Tips For Making Your Syllabus Veteran Friendly

VA College Toolkit Handout

Creating a syllabus that reflects awareness of student Veterans as a student group can communicate your interest and respect for their service and success in school. One possibility is to include a Veteran-friendly statement in your syllabus. This one has been used at several universities.

Veterans and active duty military personnel with special circumstances (e.g., upcoming deployments, drill requirements, disabilities) are welcome and encouraged to communicate these, in advance if possible, to the instructor.

HERE ARE SOME ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR YOUR SYLLABI:

1. Today's student Veterans are non-traditional students. Many are several years older than traditional students (i.e., only 15% are between 18 and 23 years of age), and nearly half have children or are married. As a result, many student Veterans are managing multiple roles, such as parent, spouse, employee, and student. In addition, some students may be Active Duty, Reservists, and National Guardsmen, and they may still be participating in drill on the weekend or have the potential to deploy. Drill involves a commitment of one weekend every month, as well as two weeks during the year. This could intensify if a service member is scheduled to deploy.

   - **What can I do?** Provide the syllabus in advance, with specific dates for assignments and tests to allow for planning around work and childcare. While it may not seem helpful to give specific dates for exams, the student can schedule childcare or work schedules around this or use this as an opportunity to speak to you about rescheduling.

2. Being in combat, or even in the military, may leave a person changed. While many of these changes are positive, there may be some struggles with adjusting to civilian life. For many, this adjustment will resolve with time, but some student Veterans may need additional assistance.

   - **What can I do?** Veterans consistently say that other Veterans are their major support on campus, so become familiar with the Veteran club or Student Veterans of America (SVA) chapter on your campus and encourage the Veteran to get involved. Find out if mentoring services are available to Veterans through your school's Veteran service center. If classroom behavior and academic performance are impacted, consider a referral to the counseling center or the campus disability office to inquire about academic accommodations. Providing information about the disability office on the syllabus is beneficial for students who may feel that they need additional help.

   - For Veterans with established medical or mental health concerns, they may be receiving treatment at the local Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Center. Be flexible if a Veteran requests time for appointments.

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs