

V.E.T.S. in College: Veterans Education and Transition Supports

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Program Goals

- Adapt the campus-based supported education model to a mobile model allowing us to serve 20 veterans with SCI and TBI in need of intensive services to enter and remain in postsecondary programs across the state
- Evaluate the model so that it can be replicated in other hospital or community based settings serving veterans.

Supported Education Model

Flexible, individualized support system of community and college resources

- Resources structured to meet short and long-term goals
- Resources structured around veterans' academic and career choices

Supported Education Model

- VCU faculty members serve as Education Coaches
- Develop a plan with the veteran involving career decision making and planning, determining appropriate postsecondary education program
- Assist with services and supports as needed

Examples of Services Provided

- **Educational and Career Planning**
 - * Exploring career options and determining goals
 - * Identifying strengths and challenges
 - * Navigating the college application and admissions process
 - * Identifying accommodations and strategies that generalize to educational and employment settings

Examples of Services (cont.)

- **Supporting Academic Achievement**
 - * Exposure to technology to increase efficiency and productivity—will loan devices or help secure technology for students
 - * Understand disability and impact on learning
 - * Develop self advocacy skills and ADA knowledge
 - * Develop study and time management skills in conjunction with other campus entities
 - * Develop strategies for enhancing reading and comprehension skills

Services (cont'd)

- **Service Coordination**
 - * Referral to community services
 - * Awareness of campus resources
 - * Coordination with veterans programs and services

Referral Sources

- McGuire VA SCI &D Program (outpatient and inpatient)
- McGuire VA Polytrauma Network System (PNS) (outpatient and inpatient)
- McGuire VA Polytrauma Transitional Rehabilitation Program (PTRP)
- OEF/OIF Program
- Virginia Wounded Warrior Program
- DSS Offices

Characteristics of Participants

- 23 active participants
- Average age is 35
- 67% are White, 19% are African-American, 9% are Hispanic, 5% are Asian
- 84% are veterans, 16% are active duty
- 59% have TBI and PTSD, 23% have SCI, 12% have TBI, 6% have PTSD

Findings of Project to Date

- Veterans confront multiple issues as they transition back into civilian life
 - Learning to deal with an acquired injury and how it has changed their lives
 - Determining where they will live, work, or obtain education. Very mobile population- have worked with several service members who move, etc.
 - Facing multiple commitments including family, work, financial stability

Findings of Project to Date

- Working with student veterans is a multi-step process. For example, the steps needed to choose and apply to a postsecondary education program, secure benefits, etc. can be overwhelming to them.
- Mobile model presents logistical challenges
 - Maintaining contact
 - Transportation
- Working with multiple systems is challenging for the student veteran as well as project staff

Findings of Project to Date

- Common supports for veterans to enroll in college
 - Sort through benefits and financial resources
 - Veterans are reluctant to be labeled as having a disability or take advantage of the Disability Support Services Office
 - Start out with 1-2 classes
 - Connect with other veterans on campus
 - Explore technology

Satisfaction Surveys

- 100% were pleased with assistance and services
- Over 90% agreed services reduced concerns about going to college and should remain an ongoing program
- Over 80% agreed the education coach provided useful information and resources to meet educational goals and would recommend to other veterans interested in college.

wearevirginiaveterans.org/Get-Community-Support/Blog/June-2011/Combat-veterans-in-college.aspx – comments from Joel



- “The VETS program was a life changer for me at UMW.”
- Since Joel’s enrollment in the VETS Program, he is proud to report 3 A’s, 2 B’s and has made the "Deans list“ on his latest semester.

Hear from a student veteran

Johnathan Hoggatt