Research exercise: Understanding Veteran Needs for Academic Success

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What is the Post 9-11 GI Bill?

A monetary award granted to service members serving in the military for at least 90 consecutive days after September 11, 2001. This bill provides monetary assistance for attending school and earning a degree (Caspers & Ackerman, 2013).

Definitions of Veterans

- **Veteran:** Former member of the U.S. Armed Forces.
- **Combat Veteran:** Active duty personnel in combat operations during periods of war.
- **Military Undergraduate (or Graduate) Students:** Students who are veterans, on active duty or members of a reserve or National Guard unit (DeSawal, 2013).

Common Profile - Veteran Students

- Predominately male
- White (85%), Black (11.2%), Hispanic (5.1%), Multiple (2.2%)
- Over the age of 24
- First generation college students
- Married
- Has children
- Focused on education
- Wealth of life experiences

Campus Challenges

- Creation of a safe space
- Primary contact person
- Monetary resources
- Personnel to provide special services
- Faculty to assist/advice veterans
- PTSD/Hypervigilance/traumatic brain injury/depression
- Faculty training programs to understand veterans

Best Practices

- Formal Student Veteran Association Chapter
- Campus contact or one-stop office of Veteran Services
- Orientation to campus
- Reflective learning experiences
- Credit for Military Service
- Rapport-building
- Supportive campus community

How Faculty Can Help

- Create feelings of welcome in classroom
- Design assignments for vets to reflect on military experience
- Award credit for military service
- Serve as front line for challenges
- Identify mental health needs or disabilities and direct to appropriate resources

Connections to the Literature from The Professoriate (EDU 847/947)

- Faculty in the United States are under intense time demands and expectations regarding productivity in teaching, research, and service. Taking the time to learn to serve a unique population such as veterans could further stress limited faculty time (Fairweather, 2005; Norman, Ambrose, & Huston, 2006; Townsend & Rosser, 2007).
- Large numbers of post-9/11 veterans are attending for-profit institutions of higher education (DeSawal, 2013). While for-profit institutions are skilled at attracting the growing non-traditional student population, they often lack student support services and accountability metrics (Lechuga, 2006).
- Institutions of higher education are becoming increasingly diverse and attracting technology-savvy students in the twenty-first century (Hainline, Gaines, Feather, Padilla, & Terry, 2010). Veterans add another type of diversity and bring unique life experiences to campuses.
- Institutions of higher education often reward faculty for research more than for teaching or other diverse forms of scholarship. The promotion and tenure process is in need of reform to better reward faculty who excel at teaching and service, such as work with veterans (Beyer, 1990; Shapiro, 2006).

References