

IX. Faculty Allies: Leveraging supporting services on campus, Service Learning, SVO, and other faculty

In the months since, Ms. Schwartz-McKinzie has fielded energetic requests from fellow faculty members who say they'd like to help student veterans, too. Getting the faculty more involved in Combat2College, say Ms. Sachs and others, is a main challenge for the future.—Libby Sander. "On a Maryland Campus, Veterans Journey From 'Combat to College'." The Chronicle of Higher Education 58.31 (2012).



Three top learning goals:

- 1) Learn how to learn about the student support services typically available to student veterans;
- 2) Identify allies among faculty and other constituencies at the college for more, better, faster results and general success that eventually pay off in the classroom;
- 3) Understand how a non-veteran faculty can still earn the trust and ability to better serve student veterans through working with SVO and other student veterans who can act as mentors for students and as guides against blindspots in faculty decisions and actions.

ABSTRACT:

A small role outside of the classroom among student life and support services, and connecting with other 'student vet friendly' faculty and SVO, for referral, presentations, consults, and general share of best practices and Q&A, can radically improve the success of student veterans in the classroom. In return, the faculty can play a representative role in policy, steering committees and budgets that ultimately help student veterans and their resources at the college.

BRIEFINGS:

A small role outside of the classroom and connecting with other 'student vet friendly' faculty and SVO, for referral, presentations, consults, and general Q&A, can radically improve the success of student veterans in the classroom. In return, the faculty can play a representative role in policy, steering committees and budgets that ultimately help student veterans and their resources at the college.

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1 Samples scenario

TIPS:

Faculty TIP 1): Hold a faculty open office hour for student veterans Have (rotating can be fine) willing faculty members who are military veterans, the faculty liaison, or fellow travelers (was an army 'brat', has experience teaching student veterans, etc) hold an open, anonymous if desired, office hour – preferably at the student veteran lounge (if you have one) or the meeting space for the SVO. If possible have a female faculty representative available as well or at least part of the rotation. The benefits are two fold: the volunteer faculty member can inform (anonymously if desired) the student veteran about policies, expectations and likely frameworks of consequences related to classroom/faculty domain issues, refer/ 'warm hand over' a student veteran in crisis to the appropriate support service; while student veterans become familiar with someone with experience in the bureaucracy and logistics of campus rules and practices that they can come to for help. If possible, have at least one female faculty member in the rotation or available for the open office hour: some female student veterans will simply not go to a male faculty member with some issues, especially things like PTSD from sexually related incidents, harassment by faculty or male student veterans (or any students), and other factors that really do need addressing.

Faculty TIP 2): Consider suggesting and supporting creation of a (non funded)

Faculty Liaison position on campus. Administration typically support this position (when non-funded, unless the college has massive resources or a large percent of students are student veterans) as a committee equivalency of required duty. Some colleges may give 'release time' from 1 course teaching load.

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You'll create a specialist and nurture a contact and mediator between other faculty and student veterans and SVO. Is it important that the faculty liaison be a veteran themselves? Yes - especially if there is not a strong, established SVO at the college. However, a faculty person who can work interdisciplinary with other faculty is more important than being a veteran or from a military tradition (family). Tenured faculty are especially useful from a peer and communications perspective. Expanded definition of faculty liaison: The Veterans Faculty Liaison is there to support both faculty and student veterans in their functions in the classroom and other learning environments. They work closely with the Veteran Services Coordinator (for my college, Reda Chambers) and assist with related orientations and faculty development. They can clarify questions, issues, procedures, referrals and options from a faculty point of view, as applicable to student veterans, family using military educational benefits, or military service personnel who are currently active duty or reserves. The foundation of the position is the belief in "accommodation, not exceptions." This is essential to avoid 'territorial conflict' with other faculty who see too many exceptions to their status quo syllabus and classroom management as coddling (I have seen this even in cases with faculty who were veterans). This is not a replacement for emergencies or behavioral issues (Safety, Counseling) or for general issues related to veteran student status or resources (benefits certification, orientation: Veteran Services Coordinator) but a starting point/triage point for questions from faculty or student veterans. Appointments are good, but drop-in is the reality. Faculty liaison open office hours at the vet center can be very useful . Faculty can clamor and rally support for growth of resources: starting: Toolkit for Veteran Friendly Institutions to set institutions' vet offices: www.vetfriendlytoolkit.org www.vetfriendlytoolkit.org

Faculty TIP 3): Alliance, connect with other 'vet friendly' faculty, with faculty and employees with military background (for quick fact checking or questions about military culture or jargon) and with 'vet friendly'/'vet aware' counselors:

Ideally two points of contact/partnership is good: someone from faculty and/or advising + certifying officer, to be able to help figure out referrals and recommend options for student veterans that look at the big picture on campus (paperwork and academics). Be aware: referral & support services are sometimes good for the teachers, too , who work closely with student veterans – both for better training and quick questions, and to debrief of any emotional burdens of working with transitioning student vets, especially those in crisis.

Faculty TIP 4): Informal peer or 'blind' review of syllabi and assignments: Get veteran teachers to validate classes or assignments as 'vet friendly' or clear to a non traditional student. Even an informal 'blind' review by SVO can be helpful.

Faculty TIP 5): Be aware: Secret lists of the 'vet friendly' faculty WILL form:

"Why don't veterans register in my class?" Vet students (especially SVO) often have: 1)an underground list of 'vet friendly' professor. 2)They will post/consult ratemyprofessors frequently. 3)Vets will share/can tell you who to take or avoid for a class, albeit may not be able to give you all the reasons why or why not that person is 'one to take,' and sometimes pass wrong judgment or show unnecessary favoritism. When membership circulates out to one of the instructor on the NOT list, the faculty liaison and/or people working student

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veteran services may be put on the spot: feel ‘the cold shoulder’ or have to answer politically why the individual has been wronged by the list.

Faculty TIP 6): LEVERAGING VETERANS ALREADY ON CAMPUS

There are excellent resources available, but student veterans are just a portion of the audience, of the students, of the time available to personalize attention to student populations. The single best resource is a fellow student veteran. If a faculty member is at least familiar to the SVO, it is likely that they can get a straight answer to a student veteran related (legitimate issue or exaggeration) and help through referral among the network of other student veterans.

Faculty TIP 7): Vets can train others how to advocate and work the system for themselves.

Consider extra credit and/or service learning possibilities as well as referral for Work Study positions. One of the benefits of SVO as ally: they’ll support, but won’t necessarily ‘baby’ as a peer anyone ‘gaming’ the system based on vet status. Work studys and SVO can help in providing direct honest opinions and, especially if your college can’t afford a dedicated vet counseling individual, provide a peer relationship or ear to listen to help in transition. An excellent example of student vets peer advising/informally mentoring is PAVE: Peer Advisors Veterans Program

<http://www.cm-life.com/article/2013/10/pave-helps-student-veterans-adjust-to-college-life>

Faculty TIP 8): Lobby for counseling to pre-reserve some appts:

Pre-reserving a time slot for just-in-time walk-ins in counseling services, once or twice a week, usually right before or after lunch, for student veterans, is a good idea. It can happen if there is demand – or anticipation of demand, if proposed by a joint faculty member and student or support services individual. If it can coincide or run just after an open office hour for student veterans, even better.

Faculty TIP 9): Include support materials for student veterans in orientation packets.

Typically there is a call for materials from faculty to promote their classes, special committees and such in orientation packets. Support/be familiar with materials from your office of student veteran services, and make sure any handouts for the (hopefully) separate orientation for student veterans has contact information, and if possible, a picture, of faculty members with open office hours for student veterans, or who are veterans willing to informally counsel student veterans . Include in orientation packet resources for family and kids if possible – that will stand out to student veteran with families.

1 Sample SCENARIOS* relevant for Faculty Allies

for instructions on how to use Sample Scenarios, go to HOW TO USE TOOLKIT chapter/module and read: "How to use SCENARIOS: Teachable Moments strategy or as Faculty Development exercises"

SCENARIO 1:	Student veteran that has been disciplined or called out on disruptive behavior wants to meet with instructor (and/or chair) with faculty liaison or SVO officer as mediator to appeal or follow up on a complain. [solution hint: faculty can have their chair or another faculty familiar with working with student veterans at their meeting to help with representation and 'phrasing' the issue and best solution for all]
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***Where are the solutions?** *There are too many different ways to 'solve' each, agreeing and disagreeing, similar and dissenting, so instead you have 1)the scenario 2)suggested steps in Chapter ["HOW to USE Toolkit"](#) to find your own localized solutions. **Forcing people to start discussions - active learning -- rather than reading/skimming what I thought/found worked in MY location/culture is the key to action and owning the problem and approaches.** Only homegrown solutions SOLVE WITH PURPOSE*