The Veterans Resource Center (VRC) Project in the California Community Colleges (CCCs)

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The Need—2010

- Concerns over campus’s ability to help our returning veterans
- Concerns for meeting the needs of non-traditional learners
- Concerns for student veterans needing assistive technology but not wanting to ask for help
- Concerns over campus readiness to assist with TBI / ABI, PTSD, depression
The Example

- Butte College had a well-established VRC
  - VRC established by Butte College in Spring 2008
  - Staffed by vets
  - Collaborative effort
  - Included Assistive Technology

- Goal:
  - Provide central entry point for student veterans as they navigate the civilian and academic worlds
VRC at Butte College

- www.butte.edu/services/veterans/vrc.html
The Vision

- Focus on three key areas
  - Academics
  - Camaraderie
  - Wellness

- Include assistive technology (AT)

- Establish and track a few pilot sites
Statewide Model for CCCs

- Serves students
  - Includes assistive technology
  - Provides a supportive, safe environment
- Serves campus staff and faculty
  - Provides information
  - Serves as a training hub
- Serves CCC system
  - Provides a simple, replicable model
The VRC Goal

- Ease transition for returning student veterans
  - One-stop center on CCC campuses

- Provide tools for success

- Serve as a focal point for collaboration
  - On-campus resources (Health Services, etc.)
  - Off-campus resources (VA, etc.)

- Serve as a resource on ABI/TBI and PTSD for students & staff
The Project

- High Tech Center Training Unit (HTCTU) developed a grant project
  - In coordination with the Chancellor’s Office of CCCs
  - Establish VRCs on CCC campuses
- Assistive technology (AT) will play significant role
Grant Application

- Space allocation: minimum 400 sq ft with a door
- Staffed primarily by vets
- Broad-based advisory committee
- Administrative sign-off
Campus Commitment

- Campuses asked to supply a vision
  - Academics
  - Camaraderie
  - Wellness

- Very important
  - More than a vets lounge
  - More than a vets club
Academics

- Offering tools & strategies that provide scaffolding for academic success
  - Assistive technology
  - Note-taking technology
Assistive Technology (AT)

- Kurzweil 3000 & Kurzweil 1000
  - Donated by Cambium Learning Technologies
- Inspiration - Donated by Inspiration Software, Inc.
- eText readers:
  - Read:OutLoud - Donated by Don Johnston, Inc.
  - EasyReader - Donated by Dolphin Systems
- ZoomText - Donated by ai squared
- Screen reader & speech recognition
  - Referral to DSPS for training
- Pulse Smartpen
Campus Support

- Tutoring
- Study groups
- Quiet area with computers
- “Safe” place to focus and concentrate
- Student vets walking newcomers through admissions/financial aid process
Camaraderie

- It starts when a vet walks through the door:
  - Staffed primarily by vets (minimum 70%)
- Provides a safe place where vets connect with other vets
  - We’ve got your back
- Builds on shared values & experiences:
  - People already know what you’ve been through
Camaraderie: Services for Students?

- Military culture centers on camaraderie
  - VRCs reflect that culture, provide a safe place

- Provides support system as challenges arise
  - Vet-to-vet mentoring may aid retention

- Shared activities promote a sense of belonging
  - Outward Bound, paintball, etc.
Examples of Camaraderie Services

- Outward Bound team building (Pasadena)
- Weekly vet-to-vet social hour (Grossmont)
- Vets Alliance Club on Facebook (City College San Francisco)
- Bowling, paintball (Long Beach City College)
- World map competition between military branches (Butte)
- Identify staff/faculty who are vets (Sacramento CC)
Wellness

- Identify resources
  - On- and off-campus
- Refer to appropriate resources
  - Ideally, a seamless process
  - Recognize stigma associated with asking for help
- Provide training on veteran-specific issues:
  - Dealing with TBI, PTSD, depression, stress
  - Family issues
  - Financial issues
Wellness: Services for Students?

- VRCs provide support in seeking assistance
  - Encourage student vets to get beyond the stigma
  - “Here at home, as well as over there, how you deal with the effects of war is a tribute to your bravery.”

- Refer to on- and off-campus resources

- Help student vets build their own “coping toolbox.”

1. *Courage After Fire*, K. Armstrong
Examples of Wellness Services

- VA clinician on campus (CCSF, Las Positas, Merced & Sacramento)
- Health/fitness course for vets (Las Positas)
- Redeem coupon for “goody bag” at Student Health Center (Mt. San Antonio)
- Suicide Prevention Gatekeeper Training (Foothill)
- Also address financial wellness: workshops (Pasadena)
Contact

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