

A VETERANS TRANSITION SUPPORT PROGRAM

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BRANDIN L. HOWARD

ADVISOR: DR. ROGER WESSEL

BALL STATE UNIVERSITY

MUNCIE, INDIANA

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ABSTRACT

Title: A Veterans Transition Support Program

Student: Brandin L. Howard

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The purpose of this project was to provide an alternative guideline for creating and establishing an effective veterans affairs program which aides in the transition and success of student veterans. Through this project, the main goal was to offer a program which combines the efforts of individuals from numerous departments at colleges and universities to smooth the transition in and out of active duty and ensure that all the support and resources institutions can provide are given to student veterans.

The first stages of this project included a review of related literature on student veterans which included an investigation of the history of student veterans in the higher educational setting, veterans in contemporary higher education, their transitional processes and challenges, mental and physical issues, and the need for support mechanisms. In addition, current veteran affairs programs were researched to discover the services that they provide for student veterans to determine best practices and components needed for the project. These programs were research through their institutional and program websites as well as through personal contact with representatives of the program.

This project provides those with interest in this area with specific instructions on how a Veteran's Transitional Support Program can be created. This project contains a university Task Force designed to discuss and explore possible accommodations for student veterans, a position description for Program Coordinator for Veterans Support Services, a position Description for Graduate Assistant (GA) for Veterans Support Services, and a template of a Vets Helping Vets Organization Constitution.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Towards the end of World War II, institutions of higher education saw an increase in enrollment of numerous different populations of students. Most notably, institutions saw a vast increase of students who served in the armed forces of the United States military enrolling in higher education. This increase of service men and women is primarily attributed “by the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944 (the GI Bill)” (Geiger, 2005, p. 61).

With the increase of this particular population of students, higher education institutions were forced to take a look at methods to aid the transition of students returning from wars. In modern day higher education, there has been a major effort on the behalf of colleges and universities to develop programs, departments, and initiatives to aid the transition of not only students returning from active combat but students who are preparing to enter active combat and students who are enlisted in the United States military as a whole.

Introduction to Project

There are numerous institutions of higher education that have some form of a veteran’s affairs department or program which is designed to aid student veterans in the higher education realm. However, the question of “are these programs and initiatives

truly effective” in easing the transition of students in the military still remains. The transition from an active war-zone to being back in a classroom can potentially be one of the greatest challenges these students face. This creative project provides a potential framework for colleges and universities in creating or reformatting veteran affairs programs in efforts to ease the transition for students returning from war as well as provide needed support to students who fall within this dynamic.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this project was to provide an alternative guideline for creating and establishing an effective veterans affairs program which aides in the transition and success of student veterans. Through this project, the main goal was to offer a program which combines the efforts of individuals from numerous departments at colleges and universities to smooth the transition in and out of active duty and ensure that all the support and resources institutions can provide are given to student veterans.

Significance of Study

The intent of this study was to encourage a critical evaluation of current practices regarding to student veteran affairs departments in higher educational institutions. Although numerous institutions are making strides in developing programs to suit the needs of this student subpopulation, the literature suggests numerous best practices which could strengthen the effectiveness of said programs. By studying the needs of student veterans in the higher education and using best practices while developing new practices, the goal of developing a veteran affairs department which provides little friction in the transition process of these students can be achieved.

Limitations of the Project

This project is created with the intention that many higher education institutions can pool the resources that are already available and present to aid this particular student demographic. Due to various institutions having different resources, the overall composition of this program will vary. Some institutions may be limited in regards to the amount of resources that are available to divert to this program, therefore may have to make changes to the framework outlined in this project. This project is not intended to provide a definite guideline for establishing such a program as each institution is different from one another, but to provide a generalized framework for establishing or revamping current programs.

Definition of Terms

Activated/Activation - The first step of the deployment process. Generally refers to calling a reservist to active duty for deployment to an active war zone.

Active War Zone - An area where military personal are engaged in combat or humanitarian efforts.

Civilian - Individuals with no prior or current involvement within a military branch.

Full-Time Soldier - A military personnel member who serves and works in the military as their primary employment.

Higher Education Institution - Includes two and four year colleges and universities as well as community colleges.

Military - Refers to all branches of the United States Military including Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard, and reserve members.

Reservist - A military member who is not enlisted full time in the military. These individuals typically hold full time civilian jobs with little military performance on a monthly basis.

Transition (anticipated) - A transition that is expected. (i.e., expectation to transition from high school to college)

Transition (not-anticipated) - A transition that is unexpected without prior warning. (i.e., Suddenly called to military duty without prior warning.

Organization of the Paper

This paper is composed of four major sections. Chapter one provides an introduction to the overall paper including its significance, and limitations as well as definition of terms. Chapter two reviews the current literature on student veterans in relation to their transitional needs, physical and mental health issues, as well as student veteran organizations. Chapter three discusses the methodology of how this project can be created on a college campus. Finally, chapter four provides outlines of how this project can be implemented including complete job descriptions for professionals and graduate assistants associated with the program, student veteran organization constitutions, etc.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Summary of the Project

Students in contemporary higher education are more involved in areas outside of the classroom than in previous times. It is a common occurrence to have students balancing the roles of being a student organization leader or member, resident advisor or a part-time job, with being a student. These students often have their own unique set of needs and support mechanisms that higher educational institutions are well suited to address. However, there is one unique student subpopulation that needs the support and resources that institutions have to offer just as much as, if not more than traditional students and those students are student veterans.

Students who balance the demands of being a college student along with the strenuous demands of serving in the military need and deserve the aid and resources that higher educational institutions can offer. Student veterans often have issues with transitioning from being a full-time student to being a full-time soldier upon deployment. Also, these students face issues upon their return, the challenges of navigating institutional channels for reenrollment including federal and respective state laws regarding veterans, navigating and obtaining their GI Bill benefits, support and coping

with returning from a high stress and dangerous environment also with dealing with mental and physical health issues that may have developed during their deployment.

With the numerous issues that student veterans and students currently enlisted in the military face, a student veterans program should be created to aid students during the difficult transitions that come with serving in the military, and ensure that these students are able to reenter the realm of higher education and successfully continue and complete the education that they put on hold for our country.

History of Veterans in Higher Education

Students who are enrolled in higher educational institutions who are also enlisted in the United States military are by no means a recent occurrence. Although roles of higher education institutions have changed throughout time, military personnel have also served a vastly different role as a student since as early as the Civil War.

The world of higher education merged with the realm of military students back in President Thomas Jefferson's administration. Under his administration the first United States Military Academy was created in West Point, Virginia in 1802. The primary purpose of this school was not "on the provision of specific military training and the development of military capabilities . . . [but] on the engineering instruction cadets would receive" (Bateman, 2008, p. 66).

In the early 1800s, colleges and universities were areas of training and education for citizens to take on the soldier role (Neilberg, 2000). This is mostly due in part, to the Morrill Act of 1862 which took land grant universities and colleges and incorporated a military training component into their curriculums. According to the original Morrill act, a condition of receiving these federal lands, states were required to maintain "at least one

college where the leading object shall be, without excluding other scientific and classical studies and including military tactics to teach such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the mechanic arts” (First Morrill Act of 1862). A primary method institutions utilized to facilitate the education of military tactics was the implementation of Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) programs. The first ROTC program was created in 1916 “in part to avoid expanding cadet enrollments at service academies” (Rumann & Hamrick, 2010, p. 432). These programs were considered a mandatory component to the educational curriculum until colleges and universities discontinued this mandatory requirement in the 1960s.

Beginning in 1917, colleges and universities had to not only handle students who were voluntarily enrolled in the military, but also students who were conscripted into service. “The Selective Service System (SSS) was the principle means of ensuring that the personnel needs and operational requirements of the armed forces were met, particularly during wartime” (Rumann & Hamrick, 2009, p. 27). The Selective Service System was required for males 18 years or older. However, individuals who were enrolled in higher educational institutions were eligible for an exemption from mandatory active duty although it was not guaranteed. Because of this available exemption, enrolling in higher educational programs became a tactic to avoid having to go on active duty for some individuals. Mandatory conscription into active duty ended in 1973, however registration for the SSS is still a contemporary requirement for 18 year old males.

After World War II, higher educational institutions saw an increase in the enrollment of student veterans. This is largely in part due to the numerous federal benefits offered to veterans who wish to continue their education (Donahue & Tibbitts,

1946). These benefits, most of which are part of the GI Bill, allowed for institutions of higher education to expand in regards to who was able to attend college as well as an increase in the diversification of student populations (McDonagh, 1947; Shaw, 1947).

Veterans of the Vietnam War were able to afford higher education due to the GI bill and the adjustments made to the Readjustment Assistance Act of 1972. On average, over half of student veterans who served in Vietnam that were in a college or graduate school program received higher earnings career wise than their civilian counterparts (Angrist, 1993). However, during this time period, these students who participated in the Vietnam war had greater transition issues than student veterans today. College campuses were not supportive locations for Vietnam veterans as they were some of the areas where war protests took place. Because of the public opposition to the war, many returning student veterans kept their status hidden from their civilian counterparts to avoid criticism. Also during this time, higher educational institutions were operating during financially challenging times. Therefore, most institutions were not able to develop veteran affairs programs and departments to aid in the transition of student veterans returning from this unpopular war (Figley & Leventman, 1980).

The Persian Gulf War of 1991 introduced another challenge to student veterans as well as higher educational institutions (Rumann & Hamrick, 2010). Numerous Guard and Reserve members were activated and deployed “for support and combat missions” (p. 433). Upon their return, the growing trend was that student veterans did not return to school to continue or finish their education. In efforts to motivate soldiers to return to education, the Federal Government decided to allow for student loan deferments to be

extended in addition to allowing the Pell Grant eligibility for deployed students to remain intact (DeLoughry, 1991).

Veterans are once again facing the challenge of obtaining degrees in higher education. With the War on Terror which encompasses the Iraq war known as Operation Iraqi Freedom and the war in Afghanistan or “Operation Enduring Freedom,” students who also serve in the armed forces are once again facing the reality of putting their educational goals on hold therefore, students engaged in higher education are once again facing the difficult transitions of leaving and entering institutions of higher learning.

Veterans in Higher Education

Higher educational institutions are once again facing the challenge of aiding returning servicemen and women in their transition back into the classroom. “The President of the United States promises to return servicemen and service women back home from the war in the Middle East by 2011” (Hassan, Jackson, Lindsay, McCabe, & Sanders, 2010, p. 30). The questions of what exactly returning veterans need from their academic institutions are being raised. The answers to these questions are vital if educational institutions are to not only appropriately aid in these students transition but to prepare faculty, staff and students who will interact with these students.

One idea that higher educational institutions should embrace is the idea that student veterans can have a positive impact on campuses. Not only can colleges and universities have a profound impact on student veterans but also veterans on colleges and universities. One major area that student veterans can have a large impact is in the classroom. Student veterans are able to bring unique and more life based examples to certain discussions, especially those centered on political science, sociology and general

discussions of morals and ethics. Daniel Byman (2007) stated that “discussions of life-or-death questions are far more real when veterans are in the classroom. At times the discussion becomes personal, but that often brings the complexities home more effectively than any reading I can assign” (p. B5) While students who do not have these life experiences can exhibit dualistic thinking on the topics of humanitarian intervention, “‘U.S. antiterrorism efforts’ and other related subjects, student veterans can provide a realistic standpoint to their civilian counterparts” (p. B5)

Not only do individuals who serve in these dual roles provide inimitable insights in the classroom, but they can also be utilized as a resource outside of the classroom. Student veterans have a tendency to exhibit a higher level of maturity than their civilian counterparts. “They [veterans] have had leadership experiences and confronted difficult challenges, challenges that have matured and, perhaps, hardened them” (Ackerman, DiRamio, & Mitchell, 2009, p. 12). Some of these students have seen horrific events take place during their deployments whether it was in the form of witnessing a close comrade die in battle to being forced to kill another human. These types of events have the ability to put life into perspective for these students and this perspective is one that the majority of students will not achieve.

It cannot be denied that students who also serve in the military are used to a more strictly structured way of life which also adds to the level of maturity that student veteran’s display. One student described their experience in the military as “something that is so structures and routine, and on task” (Ackerman, DiRamio, & Mitchell, 2009, p. 12). Student veterans are used to being assigned tasks that have to be completed on strict deadlines, following a chain of command and having an overall more disciplined attitude

towards work. While the transition of moving from a highly structured environment of such as a military to a looser environment such as college can be difficult, student veterans can also aid their civilian counterparts by exhibiting this structured lifestyle and providing an example to other students.

Student veterans also have the ability to shed a more realistic view of military affairs. “Many students’ knowledge of the military comes from the movies . . . more troubling, many professors harbor stereotypes about the military, not recognizing the diversity of opinion within military circles on many issues and the remarkable minds of many young soldiers” (Byman, 2007, p. B5). Student veterans are able to paint a more realistic view of the United States military and its practices as well as a more real life view of the world events that civilian students only witness on the news.

The Transition Process

In order to understand the challenges of student veterans during the time of deployment and return, it is vital to understand the transitional phases that these students go through. Understanding these phases will better equip administrators to provide adequate support of student veterans, especially during the enrollment process on their return home.

In a study conducted by Mark Bauman (2009), there were essentially three distinct phases that a student veteran will work through during the deployment process; pre-mobilization, separation, and return. The study included perspectives from 24 students who were members of the Marine and Army reserves as well as students from the Army National guard. These students were also individuals who were called to serve the country in the conflicts in the Middle East and had their higher educational careers

disrupted. A qualitative research method was utilized by conducting interviews with these students to gain their perspectives on their experiences during their deployment cycle.

Pre-Mobilization

During this phase of the deployment process, students who serve a dual role as a soldier begin to hear speculations regarding possible deployment. “During this phase, students felt a mixture of nervousness and excitement” (Bauman, 2009, p. 17). Students who are in the military have not received official orders pertaining to when and where they will be heading to.

The indefinite nature of the pre-mobilization phase of deployment can cause anxiety and stress on student veterans. Because there is no confirmed departure date, “many [students] are reluctant to take definitive action on important matters pertaining to school, work, or family” (Bauman, 2009, p. 17). Numerous questions for students are raised during this phase including how to deal with their current living arrangements (on and off campus housing), how will it affect their current semester, how will their families handle the news, etc. In addition to the questions that are raised by students in the military, the challenge of preparing to transition from a college student who is used to being in a classroom to being a soldier in an active battlefield begins.

Separation

The second phase of separation marks the confirmation that a student’s deployment is imminent. This phase is typically the longest phase as it includes not only pre-deployment but the actual tour of duty as well. Official orders have been received and the student now knows that they will be leaving their institution. This phase of the transition is also very emotionally charged as not only the student faces deployment, but

also the friends and family of the student face that reality as well. In interviews conducted by Bauman (2009), it was shown “that separation from one’s educational institution, including faculty members and school friends, is often one of the first tasks to be completed once orders are finalized” (p. 18).

Also during the separation phase, veterans are beginning the tough transition from being a student whose primary purpose exists in the classroom to being a full-time soldier with greater responsibilities who is now immersed in the military culture. “Immersion includes the obvious physical tasks such as preparing gear, fulfilling various training requirements, and completing administrative duties” (Bauman, 2009, p. 19). At this point, veterans are now separated completely from their undergraduate institutions and their home lives. This period spans the time during which the student is in the pre-deployment as well as the time that the student is oversees in their active duty area.

This period is where a veteran’s life will change drastically for better and for worse. Students leave a place of safety and comfort and enter an environment where they have to constantly be on their guard and worry about their safety and survival. Additionally, these individuals face the horrors of seeing their comrades injured or killed in warfare while facing the understanding that the same thing can happen to them (Bauman, 2009).

Return

The return phase can present just as many challenges for student veterans as the separation phase. During this phase, veterans are returning from active combat to a more peaceful environment which they would call home. They reunite with their families and

friends while separating from their military colleagues with whom they have formed a bond with through shared experiences.

However, it is during this time that can present issues for returning students in terms of higher education. For example, student veterans who earn GI Bill benefits “often found themselves lost when navigating the GI Bill benefits process, other tuition assistance programs, scheduling, or other administrative tasks associated with college attendance” (Bauman, 2009, p. 20). These individuals often return from deployment with the intent to return also to their higher educational institutions, however the process for returning can be difficult and overwhelming. Matters of reenrolling in their institutions, getting classes scheduled, making living arrangements and essentially trying to resume their lives from where it was interrupted is a difficult task. Most notably, many veterans involved in Bauman’s study found little help out of campus veteran affairs offices; “the obvious starting point for the academic return process [which] appeared to be of little value” (p. 21).

Transitional Challenges

Issues of navigating institutional channels as it pertains to resuming their education after deployment arise for most returning veterans. In addition, “many Soldiers [are] returning from deployments or starting college for the first time after active-duty tours report difficulties fitting in with fellow classmates, getting school officials to understand their needs and concentrating on class work” (Hemmerly-Brown, 2010, p. 10).

In regards to veteran affairs services, there is not a uniform configuration as to how these departments and programs are run. While “state governing agencies likely

determine procedures for institutions to follow. Moreover, higher education organizations may also make recommendations for working with student veterans” (Rumann, & Hamrick, 2009, p. 29). In most cases, instead of being able to rely on veteran service programs to aid in the process of reenrolling, veterans sometimes have to resort to less formal or extensive methods such as emailing or calling numerous departments to inquire about the reenrollment process or have to rely on peers who may still be enrolled at their institution to aid them in the process. In interviews conducted by Mark Bauman (2009), it was shown that having a more formal and effective veteran services unit would prove beneficial to returning student veterans. Even “in the initial years of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, college campuses were not poised for the difficulties service members faced when returning to their studies” (Hemmerly-Brown, 2010, p. 10). Some institutions do not have fully staffed veteran services departments or programs that are capable of handling the complexity of issues that student veterans face. Instead, some areas rely on student volunteers to meet their staffing needs in veterans departments, which does not necessarily prove helpful to those seeking its services. One specific example of such sentiment reads:

The veteran office there [at his university] should have a more permanent presence than just the volunteer students and their spontaneous schedules . . . It sucks that we have to play phone tag to handle something military-based instead of getting extra help because we put our lives on the line for them but they only give us three minutes of their time on the phone. (Interview cited in Bauman, 2009, p. 21)

In addition to the institutional challenges that student veterans face upon their return, there are also numerous personal challenges that they face both in and outside of the classroom. Student veterans now face the reality that the peers that they were once taking academic courses alongside with may no longer be at the institution upon their return. “Often returning student veterans find that their original peer group has graduated, while their own class standing has remained unchanged and they are some years older than their new peers” (Bauman, 2009, p. 21).

There are also notable personality differences between student veterans and their non-military students. “Many of those students are more mature and motivated than the average freshman” (Mangan & Wright, 2009, p. A1-A28). Some student veterans find it difficult to relate to their new peers and even in some cases, are easily distracted by them. These student veterans have a hard time interacting with students whom most of which do not understand the experiences that they have had, therefore student veterans tend to seek out individuals who also served in the military for support (Summerlot, Green, & Parker, 2009, p. 72). Finally, with the different mental and physical issues that student veterans may acquire during their deployment, make the higher educational environment more challenging upon their return.

Mental/Physical Health Issues

Involvement in the military can take a large toll on students both physically and mentally. Students serving in active war zones face the reality that they may not return home in the same condition that they departed in. They face the risk of obtaining permanent life-long physical injuries which can greatly impact their daily activities. In addition to physical injuries that may be received, student veterans often times return

home with mental health injuries as well. In order to better aid student veterans while they are transitioning back to being home, it is important that higher education institutions have a complete understanding of these mental and physical issues as they can have a vast impact on whether student veterans are successful in their programs. (Church, 2009; DiRamio & Spires, 2009)

Physical Health Issues

As more students are returning to their degree earning programs from combat, higher education institutions are facing an influx of students returning with various health conditions. Students spend months and even years in an environment where their physical health is constantly in danger. Student veterans return with injuries ranging from a bullet wound to extensive conditions which cause a loss of a limb or vital bodily function. In an interview conducted by Cheryl Branker (2009), one student recalled her experience in the combat zones of Iraq. After a massive injury caused by an improvised explosive device, she returned to her undergraduate institution with “shrapnel in her right leg and her left leg was severed below the knee” (p. 59). The number of students returning to college with similar injuries is only going to continue to increase as global conflicts continue.

Fortunately, due to continued advances in medical and weapons technology, injuries are more prevalent than death on the battlefield. “The ratio of injuries to deaths in this war [War on Terror] is much higher (16/1) than in previous wars due to the use of armor and rapid evacuation from the battlefield” (Church, 2009, p. 44). Essentially, this means that due to quick responses of combat zone medical personnel as well as the advancements in the weaponry and protective armor used, soldiers are more likely to survive an injury than in times past.

Physical injuries are one of three major types of injuries that a soldier can obtain while in combat. These injuries can include explosion related injuries such as burns and shrapnel related injuries, and injuries which result in amputation or a major limb. It is important to understand the nature of some of the various injuries that student veterans may have when return to higher education happens, in order to better develop services and accommodations to better suit their needs. One major form of injuries sustained during combat which is also difficult to accommodate as well as diagnose is Traumatic Brain Injuries. Blast related injuries are:

Injuries sustained in combat [which] come from grenades, bombs, missiles, mortars, and artillery shells. The blasts alter the cells' metabolism and result in eventual cell death, although there may not be any visible signs of injury. Blast injuries create a pressure wave, which affects the organs that are air filled, such as the ears and lungs, and those surrounded by fluid filled cavities, such as the brain and the spine. This eventually leads to brain cell death and traumatic brain injuries in addition to possible injuries from the impact from debris, burns, and exposure to gases and vapors. (Church, 2009, p. 45)

This form of injury is considered "Traumatic brain injury (TBI)." Approximately 11-28% of injuries sustained in combat are a various form of TBI. "Diagnosis of TBI is difficult because symptoms may not reveal themselves until many months after the initial trauma. This type of brain injury will affect a veteran cognitively, physically, behaviorally, or in a combination of those ways" (DiRamio, & Spires, 2009, p. 82).

As mentioned before, these injuries are becoming a common trend for soldiers deployed in active combat zones. Between March 2003 and January 2011, there have

been an approximate total of 32,009 documented injuries in Operation Iraqi Freedom and an approximate total of 9,971 injuries between October 2001 and January 2011 during Operation Enduring Freedom, with a combined total of 41,980 injuries (icasualties.org, 2009). With these vast numbers which are only increasing, higher educational institutions are going to continue to see an increase in student veterans with disabilities enrolling in courses.

Mental Health Issues

Mental issues can often complicate the readjustment process into higher education for student veterans, regardless of if physical injuries were acquired or not. Mental health issues can cause as many difficulties for student veterans as physical injuries. One well known and common mental health issue faced by the veteran population as a whole is called Post Traumatic Stress syndrome or PTSD.

PTSD as it is known to most mental health professionals can “develop following an event that caused or threatened serious harm or death . . . Symptoms include nightmares, emotional numbness, emotional and physical withdrawal, hyper-vigilance, intense guilt or worry, angry outburst, hyper-arousal, repression of thoughts, and avoidance of triggering situations” (Glover-Graf, Miller, & Freeman, 2010, p. 44). The horrific sights and experiences such as witnessing the deaths of their comrades, being forced to terminate others, and even suffering from temporary and lifelong injuries, that soldiers face in their daily lives in combat are often triggers of PTSD. Similar to physical injuries such as TBI, PTSD is another condition that is hard to diagnose and make accommodations for on the behalf of higher educational institutions because of the lack

of immediate appearance. The average recovery period of PTSD is around seven years although the recovery period can be vastly more extensive.

The combination of PTSD, barriers to re-entry to higher education and the daily stresses that accompany daily campus life, presents an extreme challenge to student veterans. Some of the general symptoms that can be seen in “veterans with PTSD are problems with cognitive skills, judgment, and concentration/memory; difficulty coping under pressure; difficulty interacting with others and responding appropriately to social cues; problems with authority figures; problems with negative and constructive feedback; and unpredictable absences” (Church, 2009, p. 47). In addition, individuals with PTSD may utilize unhealthy and non-productive stress coping mechanisms such as abuse of substances, having numerous sexual encounters or participate in high risk behavior. The difficulty with diagnosing PTSD in efforts to aid student veterans is the desire for the condition to remain unknown to as many individuals as possible. “Individuals with PTSD also are known to use avoidant coping strategies such as trying to forget their combat experiences and may present with only partial symptoms of PTSD” (Glover-Graf, Miller, & Freeman, 2010, p. 53). It is extremely important these students are identified in order to provide the support needed, but also to begin addressing these mental issues not only for their academic wellbeing but also for their personal wellbeing.

Mental/Physical Health Issue Concerns

“If stressors are not dealt with, they may develop into more severe stress reactions or mental health concerns” (Lokken, Pfeffer, McAuley, & Stong, 2009, p. 46). The complication with addressing student veteran health issues is the lack of disclosure of any potential problems. Higher educational institutions are required to aid students with

disabilities in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as well as Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act. However, “the obligation generally begins [with] the interactive process required to arrive at an appropriate ‘reasonable accommodation’ [which] starts with a student’s self-identification of her or his disability” (Shackelford, 2009, p. 37).

Self-identification or lack thereof is not largely the fault of the individual student. One thing to keep in mind when exploring these issues is the culture of the military that students find themselves deeply immersed in. “They [students] had quickly learned that acknowledging, discussing, or reporting a personal problem or vulnerability would most likely prompt a negative reaction from superiors, as well as peers in their unit” (Shackelford, 2009, p. 37). Through what could be considered “negative reinforcement,” student veterans are trained not to disclose any problems that they have and this training can still remain present, even once they leave the military environment and enter the higher education environment, especially if the condition is one which can easily be hidden from others.

Some issues that student veterans may have may not be related to PTSD. Some student veterans face a possibility that their emotions will be out of sync with the environment they now inhabit. In a study conducted by Bauman (2009), some veterans he interviewed

Cited difficulties in dealing with stress upon returning home. Most tied this difficult to time served in a combat zone. John provided an example: “I was jumpy [when I returned home]; I was a total prick. And every little thing, when I

heard the Fourth of July when I got back home, that was nuts. Because I thought that it was either a mortar or gunshots.” (p. 21)

Support Mechanisms

With the numerous challenges that student veterans face in terms of various injuries they may return with, lack of their same-age peers upon their return as well as a lack of individuals with shared experiences, student veterans need support just as much as, if not more than traditional, non-military students. The support for these students can come from multiple facets and each one has the potential to make a profound impact on the chances of success for these students.

Faculty/Staff Support

University employees have an opportunity to make a difference in the transition back into the academic world. Having a university administrator as a person who chooses to reach out to a student veteran, especially during their deployment, can play a major role in whether a student actually returns to their higher educational institution after their deployment. In an interview conducted by Andrea Spencer (2010) at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, one student was able to speak to the impact faculty and staff members have.

According to Thomas, emails and care packages, especially from Dr. Cherry Callahan in Student Affairs, made a tremendous impact. “I don’t know if she realizes how much it meant to me, but it was great to know there were people here on campus that cared. It really made me want to come back. (p. 1).

Such initiatives are being undertaken at institutions already. Appalachian State University already mail school themed apparel to deployed students in efforts to “help them

[deployed students' maintain their identification with the campus" (Johnson, 2009, p. 58). In addition, Appalachian State University as a whole maintained contact with deployed students through list-servs which constantly sent them emails regarding application processes for the following year, school athletics updates, pictures of the student body showing support for their service and an online version of the school paper. All of this was done with the mentality in mind that "sharing this information with deployed students reminded them that they would be back on campus again and that Appalachian State University would be ready for their return" (p. 58).

In addition, there are numerous stories discovered through interviews that express and demonstrate the importance of having a faculty and staff support mechanism available. Another example outlined a faculty member who "helped her [the student] schedule her classes, rectify a financial matter, and reconnect with housing opportunities. And all these efforts occurred while Kathy was 'over there'" (Bauman, 2009, p. 19).

Student Veteran Peers and Organizations

One of the most important methods for ensuring that student veterans feel supported is through making sure that the student veteran's organization is strong. It is important for higher educational institutions to understand that "military service is a bonding experience because individual safety and security often depends on cohesive group efforts" (Summerlot et al., 2009, p. 72). Therefore, once a student veteran leaves the environment where they developed a close bond with their comrades, it is only natural that student veterans will seek to find a substitute for the close bond that they have become accustomed to having. In addition, they will seek the support of individuals with similar experiences.

Ensuring that an active veterans department can be easy or difficult depends on the type of campus environment that it is set in. A *supportive climate* tends to have fully functioning student veterans affairs departments and student organization; an *ambivalent climate* allows for military students to easily blend in with the student population due to the large student population on campus; and a *challenging climate* is one where military experience is unofficially frowned upon. Therefore student veterans are more likely to try to hide their military affiliation and thus not get the support that they need and deserve. (Summerlot et al., 2009).

Student veteran organizations have the capability to provide an essential and vital role in the transition process of a returning student veteran.

An SVO [student veteran organization] provides student veterans with a relatively risk-free atmosphere in which to interact with peers who are familiar with the language and culture of the military. An SVO can also afford its members a safe harbor away from the probing questions that sometimes arise in interactions with students who have no military experience. (Summerlot et al., 2009, p. 74).

Essentially, a student veterans organization has the capacity to provide student veterans with not only a safe area where they do not have to worry about questions such as “Have you ever killed someone?” but they also provide the student veteran with one aspect that they truly need: the support system and peer group with shared experiences. In addition, “ROTC programs may provide support and appropriate environments for many student services members and veterans” (Rumann, & Hamrick, 2009, p. 30-31).

Student veteran organizations are not a new idea in the grand scheme of things. Some of the earliest examples of student veteran groups stem back to the 1990s when

“veterans groups, particularly in Ohio, attempted to reinsert themselves into the mainstream of campus dialogue. Campus veterans established AMVETS Post No. 1963 at the University of Cincinnati and Post No. 1974 at Ohio State University” (Stever, 1997, p. 60). The primary goals of these groups were not primarily for support reasons. The main purpose of the student veteran group in this time period, was to fight for the rights and for ‘protected class’ status for Vietnam era soldiers in the campus setting. These organizations also took a campus political stance on issues which directly pertained to student veterans.

Summary

Student veterans truly have a different set of needs and support requirements than the traditional college student. The relationship between student veterans, the United States military, and higher education has been in existence for years. Student veterans in contemporary times will need and continue to need and demand accommodations and support as time continues. Higher education institutions need to prepare themselves to appropriately handle these needs to ensure that the men and women who serve to protect our institutions, are successful in them.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this project was to provide an alternative guideline for creating and establishing an effective veterans affairs program which aides in the transition and success of student veterans. Through this project, the main goal was to offer a program which combines the efforts of individuals from numerous departments at colleges and universities to smooth the transition in and out of active duty and ensure that all the support and resources institutions can provide are given to student veterans.

Methodology

The first stages of this project included a review of related literature on student veterans which included an investigation of the history of student veterans in the higher educational setting, veterans in contemporary higher education, their transitional processes and challenges, mental and physical issues, and the need for support mechanisms. In addition, current veteran affairs programs were researched to discover the services that they provide for student veterans to determine best practices and components needed for the project. These programs were research through their institutional and program websites as well as through personal contact with representatives of the program.

Design of Project

The Veterans Transitional Services Program (operational name) was created to provide a mechanism for a smooth transition to and from active combat for students who serve in the United States military on a reserve basis. The primary purpose of this program is to streamline the withdrawal and reenrollment process for veterans. In addition, it was also meant to provide a support system for veterans, which will consist of university administrators as well as students with shared experiences to aid in the reintegration process upon their return. This program will consist of a university task force as well as a student veteran's organization. This program will be housed under a Division of Student Affairs.

University Task Force

The university task force will consist of student and academic affairs professionals from various university departments. This task force is charged with navigating their respective departmental policies and procedures on the behalf of the student veteran in order to aid in the withdrawal and readmission processes. These departments and their purpose will include the following: Housing and Residence life, Financial Aid/Bursar, Academic Affairs, Registrar Services, Disability Services, Counseling Services, Student Health Services, career services, and Campus/Student Life.

Professional Staff. In addition to the task force, a full- or part-time professional staff member will serve as the chief contact between the task force and the student veteran during the reenrollment process. Due to the common frustration exhibited by returning veterans, of being sent from department to department in order to reenroll, this liaison will be charged with not only providing the necessary information to the student

veteran, but also will communicate on the behalf of the student to the departmental task force to relay individual needs for services. This professional member will be required to maintain records on student veterans and will reach out to students who are in the process of deploying to access their needs. The task force would be co-chaired by this individual as well as the Vice President for Student Affairs or his/her designee.

Also, two graduate assistantships will be established to work specifically within this task force. Both graduate assistants (GA) will have primary responsibilities of aiding the professional staff member in their responsibilities of maintaining contact between the student veteran and the university task force. In addition to their general responsibilities, each GA will be a serving member on the university task force. Also, each GA will have a specialized function within the program. One GA will have the responsibility of advising the student veteran's organization as well as marketing of the program. The second GA will have the responsibility of record keeping of student veterans and maintaining contact with students who are deployed as well as serving as the contact between the task force and a full time U.S. military officer. In order for the task force to remain current and up to date with the changing needs of student veterans, once a year, both graduate assistants will be charged with developing and holding a focus group with student veterans and reservists in collaboration with the student veteran's organization.

In the event that a full- or part-time professional staff cannot be identified or hired, the university task force shall be led by the Vice President of Student Affairs or his/her designee. The general job responsibilities of the full-time staff member will be redistributed and handled by the identified graduate assistants. In chapter four of this project, complete job descriptions are developed.

The university task force will be guided by a primary mission statement which will be developed once the appropriate members from the recommended departments are identified. While this purpose statement for which this task force will operate on would be determined by the task force at its initial meeting, the primary goal of streamlining the withdrawal and reenrollment process as well as providing support on the behalf of the university shall remain intact.

Internal Review of Standing Policies. One of the first orders of business that the university task force will undertake is an internal review of standing policies for the respective departments represented in the task force. The purpose of this internal review will be to evaluate and decide which standing policies in each department can be altered in special circumstances surrounding student veterans. For example, housing and residence life shall review policies regarding midyear housing contract cancellations in order to decide if a provision can and needs to be put in place to allow for housing cancellation in the event of deployment.

The internal review of standing policies and procedures for each department will be vital in determining the scope of the university task force in terms of which accommodations can be provided for deploying and returning student veterans. This is extremely important for departments which deal with policies that are not influenced by just the university, such as financial aid. The internal review will explore not only represented department policies, but also university, local and state policies in order to have a full picture of what accommodations can be provided.

Approval. Prior to inviting student veterans to the initial focus group, approval for the program must be solidified through the appropriate channels. Once approval is

granted, the task force will be permitted to proceed with the beginning stage of program implementation which is the initial focus group.

Initial Focus Group. Once the scope of the university task force is determined through the internal policy review, an initial focus group will be held with invited student veterans. The purpose of the primary focus group will be to gauge specifically what student veterans need in terms of policy changes and support on the behalf of the university. The focus group would be centered around student veterans who have been deployed during an academic semester, in order to gain their insights on the withdrawal and reenrollment processes in regards to their deployment.

Student Veterans Organization

The student veteran's organization will be created to support student veterans in transition to and from active duty through providing support and venting sessions for student veterans, creating social and educational program opportunities for student veterans, as well as voicing concerns of current student veterans to university administration. This organization will primarily be housed within the campus/student life office, however will be advised by the graduate assistant for the 'student veterans transitional services' program.

Summary

The Veterans Transition Services program will be a university based initiative to streamline and smooth the transitional process for student veterans as well as provide support. Prior research of existing veteran's affairs programs shows that they have a concentration on G.I. benefits navigation and financial aid benefits. In conjunction with related literature, this program seeks to provide additional support and resources for

student veterans in addition to financial aid. Through enhanced support and aid in facing life difficulties while addressing and solving institutional challenges student veterans face, this program will help these individuals reach their full potential as academic scholars.

CHAPTER FOUR
VETERANS TRANSITIONAL SUPPORT PROGRAM

Program Summary

This creative project created a Veterans Transitional Support Program for student veterans and students enlisted in the military in efforts to provide institutional support for students during the deployment and return process. This project can be altered and redesigned to suit the needs of student veteran populations or at any higher education institution, as well as in conjunction with the available resources the institution may have at their disposal. The concept of this project was to provide a framework for colleges and university to effectively provide transitional support services to their student veteran populations. This project will provide those with interest in this area with specific instructions on how a Veteran's Transitional Support Program can be created.

This project contains the following items:

- University Task Force on Veterans Transition Support, page 41.
- Position Description for Program Coordinator for Veterans Support, page 45.
- Position Description for Graduate Assistant (GA) for Veterans Support Page 49.
- Vets Helping Vets Organization Constitution, page 53.

University Task Force on Veterans Transition Support

Mission Statement: The Veterans Transition Support Program Task Force seeks to ease the transition to and from higher education for student veterans in the university. Our primary goal is to provide specialized services and accommodations to suit the needs of students who also honorably serve our country through participation in the United States military. Our primary mission is to provide the tools and support necessary in order for our student veterans to excel academically and personally.

Task Force Description: The Veterans Transition Support Program seeks to provide accommodations for student veterans at the university through collaboration between all academic and student affairs departments. The university Task force will be comprised of representatives from the following departments and have the following roles.

Academic Affairs: Academic affairs will have the primary responsibility of communicating student veteran needs as it pertains to academic course work. These needs may include but is not limited to:

1. Making arrangements between the student and faculty in regards to completing course work for students who are ordered to deploy prior to the end of the academic semester.
2. Develop possible ways for student veterans to complete course work or participate in courses during their deployment.
3. Provide web-based academic advising for students preparing to return from deployment to determine the appropriate course schedule for their return.

4. Developing methods for transferring combat experience into appropriate course credits that can be applied towards graduation.

Campus/Student Life: Campus/Student Life will have the role of providing on-campus opportunities for returning student veterans to reintegrate back into the campus community through personalized invitations to campus events, providing resources for potential student organizations of interest, and providing support to the Student Veterans Student Organization.

Career Services: Career services will provide opportunities for employment for returning student veterans including but not limited to:

1. Communicating available on-campus employment opportunities to returning student veterans.
2. Developing and setting up career expos for military students to highlight potential military based careers or careers which value military experience including VA services, Federal Government employment, etc.
3. Aiding in the discovery of off-campus employment for student veterans.
4. Determining the full scope of career services which can include resume writing, interviewing skills development, etc.

Counseling Services: Counseling services will have the responsibility of providing ample counseling opportunities for returning student veterans to process and debrief their experiences through individual or group counseling. In addition, counseling services will be charged with providing full mental health assessments of returning student veterans to determine appropriate mental health needs and identify concerns.

Disability Services: Disability services will be available to provide appropriate accommodations for physically and/or mentally disabled student veterans in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Financial Aid/Bursar Services: Financial Aid and Bursar services will be charged with arranging accommodations for the financing of student veteran's education though:

1. Navigating G.I. Bill benefits for returning student veterans who qualify.
2. Making arrangements for tuition deferrals until G.I Benefits and other financial aid can be arranged upon their return including payment plans and tuition remission.
3. Developing alternatives and solutions for tuition refunds or deferrals to later semesters for students who are deployed in the middle of their academic semester.
4. Providing information for potential scholarships and grants.

Housing and Residence Life: Housing and Residence life will be charged with providing on-campus housing options for returning student veterans should it be requested. In addition, this area will arrange for housing fee refunds or deferral for later semesters for student veterans already residing on campus prior to their deployment.

Registrar Services: The office of the Registrar will be charged with scheduling the appropriate courses for returning student veterans in collaboration with Academic Affairs so the student's schedule will be established prior to their return.

Student Health Services: Student health services will be available to a comprehensive physical for student veterans upon their return. Additional accommodations will be recommended to the student by student health services based on the outcomes of the physical.

University Task Force Functions: The Veterans Transition Support university task force will be co-chaired by the Program Coordinator and the Vice President of Student Affairs or their designee.

The task force should meet on a monthly basis to discuss the direction of the Veterans Transition Support Program and its progress at a time which best suits members of all departmental representatives. In addition, the task force should be prepared meet in the event that knowledge of a student that is deploying or is returning from deployment becomes available in order to offer support and aid to the student during their difficult transition.

Position Description for Program Coordinator for Veterans Transition Support

Information: This position is a full time position in the Division of Student Affairs. The incumbent will report to the Dean of Students.

Responsibilities:

1. *Serve as Co-Chair of the University Task Force for Veterans Transition*

Support: The incumbent will serve as the co-chair of this university Task force in collaboration with the Vice President for Student Affairs or his/her designee. This individual will have responsibilities in:

- a. Being a liaison between student veterans who are deploying or returning from deployment and the departments represented on the university task force and the university as a whole.
- b. Working with these departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for student veterans in regards to their transition to and from deployment.
- c. Continuing to explore and implement initiatives to support student veterans in their transition in leaving and returning to the university.

2. *Maintain appropriate contact with student veterans:* incumbent must maintain appropriate contact with student veterans enrolled in the university. This contact will include but is not limited to:

- a. Contacting student veterans who are preparing for deployment to assess their needs from the university.

- b. Maintaining communication with student veterans during their deployment if possible to ensure their connection with the university is not lost. This communication can include:
 - i. Updates about campus activities and events.
 - ii. Online participation in university discussion forums if held, Student Government elections, etc.
 - iii. Sending of care packages on the behalf of the university.
 - iv. Letters or emails to check on their personal wellbeing as well as obtain information in regards to how the university can continue to support them.
 - c. Maintaining contact with student veterans after their return to the institution to ease the transition from active combat duty to being in the classroom and on campus through offering of services and arranging accommodations and serving as their liaison to the university and its task force. In addition, communication with student veterans during their enrollment at the university will be necessary to continuously monitor their transition progress and to assess their needs as well as general support and care for the student.
3. *Maintain appropriate records of current student veterans:* In this role, the incumbent will maintain records of current student veterans. This task includes:

- a. Obtaining information on students who are also enlisted in the United States military as a reserve member or other capacities. This includes contact information, and military status.
 - b. Maintaining records of accommodations made on the behalf of student veterans.
4. *Serve as the advisor to the Student Veterans Organization:* The incumbent will provide advising and administrative support to the student veteran's organization to ensure their continued support as well as their compliance with university policy and the National Student Veterans of America organization. These advising responsibilities will include but not limited to:
- a. Event and organizational meeting planning.
 - b. Organizational budget use.
 - c. Philanthropy.
 - d. Organization Functions.
 - e. Meeting individually with Executive Board members.
5. *Supervision:* The incumbent will have the responsibility of supervising two graduate assistants.
6. *Maintain contact with United States Military:* The incumbent will be charged with maintaining contact with the United States military to assess appropriate accommodations for student veterans, provide career opportunities for student veterans, as well as to insure university compliance with U.S Military policy as it pertains to higher education.
7. *Other duties as assigned.*

Qualifications: In order to be successful in this position, the application must be able to perform the above tasks in a satisfactory manner. The successful candidate will possess:

1. A master's degree in military sciences, student affairs administration, counseling, college student personnel, or related field.
2. 1-3 years of military experience as an enlisted member or officer is highly preferred.
3. 1-3 years of student organization advising experience at the graduate or professional level.
4. Excellent oral and written communication skills.

A bachelor's degree in Military Sciences or related field will be considered with appropriate experience.

Position Description for Graduate Assistant (GA) for Veterans Transition Support

Information: This position is a part-time graduate assistantship in the Division of Student Affairs. The graduate assistant will report to the Veterans Transition Support Program Coordinator. In the event that the Program Coordinator position is not filled, the graduate assistant will report directly to the Dean of Students.

The primary responsibility of the graduate assistant will be to aid the Veterans Transition Support Program Coordinator in the course of his/her duties. Therefore, this position description can be altered to suit the needs of the Program Coordinator, Student Veteran population, and the university. In the event that the Program Coordinator position is not filled, the graduate assistant workload will be increased and delegated between graduate assistants.

Responsibilities:

1. *Serve as an Active Member of the University Task Force:* The graduate assistant will serve as an active member (not ex-officio) of the University Task Force for the Veterans Transition Support Program. In collaboration with the program coordinator, the GA will offer recommendations to the task force as well as act as a liaison between the student veteran and the task force.
2. *Maintain appropriate contact with student veterans:* the GA must maintain appropriate contact with student veterans enrolled in the university as directed by the Program Coordinator. This contact will include but is not limited to:
 - a. Contacting student veterans who are preparing for deployment to assess their needs from the university.

- b. Maintaining communication with student veterans during their deployment if possible to ensure their connection with the university is not lost. This communication can include:
 - i. Updates about campus activities and events.
 - ii. Online participation in university discussion forums if held, Student Government elections, etc.
 - iii. Sending of care packages on the behalf of the university.
 - iv. Letters or Emails to check on their personal wellbeing as well as obtain information in regards to how the university can continue to support them.
 - c. Maintaining contact with student veterans after their return to the institution to ease the transition from active combat duty to being in the classroom and on campus through offering of services and arranging accommodations and serving as their liaison to the university and its task force. In addition, communication with student veterans during their enrollment at the university will be necessary to continuously monitor their transition progress and to assess their needs as well as general support and care for the student.
3. *Maintain appropriate records of current student veterans:* In this role, the graduate assistant must be able to maintain records of current student veterans. This task includes:

- a. Obtaining information on students who are also enlisted in the United States military as a reserve member or other capacities. This includes contact information, and military status.
 - b. Maintain records of accommodations made on the behalf of student veterans.
4. *Serve as the graduate advisor to the Student Veterans Organization:* The graduate assistant will provide advising and administrative support to the student veteran's organization to ensure their continued support as well as their compliance with university policy and the National Student Veterans of America organization. These advising responsibilities will include but not limited to:
- a. Event and organizational meeting planning.
 - b. Organizational budget use.
 - c. Philanthropy.
 - d. Organization Functions.
 - e. Meeting individually with Executive Board members as directed by the Program Coordinator.
5. *Market the Veterans Transition Support Program and Student Veterans Organization:* In collaboration with the Program Coordinator, the Graduate Assistant will be in charge of active marketing and advertising of the Veterans Transition Support Program to ensure active participation and full usage by student veterans. In addition, collaborating with the Student Veterans Student Organization Executive Board, the Graduate Assistant will also promote the

Student Veterans Student Organization to enrolled student veterans, at university Admissions events and other venues as determined by the Executive Board of the Student Veterans Organization and Program Coordinator.

6. *Hold Yearly Focus Groups for Student Veterans:* In collaboration with the Student Veterans Organization executive board, the Graduate Assistant will hold a yearly focus group targeting student veterans to obtain information on the success of the overall program as well as receive recommendations on improvements.
7. *Other duties as assigned.*

Qualifications: In order to be successful in this position, the application must be able to perform the above tasks in a satisfactory manner. The successful candidate must:

1. Be enrolled in a graduate level program. Preferably in a student affairs administration, college student personnel program or similar.
2. Prior Military experience as an enlisted member or officer is highly preferred.
3. Interest in the military culture and working with student veterans is required.
4. Prior student organization experience as an executive board member or active participant is highly preferred.
5. Excellent oral and written communication skills.

Vets Helping Vets Organization Constitution

PREAMBLE

We, the Student Veterans Organization strive to provide a safe and supportive atmosphere and camaraderie for all student veterans and ROTC cadets on campus. We aim to achieve this through support groups, meetings, academic and social programming as well as voicing our collective concerns to university administration. We will promote and display with pride the honor of being in the United States military while being academically sound and stable students.

ARTICLE I

NAME AND STRUCTURE

- A. This organization, to be known as Vets Helping Vets, will be committed to leading, supporting, and teaching student veterans.
- B. The organization will be comprised of the Executive Board Members, Professional Advisor, Graduate Advisor(s), and general body members.
- C. A name change is allowed, only with 2/3s vote of the general body and approval from the Vets Helping Vets Advisor and/or Graduate Advisors.

ARTICLE II

MEMBERSHIP

- A. In order to be considered a general body member of the Vets Helping Vets student organization, members must be an enrolled student at the university.
- B. Members must also be enlisted in the United States military (Army, Air Force, Coast Guard, Marines, Navy, Peace Corps), classified as a student veteran (someone who

has previously served in the armed forces) OR a cadet in the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC).

- C. To be considered an active member, members must attend one-half of the Vets Helping Vets General body meetings unless on deployment, conflict with academics (i.e., Class time conflicting with meeting times), or conflict with military commitments.
- D. To take part in elections, members must have “active member” status.

ARTICLE III

GENERAL BODY

- A. The General Body is the main body of the Vets Helping Vets and is comprised of student veterans, enlisted members and ROTC cadets not on the Executive Board.
- B. The President shall preside over all General Body meetings.
- C. The General Body shall meet one every week at a time to be voted on at the beginning of every academic semester.
- D. The General Body shall elect the Executive Board for the upcoming year.
- E. All major decisions regarding the organization as a whole (i.e., budgets, major events, communication of concerns to university administration) must be run by the general body.

ARTICLE IV

EXECUTIVE BOARD

Section 1: Executive Board Positions

- A. The following officers shall comprise the Executive Board of Vets Helping Vets.
 - a. **President:** The President will have the following responsibilities and privileges:

- i. Preside over all Executive Board Meetings.
 - ii. In the event that the Vice President is unavailable, preside over General Body meetings.
 - iii. Meet on a weekly basis with the Advisor and Program Coordinator of the Veterans Transition Support Program.
 - iv. Hold five office/cubicle hours per week.
 - v. Meet individually with general body members preparing to deploy or are returning from deployment.
 - vi. Other duties as assigned by the General Body or Advisor/Graduate Advisors.
- b. **Vice President:** The Vice President will have the following responsibilities and privileges:
- i. Preside over all General Body meetings.
 - ii. In the event that the President is unavailable, preside over Executive Board meetings.
 - iii. Meet on a bi-weekly basis with the Graduate Advisor.
 - iv. Hold five office/cubicle hours per week.
 - v. Communicate student veteran concerns to the Advisor and/or Graduate Advisor as needed.
 - vi. Other duties as assigned by the General Body, President, or Advisor/Graduate Advisor.
- c. **Secretary:** The Secretary will have the following responsibilities and privileges:
- i. Maintain accurate notes of all General Body, Executive Board meetings, and organization events.

- ii. Hold four office/cubicle hours per week.
 - iii. Serve as the representative to the Student Government Association.
 - iv. Other duties as assigned by the General Body, President, or Advisor/Graduate Advisor.
- d. **Treasurer:** The treasurer will have the following responsibilities and privileges:
- i. Maintain accurate financial budgetary records.
 - ii. Approves all organizational spending in collaboration with the President.
 - iii. Meeting on a bi-weekly basis with the Graduate Advisor.
 - iv. Hold four office/cubicle hours per week.
 - v. Other duties as assigned by the General Body, President, or Advisor/Graduate Advisor.
- e. **Parliamentarian:** The Parliamentarian will have the following responsibilities and privileges:
- i. Plan and coordinate organization events and speaker panels for student veterans and the wider campus community.
 - ii. Ensure that decorum and respect is displayed during all general body and executive board meetings.
 - iii. Hold four office/cubicle hours per week.
 - iv. Other duties as assigned by the General Body, President, or Advisor/Graduate Advisor.

Section 2: Term Limits and Vacancies

- A. There is a two year consecutive term limit on executive board positions. However, an executive board member may serve two years, take a year off, and then resume an executive board position.
- B. In the event of a vacancy, the Advisor/Graduate Advisor may appoint a new executive board member to fill the position.
- C. The chain of succession will follow: President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and then Parliamentarian.
 - a. In the event of a vacancy due to deployment, withdrawal from the university, discharge from the United States Military, or any other reason, the right of succession will be implemented.
 - i. In the event that the right of succession is implemented and the next in line does not wish to take the position, the next following officer may step forward (e.g., If Vice President position becomes available and the Secretary does not wish to fill the role, the treasurer may assume the position).
 - ii. Elections may only be held to fill the open position only after the chain of succession has been utilized.
- D. All Executive Board members will be required to hold and maintain a GPA of 2.75 or higher.

Section 3: Removal from Office

- A. Executive Board members may be removed from office voluntarily through a private correspondence to the President and/or Advisor/Graduate Advisor.

- B. Executive Board members may also be removed from office involuntarily by the General Assembly. In order to initiate an involuntary removal from office, the following must occur:
- a. A movement for removal and reasons for removal from office must be given at a general body meeting.
 - b. The officer up for removal must be given an opportunity to address the given reasons for removal.
 - c. The officer must leave the general body during the impeachment vote.
 - d. If the vote passes, the officer is immediately removed from office following the vote and the right of succession must be implemented.
 - e. If the vote fails, the officer may resume their Executive Board role.
- C. Executive Board members may also be administratively removed from office by the Advisor or Graduate Advisor.

ARTICLE V

ADMENDMENTS

- A. Amendments may be made to the constitution by majority vote of the general body and approval of the Advisor and Graduate Advisor.

ARTICLE VI

STUDENT VETERANS OF AMERICA MEMBERSHIP

- A. Vets Helping Vets must maintain membership with the national chapter of Student Veterans of America Organization.

- B. Any and all regulations set forth by the Student Veterans of America National Organization must be implemented and in some cases may even supersede Vets Helping Vets Constitutional requirements.

ARTICLE VI

ELECTIONS

- A. Elections for Executive Board must be held by the end of April every academic school year.
- B. Candidates for Office must pass an academic grade check and military status check to be performed by the Advisor and/or Graduate Advisor.
- C. All aspects of the elections will be run by the Graduate Advisor including the nomination process, voting process, counting of ballots, and announcement of results.

REFERENCES

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