

Strategies to Build Academic Confidence

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Session Plan

Session Overview

Military and veteran students have access to tremendous education benefits, yet many lack confidence in their academic abilities. This can lead to an underutilization of those hard-earned education benefits.

In this session, we will discuss data-driven strategies institutions are employing to help build that confidence in both student veterans and the staff and faculty who support those students, including those utilized at Warrior-Scholar Project, the Columbia University Center for Veteran Transition and Integration, and Syracuse University.

Session Structure

1. Why focus on confidence?
2. Understanding student veteran needs
3. Research on building confidence in first-generation students
4. Building confidence in student veterans
 - a. Warrior-Scholar Project
 - b. Columbia University Center for Veteran Transition and Integration
 - c. IVMF / Syracuse University
5. Building confidence in staff, faculty, and institutions supporting student veterans

Why
focus
on
confidence?



Understanding Student Veteran Needs

- Student veterans require specialized support from higher education policy makers and program providers.¹
- Post-secondary education is the top resource needed by most veterans.²
- Students using GI Bill benefits are more likely to be enrolled full time, with 10% of students enrolling in certificate programs, 27% enrolling in associate's programs, 43% enrolling in bachelor's programs, and 20% enrolling in graduate programs.³
- Community colleges are the preferred student veteran entry point into higher education.⁴
- 65% of student veterans enroll at low-graduation-rate institutions, compared to 51% of all students.⁵
- 62% of student veterans are first-generation college students.⁶

1. Ackerman, R., DiRamio, D., & Garza Mitchell, R. L. (2009). Transitions: combat veterans as college students. *New Directions for Student Services*. 126, 5-14. DOI: 10.1002/ss

2. Euto, L., Maury, R., Armstrong, N., Stone, B., & Linsner, R. (2020). *Top Resource Needs of Veterans and Active Duty Service Members*. Institute for Veterans and Military Families at Syracuse.

3. Institute for Veterans and Military Families & Student Veterans of America. (2019). *Student Veterans: A Valuable Asset to Higher Education*. Syracuse University.

4. Evans, J. J., Pellegrino, L., & Hoggan, C. (2015). Supporting veterans at the community college: a review of the literature. *The Community College Enterprise*. Spring 2015, 47-65.

5. Hill, C. B., Kurzweil, M., Pisacreta, E. D., & Schwartz, E. (2019). *Enrolling More Veterans at Higher Graduation-Rate Colleges and Universities*. Ithaca S+R.

6. National Conference of State Legislatures. (2014, May 30). *Veterans and College: State and Community Roles in Supporting College Completion for Veterans*.

Research on Building Academic Confidence

- In a 2006 study,⁷ Bermeo, et. al identified three crucial steps to support first-generation college students:
 - ▷ (1) Raising aspirations for college
 - ▷ (2) Navigating the college admissions process
 - ▷ (3) Easing the initial transition to college

- In a 2014 study,⁸ Ford & Vignare noted key challenges college students face with respect to coursework, including:
 - ▷ lack of knowledge regarding academia and academic culture
 - ▷ rusty study habits
 - ▷ difficulties balancing school and life

7. Bermeo, A., Grigsby, M., Mortenson, T., Muraskin, L., Stokes, L., Tinto, V. & Upshaw, W. (2006). Straight from the Source: What Works for First-Generation College Students. The Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education.

8. Ford, K. & Vignare, K. (2014). The evolving military learner population: a review of the literature. *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks*. 19(1), 7-30. DOI: 10.24059/OLJ.V19I1.503.

Confidence Building at Warrior-Scholar Project

The Model

In partnership with colleges and universities, WSP hosts intensive, one and two-week college-preparatory boot camps for enlisted veterans and service members. Boot camps are offered in Humanities, STEM, and Business disciplines.

Through faculty lectures, workshops and research projects, tailored assignments, and one-on-one tutoring, warrior-scholars acquire the skills to succeed in higher education and navigate the cultural shift from military service to college.

Throughout the course, warrior-scholars are mentored by student veterans who have successfully transitioned from the military to college.



The Results

Warrior-Scholar Project data shows connection between increased confidence and increased degree persistence rates

WSP graduates report increased confidence among a variety of academic and personal areas related to higher education, increased motivation regarding college admissions, and a large degree of preparation for life on a college campus

Confidence Building at Columbia's Center for Veteran Transition and Integration

- Columbia University launched the Center for Veteran Transition and Integration to have a direct and lasting impact on the issue of veteran transition and upward mobility by creating best-in-class programming veterans need as they transition from active service to college and the workforce.
- CVTI curriculum participants report several key indicators of persistence: lower rates of academic distress, lower rates of academic probation, increased performance coming out of probationary status, and critically, earlier outreach to support
- On-demand support from anywhere, and for free, for both student *AND* administrators

Syracuse University First-Gen Support

- 19% of undergraduate students at Syracuse University identify as first-generation students.
- Cuse- First- Pre-welcome Program - three-day program designed by Syracuse University to provide support- where the first generation student needs it the most-which is how to navigate resources. I.e., where is the financial aid or bursar's office, office of student services. It also helps them with terminology (what MWF means) .
- Gives the first-generation student a sense of community and a glimpse of what campus and student life will be like.
- While these SU resources help students find where they need to go to find the right support- it is also an issue of them becoming connected to the right areas in order for them to remain successful and stay.

Office of Veteran and Military Affairs (OVMA)

- Transitioning Military Service Members to Campus life @ Hendricks Chapel (Summer)
- Peer Advisors for Veteran Education (PAVE)-providing peer advisors to new student veterans - from other student veterans
- Warrior Scholar Project (Annually-Summer)
- Student Veteran Welcome and Resource Fair (Fall and Spring Semester)
- "Operation Welcome"
- Student Veteran Organization (SVO)
- Campus Events - continue to build community

Other Considerations

- Access = Admission + Support + Resources
 - ▷ It's insufficient just to admit students to college or university
- Taking a broader view of “benefits”
 - ▷ Benefits are more than just the funds to pay for college – they also include the support programs that help ensure success once on campus
- Institutions are not on their own
 - ▷ IHLs should leverage support offered by nonprofits such as WSP, CVTI, and IVMF to ensure students succeed
 - ▷ There is value in IHLs themselves gaining confidence in their ability to fully serve student veterans