Working with Veterans

Veterans Resource Office
Goals of the Presentation

• Information about veterans on campus
• Tips for working with student veterans
• General information about Veterans
• Deployment/Post-Deployment Issues
• Mental Health and Medical Issues
How it feels to come back to school?
USU Student Veterans & Dependents

- Total Veterans and Dependents enrolled Spring 2019 is approximately: 698
- Veterans Spring 2019: 399
- Approximate Veterans and Dependents enrolled for Fall 2019: 646
Student Veteran Characteristics

- 61% of student Veterans are male; 38% are female
  - Female student Veterans are over represented in postsecondary education

- Few student Veterans are traditionally aged college students (18-23)
  - 46.7% are between the ages of 24 and 34
  - 23% are between the ages of 35 and 44

- 47% of student Veterans have children

- 47.3% of student Veterans are married

- Only 35.3% are unmarried and without dependents
IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND

• VA rules are often difficult to navigate, rigid and frustrating

• Not all Veterans have PTSD, but even those that do can function fine in the classroom

• Refrain from identifying a student as a veteran unless they self identify first

• Veterans will share their story with you if they trust you
WHAT TO SAY...

A general approach is initially recommended

• “Thank you for serving”
• “Thank you for your service to our country”
• “Welcome back”
• Thank their family for their service in supporting their Service member
• All are acceptable but have become cliché
  • For veterans & service members to really show appreciation or that you are interested to know about them.
    • Ask questions that can get factual answers and that show genuine interest in the individual
      • What branch of the service are you/were you in
      • Active duty or Reserve/National Guard
      • What unit were you with
      • What was your MOS (Military Occupation Specialty)
      • What does that mean/what did you do
      • Are you still in/could you be called back
• Don’t Pry, develop report. When you gain their trust they will likely share more than you want to know.
• Don’t go overboard in praise or thanks to the veteran.
• Simplicity is the key.
WHAT NOT TO SAY TO A VETERAN

• What was going to war like
• Did you see anyone die
• Did you kill anyone?
• Would you go back?
• How was Iraq/Afghanistan?
• How did you get injured?
• Are you okay (mentally)
• That must have been hard...
• Thank you for what you did
• Did you lose any friends
• Are you opposed to the war?

• Are you traumatized?
• Are you experiencing PTSD?
• Don’t use military lingo to attempt to connect or joke with your veteran unless you have developed that type of relationship
Where Veterans are coming from

- Military offers a sense of “belonging”
- They come from an incredibly structured environment.
- Veterans have typically held significant levels of responsibility
- Often times they didn’t choose their “Military Occupational Specialty” (M.O.S.)
- They may feel as though they no longer have an identity
Military skills in a civilian Environment

- Emotionally “hardened”
- Augmented watchfulness
- Startle response more sensitive
- Heightened protectiveness
- Different experiential worldview
- Understand true sacrifice
- Goal oriented
- Direct communications
- Experienced and overcame failure
- Motivated towards success
- Dedicated to completing the mission
- No BS
What Veterans Are Dealing With

- Loss of Identity
- Loss of Structure
- Bureaucratic Struggles (VA, USU, Financial Aid, etc...)
- Perceived lack of options
- Medical issues
- Psychological issues
- Financial Issues
- Educational Issues
- Continued Military Obligations
- Frustration with loss of authority
- Academic deficiencies
Mental health/TBI

• Approximately 30% of returning personnel have a mental health diagnosis
  • PTSD and Depression are the most prevalent
• Traumatic brain injury (TBI)
Potential Readjustment Challenges

- Small decisions seem big: too many choices
- Unrealistic readjustment expectations
- Difficulty fitting with family/friends
  - Non-shared experience
  - “Civilians just don’t get it”
- Anger/irritability
- Potential increased substance use

- Driving
- Ambiguousness of Higher Ed

- Family Challenges
  - New routines and traditions
  - Negotiating new roles
  - Connection to children may take time
  - Shifts in parenting responsibilities
Readjustment

• Most Veterans adapt over time
• Readjustment challenges are normal
• Acclimation period will vary by individual
• Increasing protective factors more rapidly facilitates adjustment
What Benefits Veterans May Have

- Medical Benefits
- Mental Health Benefits
- Education Benefits
  - GI Bill
  - VA Vocational Rehabilitation
  - Purple Heart Scholarship
  - Tuition Assistance
- Housing Benefits
- Employment Benefits
Contact info

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Questions?