

Veterans Resource Center and Veterans Services Coordinator

Overview:

The California Community College system has begun to serve veterans of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) as well as to continue serving those veterans and dependents receiving education benefits through existing GI Bill programs. It is estimated that more than 50% of veterans and their dependents using the GI Bill at California postsecondary institutions are enrolled at a community college. Further, enrollment of veterans is expected to increase dramatically in the near future.

Returning veterans arrive on campus as an at-risk population for three primary reasons¹:

- Most veterans have not attended formal, traditional academic programs for several years
- Veterans can often be described as nontraditional learners
- Many OEF and OIF veterans return with a traumatic brain injury (TBI), post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), or other disabilities that pose substantial barriers to academic success

A veterans resource center would provide an entry point for student veterans as they navigate the civilian and academic world as well as provide a study space, computer access, referral services, private counseling area and lounge. Ideally, the center would be staffed by a full-time coordinator who would provide assistance on navigating the different application processes for returning veterans; college admissions, scheduling assessment and/or counseling appointments, applying for VA Education Benefits, registering for classes, certifying student's for education benefits, etc.

The center would be a location to promote student success, community and wellness. Space could be allocated for one-on-one counseling; academic, crisis and personal, peer mentoring, referral services, study area/lounge space, transfer information, job search, and veteran oriented events.

Space:

Space should allow for a computer bank with internet access, private counseling offices, study area, and lounge space. Robin Armour suggested that we consider using the Admissions and Records Swing Space as a location for the proposed Veterans Center once the Admissions and Records Department moves to its permanent location. This space is set up with private offices (for counseling and coordinator position) a computer bank, open area for study area and /or lounge space. This space is ideal as it would have minimal construction/remodeling costs and is basically move-in ready.

¹ <http://www.htctu.fhda.edu/vrc/Veterans%20Resource%20Center%20project.pdf>

An informal survey of existing Veterans Centers revealed that if dedicated space is available, VA professional counseling services (transition, VocRehab, Job Search and crisis) have scheduled time on those campus' to meet with Veterans. For example; Las Positas College has an Oakland Vet Center Readjustment Counselor on staff and American River College working in partnership with VA's Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VocRehab) has a VocRehab/Success Counselor on staff. Both of these positions are VA funded.

Funding Sources:

- Grants and donations from community organizations and local businesses, ie.VFW, AT&T, TOSCO, Google, Chevron, Local Banks, Community Veterans Support Groups, etc. (need buy-in from LMC Foundation on grant writing and donation solicitation process) We could solicit donations of equipment and furniture from local businesses and community organizations and acknowledge these donations by commemorative plaques displayed in the center. For example, "This equipment was graciously donated to our veteran students by a generous donation provided by ***Company Name***".
- Bond measure

Staffing:

Center should be staffed by at least one full-time staff member (Veterans Center Coordinator). Part time staff could be provided by VA Work Study Program. VA Work Study Students are paid through VA Education Benefits. The allowed number of student positions is determined by the VA student population. These positions would be funded at no-cost to Los Medanos College other than supervision and time-keeping.

Sub-Committee:

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