Helping Returning Veterans Transition to College

Adapted for Oregon State University by the Veterans Workgroup
(Updated August 31, 2012)

Acknowledgements:
Adapted with permission from Dr. Bill Burns at North Dakota State University, Veteran’s Reintegration Committee
In February 2010, Oregon had 2,500 – 3,000 returning National Guard soldiers.

It was expected that an increasing number of veterans would begin using their educational benefits as they transition out of the military or return from deployments. Due to this increase OSU saw an increase in the numbers of veteran students applying for and being admitted.
Veteran Students at the Corvallis Campus

- Fall 2012: 613 Students
- Fall 2011: 542 Students
- Fall 2010: 513 Students
- Fall 2009: 400 Students
- Fall 2008: 342 Students

* These numbers reflect students receiving VA educational benefits; the number may not be inclusive of all veterans on campus.
By Major – Top 7

- COE – 165
- COS – 75
- COB – 62
- COF – 25
- CLA – 105
- PHHS – 74
- Ag Sc – 55
Veteran Students at OSU Cascades

- Fall 2012: 74 Students
- Fall 2011: 56 Students
- Fall 2010: 31 Students
- Fall 2009: 26 Students
- Fall 2008: 10 Students

* These numbers reflect students receiving VA educational benefits; the number may not be inclusive of all veterans on campus.
OSU Cascades Student Veterans

By Major - Top 7

- COF – 14  PHHS – 11
- COB – 10  CLA – 9
- COS – 5  COE – 4
- EDU – 3
Veteran Students at OSU eCampus

- Fall 2012: 181 Students
- Fall 2011: 97 Students
- Fall 2010: 84 Students
- Fall 2009: 64 Students
- Fall 2008: 44 Students

* These numbers reflect students receiving VA educational benefits; the number may not be inclusive of all veterans on campus.
By Major – Top 7

- Ag Sc – 41
- CLA – 34
- CEOAS – 14
- COS - 6
- COF – 37
- COE – 19
- PHHS – 12
What is a Student Veteran?

- What are some ways you can tell a student may be a veteran?
Student Veterans…

*Not your Average College Students*

- Often older than average
- May have more responsibilities (spouse, kids, military duties)
- Different life experiences (military training, deployments, etc.)
- May be struggling with after effects of deployments (emotional, physical, social, and occupational)
Some veterans don’t want to be identified as veterans
When a service member comes home, they may find it hard...
... to listen to their child whine about being bored.
... to be understanding when a classmate complains about a bad night's sleep.
... to be tolerant of people who complain about the hassle of getting to work.
... to be sympathetic when someone talks about how hard it is to have a new baby in the house.
... to control their emotions when they hear someone say that the war is about oil.
... to control their panic when asked to drive slower.
... not to startle to loud noises.
...to sleep through the night.
... to forget the things they have seen and done.
Coming Home: After Effects of a Deployment

Not all war wounds are visible...
Physical Injuries/Conditions

- Orthopedic injuries: chronic pain due to joint and muscular-skeletal injuries in back, knees, shoulders, wrists
- Hearing problems: hearing loss, ringing in ears
- Respiratory illnesses: sand, dust
- Skin conditions: rashes, bacterial infections
- Major trauma injuries: gunshot wounds, shrapnel etc.
Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

- 3.5% - general population
- 21.8% - national, returning Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation Enduring Freedom veterans have been diagnosed

NOTE: Nearly 80% of returning veterans do not have PTSD!
Up to 20% of returning Operation Iraqi Freedom /Operation Enduring Freedom veterans have been diagnosed with TBI.
Typical War Zone Stress Reaction

- Problems concentrating, easily distracted
- Sleep disturbance
- Some nightmares and intrusive thoughts/memories
- Hypervigilance / exaggerated startle response
- Diminished interest in activities
- Difficulty relating to others
- Increased irritability and anger outbursts
- Avoidance: driving, crowds, news, talk of war
What You May See in Your Classroom or Office

- Student may be uncomfortable around unfamiliar people and in unfamiliar surroundings
- Student may distance themselves from windows and/or their peers and be reluctant to speak up
- Student may be sensitive to war references and may withdraw or become confrontational when the topic is brought up
What You May See in Your Classroom or Office

- Student may have difficulty concentrating during class and be easily distracted
- Student affect may be such that it can be misinterpreted as boredom/anger
- Student may experience chronic pain which makes it difficult to sit for long periods of time
- Student may be reluctant to ask for assistance even when they are struggling
Suggestions for Faculty and Staff

- Include information on class syllabi for student veterans, such as:

  “Veterans and active duty military personnel with special circumstances are welcomed and encouraged to communicate these, in advance if possible, to the instructor.”

- Understand veterans may miss class due to VA appointments which, if missed, can take 1 to 4 months to be rescheduled or cause the claim to be denied.
Suggestions for Faculty and Staff

- Be aware that military spouses and families with loved ones deployed have challenges of their own.
- Ask veterans what they want. Do they want to be anonymous? How should war references be handled?
- Regardless of your political opinion on a specific military campaign, remember that our focus should be on assisting the individual.
Keep In Mind...

- In the spirit of fairness, all students, including veterans, have the same responsibilities to complete course work and other university requirements.

- A faculty/staff member’s goal should be to recognize and help veteran students with special circumstances successfully complete their education goals. (while not compromising student responsibility and university policy).
Positive Characteristics of Veterans that Enhance the Classroom

- Have lived and worked in diverse and multicultural environments
- Are accustomed to frequent change
- Have experience working with and leading small groups or teams
- Demonstrate a propensity to speak confidently in public
- Possess an above average work ethic
Show strong habits of self-discipline
Highly value the educational experience and the opportunity for a degree
Possess a background and world view that is more global than the average college student
Through their military training and travel, they may have discovered interest areas that can lead to a career or vocation
Resources at OSU

- OSU Veterans Advisory Committee
  - [http://oregonstate.edu/veterans/home/](http://oregonstate.edu/veterans/home/)

- OSU Veterans Workgroup
  - [http://oregonstate.edu/veterans/contact/workgroup.php](http://oregonstate.edu/veterans/contact/workgroup.php)

- OSU Veterans Website
  - [http://oregonstate.edu/veterans/home/](http://oregonstate.edu/veterans/home/)
Resources at OSU

- **ASOSU Veteran Affairs Task Force**
  - veteran.affairs@oregonstate.edu

- **Student Veterans of America**
  - OSUveterans@oregonstate.edu
Additional Resources at OSU

- Gus Bedwell
  - Veteran Service Advisor/Facilitator for Veterans Workgroup and Veterans Advisory Committee
    - Helps veterans and their dependents navigate the VA system while attending school.
    - 541-737-7662 or Gus.Bedwell@oregonstate.edu

- Angela Williamson/Cathy Walker
  - VA Certifying Officials
    - Process VA benefits, verify eligibility of benefits
    - 541-737-0593/2007 or veterans@oregonstate.edu
QUESTIONS
1. Majority of photos and captions come from chain emails.


