance for our School Certifying Officials (SCOs) is the VA School Certifying Official Handbook. We are required to complete all student claims, certifications and reporting based on these guidelines. Each year an updated handbook is published that we must follow and make adjustments as directed.

We follow the CAS Professional Standards for Higher Education, which provides national standards for Veteran and Military Programs and Services. This assists us with the direction of our current and new programs and services for our students.

We use American Council on Education publications as they apply to working with servicemembers on campus, pulling from their studies and suggestions for serving veterans. For example, we have used *From Soldier to Student* (2009), *Veteran Success Jam* (May, 2010) and *Accommodating Student Veterans with Traumatic Brain Injury and PTSD: Tips for Campus Faculty and Staff* (May 2010).

Publications from the National Association of Veteran's Program Administrators (NAVPA) are helpful in deciding on and planning our programming and services.

### **Alignment with College Priorities and Student Services Values**

By providing timely and inclusive support services in partnership with a variety of departments (both on and off campus), we assist students to receive services on campus that they might not have received if they were sent off campus to find them. We identify challenges our students may be having and determine the most effective way to obtain the support they need. By being knowledgeable about resources in the College and in the Veterans Affairs (VA) community, we are able to find the best method of service for students. In these ways, we support SLCC Strategic Priority I, Enhance Quality Education; Strategic Priority II, Improve Student Access and Success, and Strategic Priority V, Advance Partnerships/Relationships with the Community and Business.

We continually strive to uphold Student Services Purposes and Values through a commitment to an ethic of care and support for the students we serve. By being committed to empower and support our students to reach their educational goals, we are able to truly serve them. We keep an open door to create trust and are able to guide students to the next step in their progression toward their goals.

We document our processes and conduct assessments to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of our services. This supports the SLCC Strategic Priority III, Advance a Culture of Evidence and Accountability and the Student Services Purposes and Values.

Given the rapid growth and development of Veterans Services at SLCC, it is time to review and update our mission statement. We will bring together a group of our close partners, staff and students to provide feedback to assist us in redefining our direction, goals and mission to include new efforts such as the importance of partnerships to leverage resources for veterans and to include the need to provide veterans awareness and sensitivity training for staff, faculty and administration.

### **Initiation of New Programs and Services**

Changes in VA policies create changes in procedures for our office. Once we receive the new policy or procedure from the VA we evaluate what we are currently doing and determine what we must do differently to follow the new VA rules. In most cases, the VA indicates what it needs and we must decide, based on the policies of the College, how to do it. The SCOs discuss the new

regulation and how to be compliant which in most cases means making our college policy align with the VA. Then we decide how to implement the new requirement.

Agencies or departments sometimes will contact the Manager to offer a new service for our students. The Manager determines who would be best to assist in determining whether the program or service would be a fit for our students. The Manager sets up a meeting to share and discuss the proposal with others and to decide whether to move forward or decline the offer.

When the VA develops a new program or service it may contact the Manager who determines how to implement the program if we choose to participate. SLCC has been a test site for new programs that the VA is thinking to start at other institutions around the nation. We have had good success making the programs work and assisting in creating training modules for new schools implementing the VA programs. Two of the programs we were selected as a pilot school for are VetSuccess on Campus (first of eight in the nation) and VITAL Program (first of 22 in the nation).

Up to a year ago, the Manager had the sole responsibility to research, evaluate, decide and implement all new programs and services to add to Veterans Services. Recently the VetSuccess Counselor has been assisting the Manager with evaluating new potential services although the Manager still has the final responsibility for implementation.

We are in the process of starting up a 'Veterans Support Team' to assist with decisions and implementation of new programs and services, planning and support of events and trainings and plans for additional support for our veterans. The VS Manager and the Veteran's Accessibility Advisor (DRC) are working together to start up the group. College staff, faculty and students, and members from the VA community will be invited to participate on the Veterans Advisory Council.

### **Awards and Acknowledgements**

Veterans Services has received many department acknowledgements and awards for the service we provide. A few of the awards include the following:

March 2007 Utah Veterans Affairs Certificate of Appreciation for participation and support by SLCC for Veterans Benefit and Employment Fair  
2007 Freedom Award- Army-National Guard  
June 2009 Support for Veterans Upward Bound  
March 2011 SLCC Innovation of the Year Award for creation of the Veterans Center  
March 2014 SLCC Innovation of the Year Award for partnership with VS and DRC

SLCC has been ranked by these publications:

- Military Times Advantage in the top 12 as 'Best for Vets' since 2011
- GI Jobs as 'Military Friendly' since 2010

May 2013 the Salt Lake Tribune wrote a full-length article on the success of SLCC in serving veterans and servicemembers and in increasing the graduation rates of veterans. The reporter covered graduation and the support for our veterans.

With the current drawdown and downsizing of the military, we are preparing to be able to serve another large group of new veterans. The only job most of our veterans have held has been their job in the military. As they return to their homes and with the economy still struggling, it will be important for them to be trained for a new profession, thus educational training will be necessary. We need to be prepared to best serve them. With the new GI benefit, they will have money for education, a living stipend and a need for training. Now is the time for us to prepare for the next wave of students to best serve them and assist to prepare them for their new career.

## II. FUNCTION, PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Veterans Services performs a variety of functions at SLCC and provides a range of programs and services to student veterans and their dependents. Until 2006, the only function for the School Certifying Official was to certify the 425 veterans and their dependents attending school using VA educational benefits. There were no additional programs and support services provided. This area has seen a dramatic change since 2007.

Today, we can identify approximately 1300 veterans attending SLCC. An average of 825-850 veterans and dependents are using GI funding to pay for their education. The other students pay for their tuition by other means. We believe there are additional veterans attending SLCC but can only identify them if they use VA benefits or self-identify on their college application.

Assessing what our veterans might need to succeed with their educational goals has been our main focus as we developed our center, services and programs. Paying attention to military culture and students' feedback as well as programs and best practices at other institutions has helped guide our progress and services to where we are today.

We now offer many services for all veterans and dependents attending school and we consider all veterans as part of our charge. Before we only served students using VA benefits, today we have accountability for all veterans attending school, including traditional credit students and SAT students.

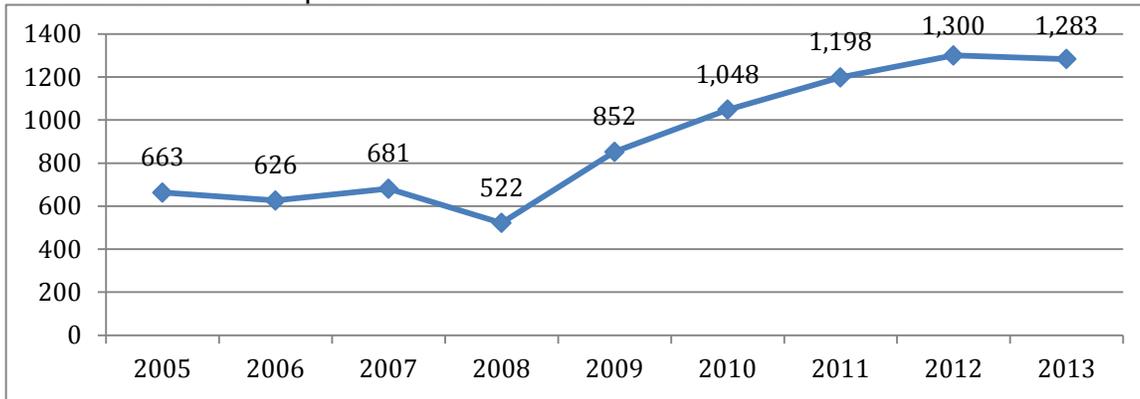
### Enrollment Trends

The graphs below demonstrate the increase in enrollment of veterans using benefits and the enrollment of all veterans and dependents over the past eight years. The sharp increase since 2008 was largely due to returning veterans (and dependents) from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the new GI benefit.

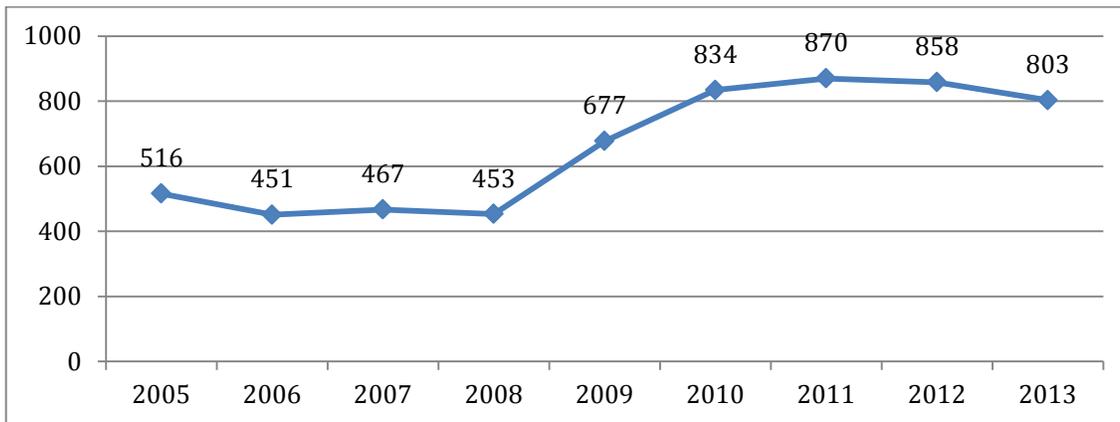
We have experienced a small decline since 2011/2012 in the number of veterans receiving benefits but the total number of veterans on campus has remained steady. There was a major decrease in the unduplicated headcount of veterans. We believe that this reflects an increase in the number of veterans staying and completing their degree and not dropping out after just one semester, thus accounting for the steep decline in unduplicated headcount.

The last table shows the enrollment of veterans attending each campus based on Fall Semester numbers.

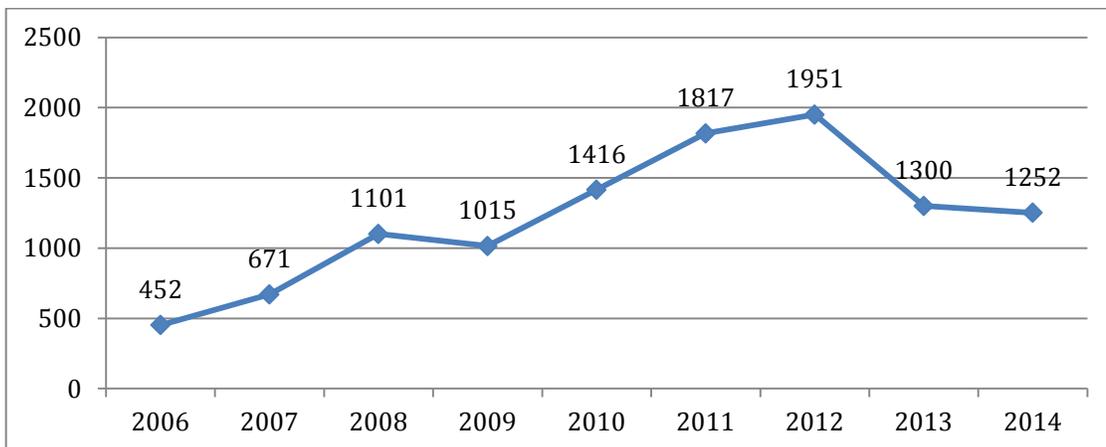
### Total Veteran and Dependent Enrollment – Fall Semester



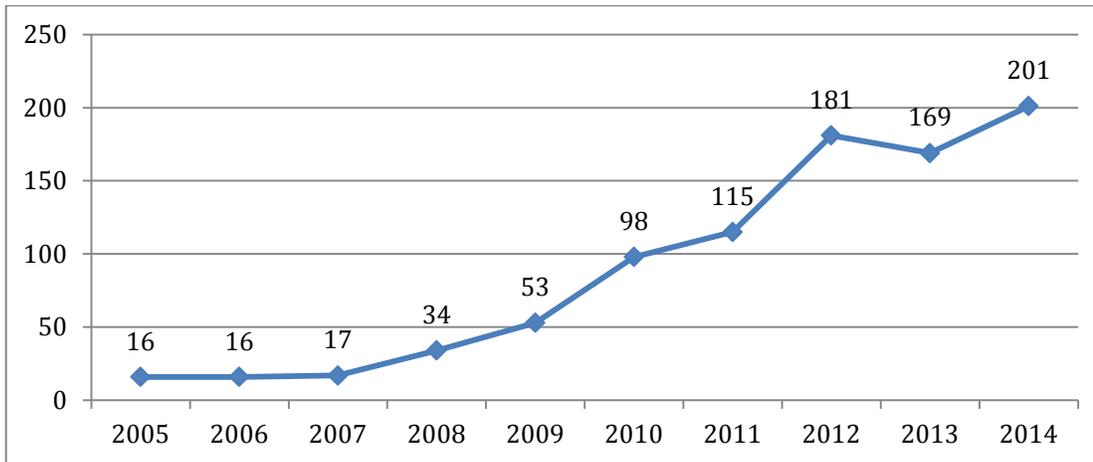
### Veterans Only Using Benefits - Fall Semester



### Yearly Unduplicated Head Count - All Veterans and Dependents (Summer, Fall, Spring)



## Number of Veterans and Dependents Graduating - Spring



## Veteran Enrollment by Campus - Fall Semester (duplicated headcount)

Campus	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Highland Center	0	20	28	51	36
Internal Airport Center	16	21	19	14	18
Jordan Campus	115	149	150	196	194
Library Square Center	29	34	41	42	68
Meadowbrook Campus	38	85	110	19	18
Miller Campus	57	114	123	152	127
Off Campus	45	49	43	41	44
SLCC Online	213	261	236	271	368
South City Campus	167	240	242	245	252
Taylorville Redwood	587	709	700	738	753
Westpointe	-	-	-	141	165

## Functions of Veterans Services

- Provide VA education benefits guidance, enrollment and certification
- Provide assistance with all aspects of enrollment at the College
- Provide support services to veterans attending school on all campuses
- Provide support for community service providers on campus to assist and support veterans
- Ensure SLCC upholds all rules and regulations of the VA
- Employ veteran work-study students to provide veteran-to-veteran support
- Provide referrals and contact information for veteran support services on campus and in the community
- Plan and conduct events to support veterans success missions and goals
- Serve as a liaison with college administration, staff, and faculty, the local and national VA community, and local and national elected officials

## Certification Services

### Education Benefits Guidance, Support and Certification

One of the most critical services of the department is to provide information to students on use of benefits. As the first contact with student veterans, we seek to provide them with information not only on benefits but also on the services and resources available to them.

An orientation is given individually to students when they submit all their documents to begin their benefits package. This one-on-one orientation is important to ensure each student is clear on requirements for using benefits and the services provided. We want each student to know they are important when they come in and hope this creates a connection between our staff and the student.

### Tasks of School Certifying Officials

The tasks required for certifying and processing benefits have grown dramatically over the past five years, are labor intensive and take much more time than previously. Prior to 2009, these steps were required in processing veterans' benefits:

- Certification of enrolled classes to the VA
- Audit of each student's files
- Adjustments made as needed for changes in enrollment
- Grade review and adjustments, if needed, for incompletes, probation and suspensions
- Adjustments

Since 2009, the following tasks are required of SCOs to process veterans' benefits:

- Collect basic identifying data from student to include full SSN/VA File number
- Verify start and end dates of each class
- Verify credit hours
- Determine training time equivalent, calculate full-time standard for graduate enrollment if courses are accelerated
- Verify degree requirements: analyze degree applicability of each course (requires academic advising expertise)
- Validate need for repeat based on degree requirements and obtain permission from SAA if taking for third attempt
- Validate need for remedial courses: document-testing justification if considered a remedial/deficiency course
- Determine in-residence vs. distance education designation based on VA definition
- Identify allowable charges (requires bursar/account expertise), manually distribute semester charges across artificial terms due to accelerated courses within standard terms; readjust those artificial charges any time a student moves hours between accelerated terms (a very common occurrence!)
- Make decisions about overseas study program cost coverage under Ch 33 (requires research into degree programs as well as breakdown of assessed charges)
- Identify other federal non-title IV funding sources (financial aid and bursar expertise)
- Draft parent school letters; collect appropriate course transfer approvals from advisors and

- create and submit parent school letters when students studying at other schools
- Collect DD214, NOBE, Kicker contracts, etc. for forwarding to VA; assist with VONAPP completion
- Input data into VA Once within the 30 day limit
- Keep school administration aware of impact on students of any VA related program or benefit; provide comment on proposed legislation-impacting student veterans
- Provide updates and information to students on changes in GI Bill programs as well as reminders about processes and procedures to ensure receipt of benefits.
- Provide referrals to appropriate institutional and VA resources to resolve questions about eligibility determination and payment amounts
- Report graduation to the VA

In addition SCOs must conduct these tracking tasks:

- Provide certification information to bursar for tracking and reconciliation; cross-check VA pay rosters with campus account reports for any missing payments or to direct payments to other academic unit (SCS) when required
- Reconcile Ch 33 pay amounts; analyze for accuracy (basically requires equivalent of claims processing at school); troubleshoot payment issues and inquire via RNW for any discrepancy; coordinate return of funds to VA if and when appropriate
- Track first week attendance and terminate any certification for student who does not show up for term, return Ch 33 funds to VA
- Track all benefit recipients for schedule or account changes, report via adjustment or amendment thru VA Once – 205 GI Bill students out of a campus veteran population of 373 made changes to a total of 650 class sections in the course of the spring 2010 semester. This process is exceptionally time consuming especially now that charges are included in certifications and must be redistributed across artificial mini-terms within school's standard semester
- Coordinate with 3<sup>rd</sup> party billing accountant for federal funding conflicts under Ch 33 – MyCAA, FTA, ROTC, etc.
- Track end of course grades, investigate any F for non-attendance issues, report reductions as appropriate including possible artificial calculation of charges based on reduced VA hours; this requires multiple entries in VA Once, each on a different day to ensure that all data is received at RPO clearly.
- Track incomplete grades for completion within one year or reduce training time as appropriate
- Coordinate with bursar for reduced charges for returning servicemembers under new HEOA rules that require analysis of military and VA benefits when setting initial year tuition and fee rates
- Verify that military training is evaluated for transcript credit (requires admissions expertise or collaboration)
- Keep abreast of changes to rates and rules of all programs: Ch 33, YR, Fry scholarship, 1606, 1607, 30, 31, 35, and all state and non-VA programs (in Indiana: CVO, Purple Heart, NGS, FTA, MyCAA)
- Track publications and changes to every degree program and policy on campus for submission to SAA for approval – at SLCC this entails 19 schools, colleges and divisions; 134 undergraduate degree programs, 12 approved pre-professional and medical field preparatory programs, 34 non-degree certificate programs, certificate programs plus

distance education; enrollment bulletin and calendar published three times yearly; catalogs/academic bulletins published bi-annually – often only electronically requiring copying of every page from website either to CD or paper for submission in triplicate for approval by SAA

- Maintain files for compliance audits from VA and SAA
- Verify annual VA reporting fee roster for accuracy
- Accept Ch 31 authorizations, coordinate locally with appropriate staff units for sponsorship (bursar, financial aid, bookstore, parking); report enrollment information to case manager to include specific schedule details; keep track of Vocational Rehab counselors and their requirements; track authorizations for Ch 31 students; report end of term grades for Ch 31 students; advise Ch 31 students on admission procedures and other campus requirements
- Forward Ch 31 certification and adjustment information via email or fax to case managers and Vocational rehab finance office
- Verify tutorial assistance need and tutor qualifications, submit documentation for student reimbursement
- Hire, supervise, and pay tutors hired under Vocational Rehab tutoring contract for Ch 31 students
- Hire, train, supervise, and process timesheets for VA work-study employees

## **Evaluation and Assessment of Claims Processing**

In October 2009 we conducted a study of our processes to determine the amount of time it takes to process certifications. This was at the beginning of the new GI Bill, Chapter 33. Our study revealed students on Ch 33 who had no problems with their files took between 45 to 85 more minutes (depending on the student's program) to process than students who were not on Ch 33.

Because the majority of our students are now using Ch 33, and the process is more established and the requirements are clearer, we conducted another study of the steps and time required for processing Ch 33 and flight program certifications. (See Appendix A for SLCC Steps for Certifying a Student.)

Because of the added time required to process Ch 33 claims, there are discussions nationwide addressing the need for additional support at schools. Until recently, there have not been formal studies or suggestions for the number of SCOs needed. However, in a letter regarding compliance survey findings for another institution of higher education dated March 2014, the VA Education Liaison stated, "... with all of the added policies and procedures required, it is recommended to have additional staff assist with compliance. During VA conferences the recommendation is one staff member for every 150 beneficiaries."

At SLCC, the ratio is one SCO to 283 beneficiaries. To break down the workload for each SCO:

Each student requires an average of two certifications per semester equaling 566, and 1,700 per SCO per year (three terms)

Between the four SCOs they complete at least 6,800 certifications per year just for the basic certifications.

When a student drops or withdraws from classes, the number of certifications increases. Approximately 450 students per semester require one or more additional changes in their certifications (each change, each different LDA requires a separate certification) for drops,

withdrawals or fails plus reporting for graduation, probation or suspension. If 450 students need just one additional change each semester, (those that have a change in the middle of the semester normally need more than one adjustment), that brings the total certifications and adjustments per year to over 8,164 between 2 full time and 2 part time SCOs.

Our SCOs are also required to complete additional support duties for the department and to be available for the other 450 veterans not using VA benefits.

This is the process we follow each semester:

1. An email is sent to all students reminding them to submit a certification request by email once their schedule is completely set.
2. Certifications are processed in the order we receive the request as long as there are no problems with the student's file.
3. Students submit requests for certification for the semester to [veterans@slcc.edu](mailto:veterans@slcc.edu) so we have proof they sent it. We verify we have received it by return email to student.
4. Student's schedule is printed from Banner.
5. Work-study employees find student's file and put schedule on front of file.
6. Work-study employees complete coding process by entering data into Banner computer system for tracking. They enter term, number of hours, check for transcript completion, and ensure classes are required for graduation. All documents submitted and processes are logged on fact sheet.
7. File is given to SCO to complete certification.
8. SCO checks for correctness of coding process. If classes all fit and prior credit is complete, student's info on BIO screen is checked for accuracy and certification is entered for term into VA Once system; which is reflective in the steady number of students per semester prints out the certification is printed to be scanned in students file.
  - a. If class does not fit or if prior credit is not complete, a letter is emailed to the student with details as to why certification is not being processed. File is placed in the contact drawer waiting for response from student.
  - b. Once the student has corrected the issue, the file is placed in the processes submitted for that day. It does not go to the front of the stack.
9. Once the student has been certified, the VA sends an email to the student notifying them it has been completed.
10. SCO logs work completed and places file in bin to be scanned.
11. Work-study scans all documents on the front of the file, punches holes in documents and places them in the file.
12. File is placed in 'to file' bin and work-study files the file in the correct file cabinet.

Our weaknesses and challenges in processing veterans' benefits each term include the following:

- Reporting data to the VA is required to be completed within 30 days.
- We must complete our end of term and grade audit, make adjustments and report LDA's, send probation and suspension letters to students and report graduation at the same time we are processing new claims for the new term. It takes one SCO two weeks to complete the end of term process, which leaves the two part-time employees to process new certifications.
- Each semester over 70 percent of our students do not check to ensure classes are required before they submit their request for certification. We must send a letter to each student informing them of the no-pay class and give them 10 days to correct their schedule, thus

slowing down certification completion. We then process the claim after 10 days or when notified by the student they have corrected the problem.

- During our certification period, we often do not have our work-study employees to answer phones, assist our new students, and assist with filing and scanning. This is due to the slowness of the VA to complete new work-study approvals each semester. The SCOs are then required to answer questions and help students so processing claims slows down.
- With the time it takes to find each student's file to process each claim, when we do not have enough staff, and have other duties to complete, we struggle to complete certifications quickly. We do keep within the 30-day requirement.

The strengths of our processing system and procedures are that

- we work well as a team and, when needed, everyone from the Manager to all SCOs complete all steps of the process to get the work done,
- we double check each other in the steps we take to complete the work, and
- we make few errors (based on our 2013 VA audit) in certification and reporting for prior credit.

Our goals and timeline in processing benefits is to complete certifications within three days before the rush and during the rush. However, we do not meet the second part of that expectation very well. We process the claims in the order they are submitted to our office and do a good job processing them in a timely manner before the term. But when the term begins and during the first two weeks of the term we have a difficult time keeping up with the certifications.

As much as we try to always satisfy our students we do receive complaints about issues such as those listed below:

- The length of time it takes to process their files
- The way we process claims in the order they are received; students say they need the money so we should process their claims first
- That we will not process their classes if they are not required
- Academic Advising giving wrong information about which classes to take
- Making students get transcripts and have them evaluated before process
- The VA garnishing flight students who do not bring debt letters for flight labs to our office so we can refund remaining funds

When students have a concern or frustration, we listen and address their concern or complaint. Most of the time we just need to explain and clarify the facts of the situation. If there is anything we can do to fix the concerns we will. Mostly we just need to let them know what the rules are and that we follow those rules so we can be fair and continue to be approved to certify veterans' classes.

If we know a student has become in-eligible or run out of benefits, we do what we can to direct them to other possibilities for funding sources such as Financial Aid or Department of Work Force Services. Most times though, we do not know they have run out of benefits. The VA does not allow us to see the amount of benefits our students have remaining. The VA claims this would be a violation of FERPA. This makes it very difficult to know if the student stopped attending due to running out of benefits or for other reasons.

## **Procedures Needing Improvement**

One of the biggest challenges each semester when certifying benefits is the time it takes finding files for the student we are certifying, completing the certification and then scanning all of the documents and re-filing the folder. We want to move to a paperless system for certifying and record keeping, but have not been able to develop a system that we are comfortable with yet.

We also want to automate more of our processes but again we have not been able to develop a plan for that. Much of our problem is the lack of IT support for and knowledge of how we can work with Banner to do this. An SCO from another Banner school gave us a document her school developed that provided all the information we would need from our files on one page. The document was given to IT but nothing has been done yet to assist us with the project.

## **Yearly Federal Audits**

Each year the VA conducts an audit of the department's records due to the number of veterans attending SLCC. The VA audits both traditional and SAT student records. A formal letter is sent to the VS Manager informing her of the pending audit with a list of students to be audited and a list of questions to answer. The department typically has one to two weeks to prepare all documentation for the auditors. The audit is conducted either in person, with VA auditors on campus reviewing files, or remotely, for which the department must send copies of the requested records to the VA.

After an audit is complete, we receive a findings letter from the auditor. It is the responsibility of the Manager to send a response to the findings letter, addressing what we are doing to correct any concerns. The audits are helpful to identify things we may be doing incorrectly so we can correct our processes. Prior to 2010, the State Approving Agents (SAA) role was to visit the schools every year to monitor the files without penalty to the College and to answer questions, provide training if the files had any problems. After PL 111-377 was passed, the SAA no longer can visit to assist and provide non-punitive review and training.

There is a problem with process because if one auditor gives directions for processing and then the next year, another auditor believes it should be done a different way, there is no recourse for the school. This raises the question, whose directions do we follow? The VA says to follow the direction of our ELR, yet when we do we could still have problems. We had first hand experience with this in our 2013 audit.

## **VA Audit 2012**

We passed the 2012 audit, but had multiple concerns, mostly because of the flight program. A few of the main points of concern and solutions are explained below.

- Not having files available to the auditor and not having records (13 files)
  - The flight vendor ULA refused to provide the files to the auditor on our campus, but instead, told the auditor to go to their site.
  - The SLCC flight department did not keep any copies of the students' documents in their files.
  - The SLCC flight department acting dean did not intend on maintaining or monitoring each file.

SOLUTION: It was mandated that to keep the program, the VS office would be required to maintain the files and monitor each student.

- Late reporting when student terminated training (2 files)  
SOLUTION: An employee was assigned to focus on completing the grade audit.

### **VA Audit 2013**

In the 2013 audit, different ELRs audited our files than the previous year. Our auditor had retired so the VA sent auditors from Arizona to complete the audit. First, they audited our office files, including the SAT program but not the Flight department. Our files for the regular students and our SAT program audit were completed with no errors, concerns or problems.

Then they audited flight students, which did not go well. These auditors looked at the files and interpreted the regulations differently than the previous ELR. As there were many problems and differences between what we were told the prior year and what the 2013 auditors indicated is the approved processes for flight programs.

As a result of problems with the flight students, the audit was expanded to another 45 flight files. We assembled the files and sent them to the auditors. When they found the same problems with those files, they expanded the audit to 100 percent for flight students only. The VA will not tell us the extent of the problems, however, they have given us suggestions for changing our process to avoid these same problems.

One of the main suggestions is to move to a flat fee for flight labs. By moving to a flat fee, we avoid having to monitor every charge and monitoring every flight, and we avoid having to make adjustments in fees. This would also ensure that the veterans pay the same amount for the lab as the self-pay student. Currently, the self-pay student pays almost one half the cost our veterans pay for the same lab. The College has decided to require the flight department to move to the flat fee. This is an important step.

We have also adjusted the flight labs to fit in the standard term dates and not adjusting the beginning and ending date as directed by our Utah ELR previously. The goal for completion of our remote 100 percent audit is May 15, 2014. Once the auditors are done, they will send all results to Muskogee, and they will begin making the adjustments to the students' files. We must prepare for that because the adjustments may require the 350 veterans who have taken flight labs in this program to repay hundreds of thousands of dollars to the VA.

### **Yearly Catalog Approval**

Each year the VS Manager is required to prepare a catalog approval request for our traditional programs, identifying all certificate programs we want approved and identifying any changes made in non-credit programs. As per a change in the law, all degree (A.A., A.S., A.A.S) programs are automatically approved.

Each year the SAT catalog is also required to be submitted. Every SAT program must be compared to the previous year's catalog and each class and credit hour change must be reported and each program requested to be approved.

Completing the process of preparing for the yearly catalog approval has been a challenge. It is a lengthy process and due to no longer having a printed catalog, must be done on the computer.

This process has not always been completed in a timely manner. We need to do better to get this process completed and submitted quicker each year.

## Support Services

Over the years we have conducted satisfaction surveys of our students. During Spring Semester 2013, our survey asked about the various support services we provide on campus, whether the students used them and their satisfaction with the services. The results of the most recent survey are listed in Appendix B.

### Students Participation in Services

Listed in the table below is the number of students participating in the support services provided in the Veterans Center

Service Provider	Fiscal Year Stats		
	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
VetSuccess On Campus	90 (3 months)	840	870
Veterans Upward Bound	16	34	27
VITAL	None	New	103
Veterans Accessibility Counselor	(before partnership)	98	191
Department of Workforce Services	4	3	6
Helmets to Hardhats	0	0	0
Yellow Ribbon Waiver Program (in 2012 the residency law was changed allowing veterans out 1 year to pay resident tuition, thus there's less need for Yellow Ribbon)	68	32	23

## **VetSuccess on Campus**

A VA counselor is assigned to SLCC to assist all veterans with VA benefits information and to provide referrals to VA services including VA rehab education, career and employment guidance, faculty/student support, stress and crisis management. The VetSuccess on Campus program is a collaborative effort between SLCC and the VA to provide on-campus support for student veterans, staff and faculty. SLCC was one of the first eight schools selected by the VA to serve as a pilot school for this program

This program has been highly successful and beneficial for our student veterans, staff and faculty. The Counselor is available to our students, staff and faculty during office hours and provides support to students at satellite campuses also. He has assisted in diffusing tense situations when veterans have come in upset and frustrated. He provides guidance to students on their educational goals and meets with students on academic probation. He is a VA Rehabilitation Counselor so has the background to assist students with VA rehab benefits, employment, education, and other supportive areas. He also can check on benefit payments from the VA to the students, write letters of support for DRC services, direct the students to the various VA benefits available. This program supports the mission and goals of SLCC.

## **Veterans Upward Bound**

This is a federally-funded TRIO program offering free tutoring for veterans in math, English and computer science. It is a partnership between Weber State University and SLCC. Weber State holds the grant and includes SLCC as one of the sites it supports. Weber hires and pays the tutors available to our veterans.

The tutoring has been highly valuable and successful and has assisted hundreds of veterans each year to pass the three subjects. We have had excellent tutors who work with our veterans, sometimes one-on-one in the tutoring labs. The tutors are well qualified, give clear guidance and are caring with students. This is an excellent program and we are lucky to have it on our campus. Many of our veterans have said the only reason they passed the class was because of VUB.

The main challenge is finding rooms for tutors to work with our students. Each semester we must look for space and arrange the rooms. For example, our current math tutor must use the study area in our lounge to provide tutoring because we cannot find a room for his morning hours. He then moves to another room for the afternoon tutoring times. If we had space permanently reserved for tutoring, this would solve the problem.

This program supports our missions and goals at SLCC and is a valuable service for our veterans.

## **Veterans Integration to Academic Leadership (VITAL)**

SLCC was selected as a pilot site (out of 20 sites nationally) for this new VA health care program beginning Fall Semester 2012. SLCC, U of U, and Weber State share a VA psychologist who is on our campus two days a week to aid student veterans in adjusting to the academic setting, to overcome obstacles that might impede academic success, to provide support toward completing educational goals, and to provide mental health treatment to veterans and their families as they improve their lives through education. The Counselor is available to assist veterans with enrolling

for medical benefits and to provide counseling on stress and crisis management. The Counselor also

- serves as a bridge between VHA and the student veteran,
- helps to navigate a complex and intimidating system,
- helps with health care enrollment,
- provides referrals to appropriate providers,
- provides an outlet for frustrations with the system, and
- is an advocate for resolution of concerns.

The VITAL program has been highly successful in serving our students. The Counselor has assisted many students in a variety of ways, particularly with signing up for healthcare benefits and by providing counseling sessions on campus. By having this service on campus, our students don't have to go to the VA complex for sessions and can receive immediate assistance. This type of immediate support can make a difference to the student and keeps them in class and school. The Counselor also provides referral information and letters for students to receive support services from SLCC's Disability Resource Services.

Even though VITAL is relatively new, it has already provided a valuable service and has been highly successful. The Counselor uses a room in the SLCC Health Services offices for counseling sessions. This provides a quiet, safe, and private place for veterans. The Counselor also uses the Veterans Center to visit with students and to conduct learning testing. This program supports the mission and goals of SLCC in every way.

### **Veterans Accessibility Counselor**

In an effort to reach out to our veterans with disabilities, Veterans Services developed an innovative partnership with the SLCC Disability Resource Center (DRC). We noticed our veterans were not using DRC resources. Veterans often do not identify themselves as disabled and seemed uncomfortable going up to the DRC office. We developed a creative approach to place a DRC counselor in the Veterans Center two days a week and to change the employee's title from Disability Advisor to Veterans Accessibility Resource Counselor. The Counselor serves veterans in the center and assists them with supportive services and disability accommodations. By bringing the DRC Advisor to the center where our veterans feel comfortable in seeking support, by changing the title and by working in partnership with the VetSuccess Counselor, the VITAL Counselor and the Veterans Services staff, the number of veterans using DRC services has increased by 75 percent in less than one year.

This program has been very successful and the Counselor has been perfect for our students. The DRC Director supported the Counselor to attend VA conferences to learn about working with veterans and about veterans' benefits. This program supports all of the values and mission of the College. Student veterans are now even willing to go to DRC Advisors in the DRC office.

The DRC and Veterans Services just received the 2013-14 SLCC Innovation of the Year award for this partnership. They will be presenting their innovation to the Innovators Conference held in Boston at their 2015 annual conference.

## **Department of Workforce Services**

A veteran representative from the Department of Workforce Services provides assistance once a week with financial, job-seeking, resume and employment needs. If veterans meet financial eligibility needs, they may qualify for additional services as well.

This is a good program, but we have had problems getting veterans to use the services. There are many restrictions to receiving DWS services and most of our students are not looking for employment while they are in school. Another challenge may be that some veterans hear “Workforce Services” and don’t want to talk to them. We have been waiting for a flyer that DWS has developed to promote the program, but they are having problems with getting the flyer approved by their legal team.

This program does support the SLCC mission and goals. However, we need to find a way to market it more to encourage students to use the resource on campus. Only a few students have used the services so it has not been that successful yet. This can be a benefit for our students but we have not done a great job marketing it.

### **Helmets to Hardhats**

Helmets to Hardhats provide online assistance to veterans wanting to be placed in construction trades careers. Veteran’s sign up for the service provide their credentials and the program contacts them to place them in jobs in this field. We are the contact and support site for this program.

This program has been available for four years at SLCC, but to date, we are not aware of anyone using the resource. We do not have many student veterans in the construction trades fields. This is not a program we spend a lot of time on due to the lack of interested students. We have the information in our office and we pass that out, but it does not require much from our staff.

### **VA Yellow Ribbon Program**

The Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008 established the Yellow Ribbon Program. This program allows institutions of higher learning to voluntarily enter into an agreement with VA to fund tuition and fee expenses that exceed the tuition and fee amounts payable under the Post-9/11 GI Bill. The institution can contribute a specified dollar amount of those expenses, and VA will match the contribution, not to exceed 50 percent of the difference. To receive the Yellow Ribbon Program benefits the student must be enrolled in an approved program offered by an institution of higher learning that participates in the Yellow Ribbon Program.

The department performs the following tasks to support the program:

- Advertises Yellow Ribbon program and procedures
- Determines Yellow Ribbon eligibility and appropriate campus and VA contributions
- Bills VA for their contribution and ensure college makes its contribution
- Ensures students maintain status and adjust awards as required
- Maintains tracking of process, awards and student application process for review of VA auditors

## Yellow Ribbon Waivers and Residency Apps Approved by Semester

Term	#applied YRP	#granted YRP	#residency issues	#not qualify for YRP	College Paid	#Residency approved
Fall 2010	16	15	1	0	\$8,400	
Spring 2011	30	30	0	2	16,587	
Fall 2011	35	29	4	2	37,700	
Spring 2012	20	17	0	3	22,100	
Fall 2012	14	10	4	0	13,000	31
Spring 2013	16	12	4	0	15,600	44
Summer 2013	*Not needed	-----				9
Fall 2013	17	8	4	5	10,400	22
Spring 2014	6 pending	pending				pending

\*Summer semester tuition for resident and non-resident is the same.

\*\*The number of students not qualifying for the Yellow Ribbon waiver due to rules applies to VA rules of not qualifying for 100 percent of chapter 33 benefits.

### Annual Events

The department has developed a variety of events (listed below) to involve veterans as well as the college community in recognizing veterans. It is difficult to get veterans or students, staff or faculty to attend events. We have tried multiple avenues to encourage attendance. We have not always been as successful as we would hope. An email is sent to each student, a message is posted on Facebook and notices put on our web page notifying them of our events.

- The Manager assists with planning and presenting Veterans Day programs in partnership with Student Life and Leadership. We provide a program one day during the week before Veterans Day.
- On Veterans Day, we conduct a flag raising ceremony on four of our campuses and provide refreshments after. This event acknowledges the service and sacrifice of all veterans, including our student veteran population and show that SLCC supports and respects them as an institution of higher learning.
- We provide workshops for veterans throughout the year. Workshops are conducted by the VetSuccess on Campus and VITAL Counselors. Workshops have covered topics such as financial awareness, stress management, resume writing, and military service to civilian terms.
- Fall Semester we hold an orientation for new veterans and a guest. We provide dinner and invite representatives from various Student Services departments to provide short presentations.
- Trainings and presentations are offered to educate faculty, staff, and administration about student veterans' issues. The Veterans Services Manager, VetSuccess on Campus and VITAL Counselors usually present in partnership, each covering their areas of expertise. The training is called From Combat to the Classroom -- Student Veterans 101 and includes veteran sensitivity training.
- Veterans Services serves cake to the student body on the birthday of each branch of the service. A flyer with information on and contributions made to America made by that branch is also passed out. We invite recruiters from that branch of service to come in their uniform to pass out cake with us. This provides a chance to educate civilian students that do not

know about the military or may have misconceptions regarding the military and also provides acknowledgement for veterans from each branch.

- For graduation, red, white and blue veterans honor cords are presented to veterans at a special graduation dinner to honor their graduation. Certificates for those graduating with Honors and High Honors are also presented.
- The Valentines 4 Veterans drive collects valentines and messages of love and support from SLCC students for veterans and actively serving military members. These cards are delivered to the VA Hospital, nursing homes, and homeless shelters, and extras are mailed to active duty servicemembers. In seven years we have collected and delivered over 45,000 messages.
- We support the Veterans Club with their activities and promote joining the club to students.

In addition to the annual events, the VS Manager is responsible for planning and carrying out other random events and meetings throughout the year as needed. This is sometimes a challenge due to the many other responsibilities and meetings scheduled.

Many outside groups contact the VA Manager to partner with them on events or to bring their services to campus. Due to the many events we already plan and the lack of support staff, those additional requests for services and events cannot be accommodated. The VS staff has voiced concern that we are stretched thin and cannot take on any more events and get our work done. The choice to not bring on more programs at this time has disappointed the groups requesting the partnerships. We don't want to create bad feelings with others, but we cannot do more with the staff we have.

### **Outreach and Marketing**

Veterans Services' programs and services are advertised to students, staff, faculty and the community through a variety of methods listed below:

- The Veterans Services web page ([www.slcc.edu/veterans](http://www.slcc.edu/veterans))
- A Veterans Services Facebook page (SLCC Veterans Services)
- The SLCC College Catalog
- Phone contact with students
- Emails to student veterans
- During events and activities provided for veterans and the College
- Presentations at conferences to staff, faculty and students
- Flyers and posters
- Veterans Service brochure
- Articles written for The Globe, the student newspaper
- Listing activities on the state's veterans web site

A large challenge in sending "mass" emails to student veterans is that we can only send groups of 50 emails at a time because of limits on SLCC's system. Given that there are 1300 veterans and dependents identified at SLCC, we must cut and paste 50 names into 26 separate emails to cover all the students. This is very time consuming and we don't have the staff to do that without taking them off other tasks. It would be very helpful to find a more efficient system of sending mass emails.

We make every effort to contact student veterans and notify them of events and new services. However, we have not had the response from our veterans that we hope in attending events or in using new services. The method we found to have the best success is having the veteran come to our center and having our employees, who are veterans, share the information veteran to veteran. Then we can personally introduce the student to the services and service providers available.

People from the veteran community and some veterans themselves have said that veterans are not joiners. In addition, our student body at SLCC consists of veterans who are going to school full time, many of whom have jobs and/or families. We are a commuter school with students, especially veterans, who go to school and leave, and who do not want to stay on campus longer or come back to attend events.

Based on the attendance at events, it seems we do not have an effective process for notifying students of events. It just might be that they are not interested or we just have not found the right method to reach them. We are planning on sending out a survey to the students to seek feedback on what they would attend, what might stop them from attending our events, and what method of notification they would prefer for the events. Doing that would capture the veterans' ideas, but we still are not guaranteed to have the attendance. We can also contact other schools that are similar to the demographics of ours to determine what they do to encourage participation. We have also discussed holding events in two sessions, one in the day and one in the evening. But again, providing two events would take more effort and time in our already overbooked schedule.

An example of what we have done differently is this year's graduation dinner. A week from the RSVP deadline, we had few students calling to RSVP for the dinner. Staff members called and personally invited them to the dinner and we more than doubled the number of students in attendance. This seems to be a successful method to get participation, however it is extremely time consuming. Given that we had a total of 96 in attendance and in the past we had 40, we now know that we need more personal contact to get attendance at such events.

## **Inclusivity**

Many of the services and programs have certain criteria that need to be met in order to qualify for the service or program. Because of the varied criteria, some student veterans can use some services and others not. Where we can, however, we keep things open to all. For example, the veterans' lounge is open to all veteran students; they all can use the computers and printers and they can talk with our VetSuccess Counselor and VITAL Counselors. But some may not qualify for Veterans Upward Bound because of this program's federal eligibility requirements.

Since our services and programs are tailored to the veteran as an individual as opposed to as a group, we do not have any evidence as to one group of veterans using a service more than another group. There is not a certain age, economic status or other identifiable feature that would make the student more likely to use the computers or any other service offered.

Student Services departments know where Veterans Services is located and refer veterans to our office if they identify themselves as veterans. Student veterans using VA education funds are relatively well informed about our office and location. However, those who are not using VA funds often times do not know where we are located or the services available. Our services and programs are available for all veterans and we do provide information and invitations to all veterans to be inclusive. The students not using benefits are notified of Veterans Services by

emails as well. But given that these students are not participating, we must look at what other things we can try to promote services and programs to this group of veterans

We speak frequently with other staff members to help them work with veteran students. The VS Manager has provided more formal training for advisors and other educational groups on interacting with veterans and the specific needs of veteran students. Most information is provided informally when a staff member has a question regarding the student or their benefits.

Recently, we held our Veteran Students 101 training in partnership with the Faculty Teaching and Learning Center and Institutional Marketing. We had great participation, with 61 staff and faculty in attendance.

## **Community Involvement**

Since 2006 SLCC has been very involved in the community in many ways. Through our involvement we learn what is happening in our area to help our veterans and for the community to know about our events to better serve our veterans. In many meetings, SLCC is held up as top in the state with quality programming and support for veterans. As listed below, the Manager sits on many committees and task forces within the College and in the community:

### **SLCC Committees**

- Veterans Support Team
- SAT Multicultural Committee

### **Community Committees**

- Veterans Education and Training Working Group
- VetSuccess Committee
- Boots to Business
- National Veteran Program Administrators, NAVPA
- Student Veterans of America, SVA
- Wasatch South Veterans' Civic Counsel
- OIF/OEF Advisory Team
- AmeriCorps, VetSuccess on Campus
- Veterans Small Business Development Subcommittee
- Utah Veterans and Military Employment Coalition
- Utah Wasatch Front Army Recruiting Battalion Advisory Board
- Utah Veterans Education and Training Working group
- Helmets to Hardhats
- Utah Yellow Ribbon Support Team
- Utah National Guard Education Fair Committee
- Utah Veterans Job Fairs Committee

## **Local Events**

Yellow Ribbon Events- we participate in the Yellow Ribbon Events which support National Guard and Reserve units before deployment or upon return from deployment. Our participation allows us to let military members know about SLCC and the benefits that Veterans Services can provide as they use their VA educational funds.

Education/Job Fairs- We participate in job fairs and college education fairs directed toward veterans to let them know about our office and the programs and services that we provide. We ensure that veterans know we can provide support (even if it is just encouragement) for them at our office.

## **Publications**

Our brochure highlights services and programs available through Veterans Services. In keeping with the policy of reviewing all publications with Institutional Marketing, we have worked with IM to ensure that the brochure meets college guidelines.

## **Presentations**

We have developed Student Veterans 101 as a training presentation for the college community. It is presented in partnership with the VS Manager, VetSuccess on Campus Counselor and the VITAL Counselor. The presentation highlights working with veterans, challenges they may experience in school and ways we can support them.

We present trainings to the staff and faculty for their group trainings, staff meetings, and for college conferences such as the annual Student Services Conference and Faculty Conference. We also present to other schools and organizations and conferences as requested. The information presented is tailored to what the group requests.

To gain further support for veterans on campus, we are developing a more detailed training to be conducted after staff and faculty attend the Student Veterans 101 training. The additional training will be to create a 'safe zone' training for veterans and their needs at the College. This will mirror what is currently being done for other minority groups on campus. We hope to hold our first safe zone training during the summer session. Many indicated they want to participate and be identified as veteran friendly and provide a safe zone.

## **Campus Relations and Collaborations**

It is important to collaborate with other departments within Student Services and with other divisions and departments at the College. By working in partnership with others we better serve our veterans.

We initiate collaborative projects on campus and the community by simply talking with other departments and community agencies about the needs of student veterans. Together we determine if there is something we can do together, and if so, we move forward. Veterans Services has proven to be quite effective in developing partnerships and leveraging resources as evidenced by the many programs that are now available on campus for our students. The collaborations with on-campus departments are described below.

### **Disability Resource Center**

Veterans Services and the Disability Resource Center have collaborated for years on encouraging the use of DRC's services. In 2012, we developed a unique partnership to offer services within the center which has been very successful. See Support Services above for a detailed description of the program.

## **Accounts Receivable/Cashiering**

In 2009 when Chapter 33 was implemented, a new challenge was experienced by VS. The new benefit paid the school directly for education for any students using this benefit. Tuition and fees were paid based on how long the student served on active duty after 9-10-11. Most students received 100 percent of the benefit, but many received only a percentage.

In the beginning, VS was required to complete a spreadsheet with the amounts, the amount we billed the VA for and what we guessed the VA would pay. We were responsible to ensure all payments were made by the VA and that the amounts were correct. If the payment was wrong, we wrote the VA to get the correct amount sent to the school. The other steps we had for the financial process did not work and we experienced many problems with billing and refunding money to the VA.

The position of Accounts Receivable Veterans Accountant was created to address the concerns and problems relating to VA Debt Management issues and garnishments around Chapter 33, and most especially, the flight program adjustments in their lab fees. Two accountants were hired and quickly learned about the VA, VA Once, the VA web-based system used by the SCOs to certify classes, the way the VA processed claims and much more. Their help in all aspects of the college billing process was invaluable. They got our debt issues figured out, developed processes to clear up old records and stopped Debt Management from garnishing further funds. They determined where problems were with the students' accounts and refunded the money to the student or the VA.

There is now discussion that the two Veterans Accountant positions were temporary and will soon be absorbed back into the AR Department. We are concerned that things will go back to the way they were before when we had so many problems by not having dedicated staff to develop effective processes. There still are many accounts that must be balanced and the money returned to the VA. This is not something VS can do; it needs to be done by an accountant.

Having an accountant work with VS has been very helpful. One of the accountants knew Banner and assisted us in creating and printing a document for the auditors that had all the students' information including all billing information on it. We hope to be able to continue to use that form. AR has been creating a database to track the payments and compare them to the certifications more efficiently and tying all pieces (Banner, VA Once and the RA's) together to resolve any DMC issues or non-collection of payment.

## **Health and Wellness**

We have received many different types of support from the Health and Wellness Services department. Our departments are located in the lower level of the Student Center -- VS is in the north hall and Health and Wellness is in the south hall just around the corner from us.

Health and Wellness' massage therapists provide students a free massage each semester. When there are cancellations, the therapist comes to the Veterans Center and offers free massages to our veterans. This is quite a bonus for our students and appreciated by all.

When we applied for the VITAL grant, the Director of H&W wrote a letter of funding. The H&W Director made one of their counselor's offices available for the VITAL Counselor to use for private sessions for our students.

The Director understands the challenges student veterans experience and is a great supporter of our services and our veterans. We are exploring the possibility of doing an assessment together to study the effect of holistic support on veterans and their education. That might include extra massages, use of essential oils in the center, and other approaches. We look forward to conducting such a study.

### **Transfer Evaluation Office**

We count on the Transfer Evaluation Office to accurately evaluate and transfer credits from veterans' transcripts to their SLCC records. The VA requires that by the end of the second semester, all transcripts must be evaluated and all applicable credits transferred. SLCC uses the guidance of ACE to determine the credits that transfer. If the evaluation is not completed correctly, the College would experience problems upon our audit.

### **Financial Aid**

The Financial Aid department is very important to our students. They process the Pell grant funds, Purple Heart waivers, yellow ribbon waivers, scholarships and loans for flight students. We rarely hear any complaints regarding their services. They are very willing to assist when we have questions or concerns and process claims quickly.

### **Academic Appeals Office**

There can be significant implications for student veterans who submit appeals for complete drops or withdrawals. If they drop, we must terminate the students' certification that results in the VA determining the student never attended, in which case the student is responsible for all funds received and for the funds the school received on behalf of the student. We explain these implications to students to ensure they know what might happen if they proceed.

If the Supervisor in the Office of Academic Records has questions regarding a student's case, the VS Manager is invited to attend the Appeals Committee meeting. The Supervisor also emails the Manager the names of student veterans who have applied for appeals and the Committee's decisions. This way we can ensure we submit the appropriate reporting to the VA in a timely manner.

### **Residency Office**

Since all veterans returning home are considered non-residents until they complete the residency application, they must work with the Residency Supervisor. She has been helpful and willing to work with veterans to give them time to get their paperwork to her. She processes their paperwork quickly and is clear with students as to what they need. She has been fair and compassionate with our veterans.

### **Government and Community Relations**

At SLCC, we have a unique relationship with the department of Government and Community Relations. The Manager is sent new legislation being discussed and is asked for feedback as to how the legislation will impact SLCC, whether it would be good for our school, and if passed, what it would take to implement. Then the Legislative Director keeps the Manager informed when it passes. Working together as we do, there are few surprises for VS and if something is proposed that absolutely won't work, we have a say as to our concerns.

## **Academic Advising**

We do not currently have any special working relationship with Academic Advising. We need to create a closer connection and communication with Advising. Because the advice the advisors give our students is so important, this relationship must improve. Hopefully when our staff begins attending the advisors' meetings, they will be more open also.

## **Future Programs**

### **Veterans Support Team (VST)**

We are adding another level of support for our veterans by creating a team called the Veterans Support Team (VST) on campus. The VS Manager and the Veterans Accessibility Advisor (DRC) are working together to bring this team together. The vision is to create an interdisciplinary team of administrators, staff, faculty, students, veterans and community members to foster awareness of the student veteran experience and to ensure that needs are met across campus. The team will assist in planning future events and support services for our veterans.

### **Phone Outreach**

It is important for SLCC to begin outreach to veterans not returning to school and completing their education. A goal this year is to begin a process of contacting each student to determine why they stopped attending and work to encourage them back to school to complete their education. We do not have a finished plan, but we do have the beginnings and need to complete it.

### **Veterans Academic/Persistence/Outreach Advisor**

With the changes in VS, the growth in the number of veterans, and the complex requirements for tracking and other challenges that the Manager and SCOs handle, there is a need for another employee to address some of the gaps we have identified in advising, persistence and outreach. Currently our VS Manager and SCOs must complete these tasks but often do not have adequate time to do so or when they do, they are taken away from their primary certifying responsibilities. While there is not a need for separate positions to fill the three roles, we do need one position in which an individual would be trained in all three areas, which actually fit together.

Our veterans need to have an Academic Advisor they can go to who knows the rules for VA benefits, is clear that veterans can only take required classes, understands the veteran culture, and is supportive of our veterans.

We have many students who attend a term or two, leave and never return to school. Given our limited staff, we have not been able to follow up with these non-returning students. Institutional

Research was asked if they could generate a report identifying persistence rates of our veterans, but they could not provide that information for us. We need to begin tracking retention rates of student veterans and we will continue to ask Institutional Research to figure out how to extract that information. The number of inactive files in the office indicates that there are many veterans dropping out of school. It would be important to find out why and reach out to them and encourage them to return and complete school. This employee could work with those on probation also to assist and support them to successfully complete the term.

There is also a need to have someone trained in VS services to attend the outreach events including education fairs, yellow ribbon program events, VA events, etc.

## **Significant Changes**

Everything in our department has changed and is new since the last five years. The whole department, office space, all employees and responsibilities are new. In Section I, the major changes were outlined and are summarized briefly below.

Veterans Services has experienced many changes in structure, location, staff, processes, responsibilities and direction over the past six years. The only employee that is the same is the Manager. The only process that is the same, is certifying veterans and dependents, however, the process for certifying is completely different.

A few of the changes are listed below.

- We had an office of 178 square feet to now 1800 square feet.
- We were responsible for five different types of benefits and groups of students, to now being responsible for 17 types of benefits and groups of students.
- We were responsible for only traditional credit students and have added SAT non-credit students to our accountability.
- We were responsible for 400 students to now 1300 students.
- We worked with one outside support service on campus to now six.
- We had one full-time and one part-time employee to now three full-time, two part-time and 9 work-study employees.
- In four years we have had eight different part-time employees for two positions.
- We changed from providing no support activities to providing many per year.

Institutionally, the major changes included VS taking responsibility for SAT veterans and moving to a new and expanded space in the Student Center with another office at South City Campus. Organizationally, the office shifted from reporting to the Registrar to reporting to the Assistant Vice President for Enrollment Services and it became an independent department. The Manager performs the duties of an SLCC director, including leading an expanded staff of professionals and non-exempt employees, managing the budget, ensuring compliance with VA regulations/policies, defining goals and assessments, developing programs and support services with partners, and serving as a liaison with local and national VA officials and service providers as well as elected officials.

## **Professional Pilot Program**

When Chapter 33 was implemented SLCC began a new procedure for offering classes for our newly organized Flight Program. Because SLCC is a state school, we were able to offer flight training and have the VA pay for the entire program. This program put a significant strain on our department due to the additional work to process and track, than all of the other programs and students combined.

In 2009 SLCC began certification for the SLCC Flight Program under the new GI Bill. With the new bill, the VA began paying up to 100percent of all tuition and fees including flight lab fees for those qualifying for Chapter 33 seeking a degree at an IHL. Following guidance from our VA Education Liaison, the certification process for Flight was set up according to the instructions for certifying benefits under the new Ch 33.

There has been little formal guidance from the VA on how to process claims for the Flight Program. This resulted in different perspectives between the Flight and VS departments as to how to comply with regulations to avoid liabilities for the institution. There have also been different perspectives from one ELR to another ELR on how to process flight claims.

The Flight Program grew rapidly with many veterans wanting to take classes. The first VA audit by our ELR indicated a concern with how we were certifying the flight lab with the theory classes and we were instructed to certify the lab separate from the theory classes. There was no concern with veterans receiving incompletes.

We experienced other problems due to the Flight Program; however, we have made changes in our processing procedures, refund procedures and tracking to address the problems. On the recommendation of the VA, the College is moving to a flat fee for the flight labs, which will address other problems we have had. Moving to the flat fee would eliminate our adjustments at the end of the term, needing to return money to the VA, and would keep the cost down for each lab. This will lessen the work and record keeping for all departments of the College and make audits easier.

## **Changes in VA Laws, Procedures and Executive Orders**

We experience many changes in VS due to changes in state and national laws passed through Congress or by the President. Listed below are only some of the major changes over the past five years. This is to demonstrate the frequency of changes by the VA and Congress that require, most times, major changes in what we must quickly conform to. With each change, we must adjust the work we do, the reporting and all documents to keep the instruction current. It also requires quick learning and adjustment by the employees. At one point we taught our work-study employees more processes to be able to help us. However, we decided this was not working due to the complexity of the laws and the frequency of changes from the VA.

This emphasizes the need for full-time employees to have the consistency and training to keep up with all of the changes. For detailed information on the specific laws, executive orders and our legal responsibilities, please refer to Section 6.

## Timeline of Changes

Summer 2008: Congress passed a new GI Bill that would pay 100% of tuition and fees, \$1000 annually for books and supplies, and tied the monthly stipend to the BAH rate. Schools had to prepare to adequately serve the existing population of veterans and also handle the influx of additional student veterans while the tripling of time spent on each veteran in benefits counseling, multiple certifications each term, and payment processing. The new benefit exponentially multiplied the awareness of veterans' needs and SCO expertise in dealing with those needs.

August 1, 2009: Post-9/11 GI Bill went into effect, requiring new certification procedures (distance/residence credits and a breakdown of tuition and fees). Without documented or consistent procedure/policy guidelines from the VA, most SCOs were required to submit multiple corrections for the same term. SCOs were now also required to report all changes in enrollment, even if the change did not affect a student's full-time status.

Schools were also inundated at the same time with a surge of veterans wanting to use the new GI Bill. There was much confusion about what the GI Bill covered and how it worked due to lack of direction and information from the VA. This required SCOs to spend additional time explaining things to students and colleagues. Extensive VA payment delays of up to five months resulted in student hardships and across-the-board frustration, leading schools to financially support students during the transition period.

March 2010: The VA began issuing debt letters for overpayments that were created with problems during the Fall 2009 rollout, requiring SCOs to begin researching claims, processing refunds, and reconciling accounts. Overpayment errors, vague debt letters, and VA overpayment policy changes since March 2010 have resulted in a significant workload increase for SCOs to manage the necessary accounting.

August 1, 2010: The Yellow Ribbon Benefit was activated. The benefit provides a means to even out the unmet financial need for veterans

August 1, 2011: Public Law 111-377 went into effect, changing the VA to last payer and requiring SCOs to monitor student funding and appropriately reduce reported T/F charges on certification, among other changes. Now, SCOs usually have to audit student accounts and amend each student's certification multiple times each term as student funding changes. PL 111-377 also increased compliance survey frequency to as often as annually for many schools, requiring additional SCO time to administer.

Even though PL 111-377\* was signed into law, there were no written regulations provided to the schools to provide guidance for the law. As a result, the VA gave one set of instructions, and then changed the instructions stating the new instructions were retroactive. The schools banded together and fought the VA stating the rules shouldn't be retroactive. The VA changed its position and made the rules active at the time it released the new policy\*.

\* Currently we still do not have written regulations for PL 111-377 signed into law December 2010. In addition, the VA keeps changing rules for recovering overpayments from students and continues to change processes, often without notifying the SCOs nationwide of the changes.

November 21, 2011, President Obama signed Public Law 112-56, the VOW to Hire Heroes Act of

2011, which included the Veterans Retraining Assistance Program (VRAP) for unemployed Veterans. The VA and the Department of Labor (DOL) worked together to implement this program, which provided education benefits to unemployed students in a certain age group. This new group of students required a lot of work to enroll, monitor and work with. The VRAP benefit part of this law was discontinued, March 31, 2014.

April 27, 2012 President Obama signed into law Executive Order 13607

This new law put many new levels of responsibility and requirements on SCOs. It provides information, support, and protections to federal education beneficiaries; strengthens oversight, enforcement and accountability activities within educational benefit programs; establishes Principles of Excellence as guidelines for educational institutions receiving federal funding; expands student data collection efforts to better understand educational outcomes, and requires development of a Centralized Complaint System for students.

November 2012: Treasury Offset Program begins, which results in VA overpayment claims being withheld from other federal payments to the school (research grant money, Medicare payments, etc.). SCOs are now required to assist in overpayment reconciliation procedures across departments and sometimes across multiple campuses.

March 1, 2013: New DOD MOU goes into effect, requiring all schools that participate in the federal Tuition Assistance program for military students to comply with additional reporting and monitoring requirements for TA students, as well as to submit to DOD compliance reviews. As primary point of contact, many SCOs experienced a significant workload increase in necessary coordination of the new TA requirements among various campus offices.

April 1, 2014: A new DOD MOU version 3.0 will include additional requirements from President Obama's Executive Order which includes personalized Net Price Calculations taking into account GI Bills and FTA, folding veteran program administration into the MOU requirements as well as extensive regulations and responsibilities for SCOs to report and monitor requirements for TA students.

## **Conclusion**

Given all of the changes, we have done a good job. We have received awards and acknowledgements from the College and the community. We are held up as an example of a quality program in the state serving our veterans. Schools from Utah have visited our center to get ideas for their new center or services for their students. We are happy to share what we are doing because we want all veterans to be supported.

Our strengths are the ability to make adjustments as needed with the changes in laws and responsibilities, the ability to work together to get the work done and help each other. We keep up on legislation being discussed and passed and take an active role in the process of evaluating the impact on SLCC before it is passed. We are even asked, many times, to give our input on the legislation and verbiage. The services we provide on campus are valuable and make a difference for our students.

But with the growth and increased responsibilities we have experienced, our staff and support staff for the office has not experienced the growth we need to keep up. Staff members are experiencing stress and burnout. The full-time employees often work many hours in the office and from home

trying to complete the work. With the high turnover of part-time and work-study employees, we constantly need to train and review the work of the new employees to ensure work is done accurately. This often places the full-time employees behind on the work that is their responsibility. Too many times we have not had the ability to process our work within the 30 day VA requirement. It is important to have additional full-time employees to provide the consistent well-trained support in the office to complete work without requiring our employees to take work home at night or on their days off to ensure work is completed in a timely manner and in the VA required time frame.

We have not been able to make our process quicker and easier due to just trying to keep up. Going paperless would ease our processes and we would like guidance to know how to even begin working on that process. Having assistance with report writing would allow us to complete reports and to assist us in moving forward with more automated processes.

With so many of our veterans not returning to school each semester, we are concerned with how many drop out and feel it is important to know the reasons so we can assist and support them to complete their education.

While we know we are doing good things, we also know there are ways we can improve our services. One of the most important things we do and need to continue is sending the message that at SLCC veterans matter to us, we are happy they are attending SLCC and their success is also our goal.

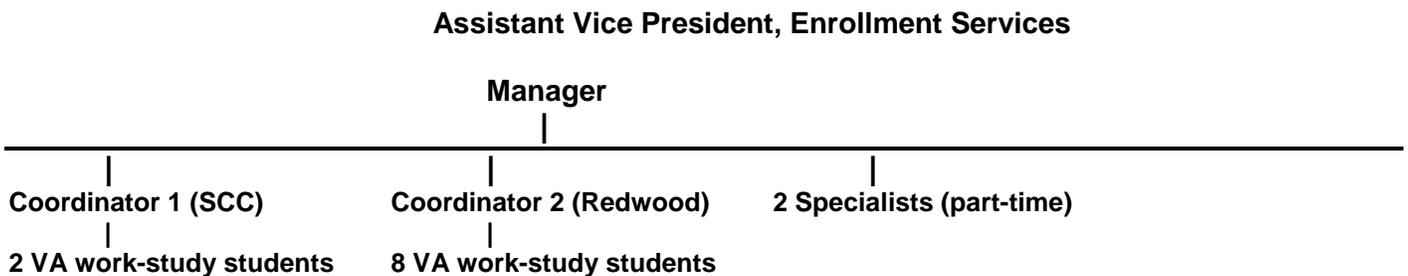
### III. LEADERSHIP AND STAFFING

#### Organizational Structure

The Veterans Services Manager is a direct report to the Assistant Vice President of Student Enrollment Services and leads the department. The department currently consists of three full-time staff (a manager, a coordinator 2, a coordinator 1), two part-time specialists and up to 10 veteran work-study employees. The full and part-time college employees report to the Veterans Services Manager and the work-study students report to the Coordinators. The demographic and experience profile of the VS staff are summarized in a table in Appendix C.

All college positions are base-funded with “Ed and General” dollars, except the Coordinator 1 position. It is paid from discretionary funding from the VP of Student Services and is thus subject to being a renewal decision each year. Funding has been requested through the Informed Budget Process to add this position to the institution’s base budget. The Manager will continue to request this position to be added to the base budget.

Staff currently serves students on three campuses. Our main site is the Taylorsville Redwood Campus and in the last two years we were given space at these two additional locations: at South City Campus we have a full-time office and at the Westpointe Center we staff an office one day a week. The Coordinator 1 is housed at South Campus and has hours at Westpointe Campus once a week. All others are at the main campus. The staffing and reporting pattern of Veterans Services is outlined in the organizational chart below.



#### Decisions and Communication

Due to the high turnover of employees, the Manager has primarily made decisions. Whenever possible and when appropriate, ideas and decisions are discussed with the full-time employees to determine the possible implications from their point of view. The Manager also periodically asks the college employees to come up with suggestions for situations, to encourage employees to learn problem-solving skills, teamwork, and to take ownership of decisions for the department. All employees are told during their employee orientation that if they have any ideas, they are welcome to discuss them with the Manager and all ideas are given serious consideration.

When a decision is made, the process is communicated to the staff through email or in-person sharing. Due to the small staff and office, this is the best method to discuss the changes.

The Manager makes all decisions on personnel and budget matters. Veterans Services has a full operating budget and basic expenditures are pre-planned. The decision-making process for the budget has been effective and is based on previous spending in various areas.

### **Staff Job Descriptions, Turnover and Recruitment**

In addition to specific duties as described below, all staff members are expected to be knowledgeable about and responsive to the needs and experiences of student veterans, servicemembers and their family members. Employees must know SLCC rules and requirements in addition to policies, rules, procedures and laws for the VA and local, state and federal laws and regulations, as these relate to the processing or use of veterans benefits and serving veterans.

In addition to understanding the rules, they must know the specific requirements for all 17 types of benefit groups of students attending SLCC. They must know how to use the college Banner system and the VA Once computer system, how to run and read the college degree audit printouts, and how to use the Nolij archiving system.

Manager 1 - Bachelor's degree required

This position has all the responsibilities of a Director under the new Talent Management system at the College. Due to education requirements, the position currently is a Managers level with the current employee having 30 years experience at the College and eight years in Veterans Services.

Duties of the Manager are to manage the day-to-day operations of Veterans Services, ensure the integrity of the records in the office, provide leadership and vision for the department and represent SLCC Veterans Services locally and nationally. The manager is accountable for department budget and determining all budget expenditures, including reconciling budgets during the year. Responsible to complete goals and assessments each year for department and prepare annual budget requests.

In compliance with SB 126, this position also serves as the designated 'Veterans Services Specialist' to coordinate with the Utah Department of Veterans and Military Affairs. This is to coordinate state veteran's services and attend state meetings and trainings.

In addition, the Manager plans and ensures events and activities are carried out for students attending SLCC throughout the year. The Manager is an advocate in planning events and services for student veterans on all campuses, for traditional and SAT students. Manager provides ongoing student veterans and veteran sensitivity training for SLCC staff and faculty.

The Manager is accountable for the evaluation, preparation and submission of the VA annual catalog approval for both the SLCC traditional and SAT non-credit programs and for requesting approvals for program changes during the year. The position also prepares for and ensures that annual VA audits are passed and completes the response to the audit to the VA. This position is responsible to ensure claims are processed correctly and submitted to the VA within 30 days, and to ensure funds from the VA are appropriately applied and/or refunded. The Manager is responsible to write policies and procedures for Veterans Services as needed, ensuring complete compliance with VA and college rules and regulations. The position oversees or produces all

documents and publications for distribution to students and community, and keeps all documentation updated.

The Manager represents Veterans Services locally and nationally as a liaison between SLCC and local and national elected officials, VA organizations and institutions. Is a partner with the local VA community, the local government and the federal VA in support of veterans, and attends community meetings to support veterans. The Manager serves on college and community committees; coordinating services for veterans is an important part of this position.

Through collaborative interactions with internal and external stakeholders, the Manager must incorporate sustainable practices, programs and services to assist in the students' transition to the college environment and to support completion of their educational goals. This position also conducts community outreach to ensure support for current students and to meet with new prospective students.

#### Coordinator 1- North Region - Bachelor's degree required

Coordinates and performs specialized and technical administrative functions in support of the School of Applied Technology (SAT) and Professional Pilot program; assists students to identify and determine eligibility for educational benefits given their declared program/degree; serves as a designated School Certifying Official (SCO) in all matters relating to VA education benefits by verifying and submitting all final documents to the VA on behalf of the student and SLCC; provides support and coordinates services and events to students attending classes at campuses in the North Region; serves as supervisor for two VA work-study employees including hiring, training and ensuring time is submitted for payment; assists with providing outreach events as required.

#### Coordinator 2 - Central Region - Bachelor's degree required

Coordinates and perform specialized and technical administrative functions in support of all students by being the lead School Certifying Official (SCO) of education benefits; assists students to identify and determine eligibility for educational benefits given their declared program/degree for traditional students; ensures certifications are completed accurately and timely by part-time SCOs and is responsible for completing end-of-term grade audits and adjustments; serves as backup SCO for the flight and SAT programs; as the work-study supervisor, is responsible for hiring and ensuring training and coverage in the office including approval of time submitted for payment; assists with updating VS web page and with providing outreach at events as required.

#### Specialist 1- two part-time positions- High school completion

Serves as SCO of education benefits for traditional students using their education benefits; answers student questions regarding benefits and services available and refers them to appropriate resources on campus; assists with training new work-study employees and ensures accurate information is given; provides back-up front desk support as needed; monitors contact letters to students and processes claims as required; assists with maintaining and updating college website and supporting planned events.

#### VA Work-study –ten part-time positions

Provides veteran-to-veteran frontline contact by answering questions regarding VA educational benefits, services available and by assisting them with using the college website; performs basic office support by answering phones, filing, scanning documents, entering basic data, and assisting with activities.

### **Staff Turnover and Recruitment**

We experience many changes among Veterans Services employees. Two different employees have held the full-time position added three years ago. However, our highest turnover rate is with part-time and work-study employees. The average the part-time employees stay in their position is nine months. Due to the complexity and requirements of the position, it is difficult to adequately train an employee and ensure continuity of services when having to continually retrain new employees.

The complexity and depth of knowledge about college, state and VA regulations that employees in Veterans Services need to master require long-time and continuous training. Keeping long-term employees is very important to maintain the high quality work required by School Certifying Officials. Training, quality and longevity of employment would be maintained and improved by upgrading these positions to full-time status. As per Utah HB 126 and the Executive Order EO 13607, schools must have employees trained and designated as a representative at each school to serve the needs of our student-veterans on campus.

We have a higher turnover rate in our VA work-study employees with two semesters as the average time in the position. Much of the turnover is due to the complexity of learning the rules and regulations as well as the needs of these students to focus on schoolwork, graduation and/or deployments. We have decided to selectively teach a work-study employee only coding or data entry due to the short time they work and the complexity of doing an accurate job. The work-study positions are focused on working with students, supporting other students and providing peer-to-peer support. These employees also do filing, scanning and other basic office duties.

When hiring a college employee, we follow the guidelines from HR. The position is posted in PARS and the applications are screened based on the required steps. All applications are reviewed and hired for the best qualifications.

Due to the complexity of claims processing and the many rules and regulations and to the short time between starting in the position and having to quickly be up to speed to assist our small staff, hiring someone without related experience is difficult for the office. Few people have experience working with veterans benefits, thus the selection is limited when looking for a new employee. This requires the remaining staff to take on more of the many tasks we must complete until the new employee has been completely trained.

## Training and Professional Development

### New Employee Training and Orientation

Our full-time and part-time SLCC employees are required to complete the College's new employee orientation provided online. New employees also participate in the New Employee Orientation offered by Student Services every semester. New employees, including work-study students, are required to complete and periodically update the College's mandatory training listed below:

- Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) - *Every 2 years*
- Anti-Discrimination & Harassment Avoidance (ADHA) - *Every 2 years*
- Emergency Procedures - *Every 3 years*
- Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) - *Every 3 years*
- Fire Extinguisher – *Renew every year*
- Workplace Violence – *Every 3 years*
- Driver Safety Training – *Ever two years if applicable*

New employees are personally introduced by a Veterans Services employee to individuals in other departments that they will be working with and to those in leadership positions. New employees are provided with on-the-job training and are mentored by one of the certifying officials until he or she is comfortable with the certification process and school regulations and procedures.

Continued mentorship is provided to ensure that new employees feel knowledgeable and secure in the processes they are performing and in the information they are giving to students.

New employees are given a packet of documents to review, which are the same as is given to our new students. They are asked to study the information especially the welcome letter that is used for the personal orientation each new student receives. Employees are also asked to review the catalog section that covers services in Student Services.

Sample files for each chapter of benefits are assembled for new employees to use as an example of the correct order for the documents in each file.

### Ongoing Training

Ongoing training takes many forms. The majority is on-the-spot training to address issues or concerns with the processing of claims. Employees are also encouraged to attend workshops and conferences on campus (such as those offered by the Center for Innovation, Human Resources, and Student Services) to guarantee that employees are well versed in college changes, services and projects.

When the opportunity arises to attend training offered by the College, any employee that can be spared may attend. Those attending training are asked to report what they learned to the others in the office who stayed back to provide coverage. There are opportunities for work-study employees to attend some meetings, but most meetings and trainings are reserved for the college employees due to our having a small staff.

Training is available for full-time employees at annual WAVES and NAVPA conferences. Attendance at these conferences is valuable to update our training and learn changes in VA rules and regulations.

With the high turnover in VA work-studies and the variable beginning employment dates, training is conducted on an individual basis and occurs on the individual employee's start date and continues throughout the period of employment. As the employee learns a task we address any deficiencies or if there are no concerns, we further the employee's level of responsibility and train them to complete more complex tasks.

Veterans Services SCOs participate in the Office of the Registrar and Academic Records meeting and training to create an open dialogue between departments in Student Services and to ensure proper procedures are followed and accurate information is provided to students. Much of what we do to assist our students requires us to know and understand changes in Student Services to ensure our processes match with those of Admissions, Registration, Incoming Transfer Credit Office, Financial Aid, Testing, Academic Advising and Disability Resource Center.

### **Professional Development Opportunities**

Currently, the full-time Coordinators are approved to attend one of two out-of-state conferences for School Certifying Officials (SCO) each year. The Manager attends both conferences and serves on the Board of Directors for NAVPA. The two conferences provided during the year are by the Western Association of Veterans Education Specialists (WAVES) and National Association of Veterans Program Administrators (NAVPA). These conferences provide the SCO valuable and timely information and an opportunity to network with other, possibly more experienced SCOs who can provide ideas and best practices from their institutions. By having more than just one employee attend, we are able to attend more sessions thus gaining additional insight and information.

Attendance at the conferences provides the SCO a chance to attend sessions presented by VA representatives and have questions regarding processing of VA claims answered to gain a better understanding of the "why" instead of just "how". The rules and procedures for processing claims, guidance to students, and laws passed by Congress are ever changing. Attending one of these conferences is the only way that SCOs stay current on national legislation and new VA practices that affect our students, the institution and what SCOs are required to do. There is currently no state-level training provided by the VA for SCOs in Utah.

Unfortunately, our two part-time SCOs have not been approved to attend training outside of Utah; this puts them at a disadvantage in their positions. They do not have an opportunity to have training from VA staff to learn the processes, laws and regulations and must depend on the full-time employees to cover all the material when they return. The workload in our office is always high and there is no downtime, thus covering three days of training from a conference in a short amount of time is difficult.

In addition, the information covered at the two conferences has some similar parts, but is very different. WAVES, presented by the VA, is very focused on claims processes, while, NAVPA not only covers claims processing but also how to work with veterans, challenges veterans might have, ways to work with the VA to best serve the veterans at our institutions and professional development. Given that these are the only veteran related trainings offered in the nation, it would

be beneficial to allow the full-time SCOs the possibility of attending both conferences to keep updated on changes and how to best serve the needs of our students. It would be ideal to offer the part-time SCOs the opportunity to attend WAVES to receive training from the VA.

We are approved for three employees to attend the Utah Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA) and UACRAO (Utah Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers) conferences; but because of such a small staff and having to keep the office covered, often we are not able to attend. The purpose of attending these two conferences is to further employees' understanding of the student affairs aspect of higher education. This provides SCOs with a chance to learn about other departments' functions and best practices for enhancing the student experience as well as to appreciate what we all are trying to achieve on a broader scale. These conferences rarely cover anything regarding veteran issues.

## **Training Strengths, Challenges and Areas Needing Improvement**

The strength of our method of training new personnel is that it is continuous and personal. Training is never truly finished as there is always something new to learn, fine tune, or change, and training is conducted in a way that is person specific. This not only provides the individual with the ability to ask as many questions as they want without any concern that they are holding others up or that they may be judged. We work to provide the training to suit the personal learning style for each employee. Some individuals learn the information faster or slower and there is no concern that one is getting restless or left behind.

One main challenge with our method of training, however, is being able to provide training in a high quality and consistent way when individuals are hired during the busiest times of the academic year or when we have many employees leave around the same time. When this occurs, training can become haphazard and pieced together due to the small staff combined with the high demand for certifications and work to be completed. This can occasionally sideline an employee's training leaving the employee untrained or feeling that their training is not considered a priority for the office.

An example of how challenging it can be to provide consistent training happened during spring semester 2013 when we experienced the most dramatic turnover losing all but one full-time employee. We had to continue processing claims and assisting students while training a new coordinator, part-time employees and work-study employees, all with different start times. This was not the first time we needed to train different levels of staff at the same time. This leaves staff members stressed and working many additional non-paid hours to complete tasks, which runs the risk of employee burnout.

An area that needs improvement is holding regular staff meetings. Because of our small staff, busy office, and lack of coverage when staff members are in a meeting, we have not held regular staff meetings. Instead, we hold informal meetings in the office to cover important topics as they come up. Trying to hold staff meetings with work-study employees given their variance in work hours based on their school schedules is next to impossible.

We will begin to hold staff meetings with the college employees (full-time and part-time) with one of the work-study employee to cover the office while we meet. The Manager will request an employee from another department to cover our office to allow us to have a staff meeting for all

Veterans Services employees. By posting notices of our meeting times, students will know they will not be able to speak to an employee during those times. If this works, we will continue this process.

It is important for one of our staff to attend staff meetings of other Student Services departments. We will be implementing this process the first of 2014. Staff members are hesitant to go to meetings due to pressure to get work done to be in compliance with VA's imposed timeline and to satisfy students' desires for their paperwork to be processed as quickly as possible to receive their pay. Staff members often feel that what is covered in other meetings has no bearing on the work we do in Veterans Services. The Manager needs to continue to assist them in understanding the importance of our attendance at meetings outside the department.

## **Staff Evaluation**

### **Evaluation Methods**

Full-time employees are evaluated each spring using the College's Performance Excellence Program forms. During this time the employee is given the opportunity to show qualitative and quantitative examples of their contributions to the College and the department. It is mandatory for employees and supervisors to discuss their goals each year. Throughout the year they are reminded to keep a list of their accomplishments to assist them when the PEP evaluations are due.

Part-time staff and VA work-studies are not as rigorously evaluated. There are no formal evaluation methods in place, but we use an informal system based mostly upon on-the-spot corrections to evaluate correctness of work. After the first 90 days of employment (the probationary period) we look at the work quality and attendance. If there are problems they are addressed during that time. Since there are no further evaluations required of part-time staff after that, evaluations have not occurred with the same frequency and regularity as they do with full-time employees. This year, however, we will implement the same evaluation process with the part-time employees, informally, as is used for the full-time employees. This will be completed to assist with the growth of all employees.

In the case of any misunderstandings or performance issues, the Manager of Veterans Services conducts an immediate meeting with the employee to understand what happened and make suggestions on how to correct the issue and improve work performance. If improvements are not made, the Manager takes additional steps with guidance from the HR department regarding reprimand or termination of employment if necessary.

VA work-studies are also provided with the opportunity to improve work performance. However, with work-study employees, termination of employment does not require involvement from the HR department and is at the sole discretion of the Manager of Veterans Services. Records concerning misconduct or reasons for termination are documented and placed in the employee's file.

### **Staff Feedback and Input**

The office operates on the belief that each person can effect positive change and is invited to share ideas with management using our open-door policy available to all our employees. The idea

will be fully evaluated for feasibility and practicality. If the idea can be implemented, a small test group is used to assess its efficacy. This is done to ensure that we can continue to evolve as an office, but do not rush into a change that may not be beneficial for unforeseen reasons.

The timeline for changes or improvements depends on several factors: cost of implementation, time to train, the size and nature of the change, and the general logistics of implementing the change. Some changes are minor in terms of budget or staffing requirements and, therefore, can be easily and quickly implemented into office policy.

## **Staff Recognition**

Veterans Services participates in the College's Staff Stars recognition program and the Student Services awards. We also work to provide spontaneous in-office recognition when an employee goes above and beyond or succeeds in a goal that they have been working to achieve.

We provide a birthday card, graduation and Veterans Day card for each employee where appropriate. We also occasionally hold a potluck lunch for everyone to acknowledge accomplishments and occasionally bring in special treats to acknowledge hard work.

We need to do more in this area of recognizing staff for what they do. One of the biggest motivators for employees, next to pay increase, is recognition in some way. This will be a topic we will cover in our staff meeting to come up with ideas.

## **Future Staffing Needs**

The department is recommending the addition of three new staff positions: an Academic/Persistence/Outreach Advisor, a South City Campus Specialist/Technician, and a Secretary 2 located at Taylorsville Redwood Road Campus. We also recommend an upgrade of the two part-time positions at Taylorsville Redwood to full-time positions.

As one of the department's assessments, the Manager conducted a study to determine the length of time it took to process claims in Veterans Services. This gave us a clear picture of the time it takes and the many steps that must be taken to complete a certification make adjustments, and complete contact letters to students and staff. Due to being understaffed, especially when we are processing for multiple terms at once, we are unable to complete all the certifications quickly. And if we have any turnover in staff, we experience a longer processing time as the new staff member learns the process.

We believe we have a staffing shortage given the increase of students served in Veterans Services and the complexity of new benefits enacted over a short period of time. Over the past five years the number of students we serve has increased over 200 percent, the number of types of benefit programs and groups of students served has increased from five to seventeen, a 240 percent increase. The added requirements for processing Chapter 33 benefits and GoArmy Ed tuition assistance and other tuition programs, have also increased the workload. In addition to processing claims, we are required to determine financial refunds and direct the release to the VA or student. The majority of our students are on Chapter 33 and the time to process its benefits has tripled the work for that chapter alone. In addition, processing students in the Professional Pilot program is complicated and time consuming.

Veterans Services focus has expanded to include all support tasks for all student veterans, traditional and SAT students, on all campuses. In addition, Veterans Services plans and carries out all events and programs in support of our student veterans. The focus and responsibility increases have basically been added without added support staff.

We are in the middle of instituting a paperless system to streamline the certification process in the next four to five months. This will benefit our students and office in multiple ways. It will shorten the delay in answering questions regarding student accounts, it will allow staff at various campuses to access any student's information, and it will allow us to certify and make adjustments to records from any campus. With a paperless system, our access to information will be almost instantaneous.

We have new requirements added to our list of duties from State Legislators and new laws and regulations by Congress and signed into law by the President. A few of the new laws that have been put in place in the last four years are listed below:

#### State Laws

SB 126	Coordination of Services for Veterans
HB 254	College Credits for Veterans

#### Federal Laws

EO 13607	Principles of Excellence
PL 111-377	Increased Compliance Survey Annually
PL 111-377	Changing the VA to Last Payer
PL 112-249	Improving Transparency of Education Opportunities Treasury Offset Program
MOU Version 3.0 - Personalized Net Price Calculations Required	

### **Positions Needed**

#### Academic/Persistence/Outreach Advisor

One of the positions we need is an in-office Academic/ Persistence/Outreach advisor. Our students are often given information in Academic Advising that, while not an issue for non-VA students, is inaccurate for veteran students and causes serious issues with their entitlement. With an Academic Advisor well versed in VA requirements, veterans would receive accurate advising specific to their degree needs to be in compliance with the VA. A comparable advising position is in existence for high school programs and pre-engineering and STEM majors.

Currently when students submit their request for certification to the SCOs, approximately half of them have already registered for classes that are not required in their program, and thus they cannot be certified. In this case, each student is sent a letter by the SCO who then has to wait for the student to change classes and notify us of the change, delaying the certification of their classes. Spring semester 2014, out of the 825 schedules submitted for certification, 420 schedules required letters to be sent due to classes not being required. Students were required to change the class or their major. While this may seem like a small problem, it can mean the difference for our students between continuing in school and dropping out. If veteran students cannot find required classes to be considered full-time, they often will drop out of school.

One clear example of how having an advisor would help ease the certifying workload can be seen in the way SAT Advisors work. The SAT Advisors and instructors are the only ones that can add a student to courses and, as a result, students cannot take classes outside of their programs and their schedules do not have to be constantly monitored for compliance. In comparison, within a period of six days, SCOs had to send out 30 emails to non-flight program students regarding non-required classes in their schedules, the need to assess their prior credit, and/or their majors being incorrect in the system. This number only reflects the start of correspondence and does not show the follow-up required to solve the myriad of issues. The academic monitoring functions that the SCOs are required to complete hinders the certifying process and delays timely notification to the VA.

By having a full-time advisor in Veterans Services, the SCOs will be able to spend more time on the certifications and interacting with the students instead of being inundated with advising matters that inevitably appear due to the strict regulations that govern the VA educational benefits. In addition, it will lessen the time SCOs must spend sending out and answering email letters for students to correct their schedule to be approved for full-time benefits.

This position would also serve as a persistence advisor. There is great concern with the dropout rate of our veterans at SLCC and across the nation. By having this same person work with veterans to keep them in school, we can increase our veterans' persistence and graduation rates. The VA and federal government will be looking closely at persistence and graduation rates beginning 2014 due to HB 13607, Principles of Excellence, signed by President Obama. With the information collected, the government will create ratings that will be posted on the VA and the Department of Education web sites. SLCC has approximately a 13 percent graduation rate for veterans based on rough numbers. However, the College currently does not track veterans' semester or yearly persistence rates. We feel it is important to know those numbers and this position could track that. And based on HB 13607, it is now required.

There is also a need to have someone trained in VS services and support to attend the outreach events including education fairs, yellow ribbon program events, VA events, etc.

#### Specialist/Technician 1- South City Campus

The second position we feel is important is a full-time Specialist/Technician for South City Campus. With the shift in responsibility for SAT veteran students to Veterans Services, the department was given office space at South City Campus. This office has a single full-time Coordinator to serve 35-40 SAT students and 150 flight students (with a highly complicated certification process) and to certify the students all programs. The Coordinator is also required to provide outreach to students at the campuses in the north region and to attend meetings on other campuses.

When the Coordinator is attending required meetings, providing outreach on other campuses, ill or on vacation, the South City office is closed, often at random times during operational hours. Students have to travel to the Redwood Campus or come back another day when the Coordinator is on campus. An additional full-time employee to cover the office and assist with the certification process of two of the most complex programs is essential to the success of both programs and the South City office. There are two work-study positions available at South City, but the positions have no long-term continuity as the VA work-study turnover rate is high, and attendance each semester depends on the student's schedule. Also, the work-study employee cannot complete

certifications nor cover the office if there is not a college employee to supervise. Thus, there is currently no support for the single full-time employee there.

### Secretary 2

The third position we need is a Secretary 2 at the main Veterans Services office. Currently there is no administrative support for the Manager; all SCOs are required to process different parts of the certification process, work with and train work-study employees, answer phone calls and emails from students with basic questions. The Manager is frequently unable to complete all of the required tasks due to the scope of responsibilities with no administrative assistance. Thus the Manager often needs to work late hours in the office and/or takes work home to complete all of the required tasks such as reconciling the budget, verifying and approving catalog program requirements, researching last dates of attendance, running and interpreting reports, completing yearly assessments and goals, planning and executing events, writing or updating policy and documents and conducting outreach activities. Currently the Manager works between 10-15 hours weekly at home or extra hours at the office in non-paid time on projects (evenings, weekends, holidays) to complete required tasks.

As requirements for the department and number of students increase, the department needs a position that can handle basic office logistics and tasks. This would allow the Manager and SCOs to complete their primary responsibilities during the day without being required to take work home on a regular basis. Having a person to consistently answer phones, provide basic information regarding the GI Bill and to complete administrative tasks for the Manager would improve staff efficiency and productivity. While work-study employees can help with phones and walk-ins, they usually are too new to the work of the office and lack sufficient knowledge to adequately answer students' questions; as a result, they frequently have to interrupt the SCO or Manager to refer students to them to answer basic questions.

The Secretary 2 would complete basic secretarial duties including answering calls, as well as providing support for the manager with multiple tasks, including events and activities, budget requisitions and reconciliation, catalog approval, updating documents and publications and other duties.

### Changing Part-time positions to Full-time

With the amount of work required for the SCOs to complete, having the two part-time positions at the Taylorsville Redwood Campus be full-time would help the claims and processes be completed quicker. It will also allow the SCOs to be available to assist new and continuing student-veterans and provide additional support and outreach activities and to students on other campuses.

## IV. FINANCIAL RESOURCES AND BUDGET

### Budget History

Through the 2010-11 fiscal year, funds to operate the Veterans office came from the institution's Triple I Investment Account and various accounts managed by other departments such as Enrollment Services (DDREGI, DDDNAS, and 15100). In 2011-12 a dedicated budget for Veterans Services was established.

The tables below show the budget allocations by account and line item expenditures for the last four years

#### Budget Totals by Account- Allocation

	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
DDREGI/DDNAS and 15100	\$ 47,548			
E & G	\$ 108,686	\$ 109,318	\$ 148,146	\$ 156,542
Reporting Fee	\$ 8,178	\$ 13,067	\$ 12,167	\$ 15,408
Total	\$ 116,864	\$ 122,385	\$ 160,313	\$ 171,950

#### Line Item Budget- DDVETS Expenditures

	2010-2011	2011-2012*	2012-2013**	2013-2014
Budget Hourly	\$ 25,011	\$ 26,830	\$ 24,888	\$ 28,667
Budget-Salary	\$ 40,954	\$ 43,270	\$ 79,409	\$ 87,072
Budget- Salary Benefits	\$ 23,260	\$ 17,312	\$ 26,088	\$ 22,987
Budget-PT Benefits	\$ 923	\$ 1,003	\$ 2,483	\$ 2,867
Current Expense	\$ 12,607	\$ 10,273	\$ 11,175	\$ 7,700
In-State Travel	\$ 0	\$ 344	\$ 215	\$ 500
Out-State Travel	\$ 5,931	\$ 8,454	\$ 3,888	\$ 2,500
Total	\$108,686	\$ 109,318	\$ 148,146	\$156,542

\* 2011-12 One-time funds received for Scanner, Fax machine, outreach and supplies

\*\*2012-13 One-time funds received for remodel of School Certifying Officials office, and a new position-Coordinator 2, which was base funded.

### Line Item Budget and Expenditures – 15099\* Veterans Services

	2010-2011	2011-2012*	2012-2013**	2013-2014
Balance forward	\$ 8,178***	\$ 13,186	\$ 30,118	\$ 25,306
In-State Travel	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 550	\$ 800
Out-State Travel	\$ 0	\$ 8,454	\$ 7,600	\$ 2,300
Total allocation	\$ 8,178	\$ 16,356	\$ 38,268	\$ 28,406
	*ACCOUNT NEW			
Total expenditures	0	\$ 10,312	\$ 16,895	Year is not complete
End of year balance	\$ 8,178	\$ 1,472	\$ 21,372	

\* The account 159099 was created in the 2011-12 fiscal year

\*\* The VA increased the reporting fee to \$12 per student per year in 2012

\*\*\* This amount was new revenue from VA reporting fee deposited at beginning of fiscal year.

Based on a total expenditure last year (2012-2013) of \$156,542 (not including the VA reporting fees) with a total of 1283 veterans and dependents served, the amount spent per student was \$ 122.

### Resources, Trends and Changes

Given that the Veterans office did not have its own designated budget until it was restructured into a department and its spending history was unclear, the Manager had to propose a budget to support the department based on projected needs.

We have been able to keep within the budget by careful budgeting and spending. We typically spend all the money budgeted by the College and much of the money we receive from VA reporting fees. The reporting fees have provided the extra resources needed to operate, to provide support to our veterans, and to allow for additional travel.

As we continue to grow and serve more students, we do experience limitations. We have new needs and have had no increase in the operating budget (current expense) since we began. The current expense budget we were given originally was decreased \$4,000 in 2013 to cover the increase in the Coordinator 1 position's pay due to Talent Management adjustment. This position is paid from one time funds year to year.

We have experienced the following changes and financial demands to our budget since our original budget was established:

- We now hold multiple events on multiple campuses for students.
- We have three full-time employees needing to travel for trainings and conferences.
- We attend Yellow Ribbon Program events, Veteran Education fairs and other marketing events to encourage veterans and service members to attend SLCC.
- We support office space and staff on two campuses.
- Our veterans using benefits has more than doubled and responsibilities of serving all 1300 veterans have increased.
- We now support students in the SAT program.

## **Budget Request and Records Management**

The Manager determines priorities for requests within the Informed Budget Process depending on projected needs of the department. Given that there are many requests from other departments, the Manager has been encouraged to only put forward the highest priority request.

For a few years, the College and Student Services conducted presentations and a discussion about the budget requests of all departments. The process has changed this year and the discussion is held only within the individual departments. There were no budget presentations this year and budget requests were submitted in writing only by completing a form. Once the College makes a decision on which department will receive new funds, the decision is shared with staff. Student Services also sends out an email notifying all departments of the final decision for positions.

Staff members know that if they see a need in the office for basic supplies, they talk to the Manager. Approval is given to purchase the items if money is available.

The Manager is responsible to balance the budget and maintain budget records. Because of the many responsibilities the Manager has and because she has no assistant, it has been a challenge to keep up with budget record keeping. The Redwood Coordinator has learned some of the functions to assist, but that takes her away from certifying of claims.

## **Future Funding Needs**

We need to have additional funds to maintain and support the office and to provide activities at other campuses. Looking forward, we need to have an increase in travel and current expenses to keep employees trained and to provide services and events for our students on other campuses.

It is important to base fund all positions in Veterans Services to ensure stability of support and services. All future staff hires should also be base funded.

Section III on staffing outlines the need for three proposed positions:

- Secretary 2 to assist VS Manager
- Academic/Persistence/Outreach Advisor
- Specialist for South City Campus

Section V on facilities indicates the space and furniture needs at both Taylorsville Redwood and South City Campuses.

With a larger operating budget, we could provide new furniture in our office and make the workspace more effective. Other campuses we will serve in addition to Taylorsville Redwood and South City are Meadowbrook, Jordan, WestPointe and Miller. It is important to begin providing events at these locations to support all our veterans attending other sites.

## V. FACILITIES, EQUIPMENT AND TECHNOLOGY

### Facilities

#### Taylorsville Redwood Veterans Center

The office staff and services have steadily grown since 2008 when the center opened. At that time, there was one full-time employee, one part-time employee and six VA work-study employees. The center was spacious, especially when compared with the previous office. However, we almost outgrew the office immediately with the success of the center as our numbers of students, staff and outreach partners increased.

#### Veterans Rooms

The veterans' study area and lounge are filled most days, from 7:30 am to 5 pm Monday through Friday. We know the students appreciate the space because they come and use it, some daily. We could have a space twice the size and it would most likely be full.

The computer bank is always full and students wait to use the computers as soon as they are available. Due to the constraints of the space and outlets, we cannot add additional computers. We also pay for the printing students send to the printer. This service is very valuable for our students but we do not have enough computers based on the constant demand. Occasionally we will see students just relaxing and surfing the web, however, most of the time, our students are completing their assignments for class. The desks are mismatched and it would be great to get matching computer desks for the computer lab area along with additional computer space.

We have a small space with a table devoted to a study area for students. It also is used often, but because of the lack of space in the staff office area, we often must use the study area to have students complete their paperwork for their benefits and also to conduct the orientation and intake process. The table is also used by the Veterans Upward Bound math tutor because we cannot find a separate room on a regular basis for the tutor in the morning hours. We often have 3-4 students with the math tutor using the study area each day he is there.

The veterans lounge, with a couch, table, chairs and recliner, is also always used. There is a TV in the room, but it is rarely used. It is not hooked up to cable so it can only be used for movies which are available, but most students seem to want quiet study space.

Due to the high use of the space by those we created it for, it is a challenge to serve those who come to the office for services while also being able to provide a comfortable area for veterans to study and socialize. We need additional space and computers for veterans.

#### Veterans Services Offices

The department has four separate offices that serve various purposes.

The SCO office is located immediately off the center space and off the work- study area. There are a couple of reasons for this location. The SCOs are accessible to the work-study employees and also available for veterans if they have questions regarding their accounts. The office is shared by one full-time and two part-time employees and is adequate in size and useful because the part-time SCOs have immediate access to the more experienced SCO. This can help minimize delays

in certifications and confusion concerning procedures. The SCO office furniture was completely redecorated three years ago with one-time money from VP funds and VA reporting fees.

The open office space for work-study students and the reception desk is located in the center of the office areas. It is the key hub area and is the first contact with our students. This area is high visible to students coming in, people walking by our office and employees in the office. The space, while large, could be more efficient with a different type of desks. The desks are mismatched and are big, old wood desks from surplus.

In the work area, there are also three work stations, the scanner, fax machine and storage area. But again, all of the furniture is from old surplus supplies.

This open area badly needs new furniture and redoing. We need more work stations for our work-study employees and for the area to look more professional and less crowded.

Due to the lack of storage space, the four staff offices have supplies in corners, in files and under desks. This creates a crowded and cluttered appearance because we have nowhere to store supplies.

The VetSuccess on Campus office is a dedicated office per our signed MOU. The Counselor requires a private office in which to meet with students regarding issues that require confidentiality. The space is adequate for the needs of the Counselor. The only change we would make is updating the furniture. But this is not the high priority of needs.

The Manager's office is a private office which allows the ability to meet with students and staff regarding confidential issues. The furniture is old, mismatched and unprofessional. The office is cluttered because it is used for storage under tables and in the corner. There is not enough space for meeting with more than two to three people.

The Service Providers shared office serves as the records room and a meeting space/office for our service providers. While it does an adequate job of giving the service provider somewhere to meet students, it is not inviting to the students (as it is obvious that it is a records room) and it can prevent the staff and work studies from doing their job when they have to wait for the files they need while the room is in use by a provider meeting with a student.

We rotate the hours providers use the office. Those using the shared office are

- Veterans Upward Bound                      4 hours two days
- Veterans Accessibility Advisor            4 hours two days
- Department Workforce Services        6 hours one day a week
- VITAL Counselor                              6 hours two days a week

There is an unavoidable overlap of time with two of the providers, however, the VITAL Counselor plans counseling sessions for veterans for the time he overlaps with VUB. Counseling sessions are conducted in the Health and Wellness office in a private counseling office. The Director of Health and Wellness has been very supportive of the sharing their space for privacy. This allows total confidentiality for the veteran. Because of the crowding of space in this office, the VITAL Counselor often will use the Manager's office on Friday to conduct meetings and testing for veterans when the Manager is not in.

## **South City Campus**

Veterans Services recently acquired office space at South City Campus in order to serve veteran students in the North Region. The space, which was originally a storage and scanning room, was meant to be temporary while construction was being completed at the campus, however, an adequate, permanent space has not yet been found for us. The office is not adequate as it does not provide a space for the full-time SCO located at South City to meet with students or even to have the ability for necessary documents to be located within reach of the computer area. There is nowhere to place additional files as there is only room for a single cabinet, which is already packed with student files. The work studies are often located in the office with the SCO in order to work on files, but when that is the case, there is no room for a student to come in and speak with the SCO. The work study must stop the work they are doing and go outside while the student talks to the SCO. Due to the elongated shape of the room, the desk takes up a good portion of the room which leaves little other space. If there is more than one person in the office it gets incredibly uncomfortable because of the close proximity of everybody. There is not good ventilation in the office either.

Service providers who would like to spend time at South working with veterans, but there is no space for them. We have tried to schedule some time at South for them when the VS Coordinator will not be there. But this also is a challenge given the setup of the office, which is uncomfortable when students come in; any confidential work on the desk must be covered or put away before students can be accommodated.

The vision for South is a larger space for Veterans Services. South Campus has the second highest number of veterans, it is the main connection to the SAT program, and it needs to have more space for the VS department. We would like to have space for computers (ideally four) for students to sign up for benefits and to do homework assignments. We need space for the Coordinator to work, undisturbed and where the documents are secure. We also need space for service providers to serve students and a work space for veteran work-study employees. A suite of three or four offices would be perfect to meet the needs of our department at South.

### **Equipment**

Computer equipment is generally funded one time then we replace computers as we can. We had not updated many of the computers since the center opened in 2008. This spring, however, we were notified our request for new computers had been granted. We will order the new items as soon as the funds are released in the new fiscal year if not before. The printers have all been replaced within the last few years.

For the future, we have determined an order to keep equipment updated; we will begin updating a few computers at a time dependent on funding. This will allow us to keep our equipment updated and rotating thus saving us from having to purchase an office full of computers at once.

### **Technology within Veterans Services**

The office uses a shared drive in order to store templates for standard office forms such as the welcome letter, orientation, academic probation/suspension, etc. This allows everybody in the office to access the documents in a timely manner and make copies when needed.

The College's archive system, Nolij, is used extensively to keep the number of paper files to a minimum; it provides a complete archive of all a student's paperwork at a moment's notice and also saves space that is needed for employees.

Banner is used to track the submission of transcripts, notes regarding the student's file/disposition, last term attended, class changes/drops and additions, graduation status and pertinent financial information regarding VA payment. We also use Banner Cognos to run reports to attain student counts, waivers that have been applied to the student's account and other information that is required by the VA or the student.

VA-Once is the online program used by the SCOs to report most information to the VA about a student's enrollment. From this site, all information is sent to the VA concerning the student's major, dates of enrollment, withdrawals, tuition and fee costs, receipt of Yellow Ribbon and any other information that might affect the payments made by the VA.

The office currently uses a general email address to receive student inquiries and certification requests. The staff is looking at how the email request can be automated for students to complete on the website. We do not have access to write reports in Banner Cognos; nor do we have someone on staff to write the reports as we need them. We must contact IR and they write the report for us as they can. This has been problematic many times since we do not have anyone trained on figuring out the fields we need, to explain what is needed and where to pull the correct data.

The goal for the future is to go paperless and have PDF fillable forms available for the students. The forms would be available on our college website and we have talked about the possibility of students using computers and tablets to complete the forms. Electronic forms could be "dropped" into Nolij, thereby requiring fewer steps in processing files and claims.

Due to the high volume of work, the complexity of our work and the need to constantly be processing claims, we have not had much time to get a solid plan in place to go paperless. But this is a high priority.

### **Suggestion to Improve Financial Accounting Processes**

The part-time employee from AR made the following suggestions to improve the effectiveness of CSOs matching with Banner and not creating a burden on students for school debts related to processing of benefits.

Gaps: The certification process is very important. It is crucial in submitting the correct information about a student so the VA may pay or collect according to the inputted information. One gap in the process is the lack of communication between parties that deal with the VA students after they have been certified (i.e. Cashiering, A/R, and Refunds). Use of SPACMNT notes will allow all necessary parties to know if anything is out of the ordinary with the student's benefits. A reconciliation of VA students in Banner to VA Once is very crucial in making sure nothing slips through the cracks. The VA payments must also be compared to the submissions. Any deviations from the actual amount should be accounted for with a new certification or follow up with the VA.

Areas that need improvement: There is not a master list of VA students to follow to make sure each student's account has had the appropriate funding requests submitted. Use technology to submit, adjust and track benefits so students do not have to suffer or deal with garnishments for debts that belong to the school.

Recommendations to remedy: Available technology can be used to create a master list of VA certifications to compare to information that needs to be pulled efficiently from Banner. Start using as much automation as possible in running reports of what students to certify and for what courses.

In addition, we believe it to be a proper business practice to separate requests for funds (by VS) from adjustments and returns (Business Office). For several purposes, one department or person should not handle both sides of the payment/adjustment transactions.

### **VS Website and Other Online Media**

Veterans Services has a website ([www.slcc.edu/veterans](http://www.slcc.edu/veterans)) and Facebook page. The Facebook page is maintained by the Manager and the website has been maintained by one of the part-time employees with input from the full-time employees. The website is slightly outdated and not very user friendly at this time. Two of our SCOs attended the College's Cascade training recently and are in the process of updating information and layout to be more engaging and student friendly. The concept is to have the website be an online "one-stop shop" that acts as an extension of the center, providing clear information and useful links to students.

Due to major employee turnover and requirements of the department, updating the website has not been done on any regular basis. We have not done a good job with this but we now have two employees responsible to edit the information.

### **Technology Support and Department Skills**

Office personnel have very good working relationships with the IT Helpdesk; it does not take any time at all to get an answer from Helpdesk and to be up and running again. All of the employees in the office are computer literate and can sometimes troubleshoot small issues on their own. Getting IT support for major projects and reports is more difficult and we have found that it is generally easier to develop another way to get the information that does not require support.

It has been difficult getting reports written or system changes for VS to run to provide required data for reporting purposes. Not having someone that could work with us to write the reports or guide us on possibilities puts us at a disadvantage compared to other departments. Because of new reporting required by the VA this will need to change. There are also programs that could be changed in Banner to help our office with data management and tracking, but not the support to make those changes in the system.

### **Projected Needs**

Ultimately, in order to support the mission and goals of Veterans Services, we will need additional space to accommodate our students, staff and service providers. At a minimum, we will need two offices with a separate front desk area for South City to support the student need for confidentiality when speaking with the SCO, plus an area for the SCO and any additional staff to work at the same time without being crowded together.

We will need additional rooms at Taylorsville-Redwood to provide an actual office space for service providers to meet privately with students, storage room to accommodate records and supplies, and space for any future staff that may be added to personnel.

With our goal of going paperless, new computers will become even more essential in enabling students to request and establish their benefits online. New computers would also be beneficial to

provide the speed and updates necessary to quickly process certifications and complete side projects required by the office and service providers. We are looking at the possibility of having a couple of iPads to complete students orientation and allow students to sign the document showing they received the information and be able to immediately drop that into the students file, thus avoiding the need to scan the document into the students file.

We need a staff person in our office to assist with technology needs, writing reports, updating the web site, and going paperless. Although current employees have some of this knowledge, a staff person with fuller understanding and skills in these areas would help very much. The current employees assigned to completing these extra tasks are constantly busy with certifying benefits and working with students; working on these technical tasks takes them in a different direction when they need to be focused on certifications.

This employee would work with IR and become familiar with Cognos report writing work closely with us to determine what data we need to have and write the program to retrieve that data. Ideally, if we had the reports written and available in our VS cue in Cognos that would allow us to run them as needed and other reports set up to automatically run at points in the term. Lack of someone familiar with Cognos and our screens used to track veterans has been a huge challenge for us.

## VI. ETHICAL AND LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Veterans Services must adhere to the same institutional, state and federal regulations as Enrollment Services, Student Services, the College and the Utah State and Board of Regents, and we follow best practices as outlined by professional organizations in the field. The sources that define the department's ethical and legal responsibilities are listed below.

### **FERPA**

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) affords students certain rights with respect to their education records.

### **GRAMA**

Government Records Access and Management Act (GRAMA) provides regulation on records policy.

### **AACRAO Statement of Professional Ethics and Practice**

The mission of the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO) is to serve and advance higher education by providing leadership in academic and enrollment services. Members shall conduct themselves with integrity, fairness, honesty, and respect for others; avoid conflicts between personal interests and professional responsibilities; resolve perceived conflicts through full disclosure and independent review; dispense complete, accurate, understandable, and truthful information and advice at all times.

### **Utah State Laws Specific to Veterans and Servicemembers**

The Utah State Legislature and the Utah Board of Regents for all USHE schools under the Board of Regents Policies and Procedures R512 set Utah State Residency Laws and Regulations.

**H.B. 254** requires colleges and universities within the state system of higher education to award credit for certain military service training and experience. This is pivotal in our office because students using VA educational benefits must submit prior training including their military transcripts and have them evaluated by the end of the second semester. Some students find this to be unnecessary because they believe that they will not receive any credit for their military training and in some situations they do not want credit brought in. This new law provides them the possibility to receive college credit for their military training and experience. It is important for our office to know about this legislation so that we can a) inform the student of its applicability and b) ensure that appropriate action is being taken by the College.

**S.B. 126** defines services required by institutions to provide for veterans, designating an institutional contact, support provided and link to Utah State Veteran and Military Affairs.

**H.B. 124** (In-state Tuition for Veterans) allows certain military personnel to pay resident tuition at public higher education institutions under certain conditions.

### **National Laws, Orders and MOUs Specific to Veterans and Servicemembers**

There are several laws and regulations that Veterans Services is required to abide by specific to serving veterans and administering the educational programs provided through the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) and the Department of Defense (DOD).

**CFR Code of Federal/Final Regulations- 38 CFR Part 21** lists the rules and regulations that direct what we do as a school that certifies VA claims for students. The handbook described below is a simplified format for use by the schools.

The CFR is searchable on the U.S. Printing Office site ([www.ecfr.gov](http://www.ecfr.gov)).

School Certifying Official Handbook (SCO) outlines regulations in a simplified format. Within defined parameters, we are required to report to the VA the following details regarding a student's attendance at our institution: major, chargeable credit hours, tuition and fees amounts (by term), prior credit, periods of enrollment, dates of withdrawals (if any), lack of Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP), and graduation. We must also track "I" grades and notify students via their student email account of being placed on Academic Probation/Suspension due to unsatisfactory academic progress.

We are required to keep the following information on file for each student and make all records available to the VA for inspection: all VA paperwork provided by the student or the VA, transcripts, grade reports, drop-slips (appeals), classes dropped during the add/drop period, tuition and fee charges, transcripts from previous schools with the evaluations of the same, student's school application, records of any disciplinary actions, program (major) outline, graduation applications (when applicable) and any other pertinent forms.

The Veterans Services office is required to maintain records for at least three years following the student's Last Date of Attendance (LDA). This may be done either with physical or electronic copies. The office is also required to ensure that records are kept in a way that protects the student's privacy. All of these requirements are outlined in the handbook (The Handbook is available online under the VA website and in hard copy in the VS office.)

**VA 85-15 rule 38 CFR 21.4201** defines restrictions on enrollment based on percentage of students receiving financial support. Except as otherwise provided in this section, the DVA shall not approve an enrollment in any course for an eligible veteran, not already enrolled, for any period during which more than 85 percent of the students enrolled in the course are having all or part of their tuition, fees or other charges paid for them by the educational institution or by VA under title 38, U.S.C., or under title 10, U.S.C. For all but one program (Professional Flight), veterans are widely distributed among a wide variety of programs at SLCC so this ratio is easily satisfied. The Professional Flight program has mostly veterans enrolled, thus we must monitor and report the percentage to the ELR each semester. None of our other programs are even close to the 85/15 veteran maximum.

**The Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008 enacted as Title V of the Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2008 (P.L. 110-252)** is the newest GI Bill which went into effect on August 1, 2009. This provided benefits to veterans and servicemembers who serve on active duty after September 10, 2001. Participants may be eligible for payments to cover tuition and fees, housing, books and supplies, tutorial and relocation assistance, and testing and certification fees. It had a rough start with little or no instructions and without documented and consistent procedure/policy guidelines from the VA. The SCOs were required to process claims with reporting on distance/residence credits, breakdowns of tuition and fees, and all changes in enrollment (even when the change did not affect a student's full-time status), and they had to submit multiple corrections for the same term.

**S.3447 / Public Law 111-377 Post 9/11 Veterans Education Assistance Improvement Act of**

**2010** changes the VA to last payer and requires SCOs to monitor student funding and appropriately reduce reported tuition and fee charges on certification. SCOs must audit student accounts and amend each student's certification multiple times each term as student funding changes. Veterans' interval pay was discontinued. This law also increased compliance survey frequency to as often as annually for schools with large veteran populations. Many other changes were put in place also.

**Public Law 112-249, Improving Transparency of Education Opportunities for Veterans Act of 2012** requires the DVA to develop a comprehensive policy to improve outreach and transparency to veterans and servicemembers, including the provision of information on Institutions of Higher Learning (IHLs). VA is required to develop outcome measures that schools will be required to begin reporting. VA will also set up a system for veterans to submit complaints for the VA to review and take action as needed.

**Vow to Hire Heroes Act of 2011** combines tax credits from the Opportunity to Work Act into a comprehensive package that will aggressively attack the high unemployment of this population of veterans. As part of this bill, the new education benefit was put in place for unemployed veterans meeting specific criteria. The benefit was called, VRAP and was a jobs benefit giving one year of benefits as long as the veteran attended 12 credit hours a semester. This bill also had many problems in implementation.

**Executive Order 13607 (April 27, 2012)** lays out "Principles of Excellence" which educational institutions serving military members must follow. It is designed to promote ethical practices by educational institutions that serve current servicemembers, veterans, spouses and other dependents. Those serving students under Federal Tuition Assistance and Yellow Ribbon agreements will be required to adhere to the Principles of Excellence under future MOU's. Some of the requirements include ensuring the student understands the total cost of a program, providing a Shopping Sheet with information regarding the availability of federal financial aid and possible awards, and preventing aggressive or deceptive recruitment of veterans, servicemembers or their eligible dependents.

### **Memorandums of Understanding**

**Memorandum of Understanding MOU VetSuccess On Campus (VSOC)** is an agreement between SLCC and the VA creating a unique partnership as a way to serve our students. The MOU establishes our requirements of support by both the VA and SLCC. With this agreement, SLCC provides office space to the VA who provides a Rehabilitation Counselor to work with students on campus and provide guidance with VA benefits, educational and employment guidance and job readiness including resume writing and placement. We must provide an office and access to the students and their records. SLCC was one of the first 8 schools in the nation to be selected by the VA to host this new program.

**Memorandum of Understanding MOU Veterans ITAL (VITAL)** is another partnership between SLCC and the VA, which places a VA psychologist on the SLCC campus to work with our students two days a week. The MOU establishes our agreement of support of the position, our responsibilities, and the duties of the VITAL Counselor. The counselor assists our students with signing up for VA health care benefits, is the liaison with the VA and the student and provides counseling sessions on campus thus not requiring student to go to the VA complex to receive support. We are one of the first 22 schools in the nation to have this program on campus and less

than 10 in the nation to have both the VetSuccess on Campus and the VITAL program on their campus.

**Chapter 33 Yellow Ribbon Waiver MOU** establishes the guaranteed financial participation, requirements and responsibilities for SLCC to participate in the Yellow Ribbon program. This waiver provides additional financial support for students qualifying for 100 percent of the Post 9-11 benefit who after the VA payment to the College, still have basic tuition and fees remaining due to the College. At SLCC, the unmet need only applies to non-resident tuition.

**Tuition Assistance Memorandum of Understanding** requires that we “pre-certify” students’ schedules and tuition assistance requests prior to an education counselor conducting final approval. We must also report grades at the end of term to the TA office using their website(s), provide degree evaluations, and provide accurate tuition information to the respective branch as outlined in the MOU.

**Department of Defense Memorandum of Understanding** (March 1, 2013 in effect) requires all schools that participate in the federal Tuition Assistance program for military students to comply with additional reporting and monitoring requirements for TA students as well as to submit compliance reviews to DOD. As primary point of contact, many SCOs will experience a significant workload increase in necessary coordination of the new TA requirements among various campus offices.

### **Professional Guidelines**

#### **Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS)**

CAS provides guidance and standards of service for many student services functions for institutions across the nation, including services for veterans, military personnel, and military family members receiving VA educational funds. According to the 2012 edition of the CAS Professional Standards, staff members in the Veterans and Military Programs and Services (VMPS) role must be aware of applicable laws affecting student veterans. There should also be an awareness of changes to entitlement programs and tuition-discounting, waivers, etc. available to student veterans, servicemembers and their dependents.

#### **Servicemembers Opportunity College (SOC)**

As a Servicemembers Opportunity College (SOC), SLCC is obligated to follow the SOC criteria and principles. This involves the institution evaluating and accepting credit earned from other accredited institutions, limiting academic residency requirements for Active Duty servicemembers to no more than 25 percent of the undergraduate degree program, providing credit based off of military training and experience, and providing credit based on Extra-Institutional Learning (i.e., CLEP tests).

Institutions must publicize their commitment to the programs and activities offered on behalf of the servicemembers attending, provide effective administrative staffing and processes to give adequate support to programs for servicemembers, and designate a contact office or person for servicemembers

#### **American Council on Education (ACE)**

SLCC uses the guidelines from ACE when evaluating military transcripts for transfer of credit. ACE

also provides support and important information to SCOs regarding veterans and working with and supporting veterans in school. The Council provides many valuable publications to assist schools to better serve veterans. A particularly valuable publication is *From Soldier to Student*, versions 1 and 2, that clearly identifies research data that can assist schools and SCOs to better serve veterans on campus.

### **Awareness of and Compliance with Regulations and Changes**

Staff complies with the laws, regulations and the CAS guidelines by performing their duties within the limits of their position, training, expertise and competence. They apply the principle that when their limits are exceeded, they refer to persons possessing the appropriate qualifications. When work-study or part-time employees find that a situation is beyond their knowledge or abilities to solve, they are trained to immediately send it to one of the SCOs. If the SCOs are not sure of the correct answer, the issue is taken to the Manager. If needed, it is taken to others to solve.

The department's staff members have a solid understanding of the VA regulations and work to quickly comply consistently with the regulations as they change, both on the state and the national level.

### **Changes in Utah Laws**

Changes in Utah laws have been easier to keep up with and clearer than national changes. SLCC's Office of Government Relations informs the VS Manager of all local legislation under discussion. This office sends an email to ask our opinion and views on new legislation being discussed and how the legislation might impact Veterans Services and/or our veterans. It keeps the Manager informed on the status of the bills and whether the bills pass or not. The Manager has also been asked a few times to attend hearings on the hill to speak in support of a bill. This is not a common practice at most schools in the nation and is very appreciated by the SLCC Manager.

### **National VA Changes**

Keeping up with the many changes in rules and regulations on the national level has been a challenge for Veteran Services at SLCC and also a challenge nationally.

Information does not always flow smoothly from the VA to the SCOs at schools across the nation. Often, Congress does not reach out to those that will be tasked with implementing the laws and, therefore, does not understand the difficulty and/or problems their law will create. When legislation is passed, the VA must interpret what it thinks Congress intended. This guidance, in some cases, has taken years to be passed on to the SCOs. Often we receive one set of instructions, which are subsequently changed to a new set of instructions and, in some cases, changed again.

When a law is passed nationally, the VA determines how it fits with the VA and writes new rules, regulations and procedures for schools to follow. The VA Central Office (VACO) reports the change to the Regional Education Officer (EO) who reports it to the Regional Chief Educational Liaison Officer (CELO) who reports it to the Local Educational Liaison Representative (ELR) and finally to the SCOs. The regulations are supposed to be the same for each region and each state, but this does not always happen. SCOs have many challenges to keep up with the changes in the rules.

Often one CELO releases information for their specific region, while other regions do not receive information in the same timeframe. It's possible that one region never receives the formal notification from their ELR, which has happened in our region. We are members of the National Veteran Program Administrators (NAVPA) which hosts a national list serve that enables members to share information and VA notices they receive in their regions; this helps members who have not been notified to know what to watch for.

When Utah schools have not received notifications, the SLCC Manager has forwarded notices received from another region on the list serve to her ELR to ask if the guidance applied to us as well. Sometimes the ELR had not received the notice and indicated she would check on it and notify us. Many times we had to ask multiple times whether the decision impacted us, which it typically should, but we have been instructed by the VA many times to wait for our ELR to let us know what applies to us unless the VA CO sends the notice directly to us. We have never determined where the breakdown is in getting timely information. The other schools in Utah have had the same problem.

Another challenge is the slowness in receiving direction from VA CO on new laws. For example, we still have not received formal guidance and regulations for S.3447 / Public Law 111-377 Post 9/11 Veterans Education Assistance Improvement Act of 2010. At the recent NAVPA mid-year meeting, General Worley said they still don't have the regulations written. We have been operating on VA opinions that have changed multiple times, many times without information being sent to the schools in a timely manner. We are currently being held to rules that are still not approved regulations from the VA.

Some changes have been made effective retroactively. This can put the school in a financially demanding situation. For example, the VA initially gave directions on refunding money to students effective at the start of the Post 9-11 Bill, but months later it changed the direction on refunding money and made the rules retroactive. NAVPA membership fought that change and the VA later dropped the retroactive rule.

Another way we learn of changes in VA policies and procedures is at the WAVES and NAVPA conferences. This is one reason it is so important for more than one SCO to be in attendance. There are multiple sessions at the conferences, and one person cannot attend all sessions. It is often in the sessions where we find out new information.

Sometimes we receive VA notices that are not clear. When that happens, the Manager sends a request for clarification to the assigned ELR as we are instructed to do. Often, our questions are the same questions other SCOs have within Utah and in other states. In the past it has been a challenge to receive an answer in a timely manner. Many times we have reached out to the VA CO for clarification and receive none. We are told they will check on the questions and we do not receive an answer. Our SAA has returned from deployment and we now have a new ELR and recently we have received better support from them.

We have learned that if we receive instructions from the VA by phone, we need to get them in written form. If we do not receive an answer by email but by phone call instead, the Manager sends an email back to the VA summarizing our understanding of the answer. If we do not receive a response stating we are wrong, we assume we understand and are doing the procedure

correctly. We have begun printing these documents from the VA for proof of instruction and keeping them in a binder in the office.

Once we are notified of changes in rules or regulations, the Manager notifies all SCOs. We look at the new law or regulation and determine what we need to do differently to implement the changes. The Manager then revises all forms and documents used in the office to reflect any needed changes. We also notify work-study employees of changes they must be aware of.

### **Student Legal Notices**

Written policies on all operations, transactions and tasks have legal implications. In Veterans Services, we provide students with a variety of detailed informational forms designed to make students aware of their rights and responsibilities. We also identify what may happen if they stop attending classes, appeal enrollment, or take courses outside of their declared program.

The student's potential liabilities, both financial and legal, are outlined in the forms and presented verbally to the student on an individual basis. Examples of these informational forms, such as the CH 33 Bill Payment Agreement, Welcome Letter, are included in Appendices D and E. Other standard letters and forms are available in the VS for review.

### **Ethical Issues with Student Information**

In Veterans Services, we must be mindful of the need for privacy for documents as well as for space for counseling and sharing with students. We must follow regulations of FERPA and HIPPA.

### **Documents and Files**

To maintain privacy of personally identifiable documents, we are very careful about who comes back into the workspace. Work-study employees monitor who enters the office area, to ensure privacy. When we do have someone come back into the area, we make sure that covering or filing the information protects any visible documents with personally identifiable information.

We are required to keep all documents for three years after the last term the student attended. By scanning all documents, we can limit the number of files we keep in the office. Currently we have one and a half years of files of students' records in the office. They are stored in file cabinets in the main work area and in the resource service office. The files are not locked because so many files are in different stages of processing. After documents are scanned, the contracted agency of the College picks them up to be shredded.

### **Support Services Office Space**

We have a shared office that is used by our outside service providers. It is important to have closed office space to ensure privacy for what students share. Many times students come into the office area and just need to share. The private office allows that to happen and ensures others do not hear the conversations.

The various providers have set hours they are scheduled for the room. When they need privacy, they can close the door. They do not share what is discussed in the sessions with anyone.

Students set up appointments directly with the service provider to keep the confidentiality. When a student wants a counseling session with the VITAL Counselor, they set up the meeting in the Health and Wellness department (down the hall). The Director of Health and Wellness offered for us to use one of their offices to the counselor when he needs it to work with students. The VITAL Counselor also provides testing for learning disabilities in one of the available offices in the Veterans Center not in use on Fridays.

## **Challenges**

Our biggest challenges in this area are getting consistent directions from the VA on processes and procedures for certifications and getting the information we need from the VA to be able to complete our processing. We need to ensure when we certify a student under chapter 33, that they have benefits remaining. We also need to solve problems with payments sent to the College from the VA but the VA will not give us any information. When they return money to the College, they do not put identifying information on the check or with the check to match up the payment with the student. This has caused us much wasted time having to find information other ways.

## VII. ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

Veterans Services is assessed in many ways. We conduct a yearly department college audit, the VA conducts a yearly federal audit, the state also conducts a yearly audit and we assess our success through the collection of numbers and stats yearly. All of these methods provide feedback in different ways about our success or lack of success and of the accuracy of our processes.

Veterans Services also conducts focused assessments every year as do all Student Services departments. Our assessments have included surveys of students regarding their interests and satisfaction. We have also looked at learning outcomes from orientation and demographics of veterans compared to the general student population. The last three years of our assessments are summarized in Appendix F. In addition, we complete the Student Services Highlights report that provides quantitative information about our students and services as well as highlights of the major events and changes in the year. For an example of Veterans Services Highlights for 2013-2014, see Appendix G.

### **Developing Assessment Plans**

Since the beginning of Veterans Services, the development, research and analysis of assessment plans has been solely completed by the Manager. With staff workload and turnover, we have not had staff to assist with assessment and evaluation. The staff has participated by conducting the time study of work and asking students to complete the surveys but that has been the extent of their participation. As a result, this puts a large responsibility on the Manager and the assessments only reflect the concerns of one person.

The assessments we have conducted have been valuable and we have used the results as we plan and structure our services. For example, the time study identified how long it was taking to complete our work, and it enabled us to identify steps to improve our processes. In a different study, we found that the online tutoring service we proposed was not what students wanted, so we did not spend additional time trying to make it work. Based on pre and post learning outcome surveys, we found that our one-on-one orientation is successful.

By completing this self-study of our department and processes, it is clear that there is a need for the Coordinators to take more responsibility for parts of the department assessments each year. We will begin discussing the reasons and outcomes of previous assessments and the Coordinators will begin to complete an assessment for their area of responsibility. Also we will plan and complete a joint assessment for the department.

The results of the assessments are shared with staff as we complete the surveys, etc. We discuss what the results mean to our office, if we need to change process, whether we are doing a good job, and if we need to improve our processes. Our results of the yearly reports are made public by posting them on the college share-point drive. They are available for other departments, students or the public to view.

We need to continue conducting surveys to determine our students' needs and satisfaction with our services. We have found that the workshops requested one year are not requested the next

year. Having the survey also assists us in knowing the areas where we, as a staff, need to improve and where we are doing great.

As mentioned earlier, one study we need to conduct is to contact students who do not persist and find out why. This will give us a clearer picture of what is happening and a clearer picture of our success. Did the student get what they came here for? Why did they not continue? We can also use the data to encourage/facilitate these students' return to school.

Because we are still new, compared to other departments, we are still developing what we are as a department. We have many areas to research and grow as we continue to make this the best Veterans Services program in the state.

## VIII. SUMMARY OF SELF-STUDY

### Changes

As covered throughout the document, we have experienced many major changes within our department over the past five years. The changes have been fast, large and department forming and changing such as:

- Moving into a larger, new office
- From serving 350 veterans to serving all 1300 veterans and dependents using benefits, including traditional credit and SAT non-credit students
- Being responsible for five to 17 types of benefits or groups
- Increasing service providers and support on campus from one to six
- Implementing Chapter 33 benefits
- Working with the complexities of certifying students for the Flight program
- Opening a new office at a second site at South City Campus
- Adjusting to different department structure and responsibilities

Even with all of the changes, growth and challenges, we have created a quality center to serve our veterans. We have been able to do what we have done because of the support from our administration. We are able to serve our veterans in many ways that encourage and support them while in school. Because of our success, our center is held up as a model by many in the state.

But with all we have accomplished, we know there are still many things we could be doing that would improve our services and make our processes work smoother. We look for best practices and evaluate whether we want to investigate them further to implement in our department. We are open to new services and ways to better our department.

### Major Accomplishments and Strengths

We have not only survived but also successfully created a quality department in a short period of time. This was done during a time of major change not only at the College but also with the VA. The service we offer our students is top notch. We have many resources to assist our students to successfully navigate through their educational experience and succeed in college. We also provide services to assist them with challenges and/or issues relating to their service in the military. We have created a solid working relationship with members in the veteran's community and with departments on campus.

With the creation of the Veterans Center, SLCC has been on the leading edge in Utah for services offered veterans. We have grown support services through innovative partnerships and with support from the SLCC administration. Many in the state's VA community respect and value the participation of SLCC in discussions, plans and legislation. We have supported schools in Utah and in many states as they approach their school administrations to get approval for a center for their veterans.

We have come far which is important to remember as we continue forward. By looking at what we do, why we do it and whether there is better way, we will continue to improve. Looking "outside of the box" at creative or new options is critical in a department with limited resources. The way we

solved the problem of veterans not using DRC services is a good example of looking outside of the box and taking an innovative partnership that has been successful.

We feel we have a great working relationship with the departments on campus. There are many ways to work in partnership to improve our services and we will continue searching for those valuable connections.

Our partnership with the community members is great. We often experience their support and praise for our services provided to our students. They attend our events and send students to us.

### **Areas Needing Improvement**

Even with the many great things we have accomplished, we still have areas we can improve. We are weak in reports and tracking statistics, and need to automate processes to improve our accuracy and speed. There are many ways we could be providing support to our students on other campuses. We have not found the way to get participation from our veterans for the events we hold.

Because we do not have a report identifying those who drop out, we cannot give actual numbers for persistence. However, we know how many files are in the inactive cabinets and how many files we move each semester to inactive. There are too many that do not complete their education. It is important to know why.

We also are not providing the support services to our students in the SAT program. It is important to provide support for them as well.

We need to improve our staff meeting situation. How can we hold regular staff meetings with no office coverage and the varying work hours of part-time staff? How do we keep good employees longer to ensure we have the trained staff to process the work? What resources can we leverage to accomplish what we see needs to happen?

To make these improvements, we need the following support:

- Additional full-time staff (SCO and Secretary) support for Taylorsville Redwood and South City Campus
- Additional funding to attend conferences and training for all SCOs (part-time and full-time SCOs)
- More space for our Veterans Center on Redwood campus
- A larger office suite for South City
- Funding to hire an Academic/Persistence/Outreach Advisor
- Updated furniture in the Veterans Center since it is old and inefficient
- Additional funding to provide events on other campuses
- A method to reach and encourage veterans to attend events

### **Goals and Key Issues Based on Self-study**

As a result of the self-study, we identified the following goals that the department will work on:

- Update mission statement to reflect the expanded role of the department

- Hold regular staff meetings
- Have VS staff attend staff meetings of other departments we work with
- Continue to advocate for the development of reports in Banner needed for reporting and which will provide data to assist us in identifying needs and planning interventions and services
- Develop automated processes to eventually become paperless
- Improve processes and pass annual VA audits with no write-ups
- Get input from veterans about the best way to communicate with them and improve marketing strategies with more personal contacts for events and services
- Complete the catalog approval process quicker
- Improve support for our veterans attending the SAT
- Involve Coordinators in developing assessment plans
- Identify and follow up on students who drop out

The key issues or concerns we would like the site review teams to address are as follows:

- Space
- Staffing
- Suggestions for improving certification processes and turnaround time
- Ways to automate more of our system
- Methods to reach veterans to participate in events
- Suggestions for improving support services for students

Veterans Services staff appreciate the time and expertise of the reviewers and their feedback to improve our department. We look forward to the observations and opinions of reviewers regarding our strengths and challenges. We welcome suggestions for improvement and what we need to consider for the future development of the department to better serve our veterans.

## Appendix A: SLCC Steps for Certifying a Student

### SLCC STEPS FOR CERTIFYING A STUDENT

Compare the number of veterans using benefits and the increase in work due to the addition of new chapters. Determine steps and time it takes to process and monitor each chapter of benefits.

For this study, we will be reviewing chapters: 30, 31, 33, 33T, 1606, 1607, 35

Programs not evaluated due to small numbers affecting us yet, are 33F, MyCAA, TA, 32, 34, Purple Heart TW.

All sections below apply the same to each chapter except if a specific chapter is identified

Steps:

1.	New Student	Time - 30 min
2A & B	Letters to Students Instructors	Time - 20 min each
3.	Students Submitting Schedule	Time - 15 min
4.	Coding Procedures	Time - 20 min
5.	Certifying Chapter 31	Time - 20 min
6.	VA Once Procedures- 2-Pending-Work Study Employees	Time - 15 min
7.	VA Once Procedures- Certifying Officials	Time - 20 min
7A.	Chapter 33- Certifying Official ONLY	Time - 40 min
7B	Chapter 33- Pilot Certification	Time - 50 min
7C	Chapter 33 - Billing payment Tracking	Time - 20 min
7D	Chapter 33 - Pilot Billing payment Tracking	Time - 35 min
8.	Logging Procedures	Time - 10 min
9.	Scanning Procedures	Time- 30 min
10.	3 <sup>rd</sup> Week Audit	Time - 20 min
11.	Grade Audit Procedures	Time - 25 min

All procedures in sections below apply the same to each chapter except if a specific chapter is identified.

To determine the amount of time required to complete different tasks, identify steps must be completed based on if new or continuing student. In the

#### **EXAMPLES**

##### New Student-not ch 33

1,3,4,6,7,8,9,10,11= Total times

##### New student- ch 33

1,3,4,6,7a,7c,8,9,10,11= total times

##### Continuing student- not 33

3,4,6,7,8,9,10,11= total times

If student needs letters, changes schedule or other situations, total time. This study was done in April 2010.

We will be conducting another similar study to use as part of our self study for my departments Program Review.

#### ***PROCEDURES INCLUDED FOR EACH STEP***

##### **1. NEW STUDENT -All chapters**

- Check new documents in
- Complete Orientation with student
- Ensure all documents are correctly signed
- Copy documents to send to Oklahoma
- Log all documents
- Set up a new file folder

## **2A. LETTERS TO STUDENTS**

**NO PAY** - Classes not fitting in degree plan

**TRANSCRIPT WARNING** - The 2<sup>nd</sup> semester a student attends school and does not have transcripts evaluated they are sent a warning letter that they have this semester only to complete this requirement.

**TRANSCRIPT HOLD** - The beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> semester, if the student does not have all transcripts in and evaluated we can not certify them until this requirement is completed

**PROBATION** - Students Cum GPA under 2.0

**ACADEMIC PROBATION** - Students who's Cum GPA has not improved from 2.0.

**INCOMPLETE TRANSCRIPTS** - 3<sup>rd</sup> term enrolled and transcripts incomplete

**MULTIPLE SCHEDULE SUBMISSION**- New policy of accepting one schedule that we submit immediately then at 3<sup>rd</sup> week we will make adjustments on our certification

## **2B. LETTERS TO INSTRUCTORS**

**REQUEST FOR LAST DATE OF ATTENDANCE FOR 'E' GRADES**

**REQUEST FOR LAST DATE OF ATTENDANCE FOR 'W' GRADES**

**REQUEST FOR GRADE TO BE ENTERED ON BANNER SYSTEM**

**REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION TO DETERMINE ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION**

## **3. STUDENT SUBMITTING TERM SCHEDULE**

Receive new schedule

Ask students a list of questions- to ensure they are clear on rules for submitting

Checking students schedule against their degree audit if they have questions

Date stamp schedule and find file

Log receipt of schedule

Fact sheet placed on bottom of the papers paper clipped on outside of file

## **4. CODING PROCEDURE**

Chapters, 30, 31, 33, 33T, 35, 1606, 1607

No change of Major and ALL classes are required for major complete coding process

\*If Student has a Change of Major file need a new Degree Audit before coding can be complete

\*\*If classes do not fit major write NO PAY under the class.

\*\*\*If there is no degree audit or need for new audit, put note on top of the schedule on file and place in basket for degree audits. Complete coding once you have a new degree audit.

Match schedule to students file

Remove Log sheet from file and log receipt of schedule

Check schedule and highlight terms that are NOT full term classes

Check classes against Degree Evaluation and log new classes and term on audit

Put a check mark out to the right of each class that fits based on audit

Check SOAPCOL for transcripts and prior credit

Check SPAPERS to see if the address on document is same as in the file

Check SPAIDEN to ensure VET code is changed to veterans SS# and other protected

Check SGASTDN to code for type of benefit used, schedule hr and term

Place a C, date and initial circle all on the bottom right corner of the schedule

Place file in file for --TO VA Once -

Chapter 31

Match schedule to students file

Remove Log sheet from file and log receipt of schedule

Print a new schedule from BANNER. Shred schedule submitted by student

Check schedule and highlight terms that are NOT full term classes

Check classes against Degree Evaluation and log new classes and term on audit

Put a check mark out to the right of each class that fits based on audit

Check SOAPCOL for transcripts and prior credit

Check SPAPERS to see if the address on document is same as in the file  
Check SPAIDEN to ensure VET code is changed to veterans SS# and other protected  
Check SGASTDN to code for type of benefit used, schedule hr and term  
Place a C, date and initial circle all on the bottom right corner of the schedule  
Remove current 1905 from file. Make sure one blank copy is always left in the file if  
1905 is still valid

#### **5. CERTIFYING CHAPTER 31- Certifying Official ONLY**

Complete 1905

Verify that all classes fit in the major approved by their Rehab counselor

Write the terms of enrollment on the form separating out each term or block of  
the term

Indicate the enrollment status: FT,  $\frac{3}{4}$ ,  $\frac{1}{2}$ , less than  $\frac{1}{2}$  time

Sign and date 1905

Fax 1905, schedule, new degree audit if run, test scores if new file to Rehab

Log all documents and forms on sheet and scan.

#### **VA ONCE**

#### **6. TO 2-P STATUS- chapters, 30, 31, 33, 35, 1606, 1607**

Check coding procedures to ensure complete and accurate

Check the classes against the degree evaluation

Check SOAPCOL

Check SPAIDEN

Check SGASTDN

Enter new term information on VA Once

Enter term, credit hours, and tuition

Submit it to 2-P status

#### **7. Certification Completion - Certifying Official ONLY will complete**

Check coding procedures to ensure complete and accurate

Check the classes against the degree evaluation

Check SOAPCOL

Check SPAIDEN

Check SGASTDN

Enter new term information on VA Once

Enter term, credit hours, and tuition taking care to watch for:

\* Multiple terms, distribution of credits- Dev/CR

#### **COMPLETING CERTIFICATION- -CERTIFYING OFFICIAL ONLY**

Check classes against degree evaluation

Check information entered for 2-P status

Verify tuition credit hours distribution, credit hours and tuition

Submit certification to VA

Log sheet is placed on top of all documents signifying certifying process is complete and ready for scanning.

#### **7-A CH 33 Check coding procedures to ensure complete and accurate**

Check the classes against the degree evaluation

Check SOAPCOL

Check SPAIDEN

Check SGASTDN

Enter new term information on VA Once

Enter term, credit hours, and tuition taking care to watch for:

- Multiple terms, distribution of credits- Dev/CR  
Calculate and Enter Tuition and Fees- Split out based on % eligibility  
Submit certification to VA

Log sheet is placed on top of all documents signifying certifying process is complete and ready for scanning.

### **7-B PILOT Program Chapter 33**

Sign the students Lab billing sheet and indicate the % of the benefits the student is eligible for.

Verify student is registered for lab as per permission from the Flight Schools.

Ensure all signatures are on the sheet.

Tuition and fees are logged on 33 tracking Spreadsheet

Must put the total tuition and fees are list what the VA must pay and what the student must pay depending on percent eligible for

The amount of Flight fees must also be calculated and entered here.

Spreadsheet is sent to Rong in Accounts Receivable weekly.

Rong sends the spreadsheet back weekly for us to check:

Payments made by VA

Payments made by student

Over payments made in error by Oklahoma

Adjustments made due to student dropping classes

Overpayments on account due to student having residency adjusted

Determination must be made on each step after payments are made:

If payment is correct

Do we need to contact Oklahoma to get remainder of what is due?

Have they paid more than what is due?

If there is an overpayment, where is the additional money to be sent based on the directive from Oklahoma.

### **7C. CH 33 FINANCIAL TRACKING SPREADSHEET**

Tuition and fees are logged on 33 tracking Spreadsheet

Must put the total tuition and fees then list what the VA must pay and what the student must pay depending on percent eligible for

Spreadsheet is sent to Rong in Accounts Receivable weekly.

Rong sends the spreadsheet back weekly for us to check:

Payments made by VA

Payments made by student

Over payments made in error by Oklahoma

Adjustments made due to student dropping classes

Overpayments on account due to student having residency adjusted

Determination must be made on each step:

If payment is correct

Do we need to contact Oklahoma to get remainder of what is due?

Has Oklahoma paid more than what is due?

If there is an overpayment, where is the additional money to be sent based on the directive from Oklahoma.

### **7D. PILOT Program Chapter 33**

Tuition and fees are logged on 33 tracking Spreadsheet

Must put the total tuition and fees are list what the VA must pay and what the student must pay depending on percent eligible for

The amount of Flight fees must also be calculated and entered here.

Spreadsheet is sent to Rong in Accounts Receivable weekly.

Rong sends the spreadsheet back weekly for us to check:

Payments made by VA

Payments made by student  
Over payments made in error by Oklahoma  
Adjustments made due to student dropping classes  
Overpayments on account due to student having residency adjusted  
Determination must be made on each step after payments are made:  
If payment is correct  
Do we need to contact Oklahoma to get remainder of what is due?  
Have they paid more than what is due?  
If there is an overpayment, where is the additional money to be sent based on the directive from Oklahoma?

## **8. LOGGING PROCESS**

Ensure ALL documents under Log Sheet are logged on the sheet in correct order  
Date document is either submitted or processed (not date logged)  
Term documentation is for (circled)  
Brief description of documents submitted or processed (i.e.: schedule submitted for 12 cr hr or 1999 submitted for 13 cr hr or 1999b submitted decrease in hours/increase in hours etc)  
Initials of one logging

## **9. SCANNING PROCESS**

All documents submitted or processed are scanned. Take all documents to another office to scan them.  
New file  
Continuing student file  
Adjustments to file  
After scanning file assembly  
Hole punch documents  
Place documents in proper place in file.  
File folder in filing cabinet

## **10. 3<sup>RD</sup> WEEK AUDIT**

Check schedule in file and make sure classes are same as on Banner SFAREGS  
If classes are not the same, print a new schedule from Banner.  
Check new class as done above and against the degree audit.  
Classes fit and no change in FT credit hours-  
Log "Class changes- student still at FT" and file.  
Classes do not fit or change in credit hours-  
Log: "Adjustments made to file" and place in adjustment file.

For ALL files:

Check SPAIDEN to ensure VET code is changed to veterans SS# and other protected  
Check SGASTDN to ensure type of benefit used, schedule hr and term date is correct.

## **11. GRADES**

**VA MANAGER** will run grades after the term is over  
Grades separated by:  
Chapter 31 students  
All classes passed  
Any 'E' grades  
Any 'W' grades  
Any 'AU' grades  
Any grade sheets with Cum GPA under 2.0- highlight Cum GPA.

## **General Rules:**

Every file must have a grade sheet each semester

If no grade sheet for file screen print SHACRSE for term-

Check that grade sheet:

Has all classes listed on last schedule listed on grade sheet

Has all grades for all classes listed on last schedule

If they aren't:

Write missing classes on grade sheet and put in grade adjustment file

## **TO DO**

**Chapter 31** students- Separate – Grades – 'E' or 'W' grades/no E' or 'W' classes

E' or 'W' classes- Fax a copy to Rehab counselors

Then research LDA on Banner and write on grade sheet

Log: "Adjustment needed per grade" Place in grade adjustment file

No E' or 'W' classes- Make a copy and Mail to Rehab

Then check and make sure all classes are listed on the grade sheet.

Log: "Grades complete-no adjustment needed". Initial and file.

## **All chapters- Grade audit**

### **Any 'E' grades**

Check and make sure all classes are listed on the grade sheet.

Research LDA on Banner and write on grade sheet (see sample)

Log: "Adjustment needed per grades" and place in grade adjustment file.

### **All classes passed**

Check and make sure all classes are listed on the grade sheet. If complete, log and file.

Log:

"Grades complete-no adjustment needed". Initial and File.

### **Any 'E' grades**

Check and make sure all classes are listed on the grade sheet.

Research LDA on Banner and write on grade sheet (see sample)

Log "Adjustment needed per grades" and place in grade adjustment file.

### **Any 'W' grades**

Check and make sure all classes are listed on the grade sheet.

Research and write instructors name on grade sheet (see sample).

Log: "Adjustments needed & LDA needed researched". Place in grade adjustment file.

Instructor must be contacted for the LDA. Then adjustment must be made

### **Any 'AU grades**

Check and make sure all classes are listed on the grade sheet.

Check schedule. If AU was not certified no adjustment needed

If it was a class that was certified, must be adjusted to day before first day of term.

Note on fact sheet

"Class was changed to AU and needs adjusted". Place in grade adjustment file.

Or "AU Class was not certified. No adjustment needed." Initial and file.

## **Grade sheets with Cum GPA under 2.0**

Check and make sure all classes are listed on the grade sheet.

Complete any steps needed from above.

Note on fact sheet:

"Adjustment needed and low GPA". Place in grade adjustment file

Student will be sent a probation letter informing them they will be placed on probation for one semester.

If they do not show improvement the next semester their VA benefits will be suspended until their GPA improves.

If they do show improvement the next semester, they will be notified we will keep them on probation one additional semester and watch for improvement.

## Appendix B: Veterans Services Assessment Survey, Spring 2013

### Veterans Services Assessment Survey sent to all Veterans, Spring 2013

How would you rate your experience with the following SLCC Student Services Offices

- Answered: 52
- Skipped: 0

	Excellent	Good	Average	Below average	Poor	Never used	Total
Transfer Credit office and services	15.38% 8	40.38% 21	15.38% 8	5.77% 3	5.77% 3	17.31% 9	52
Financial Aid	19.23% 10	32.69% 17	17.31% 9	5.77% 3	5.77% 3	19.23% 10	52
Academic Advising	17.31% 9	32.69% 17	17.31% 9	13.46% 7	9.62% 5	9.62% 5	52
Enrollment Services	21.15% 11	46.15% 24	17.31% 9	1.92% 1	5.77% 3	7.69% 4	52
Health and Wellness services- medical, massages, counseling	9.80% 5	17.65% 9	13.73% 7	0% 0	1.96% 1	56.86% 29	51

Other (please specify) ( 1 ) [Hide](#)

Showing 1 response

DRC-Excellent ; Classroom Testing Services-@ times poor  
5/19/2013 2:34 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

How would you rate support and services available in Veterans Services?

Answered: 52

- Skipped: 0

	Good	Average	Below average	Poor	Never used	Total
Veteran's Center Loung	32.69% 17	25% 13	1.92% 1	5.77% 3	34.62% 18	52
Veterans Accessibility Services (DRC) Mary Keinz	26.92% 14	11.54% 6	3.85% 2	5.77% 3	51.92% 27	52
VetSuccess on Campus services- VA Benefit assistance on campus (Mike Foster)	38.46% 20	11.54% 6	5.77% 3	7.69% 4	36.54% 19	52
VITAL Counselor- VA Health care support on campus (Aaron Ahern)	11.54% 6	13.46% 7	5.77% 3	5.77% 3	63.46% 33	52
Dept. Workforce Services-DVOP (Tom)	19.23% 10	11.54% 6	5.77% 3	7.69% 4	55.77% 29	52
Veterans Upward Bound Services	15.38% 8	9.62% 5	5.77% 3	5.77% 3	63.46% 33	52
Veterans Services Staff Members	46.15% 24	13.46% 7	11.54% 6	13.46% 7	15.38% 8	52
Overall Satisfaction with SLCC Veterans Services	50% 26	17.31% 9	11.54% 6	13.46% 7	7.69% 4	52

**Other (please specify) ( 6 ) Hide**

Showing 6 responses

Excellent, Much needed as Much APPRECIATED!

5/21/2013 12:23 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

Did not know Veterans Accessibility Services (DRC) existed

5/19/2013 2:34 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

You need to publicize more. I didn't know most of these existed or where to find them.

5/18/2013 4:27 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

I normally just register and send an email that i have registered. sometime sit goes okay, but if i need to change my schedule or something comes up, I have had staff members tell me that things will basically go how they want them to go I even had a time where i had gotten into an argument with a staff member and rather than have my checks messed with i just swallowed my pride. I do not feel that the staff do everything that they can to help in my monthly checks being consistent.

5/17/2013 12:26 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

Tutoring service is Excellent

5/17/2013 12:01 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

I had to submit my packet 3 times because it kept getting "lost". Disappointing but typical of government related services.

## What is your satisfaction of State Services for Veterans

• Answered: 52

• Skipped: 0

	Excellent	Good	Average	Below average	Poor	Never used	Total
<b>State Veterans Office</b>	<b>11.54%</b> 6	<b>23.08%</b> 12	<b>19.23%</b> 10	<b>1.92%</b> 1	<b>7.69%</b> 4	<b>36.54%</b> 19	52
<b>VA Women's Center- VA Hospital</b>	<b>9.80%</b> 5	<b>9.80%</b> 5	<b>7.84%</b> 4	<b>3.92%</b> 2	<b>3.92%</b> 2	<b>64.71%</b> 33	51
<b>OIF/OEF Services</b>	<b>3.85%</b> 2	<b>17.31%</b> 9	<b>11.54%</b> 6	<b>1.92%</b> 1	<b>3.85%</b> 2	<b>61.54%</b> 32	52
<b>TBI Clinic</b>	<b>1.92%</b> 1	<b>7.69%</b> 4	<b>11.54%</b> 6	<b>1.92%</b> 1	<b>3.85%</b> 2	<b>73.08%</b> 38	52
<b>PTSD Clinic</b>	<b>1.96%</b> 1	<b>11.76%</b> 6	<b>11.76%</b> 6	<b>1.96%</b> 1	<b>3.92%</b> 2	<b>68.63%</b> 35	51

**Other (please specify) ( 1 ) Hide**

Showing 1 response

OIF/OEF & TBI are N/A for me. Already set up with MH services before PTSD clinic opened.

5/19/2013 2:34 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

## Have you signed up to use your VA Health Care Benefits?

• Answered: 52

• Skipped: 0

	Answer Choices	Responses
<b>Yes</b>	23	44.23%
<b>No</b>	23	44.23%
<b>I do not know how to</b>	6	11.54%
<b>Total</b>		52

**Please contact me: phone ( 1 ) Hide**

Showing 1 response

## Have you signed up for e-benefits?

Never used

- Answered: 52
- Skipped: 0

Answer Choices		Responses
Yes	26	50%
No	19	36.54%
I do not know how to	7	13.46%
<b>Total</b>		<b>52</b>

Please contact me: phone ( 2 ) [Hide](#)



Showing 2 responses

801.403.7583  
5/19/2013 5:41 PM [View respondent's answers](#)  
Always behind with information or down and cannot be accessed.

## Please answer the following questions about the use of your benefits.

- Answered: 52
- Skipped: 0

	True	False	Total
All veteran students are encouraged to apply for Federal Financial Aid	76.47%	23.53%	
	39	12	51
You are required to maintain a 2.0 GPA to receive VA Educational Benefits.	94.12%	5.88%	
	48	3	51
You must attend class for a month then you are paid for your attendance.	75.51%	24.49%	
	37	12	49
You can pay tuition to SLCC whenever you want to during the semester.	24%	76%	
	12	38	50
You must email a request for certification to Veterans@slcc.edu each term you want to use benefits.	91.84%	8.16%	
	45	4	49
All classes must be required classes towards your declared major at SLCC.	91.84%	8.16%	
	45	4	49
You are not accountable to make sure all classes fit your major.	17.02%	82.98%	
	8	39	47
If you drop or withdraw from a class you do not have to notify anyone.	6.12%	93.88%	
	3	46	49
You have 1 semester to submit ALL transcripts to SLCC.	58.33%	41.67%	
	28	20	48
We send ALL correspondence to your college student email account.	79.17%	20.83%	
	38	10	48

## Please rank your preferred way for us to send messages to you?

- Answered: 48
- Skipped: 4

	1	2	3	Total	Average Ranking
Student Email	87.50%	8.33%	4.17%	48	2.83
	42	4	2		
Text message	8.33%	83.33%	8.33%	48	2.00
	4	40	4		
FaceBook	4.17%	8.33%	87.50%	48	1.17
	2	4	42		

## Check all activities/events you have attended held for Veterans at SLCC?

- Answered: 14
- Skipped: 38

Answer Choices 3  
Responses

Answer Choices	Responses
<p style="text-align: center;">False</p> <p><b>New Veterans Orientation Dinner event</b></p> <p>4.29%</p>	<p>6</p> <p>9</p>
<p><b>Veterans Success Workshops</b></p> <p>1.43%</p>	<p>2</p> <p>3</p>
<p><b>Honoring Veterans Program-Honoring Veterans Day</b></p> <p>5.71%</p>	<p>3</p> <p>5</p>
<p><b>Flag Raising-Veterans Day</b></p> <p>2.86%</p>	<p>4</p> <p>6</p>
<p><b>Celebrating our 2013 Veterans Graduation Dinner</b></p> <p>8.57%</p>	<p>2</p> <p>4</p>
<p><b>Birthday Celebration for each Branch of Service</b></p> <p>4.29%</p>	<p>1</p> <p>2</p>
<p><b>SLCC Student Veterans of America-Veterans Club</b></p> <p>1.43%</p>	<p>2</p> <p>3</p>
<p><b>Vet Center Vet Mobile on campus</b></p> <p>8.57%</p>	<p>2</p> <p>4</p>
<p><b>Total Respondents: 14</b></p> <p>If no, why not ( 29 ) <a href="#">Hide</a></p>	

Showing 29 responses

Answer Choices Responses

I've just been to busy with two little ones, working, and going to school.  
 5/22/2013 6:10 PM [View respondent's answers](#)  
 never heard about them  
 5/21/2013 3:24 PM [View respondent's answers](#)  
 agoraphobic  
 5/20/2013 10:51 PM [View respondent's answers](#)  
 Did not know about events  
 5/20/2013 10:43 AM [View respondent's answers](#)  
 not sure why  
 5/20/2013 8:29 AM [View respondent's answers](#)  
 I live in Orem.  
 5/20/2013 7:27 AM [View respondent's answers](#)  
 I haven't heard of these events before now  
 5/19/2013 5:41 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

Most programs are not at my campus  
 5/19/2013 5:10 PM [View respondent's answers](#)  
 Everything is while I am working  
 5/19/2013 4:36 PM [View respondent's answers](#)  
 I am disabled & find it difficult to extent my physical limits too far.  
 5/19/2013 2:34 PM [View respondent's answers](#)  
 I was not informed about these during the last 2 years.  
 5/19/2013 2:32 PM [View respondent's answers](#)  
 Time!  
 5/18/2013 4:37 PM [View respondent's answers](#)  
 Uhhh didn't know about them. See you need to publize more if only around campus. Off campus wouldn't either.  
 5/18/2013 4:27 PM [View respondent's answers](#)  
 None, because I have not received any notifications and my benefits are too hard to use  
 5/18/2013 2:58 PM [View respondent's answers](#)  
 afraid  
 5/17/2013 10:56 PM [View respondent's answers](#)  
 Did not know about each thing.  
 5/17/2013 2:13 PM [View respondent's answers](#)  
 Some of these i do not know anything about. Others i just have a very limited amount of time  
 5/17/2013 12:26 PM [View respondent's answers](#)  
 I was sent emails, but actively inquiring or showing up, my presence wasn't really accepted  
 5/17/2013 12:01 PM [View respondent's answers](#)  
 Conflicting scheduling times  
 5/17/2013 9:24 AM [View respondent's answers](#)  
 My class lad was too much and times conflicted  
 5/17/2013 7:31 AM [View respondent's answers](#)  
 i live in ogden and my work schedule doesnt permit attending these events  
 5/17/2013 7:16 AM [View respondent's answers](#)  
 i did not know they had these things  
 5/17/2013 7:05 AM [View respondent's answers](#)  
 Wasn't informed about them  
 5/17/2013 12:15 AM [View respondent's answers](#)  
 Usually held the time that I am not available.  
 5/16/2013 9:58 PM [View respondent's answers](#)  
 busy with work and other obligations  
 5/16/2013 9:29 PM [View respondent's answers](#)  
 Had enough of ceremonies while in the military.  
 5/16/2013 8:49 PM [View respondent's answers](#)  
 Haven't heard of any of these  
 5/16/2013 6:25 PM [View respondent's answers](#)  
 Either did not know about them or was at work.  
 5/16/2013 4:54 PM [View respondent's answers](#)  
 was not aware  
 5/16/2013 4:37 PM [View respondent's answers](#)

## Please describe your status here at SLCC

- Answered: 49
- Skipped: 3

Veteran using benefits- within 1st year at SLCC	20	40.82%
Veteran using benefits- more than 1 year at SLCC	17	34.69%
Veteran graduating 2013	9	18.37%
Spouse/Dependent using benefits- within 1st year at SLCC	0	0%
Spouse/Dependent using benefits- more than 1 year at SLCC	2	4.08%
Spouse/Dependent graduating 2013	1	2.04%
<b>Total</b>		<b>49</b>

## Appendix C: Department Staff Profile

DEPARTMENT STAFF PROFILE					
	Director		Specialists		
	Managerial	Profession als	Technician s	Students	Other
<b>Total</b>	1	2	2	10	
<b>Gender</b>					
Female	1	2		1	
Male			2	9	
<b>Ethnicity</b>					
African American/Black					
American Indian	half				
Asian		1			
Caucasian	half	1		8	
Hispanic/Latino				1	
Pacific Islander				1	
Other					
<b>Years Experience in field</b>					
None				2	
Less than 1 year			1	10	
1 to 5		2	1		
5 to 10	1				
10 to 20					
20 plus					
<b>Status</b>					
Full-time	1	2			
Part-time			2	12	
<b>Veteran Status</b>					
Veteran/ Service member		1	2	12	
Non-Veteran	1			1	
Spouse of Veteran		1		1	

## Appendix D: Form CH 33 Bill Payment Agreement



since 2011



since 2010

### CHAPTER 33 G.I. BILL PAYMENT AGREEMENTS

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Student ID or SSN: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ 1<sup>st</sup>

Semester: \_\_\_\_\_

**Initials** \_\_\_\_\_ I understand that I am responsible for the payment of all tuition and fees by the SLCC payment deadline which are not covered by my VA educational disbursement. In the event I find I am not eligible for Chapter 33 benefits or if I do not elect the correct beginning date for benefits to start I am responsible for payment to college.

**Initials** \_\_\_\_\_ If I am not awarded 100%, I will pay my portion including flight lab fees or make payment arrangements by the payment deadline per term dates. Failure to do so will result in a late fee and a hold on future registration. I understand I will not be allowed to register for further terms until past financial obligations are paid.

**Initials** \_\_\_\_\_ Housing Allowance: I understand I will be paid housing stipend based on my rate of pursuit (credit hours) enrolled. Required minimum of 7 cr hour = 50% BAH paid --- 12 cr hours = Full BAH (if I am awarded 100%).

**Initials** \_\_\_\_\_ Tuition and Fees: Chapter 33 will pay a percentage of my tuition and fees for courses that meet degree requirements in my educational program on file with SLCC. The percentage will vary from 40% to 100% as listed on my COE from the VA. I understand I **MUST** submit to Veterans Services a copy of my COE OR TOE my first semester.

**Initials** \_\_\_\_\_ If I **withdraw from or stop attending class(es)**, I will be required to pay the VA back for tuition and fees, living stipend and book allowance for the hours I drop. I must inform Veterans Services at [veterans@slcc.edu](mailto:veterans@slcc.edu) of any changes I make in my schedule including the class I withdraw from and my Last Date of Attendance.

**Initials** \_\_\_\_\_ Book Stipend: The book stipend will be paid to me at the beginning of each term after I have been certified based on my benefit percentage and credit hours certified for by Veterans Services.

**Initials** \_\_\_\_\_ If there are **ANY CHANGES** in your schedule including completion of flight labs, you *may* receive an overpayment and collection notice from the VA or Debt Management. It is in my best interest to immediately bring the letter and collection notice to Veterans Services for review to determine if the debt belongs to the student or the school. If it is a school debt, the school will send the money to the VA with the collection notice. If the debt is mine, I will send the VA the money with the collection notice. If money is sent to me from SLCC because of changes in my schedule, I understand that money will be required to be paid to the VA by me due to what VA determines a "Student DEBT". **SLCC will be held harmless by me for the student debt payment if it has been returned to me.**

**Initials** \_\_\_\_\_ In the event of nonpayment of your portion of tuition/fees, your account will be referred to a collection agency. A negative report reflecting on your credit record will be submitted by that collection agency. If you default on your payment(s), the total amount you owe will become due immediately. You will be required to pay ALL collection and or legal fees incurred in the process of collection of the outstanding debt you owe.

**I understand my reporting and payment responsibilities under Chapter 33 and this is a legal and binding contract and agree to pay any outstanding amount that may be owed. I must submit a Certificate of Eligibility to SLCC Veterans Services upon receipt from the VA. This contract will be in place as long as I attend SLCC.**

Students Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Veterans Services Employee: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Salt Lake Community College- Veterans Services, STCS PO Box 30808 Salt Lake City, UT 84130

[www.slcc.edu/veterans](http://www.slcc.edu/veterans) [veterans@slcc.edu](mailto:veterans@slcc.edu)

Taylorsville Redwood Campus 4600 South Redwood Road- Student Center, 059 (801) 957-4289 office FAX:  
(801) 957-4987

South City Campus 1575 South State Street, SC W144 (801) 957-3010 office FAX:  
(801) 957-3150

FORM- Student Financial Agreement- SLCC- Veterans Services

**Appendix E: Orientation Letter**



since 2011



since 2010

New Student Orientation Name \_\_\_\_\_ Student # \_\_\_\_\_

*I have received an orientation for the use of my VA Educational Benefits at SLCC. **If I have questions it is my accountability to ask.** I have received a copy of this information. \_\_\_\_\_ I give my permission for Veterans Services to provide my contact information to the on campus service providers to contact me.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Students Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Orientation given by  
 employee \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Veterans Services offices are located on the Taylorsville Redwood and South City Campus, our two main campuses. We provide support and assistance to ALL Veterans attending SLCC.

For Veterans, Utah Residency laws are defined at <http://www.slcc.edu/enrollmentservices/residency.aspx - exception#5>. **Complete the 'Returning Veteran' application and provide requested documents by the deadline.** If you are ch 33-100% you can apply for the Yellow Ribbon Waiver (YRW)-Fall & Spring- YRW dates on webpage.

The main office and Veterans Center is located on the Taylorsville Redwood Campus, Student Center, 059. Our Center includes a lounge for studying or relaxing and a study area with computers and printer for all Veterans and dependents. School Certifying Official (SCO), VA work-study students and service providers are available to assist you in the Center.

At South City Campus, SC W 144, an SCO, work-study employees and Veteran outreach service providers are committed to serving Veterans attending classes in the North Region both through the SLCC credit programs and the SAT program. The SCO is the point of contact for SAT students and all Professional Pilot students.

1. The best source of information about SLCC is our **General Catalog** located on-line at [www.slcc.edu](http://www.slcc.edu).
2. We encourage you to set up an appointment with an Academic Advisor at 801-957-4978 to ensure you take only **required** classes.
3. Run a **degree evaluation** for your major. Follow the prompts on your MyPage account under the Student tab for a 'Degree Evaluation' and Run a 'What-If-Analysis'.
4. To determine which VA Benefit is to your advantage or to transfer benefits visit: <http://www.gibill.va.gov/>. Choose carefully. Complete the VonApp, Form 22-1990 (Veteran) and 22-5490 (Dependent) choosing the first day of the term as your start date. If you are not sure, ask a Veterans Services employee for assistance.
5. Chapter 33, TEB, and FRY students must submit a Letter of Eligibility to our office by the end of the first semester. You must be attending more than ½ time to receive any Living Stipend for the semester (7 cr hr) and BAH is based on your rate of pursuit (number of credit hours registered). 12 hr is full time.
6. Purple Heart Recipients: **Utah Residents only- Options:** 1) Submit your DD-214 to the SLCC Financial Aid Office to inform them you are a Purple Heart recipient. Tuition paid by the college, you pay student fees. 2) If Ch 33- use waiver now, College pays tuition &

- VA pays fees, you receive BAH, 3) Don't use waiver now- use Ch 33 & VA pays tuition, fees and BAH, 4) Use PH waiver and FA for fees save Ch 33 funds for later.
7. Attendance verification required for those using Chapter 30, 1606, 1607 and VRAP. You **MUST VERIFY ATTENDANCE ON THE LAST DAY OF EACH MONTH** @ 888-442-4551 or [www.gibill.va.gov/wave](http://www.gibill.va.gov/wave).
  8. Apply ASAP for Federal Financial Aid Pell Grant at [www.fasfsa.ed.gov](http://www.fasfsa.ed.gov). If your financial situation has recently changed and you are denied aid, request a 'Special Consideration' waiver to re-evaluate your award.
  9. You must maintain a *cumulative* GPA of 2.0 or above to receive benefits.
  10. VA benefits are a reimbursement program. You attend a month or part of and you are paid the next month.
  11. **You are accountable to pay your tuition or your portion** by the due date or sign up for the STIL payment plan through the cashiers' office. If you do not, you will receive a \$50.00 late fee. We will not reverse the late fee.
  12. **EACH SEMESTER** notify us of your intent to use benefits by sending an email to [veterans@slcc.edu](mailto:veterans@slcc.edu) with your *Name, Student #, Term to be certified and number credit hours*. If any classes are no pay, identify them. Schedules are processed in order received. **We must have your request to process certification.**
  13. The VA will pay for only classes required for graduation in your SLCC declared major. It is **your responsibility** to know what is required for graduation. Run a what-if-analysis to determine requirements.
  14. AccuPlacer test places you in remedial classes submit test scores to our office. VA will not pay for remedial classes taken through distance education.
  15. At SLCC 12-18 hours is the same tuition. You can take an additional class (Ch 31 will need permission) not required in your degree above the required classes as 'no-pay class' which will not count for required hours.
  16. We process the first schedule submitted in the order they are received. Do not send multiple schedules. Notify us of class changes by email to [veterans@slcc.edu](mailto:veterans@slcc.edu) indicating class and last day attended. **We begin processing changes after the last day to drop class at 100% each semester.**
  17. During your graduating term, if you have one class that counts towards graduation, you may be eligible to take additional class(es) to bring credit hours up to 12 with paid graduation app. (Not Ch 31). Ask staff.
  18. You must order ALL transcripts and request the college evaluate them by the end of your 1<sup>st</sup> term. We will notify the VA if you fail to do so. Do not register for classes you may be given credit for to avoid overpayment
  19. Veterans: You will receive your HLAC credit automatically by submitting your military transcript. Dependents: VA will pay for one HLAC class only.
  20. Those using Tuition Assistance **MUST** apply online and submit class approval form to Accounts Receivable.
  21. Your major with the VA **MUST** be the same as you have declared with SLCC. Only one major at a time. If you change your major with SLCC you must change it with the VA or classes will not be certified.
  22. Repeated classes are not paid for unless an 'E' grade is received or if the catalog states a requirement of a higher grade to move on to the next class. You may repeat a class **ONE** time without financial penalty.
  23. If you drop/withdraw or stop attending class **you will be responsible** for overpayment to the VA and/or the College and Financial Aid. Certifying Officials review & report academic status to the VA during the semester.

24. If you stop attending class for circumstances out of your control, complete VA Form 4138 including last date of attendance and provide supporting documentation to Veterans Services. **WARNING:** Requesting a SLCC tuition appeal **may place you in overpayment.** Talk to a certifying official to determine your best options.
25. If you receive an overpayment or collection letter from the VA or Debt Management, bring your letter to one of the School Certifying Officials immediately. We will inform you if this is your debt or the colleges debt.
26. You can sign up for VA Health Care Benefits with our VITAL coordinator listed below. Set up an appointment.
27. Sign up for e-benefits at [www.gibill.va.gov](http://www.gibill.va.gov).
28. VA payments are not always reliable. You will be paid but it doesn't always arrive timely. Plan accordingly.
29. If you are having problems in your class, with school or your personal life, please contact one of the Certifying Officials, the VetSuccess on Campus counselor or the VITAL coordinator. We want to assist you.
30. If you change your address or phone number notify us at [veterans@slcc.edu](mailto:veterans@slcc.edu), change it on your MyPage account **AND** the VA through your e-benefits account.
31. We send all correspondence to your college student email address. Please check it often.
32. Like us on Facebook 'SLCC Veterans Services' and watch our webpage: [www.slcc.edu/veterans](http://www.slcc.edu/veterans) for notices
33. **We must see a picture ID or One-Card when asking Questions regarding your enrollment, grades, etc.**
34. **Request transcripts - Official and in sealed envelope-** from previous colleges, universities and military training be sent to SLCC and submit request for evaluation.
35. **If you change your schedule after we certify your classes: drop-withdraw-fail due to non-attendance-** you may be placed in VA overpayment. Attendance and completion is your responsibility.

**Veteran Service Providers** available on our campus. Services listed below may also be available for dependents.

1. VetSuccess on Campus- Mike Foster, a VA employee assigned to SLCC to assist all Veterans with information on VA benefits, provide referral to other VA services available including enrollment for medical benefits, stress and crisis management and career & employment guidance. M-R 801-957-4399
2. Veterans Upward Bound- Free tutoring for Veterans in Math, English, and Computer Science. Tutoring provided on the Taylorsville Redwood campus only. T&R 801-626-7173
3. VITAL- Aaron Ahern, a VA lesion to Health Care benefits can assist Veterans overcome obstacles that might impede academic success and support to complete educational goals. In addition, he can enroll Veterans in Health Care system and provide mental health treatment on campus. R&F 801-957-4289
4. DWS-Vet Rep- Assist with Financial/Jobs/Resume and Employment W 801-269-4837
5. Veterans Resource Support Counselor (DRC)-Assists with supportive services M&T 801-957-3852

Salt Lake Community College- Veterans Services, STCS PO Box 30808 Salt Lake City, UT 84130

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## Appendix F: Assessment Summaries from 2010-2013

Assessment	Year	Type	Findings	Use of Results
Accuracy and Timeliness Processing Claims and Reporting Changes	2012 2013	Review audit findings and files	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Some files not completed within 30 days</li> <li>*Problems with department's monitoring and records of flight student claims</li> <li>*Problems with monitoring I grade changes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Changed processing workload among CSOs</li> <li>*Reviewed processing steps with staff</li> <li>*Added one FT employee for flight and SAT</li> <li>*Changed process of students submitting schedules to email for better tracking and efficiency</li> </ul>
Group Orientation	2012 2013	Satisfaction and use surveys (3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Pre-survey indicates that students in group orientation were not familiar with services</li> <li>*Follow up survey respondents remembered rules of benefits and majority found orientation helpful; use of services increased only slightly</li> <li>* Survey to all veterans indicated high satisfaction with overall educational experience; 67% rated VS services good to excellent; 50% rated SLCC services good to excellent; majority not using VS services; majority not attending VS events; most understood benefit rules</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*One-on-one orientation and Welcome Letter are providing quality info</li> <li>*Group orientation was helpful in providing info on services; need to improve method of presentation and marketing of services</li> <li>*Need to improve advertisement of services and events; improve format of email</li> <li>*Add events at South, Jordan and Miller</li> </ul>
Need for a Veterans Academic Advisor	2010 2011	Needs assessment (survey)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*78% of respondents has seen an Advisor at least once</li> <li>*93% of respondents felt it would be helpful to have an Academic Advisor located in the VS Center</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Add a request for funding of a dedicated Academic Advisor for VS</li> </ul>
Time (terms) to Graduation of Veterans	2010 2011	Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Spring 2010 average # semester to graduate was 10 semesters</li> <li>*Spring 2011 average # semesters to graduate was 8 semesters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Improve criteria for tracking terms to graduation to be more consistent from year to year</li> <li>*Track completion terms every year</li> </ul>
Success of One-on-One Orientation	2009 2010	Learning Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* More than half of the respondents are remembering 78% of the information</li> <li>* 74% of the respondents remembered more than 70% of the information from the orientation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data provided through Welcome Letter and one-on-one orientation is generally successful</li> <li>Review information points with staff</li> </ul>
Time to Complete Processing Different Benefits	2009 2010		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>From beginning to end of term grade audits (for students with no problems):</li> <li>* 155 minutes each semester for CH 30, 31, 32, 35, 1606, 1607</li> <li>*200 minutes each semester for CH 33, 33T and 33F</li> <li>*240 minutes each semester for Pilot Students CH 33</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Re-evaluate whether any step can be changed or deleted to speed up the process.</li> <li>*Change method of sending out letters to students</li> </ul>

## Appendix G: Veterans Services Annual Highlights 2012-2013



### Student Services Annual Highlights 2012-2013

#### Veterans Services

Dash Board Indicators:

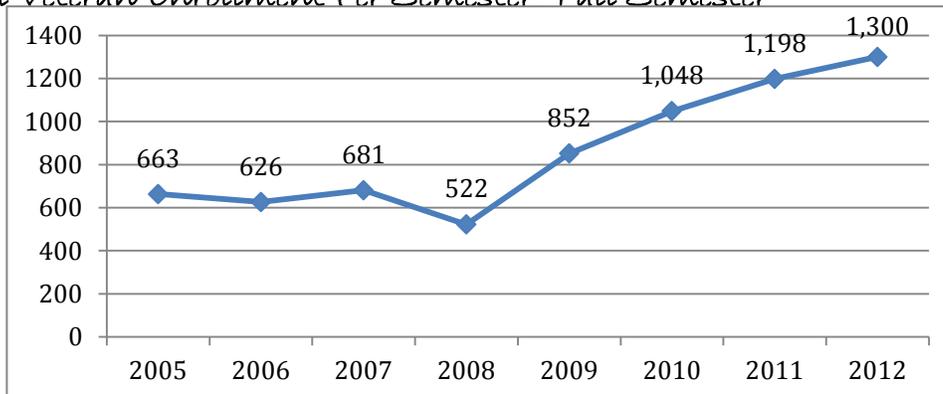
Types of Benefits we Certify and Monitor Yearly

- 2005 **5 types** 30, 31, 35, 1606, Guest Students
- 2006 **6 types** 30, 31, 35, 1606, Guest Students, 1607
- 2009 **9 types** 30, 31, 35, 1606, Guest Students, 1607 33, 33T, MyCAA,
- 2011 **16 types** 30, 31, 35, 1606, Guest Students, 1607 33, 33T, MyCAA, 33F, Yellow Ribbon, Purple Heart Waiver, Army Waivers, AD, Self pay Veterans
- 2012 **17 types** 30, 31, 35, 1606, Guest Students, 1607 33, 33T, MyCAA, 33F, Yellow Ribbon, Purple Heart Waiver, Army Waivers, AD, VRAP, Self pay Veterans
- 2012 **17 types** 30, 31, 35, 1606, Guest Students, 1607 33, 33T, MyCAA, 33F, Yellow Ribbon, Purple Heart Waiver, Army Waivers, AD, VRAP, Self pay Veterans

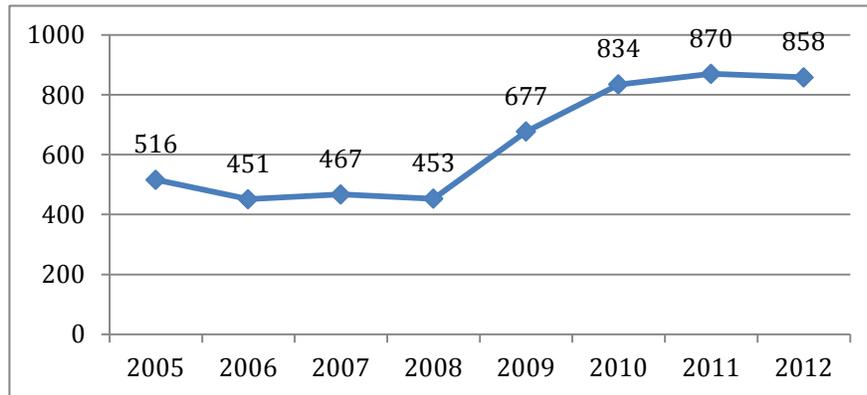
In addition to the above benefits monitored, we are now required to:

- Check 85/15 rule with each change of major by every student makes
- Monitor Exec Order Regulations and reports
- Report Veterans Graduation to VA and GoArmy
- Report Veterans Probation/Suspension to VA
- Report compliance to new VA tracking requirements
- Report VA Objective/Course codes

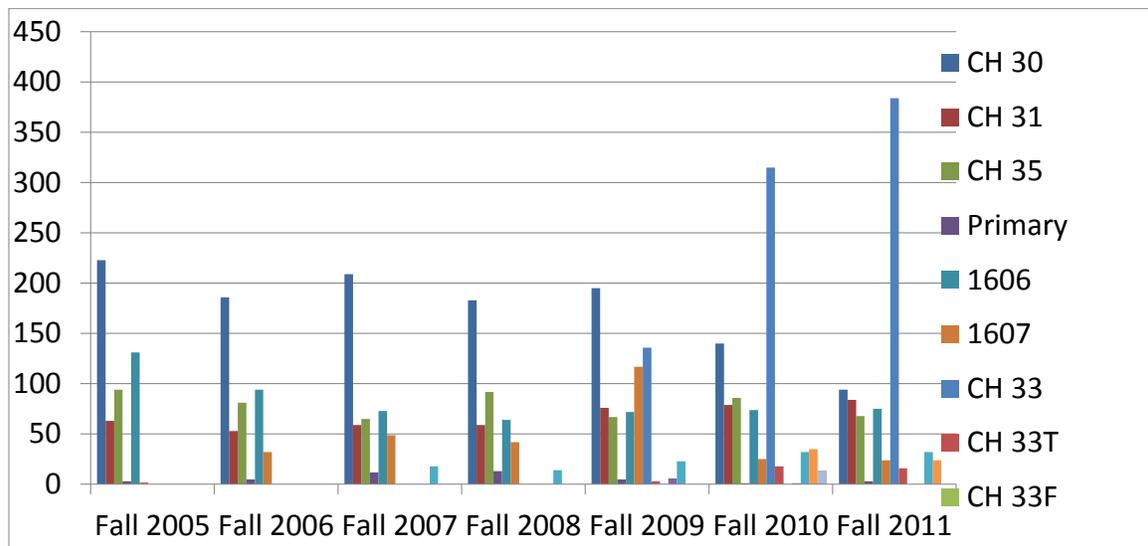
Total Veteran Enrollment Per Semester- Fall Semester



## Veterans Using Benefits- Per Semester- Fall Semester



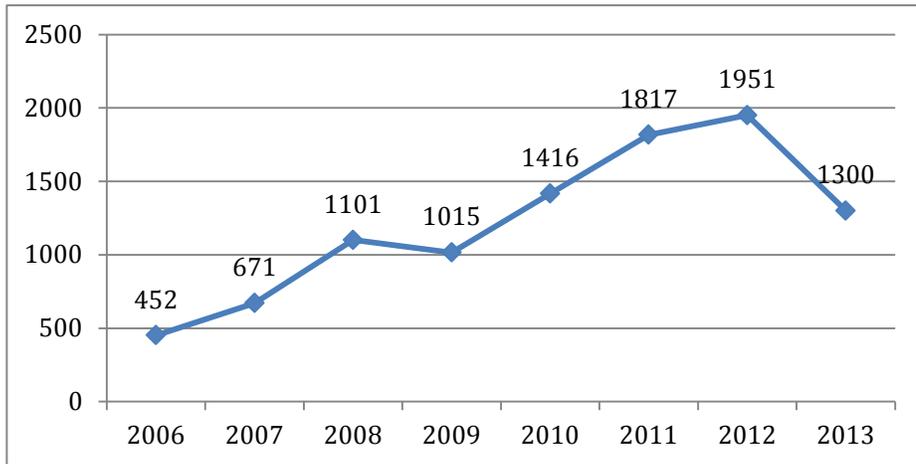
## Comparison of Chapters of Benefits Used



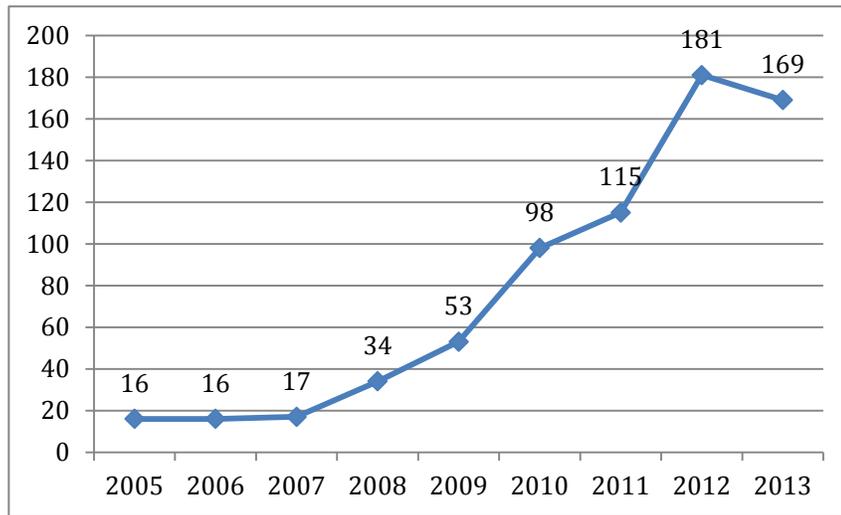
2012

30 58  
 31 84  
 33 413  
 35 54  
 1606 64  
 1607 14  
 Primary 2

Yearly Unduplicated Head Count--All Veterans  
Summer-Spring Semester -Full Year



Number of Veterans Graduating



## Veteran Enrollment by Campus- Fall Semester

Campus	2009	2010	2011	2012
Highland Center	0	20	28	51
Internl Airport Center	16	21	19	14
Jordan Campus	115	149	150	196
Library Square Center	29	34	41	42
Meadowbrook Campus	38	85	110	19
Miller Campus	57	114	123	152
Off Campus	45	49	43	41
SLCC Online	213	261	236	271
South City Campus	167	240	242	245
Taylorville Redwood	587	709	700	738
Westpointe	-	-	-	141

### Programming or Service Highlights:

- Successfully implemented the SLCC VA VITAL Initiative Program as one of 20 schools in the nation selected to host this VA pilot program
- Developed a partnership with SLCC DRC providing a counselor in our center to work with our veterans.
- Presented trainings/workshops for many groups to include:
  - SLCC Professional Development Day
  - SLCC Faculty Conference
  - NAVPA Annual Conference
  - SUU – Day of Excellence for Staff/Student/Faculty
  - ACE Program
- Hired Coordinator for the North Region Campuses
- Provide VS services & Support at Taylorville Redwood, South City and Westpointe campuses
- Transitioned responsibility for SAT program to VS
- Successfully held a Fall Orientation for new Veterans
- The SL Tribune published an article on the success of the SLCC Veterans and Veterans Services
- For the 2<sup>nd</sup> year we were rated as Best for Vets in Military Times
- For the 5<sup>th</sup> year received a plaque for Veteran Friendly Status
- A documentarily was filmed at SLCC about the success of one of our Veterans who was previously homeless

### Assessment Highlights:

#### Assessment #1 Evaluate and Improve Accuracy and Timeliness of Processing Claims and Reporting Changes to the VA

Identified common problems on the VA audit and identified some of the problems and challenges.

1. We were not completing all work in the 30-day window we have with the VA.

- We reviewed our current processes to determine possible problems
- We identified common tasks we must complete for all chapters of benefits
- Then identified some of the different tasks for chapter 33 students which is now our largest group of students
- Changed duties and division of work to ensure each task is being processed and work is evenly divided
- Changed process of students notifying Veterans Services of their intent to receive benefits each term
- We evaluated our new of changes in procedures to determine if we were successful

This part of the assessment did not completely turn out exactly how I thought or hoped it would.

- We have completed writing procedures
- We have identified what the new employee must learn to be ready to assist new students.
- We have also identified potential problems with the way we divided the workload in the office leaving the possibility of not having anyone trained to complete work.
- We need to re-evaluate the division of work to ensure coverage in all areas. But there are so many complicated jobs to do and such turn around in the part time employees, it would take longer to teach the job than the employees stay because they get better jobs.
- When we are fully staffed with trained employees, we can get through the work. The challenge is getting and keeping the staff members.

## 2. Problems with the Flight program at the college

- The college flight department was not monitoring every closeout sheet to ensure only approved charges were being paid to the vendor from the VA funds and monitoring for flights. Thus, unapproved charges were being made and charged to the VA and unapproved flights were being charged.
- The math done by the vendor was incorrect thus the amount of money the vendor said the student used on the closeout sheet was not the same amount the school one-card or blackboard showed should be charged.
- The college Flight department was not checking each file and did not have records kept at the college for each student, thus, the VA has now required Veterans Services to now maintain and verify each final close out of each flight lab. This process has added time to the close out process by the VS SCO.
- The time to complete the close out sheets after each lab was not complete in the 30-day time limit. This is because when the closeout sheets come to VS, they often have errors that must send back to have the Vendor correct.

We reviewed these concerns and issues and identified

- The history of VS accountabilities in the beginning of the program
- Required change made in VS processes due to audit- explanation of problem
- We began reviewing students' records, Identifying problems and reconciling charges. Some problems found by VS while doing an in-depth review
- Identified recent problems we have discovered within the last month

**Reviewed the success and problems of one year since change in our procedures requirements**

**Identified**

**Additional issue involving the Flight Program- VA 85/15 percentages**

- Made suggestions on how to fix the problem

The problems with the flight program are complicated and need major changes. We must make those changes soon to avoid a continuation of the problems we have been experiencing.

**Assessment #2 Hold a Group Orientation for Veterans in September and Determine the Success of the Orientation.**

**1. Gave three surveys to identify information**

**Orientation and 1<sup>st</sup> survey**

- a. Given to all those in attendance at the orientation.

**Survey 2- Follow-up**

- b. Given to all those in attendance at the orientation in November to determine if they used services and if they remembered what we told them.

**Third survey to all veterans coded in Banner**

- c. April, I sent out a survey to all coded in the Banner system. The goal of this survey was to determine if the Veterans on a whole understand using benefits, if they have used the services, their satisfaction with services. 52 students responded to the survey.

**Results/Actions taken**

2. Our one-on-one orientation is providing quality information to the students that we need them to know. The way we present it, the Welcome Letter and then the Orientation covering point by point from the letter, is working.
3. The group orientation was helpful to most students who did not know about services available for them at the college. This was a good way to introduce the students to the service providers. I feel we could do a better job of marketing the services in the way we present them at the orientation.
4. We need to do a better job of advertising services and events available to veterans and their dependents provided at SLCC.
5. We need to find a way to have some events at South, Jordan or Miller campuses as well as Taylorsville Redwood.
6. When we send out notices of events and workshops, we should change the format of emails we send to not look like just another letter to which they may ignore it.