Tips for Showing Support
VA College Toolkit Handout

ADMINISTRATORS

- Maintain a highly visible office (e.g., Veteran's Service Office) that is appropriately staffed with a person (e.g., Veteran's Benefits Coordinator) who is knowledgeable about policies and procedures related to the military and Veterans' benefits. This person should be able to coordinate services, provide advice, advocate, and create programming for students with issues related to their military status. Further, this person should be able to communicate with the college about credit related to military training and experiences. If possible, this should be a stable point of contact that is not constantly rotating.
- Consider fee deferments for students when benefits, such as those provided through the GI Bill, are delayed.
- Develop a website that consolidates information specific to Veterans.
- Coordinate withdrawal or ways in which Veteran may get credit or partial credit for courses in the event of a deployment during the academic year.
- Develop and communicate with faculty regarding absence policies related to military duty.
- Develop and communicate procedures related to a student's return to school following a deployment.
- Develop transition programming (e.g., a 1 day or 1 week Veteran-specific orientation to campus resources and activities). This could help the Veteran translate military skills (e.g., adaptability and mission focus) to civilian life.
- Designate dedicated space that allows Veterans to gather and network. This may help facilitate the sharing of information and resources, as well as reduce isolation.

STAFF

- Educate faculty and administrators on Veterans' issues, including strengths of a military background and potential struggles that may occur upon return from deployment.
- Provide resources on counseling, advising, and health care. This should include information on how a faculty member or administrator can refer Veterans to services in the Knowing Your Campus Resources Form.
- Perform outreach and provide education to faculty on how a Veteran's time away from school may lead to difficulty establishing study habits and routines. If there are resources, provide a class or develop resources on note taking, preparing for tests, and managing study time.
- Educate faculty that Veterans with identified (or even unidentified) disabilities are learning and navigating a new system. Veterans may not even recognize that resources are available or that they may access these resources. Further, Veterans may be eligible for disability services on campus, even if they are not eligible for state or federal disability. A military Veteran may receive federal disability if they have an injury that occurred while on active duty or if their injury was made worse by active military service.

FACULTY

- Encourage Veteran participation in campus groups and activities. Veterans bring tremendous life experience, diversity, and skill (e.g., leadership and teamwork) with them to the campus.
- Encourage students to approach you with questions after class and during breaks or to use office hours and email. The relationship with a faculty member or advisor could be the single item that helps the Veteran remain in school. For instance, this relationship may help the Veteran feel more connected to the campus, may help the Veteran navigate a new system (many Veterans leave higher education because they grow frustrated with the process and inability to obtain benefits), or feel support from an authority figure. Further, if a student is a National Guardsmen and has to drill on a weekend, he or she may be away from home from Friday through Monday. This could affect the student's ability to complete an assignment or study for an exam. Some flexibility with assignments, tests, or attendance policies, based upon a particular situation, should be considered.
- Recognize that a Veteran is a non-traditional student who may hold multiple roles (parent, spouse, employee, Reservist/Guardsman). Encourage communication and exhibit flexibility related to these many demands.

References

Hopkins, C., Herrmann, D., Wilson, R.B., Allen, B., & Malley, L. (2010). *Improving college education of Veterans.* Douglas Herrmann: Charleston, SC.