Military-Veteran Student Transition to Higher Education

A Kansas State University Perspective...
My Vantage Point on Military Veterans Education....

- **ROTC perspective** – former ROTC cadet & Professor of Military Science – Army ROTC program
- **Military student** – completed two graduate degrees while on active duty
  - Masters of Military Arts & Science
  - Masters of Adult and Continuing Education
- **Higher Education Administration** – serve as University Director of Military Affairs
- **Veteran student** – Recipient of Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits
- **Scholarly perspective** – Doctoral student in Educational Leadership
My 6-Point Agenda

• More about who our new veteran students are..
• What we are experiencing institutionally...
• Social expectations...and implications
• The veterans lived-experience...
• What educational research tells us...
• Some compelling insights from the K-State experience..
Point #1:
More about who our new veteran students are...
Who are our new military veteran students...

• Traditional undergraduate students?
• Under-represented minority students?
• First-generation college students?
• Students with disabilities and special needs?
• Non-traditional students?
• Graduate students?

YES TO ALL... but are categorized by education researchers as a sub-population of non-traditional students
Point #2:

What we are experiencing institutionally...
Our veteran-student educational expectations are being defined more by marketing messages than by advisement....
Reform initiatives..

Senators propose new rules to prevent colleges from exploiting veterans for benefits
Published March 10, 2012
| FoxNews.com
What we are seeing on our campus...

- Increased enrollments..
- High expectation for transfer credit..
- Need to bond with a military cohort upon arrival..
- Lack of desire to fully participate in traditional campus life..
- Difficulty adjusting to freedom and autonomy..
- Lack of willingness to learn new institutional functions..expect campus systems to work like highly-structured military system
- High need for financial advising and management..
- Identity issues—some wish to blend in..other are advocates for veterans..
- Need and respond well to mentorship by veteran administrators and faculty..
- Reluctant to seek academic assistance...

Overall Observation... They experience dissonance from what they believe and what they are experiencing... the key appears to be to mitigate while we educate them towards proper expectation and goal development
Point #3:

Social expectations...and implications....
Social Implications of Veteran Re-integration into Civil Society

The Role of Higher Education

Post 9/11 GI Bill
It's Your Future

2.2 M Vets

Preparing the “next generation”

Post-service education

Future Volunteers to Serve

“A matter of future National Defense”
Business Executives For National Security

Post-service employment
A compelling observation…

Social Reproduction of our Volunteer Military Class…

Upper class

Middle class

Working class

All Volunteer Force (1973)

<1%

80+ % of new service members from families that have served
The Post-9/11 GI Bill will not have the same social impact as Post WWII GI Bill.

**The Generation**
- Traditionalist (1922-1945)
- values/world view

**The Veteran-student**
- draft/volunteer

**Readiness**
- prior-education

**Work Force**
- opportunity
Point #4:

The veterans lived-experience...
Key Stages of the Veteran-student experience..

Transition to College
- institutional selectivity
- institutional commitment
- goal refinement & commitment

Persistence @ College
- pre-college characteristics
- social engagement
- self-efficacy

Success - Attainment of Degree
- academic engagement

Living Through Multiple, Simultaneous Transitions….

Role of Student

Parental Transition

Civilian Work Force Transition

Our Veteran-student

Marital Transition

Role of Veteran

Personal Identity
The Critical Transition... (Schlossberg, 1989) Transition Theory

I - WE - I

Civilian → Service Member → Student

Identity

Kansas State University
What educational research tells us...
The phenomenon of Post 9-11 veteran transition and student success is not adequately described....need more qualitative research to discover

Few researchers have personal military experience to fully understand context of what they are observing and finding..

Relevant models and theories of student development and retention are being recommended..

Bench-marking “best practices” appears to be used in place of applied research or evidence-based practice
We have relevant literature...but not fully describing our challenge..

- From Soldier to Student: Easing the Transition of Service Members on Campuses
  - July 2009
  - 2 stars

- Service Members in School
  - November 2010
  - 3 stars

- Veterans in Higher Education
  - 2011
  - 5 stars
Factors related to Veteran Student Transition

• Level of contact with former colleagues..
• Average time in “neutral zone” – time between military and college
• Type of transition being experienced..
• Awareness and self-definition of role changes..
• Presence of non-role dependent support of veteran student (usually family)
• **Presence of role-dependent support of veteran student** (student peers, faculty, etc.)
• Presence of a “helping professional”

Diramio & Jarvis (2011)
Point #6:

Some compelling insights from the **K-State** experience...
A Source of Tradition...and Strength...

To be recognized as the most military-inclusive public research university in America
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Military - Friendly</th>
<th>Military - Inclusive</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>military as an external <strong>sub-community</strong></td>
<td>military as an <strong>organic member</strong> of campus community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>served by separate systems of support</td>
<td>served by same systems of support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>treated as niche student market</td>
<td>treated as integral part of student population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>different faculty and academic systems</td>
<td>same faculty and academic systems</td>
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<tr>
<td>accommodate veterans expectations</td>
<td>same academic/student life expectations</td>
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<td>limited services available for transition/ <strong>meet student where they are at</strong>...</td>
<td>additional assistance offered to enable <strong>transition/develop the student</strong>...</td>
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"Military – Connected Students"

An inclusive term for the true population--

- **Veteran Students** – former service members
  - Currently serving military students
  - Military family member students – spouses/children
  - Officer Pre-Commissioning students-ROTC cadets
  - Military Degree Completion Student – recent officer candidate school graduates
  - Military Graduate Students - Advanced Civil Education Program
  - DOD Civilians and family members

**Commitment to serve all military students**
A comprehensive approach...

- Connect and steward our Military Alumni
- Ensure Military Student Success
- Provide Quality Military Programs
- Enrich Our Cultural Events
- Support Teaching & Faculty
- Engage in Military Research
- Promote Military Scholarship
- Enhance Military Community Relations
- Share the Value of our Athletics Programs

A University-wide Military Affairs Enterprise

Becoming a Military-Inclusive Public Research University...
Building a “military-inclusive” campus culture...

Our Partnership with 1st Infantry Division & Fort Riley

Create new relationships

Improve quality of life

Enhance education & professional development

Build a stronger academic-military community

Offer a diverse experience & perspective

57 programs exist today that aim to.....
Our current military-student population

2628 Military-Connected Students (Fall 2011)/ 10.9% of total student body

- Recent GI Bill veterans: 836 (32%)
- ROTC cadets: 288 (11%)
- Local military connected family: 625 (25%)
- Ft Riley Assigned Military family: 625 (25%)
- 41 (2%)

Total: 2628
For more information....

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