

Fostering and Enhancing the Success of Student Veteran Learners



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NASPA Symposium on Military-Connected Students
February 21, 2022

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Monteigne Long is the Assistant Director of the Office of Veteran Services with The Texas A&M University System. She has been working with student veterans in higher education since 2010, when colleges and universities saw a large influx of Post 9/11 veterans.

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Agenda

- I. History of Veterans in Higher Education
- II. Current Profile of Student Veterans
- III. Transition to Higher Education
- IV. Veterans as Adult Learners
 - a. Strengths & Barriers
 - b. Veteran Critical Theory
 - c. Andragogy
- V. Implications
 - a. Student Affairs Practitioners
 - b. Administrators
 - c. Faculty
- VI. Student Panel

1.

History of Veterans in Higher Education

History of Veterans in Higher Education

- ▶ **1918** - Smith-Sears Vocational Rehabilitation Act
 - Rehabilitation and retraining programs
- ▶ **1944** - Servicemen's Readjustment Act (G.I. Bill)
 - Had the largest impact on higher education by provided benefits to WWII veterans
 - Over 2 million veterans attended college (1944-1949)
 - Veterans dominated campuses in numbers and academic superiority
 - Expired in 1956 but was extended as the Montgomery G.I. Bill
- ▶ **1984** - Montgomery G.I. Bill is made an enduring benefit for veterans during peacetime
- ▶ **2008** - Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act (Post-9/11 G.I. Bill)
- ▶ **2017** - The Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act (Forever G.I. Bill)

2.

Current Profile of Student Veterans

Current Profile of Student Veterans

According to PNPI (2019) and the 2019 Student Veterans of America Census Report...

3 in 5 are employed and work *at least* 35 hours a week

Over 60% are between the ages of 25-44

75% of student veterans are considered full time students

47% of enrolled student veterans are parents

STUDENT VETERANS ARE MORE LIKELY TO:



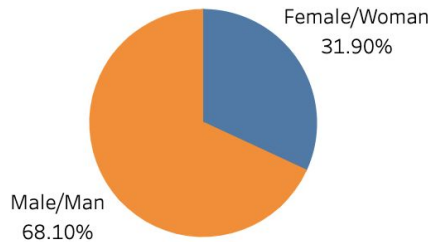
- ✓ BE OLDER;
- ✓ BE MARRIED;
- ✓ HAVE CHILDREN;
- ✓ HAVE A DISABILITY;
- ✓ WORKING FULL OR PART-TIME;
- ✓ FIRST GENERATION STUDENT



Current Profile of Student Veterans

According to the 2019 Student Veterans of America Census Report...

What is your gender?



What is your Ethnicity?

Ethnicity1	% of Total Count of Ethnicity1 al..	Count of Ethnicity1
African-American/Black	9.74%	474
Asian	3.43%	167
Hispanic/Latino/a	10.97%	534
Middle Eastern	0.16%	8
Native American/American Indian/Alaska Native	0.76%	37
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.68%	33
White/Caucasian	69.61%	3,388
Prefer not to say	2.73%	133
Other	1.91%	93

3.

Transition to Higher Education

The Transition

The Challenges...

- ▷ Transition from military to civilian life
- ▷ Experiences and perspectives
- ▷ Enduring stereotypes
- ▷ Financial concerns/Veteran education benefits
- ▷ Acculturating to campus life
- ▷ Loss of a sense of camaraderie
- ▷ Physical, emotional, and psychological issues
- ▷ Bureaucratic and unstructured nature of higher education
- ▷ Family responsibilities
- ▷ Multiple dimensions of identity

The Transition

How we can support...

- ▷ Veteran orientation programs
- ▷ Veteran's space/ Veteran support office
- ▷ Student veteran network/Student veteran organization
- ▷ Peer advisors/Peer mentoring program
- ▷ Network of supportive staff across campus
- ▷ Creating a supportive classroom environment

4.

Veterans as Adult Learners

Strengths of Student Veterans

- ▷ Maturity, Discipline & Work Ethic
- ▷ Diverse Experiences
- ▷ Leadership Skills
- ▷ Core Values
- ▷ Communication
- ▷ Collaboration
- ▷ Respectful of Leadership
- ▷ Interpersonal Skills/Team Player
- ▷ Comfortable with Diversity
- ▷ Focused on Achievement & Success
- ▷ Goal/Mission Oriented...They just know how to get things done!

Barriers to Success

- ▷ Transition
 - ▷ Isolation or Alienation
 - ▷ Change of Identity (“Hero to Zero” & “Priority of Self”)
 - ▷ Time Management
 - ▷ PTSD/TBI
 - ▷ Anger Management
 - ▷ Substance Abuse
 - ▷ Relationship & Trust Issues
 - ▷ Transfer Student “GPA Drop”
 - ▷ Liminality
 - ▷ Competing Life Priorities
 - ▷ Underprepared Faculty/Staff
- ▷ The BIG 5:
 - GI Bill benefit processing
 - Health Care and Insurance
 - Childcare
 - Academic Advising
 - Finances (bills, billing cycles, living expenses)

Veteran Mindset

“I can fix my own problems”

“Those who need help are weak”

Used to structure, regiment, taking orders, chain of command

“Push” mentality

Higher Education Mindset

Asking for help is positive

Help-seeking behaviors are a sign of strength

Less structured, leading by committee work

“Pull” mentality

Veterans as Adult Learners

Let's examine the 11 tenets of **Veteran Critical Theory** (Phillips & Lincoln, 2017) of the student veteran identity:

1. Structures, policies, and processes privilege civilians over veterans
2. Veterans experience various forms of oppression and marginalization including microaggressions
3. Veterans are victims of deficit thinking in higher education
4. Veterans occupy a third space (country) on the border of multiple conflicting and interacting power structures, languages, and systems
5. VCT values narratives and counternarratives of veterans
6. Veterans experience multiple identities at once
7. Veterans are constructed (written) by civilians, often as deviant characters
8. Veterans are more appropriately positioned to inform policy and practice regarding veterans
9. Some services advertised to serve veterans are ultimately serving civilian interests
10. Veterans cannot be essentialized
11. Veteran culture is built on a culture of respect, honor, and trust

Knowles' Andragogy

5 Assumptions of Adult Learners

1. Self-Concept
2. Adult Learner Experience
3. Readiness to Learn
4. Orientation to Learning
5. Motivation to Learn

4 Principles of Andragogy

1. Adults need to be involved in the planning and evaluation of their instruction.
2. Experience (including mistakes) provides the basis for the learning activities.
3. Adults are most interested in learning subjects that have immediate relevance and impact to their job or personal life.
4. Adult learning is problem-centered rather than content-oriented.

5.

Implications

Implications

- ▷ Top-down support
- ▷ Policies, practices, processes
- ▷ Designated veteran contacts/dedicated offices
- ▷ Moving to “veteran inclusive”
- ▷ Military Cultural Competency Training
- ▷ Campus and community partnerships
- ▷ Data collection and tracking
- ▷ Development

Critical Areas for Support

1. Pre-enrollment advising
2. Financial Aid
3. Academic support



6.

(Virtual) Student Panel

Meet Your Panel!

Robert Liu



Shawn Lopez



Shawna Uhl



Robert Liu



Shawn Lopez



Shawna Uhl



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Thanks!

Any questions?

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