Adapted from Ohio Ahead Conference PowerPoint by Dr Jessica H. Thiede

1. An Initiative to Promote Student Veteran Resilience  
  
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**2. Disclaimer**

This presentation is not intended to make anyone an “expert” on student Veterans; rather, each participant will be familiarized with the resources that are available to student Veterans.

**3. OBJECTIVES**

After today’s presentation, participants will:

Be familiar with the VITAL Initiative, its services & rationale

Understand the demographics & trends of today’s student Veterans

Be acquainted with military culture & deployment related issues that influence student Veteran performance

Learn about collaboration between VA and academia to support student Veterans

**4. What is VITAL ?**

Veterans Integration to Academic Leadership (VITAL)

National VHA initiative to bring clinical and supportive services to student Veterans on college and university campuses to help decrease barriers to care and to increase academic retention and success

**5. Structure of VITAL Initiative Program**

**[Diagram from slide 5 adapted to table form]**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Veterans Affairs Central Office**  **(VACO) Washington DC** | | |
| **Veterans Benefits Administration**  **(VBA)** | **Veterans Health Administration (VHA)**  **153 Medical Centers Nation Wide** | **National Cemetery Administration** |
| **Vet Success on Campus (VSOC)**  **94 sites Nationwide** | **Veterans Integration to Academic Leadership (VITAL)**  **23 Programs Nationwide** |

**6. 23 VITAL SITES (map of US with locations)**

**7. VITAL**

Currently 23 VITAL sites around the country serving 105+ campuses

**8. CVAMC VITAL Sites & Schools**

**9. Core Components**

10. VITAL RATIONAL: WHY IS THIS COLLABORATION IMPORTANT?

**11. National Program Rational: Increasing numbers of Veterans on campus**

Post 9/11 GI Bill

Implementation in 2009 has led to significant increases in education benefits provided to military members

Conflicts Ending

Personnel reductions of military forces result in large numbers of Veterans seeking to begin or return to higher education

State of the Economy

Most jobs require at least some higher education

**12. Other Compelling Factors**

National survey of 362,000 first-year students and seniors attending 564 US colleges and universities found:

Student Veterans perceived lower levels of campus support than non-Veterans

Interacted less with faculty members

Spent twice as many hours per week working

Six times as many hours on dependent care

Often received the least amount of help and support

National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), 2010

**13. Today’s Student Veterans:**

**Trends & Demographics**

**14. VBA DATA & TRENDS**

15. Veteran population by state.

Top five most populace states (highest to lowest): **California, Texas, Florida, Pennsylvania, New York**

**16. Education Beneficiaries FY10-12**[bar graph adapted to table form]

Total VA Education Beneficiaries

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| YEAR | FY08 | FY09 | FY10 | FY11 | FY12 |
| NUMBER | 541,439 | 564,487 | 819,281 | 923,836 | 945,052 |

**17. Post 9/11 Beneficiaries By Fiscal Year**

**Percentage of Total Education beneficiaries receiving post 9/11 benefits [compared to previous table]** [double bar graph adapted to table form]

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| YEAR | FY08 | FY09 | FY10 | FY11 | FY12 |
| NUMBER | 0 | 34,393 | 365,640 | 555,329 | 646,302 |
| Percentage | 0% | 6.1% | 45.7% | 60.1% | 68.4% |

**18. Today’s Student Veterans**

[bar graph adapted to table form]

**By age, expressed as percentages**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **<18** | **19-23** | **24-29** | **30-39** | **40+** |
| **Military** | **0.5%** | **15%** | **31.4%** | **28.2%** | **24.9%** |
| **Nonmilitary Nontraditional** | **0.9%** | **13.6%** | **37.2%** | **26.5%** | **21.9%** |
| **Traditional** | **18.1%** | **81.9%** | **-** | **-** | **-** |

**19. Demographics: Gender & Degree Level**

[pie graph as follows]

**Male 73% Female 27%**

[pie graph as follows]

**Two-Year: 43%**

**Four-Year: 21%**

**Graduate: 8%**

**Other: 28%**

**20. Student Veterans Graduation Paths**Path Alpha: Service then School, completion  
Path Beta: School, deployment, school, deployment, school, completion  
Path Gamma: School, service, school, completion

**21. Military:**

**Culture, Deployment & After…**

**22. Understanding Military Culture**

Every enlisted service member goes through Basic Training or Boot Camp

You are stripped of your individuality, and camaraderie and team work is emphasized

**23. In Basic Training…**

You are trained for combat and to be ready when called upon…

**24. Understanding Military Culture**

The military…

Emphasizes **group cohesion & esprit de corps** that connect service members

A set of **ceremony and etiquette** that create shared rituals and common identities

Maintains a **high standard of discipline** that helps organize and structure the armed forces

Emphasizes **punctuality**

-If you show up early, you’re on time. If you show up on time, you’re late.

A **professional ethos** of loyalty and selfless-service that maintains order during battle -Mission first!

**25. Common Military Stressors & Experiences**

Acculturation into the Armed Forces

Basic Training/Boot Camp is stressful

Separation from family/loved ones

Exposure to combat or life threatening situations

Injury (physical/psychological)

Loss of a close friend or team member

Inner conflict / Self-doubt

Wear and tear

Operational stress – lack of sleep/rest

High expectations at all times

Physically and mentally worn down

**26. OEF/OIF/OND Deployment**

Over **2.8** million deployed in Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, & Operation New Dawn (OEF/OIF/OND)

Deployments are longer than any other conflict (Sometimes Up to 18 Months)

Unparalleled multiple deployments

1/3 Have Had at Least Two Tours in Combat Zones

70,000 Have Been Deployed Three Times

20,000 Have Been Deployed at Least Five Times

**27. OEF/OIF/OND: Medical Conditions**Seriously Medically Injured – over 40,000

Amputations, Burns, Paralysis

Better Safety Equipment = Increased Survival

Chronic Pain

>33% Back

>38% Limb/Joint

>75.3% TBI Related Migraine

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

Estimated 320,00 Service Members

30% of deployed service members

80+% are diagnosed with mTBI

Sleep Disturbance

Nightmares, Insomnia, Sleep Apnea, Restless Leg Syndrome & Sleep Cycle distrubance

**28. Consequences of TBI**

TBI can cause a number of difficulties

physical changes, headaches, dizziness/problems walking, fatigue

changes in the person’s behavior

problems with their thinking skills

Irritability

memory problems

problems paying attention

These changes are often related to how severe the brain injury was at the time of injury.

Carlson, et al., 2011. Journal of Head Trauma Rehabilitation.

**29. OEF/OIF/OND: Psychological Concerns**

Cognitive (Memory & Attention)

Anger

Relationship Problems

Depression and suicidal ideation

Anxiety

Substance Abuse/Dependence

10-15% across all substances

Seal, et al. (2011). *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*.

PTSD

Carlson, et al., 2011. Journal of Head Trauma Rehabilitation.

**30. PTSD: Prevalence Among Returning Service Members**

18.5% returning soldier meet criteria for PTSD or depression (Rand Corporation, 2008)

PTSD

General Population – 3-4%

Vietnam War– estimated 15%, 30%

Desert Storm – 2-10%

Afghanistan – 11%

Iraq – 17%

Hoge, et al. NEJM. 351:13-22.

**31. PTSD: Classroom Impact**

Intrusive thoughts & Negative mood

Sensitive classroom discussions (i.e., politics, war etc.)

Foreign students & foreign languages

Hallway congestion & Noises (i.e., campus construction, bells, rain, helicopters etc)

Arousal & Reactivity

Emotional arousal (anger, irritability, sadness) due to comments of peers/instructors,

Content of required reading or viewing (DVD, news)

Proximity of seating, lack of seating can contribute

Avoidance

Low participation, missed classes/assignments

**32. Student Veterans: Not your typical college student…**

**33. Student Veteran Strengths Leadership Characteristics:**

Set an Example

carefully considered directions

Inspire and influence by:

providing purpose, direction and motivation

**Collaborative Team Member:**

Complete their duties by accomplishing tasks as part of a team

**Flexibility and Adaptability:**

Learned to be flexible and adaptable to meet the constantly changing situation and mission

**34. Student Veteran Strengths**

**Self-Directed:**

Trainedto understand and solve difficult problems and complex tasks

Reliable & Dependable

**Outstanding Work Habits:**

Possess pride and enthusiasm for their work

Personal integrity by adhering to moral principles

Timely and efficient manner

**Invested in their Community:**

Strong desire to be productive citizens and serve their community with selfless sacrifice

**35. Military vs. University Culture**

Attitudes ingrained in military training may not map well onto university life

Top-down vs. bottom-up mentality

Black and white vs. gray

Group cohesion vs. individualism

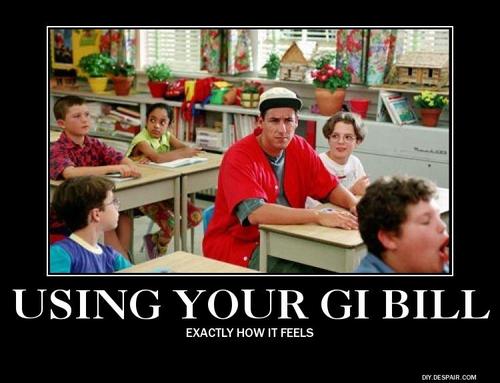
Respect vs. questioning authority

Chain of command vs. multiple points of contact

Single mission focus vs. a need to manage multiple projects at a time

The shift from one culture to another can be jarring and frustrating for healthy student veterans, even more so for veterans struggling with physical or mental health issues…

**36. Compared to non-Veteran students…**



**37. Barriers to Academic Success**

Attention and concentration issues resulting from medical and psychological issues may impact learning…

PTSD

TBI

Light Sensitivity

Hearing - Tinnitus

Chronic pain

Sleep

Medical Appointments – negative impact on attendance

\*\*Classroom accommodations or treatment can help veterans adapt and overcome these issues

38. Supporting Student Veterans on Campus

**39. Mindful Education**

Awareness

Culture

Impact of deployment & combat exposure

Common conditions (physical & psychiatric/psychological)

Triggers & warning signs

Classroom etiquette

Expressing interest & support

Respect for Student Veterans

Being mindful of other Students’ interactions with Veterans

Appropriate expectations regarding Student Veterans conduct

Flexibility

Making allowances for appointments & non-academic demands

Being mindful of Veteran needs (preference to sit near exits or with their back to a wall)

Allowing Veterans to step out of classroom if/when agitated/anxious

Ensure appropriate accommodations are in place

**40. Collaborative Care on Campus**

Students who form positive and supportive relationships with faculty are more likely to persist (Tinto, 1997)

Promote a positive learning environment

Interaction is part of the learning experience

Student Veterans may be emotionally numb, feel distant, alone, easily agitated, easily distracted and unable to fully participate, which can be perceive by faculty and other students in the class as disconnect and lack of interest (Armstrong, Best & Dominici, 2006; Shiraldi, 2009)

Creating a sensitive awareness and emotionally safe atmosphere that fosters healthy interactions will help faculty and student Veterans feel comfortable and overcome some of these barriers

**41. Collaborative Care on Campus: Building Rapport with Student Veterans**

Share if you have a personal connection to the military

Validate their military background and show “respect” to build rapport and trust

Being punctual

Directly connecting to the needed services

Giving clear steps for “mission” that needs to be accomplished

Follow-up after appointments (stay on their radar)

Be direct and concise with “assignments” and requirements

Be clear and up front

Being mindful of political sensitivities/patriotism

Know current Veteran resources available on campus, at the

VA and the community to support Veterans and their family

**41. Collaborative Care on Campus: Early Identification & Intervention**

Faculty and staff should know policies and services to help students and Veterans in crisis

Implement a Peer to Peer mentoring program

Match new student Veterans to junior or senior level Veterans who can advise and assist with navigating the institution’s system, and help access support services

Match based on similar military branches, career goals, degree programs, theater of operation

Consider Matching Veteran Alumni to Current Student Veterans

**43. Know Your Resources**

**44. Referral: CVAMC VITAL Process   
[diagram as follows]**

**Step 1: Veteran is Referred to VITAL**

**Self-Referral**

**Academic Referral**

**VA Referral**

**Community Referral**

**Step 2: Veteran Enters VA System of Care**

**Enrolled**

**VITAL National Metrics**

**Consent to collaborate**

**Needs assessment**

**Step 3: New Veterans Provided Academic Resource MAP & Program Contacts**

**Action Plan Formulated**

Step 4: **Veterans Receive OEF/OIF Clinic Or Primary Care Clinic Evaluation**

Medical & MH Screens

Referral to specialty Clinics

Step 5: **Veteran is Assessed & TX Plan Developed**

**LD**

**ADHD**

**TBI**

**MH**

Step 6: **VITAL & Academic Collaboration**

**Classroom Issues**

**Accommodation Plans**

**Academic Risk**

End result: **VITAL COLLABORATIVE CARE**

Veterans are tracked throughout academic process

Resources are coordinated through VHA, VBA, Academia and Community

**45. Assistive Technology Provided to Veterans**

Tablets (iPad, Galaxy, etc.)

Livescribe SmartPen and accessories

Digital Voice Recorders

Smartphones

FM systems (for veterans with auditory processing disorder who benefit from a more direct auditory system in a classroom setting)

Timex DataLink Watches (a watch with text entered into the alarm system so when it goes off it tells you why – I am expecting we will start using SmartWatches soon, once they become more mainstream)

GPS (not directly related to school, but it’s something that we do offer for vets with cognitive impairments)

Voice to text software

Apps for phones and tablets (i.e. Due!, which is a good app for tracking class schedules, tests and assignments)

**46. Tutoring and Rehab**

[taken from image of pamphlet] Partnering with VITAL to foster Academic Success for Veterans.  
What is a Cognitive Rehabilitation Team?

The cognitive rehabilitation team works to evaluate and therapeutically improve skills in veterans who are experiencing cognitive dysfunction (i.e. problems with memory, attention, organization, reasoning, processing speed) for a variety of reasons.

Cognitive Rehabilitation Team

Neuropsychologists (3-4 hr evaluation)

Occupational Therapist (1 hr evaluation)

Speech-Language Pathologists (1 hr evaluation)

47. Cognitive Rehabilitation Team  
[Second page of pamphlet]

What can cause cognitive symptoms

Traumatic Brain Injury

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

Depression

Anxiety

Irregular sleep patterns

Fatigue

Prescription medications

Stress

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

Learning Disabilities

Others

Benefits to the Veteran may include

School recommendations for classroom accommodations made for the veteran based on evaluations

Learning compensatory strategies that improve day to day functioning

Developing better study skills

Learning more efficient note taking skills

Receiving individualized assistive technology evaluations

Improving social interaction and communication skills

Benefits to the academic institutes may include

Increased academic success for Veterans

Specific classroom accommodations made based on neurocognitive assessment

VA reinforcement of recommendations made by the Academic Institute

Partnering with VITAL Initiative (Veterans Integration to Academic Leadership) to ensure good collaboration between the VA and the institution

Experience better integration of veteran students with traditional students.

48. VA Campus Toolkit

Online tool that provides resources and information to faculty, staff, and administration on campus to help Student Veterans succeed

Provides profile of today’s student Veteran

Information about common adjustment experiences

Information about military culture and common challenges

Other online resources and trainings

49. http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/studentveteran/

50. VA’s National Center for PTSD Website

VA’s informational website for Veterans, their families, and community and VA providers

Information about PTSD, how it is assessed, and available evidence-based treatments and resources

Education for providers

Information provided in English and Spanish

51. http://www.ptsd.va.gov

52. VA Community Provider Toolkit

Online tool that provides resources and information to community providers around how best to support Veterans in the community

Veteran status screening questions

CE courses about military culture and what it means to be a Veteran

Wellness tools

Other Veteran resources

53. http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/communityproviders/index.asp#sthash.5bmhHuwu.dpbs

54. MaketheConnection.Net

Online resource that allows military members, Veterans, and their loved ones to connect with information, resources, and solutions affect their lives

The site is customizable by gender, service era, branch of service, and combat/non-combat status (completely anonymous)

Allows the individual to hear stories from other military members/veterans like them, view helpful topics relevant to their life, receive recommendations and skills for addressing specific challenges, and learn about resources available to them

Includes resources for clinicians

55. www.MaketheConnection.Net

56. StartMovingForward.org

Online tool that provides practical problem solving tools to veterans

A “life coach”

Provides problem solving tools around common concerns

Relationships

Stress

Finding employment

Dealing with serious illness

Others

57. www.startmovingforward.org

58. GI Bill Comparison Tool

Online tool that allows Veterans to compare VA-approved institutions and review other information to choose the educational program that is the “best fit” for the Veteran

Step-by-step benefits calculations and side-by-side comparisons for institutions/programs

59. http://department-of-veterans-affairs.github.io/gi-bill-comparison-tool/

60. VA GI Bill Feedback System

Online form that allows student Veterans to submit concerns and complaints to VBA if an institution is not abiding by the Principles of Excellence

Provide students with a personalized form covering the total cost of an education program.

Provide educational plans for all military and Veteran education beneficiaries.

End fraudulent and aggressive recruiting techniques and misrepresentations.

Accommodate Servicemembers and Reservists absent due to service requirements.

Designate a point of contact to provide academic and financial advice.

Ensure accreditation of all new programs prior to enrolling students.

Align institutional refund policies with those under Title IV, which governs the administration of federal student financial aid programs

61. VA GI Bill Feedback System

Feedback categories

Accreditation

Recruiting and marketing practices

Financial issues (e.g., Tuition/Fee charges)

Student loans

Post-graduation job opportunities

Change in degree plan/requirements

Quality of education

Grade police

Release of transcripts

Refund issues

Transfer of credits

Others

62. VA Resources  
 http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/feedback.asp

**63. VA Resource Links**

Mental Health Services Website: http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/

Veterans Crisis Line: http://www.veteranscrisisline.net/Default.aspx

VITAL Campus Toolkit: http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/studentveteran/

National Center for PTSD: http://www.ptsd.va.gov/

Make The Connection: http://maketheconnection.net/

Virtual Problem Solving Techniques http://www.startmovingforward.org/

VBA Vet Success On Campus: http://vetsuccess.gov/vetsuccess\_on\_campus

Department of Veterans Affairs’ GI Bill Website: http://www.gibill.va.gov/

Yellow Ribbon Program: http://www.gibill.va.gov/benefits/post\_911\_gibill/yellow\_ribbon\_program.html