

# **CAMPUS KIT**

**FOR COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES**



**OPERATION VETS LLC**

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# PURPOSE

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*This Campus Kit is designed to provide information to assist institutions in serving the needs of their student veterans.*

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# STUDENT VETERAN CONCERNS

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## Delayed Schedule for Payment of Benefits

**ISSUE:** Processing Department of Veterans Affairs educational benefits can take up to eight weeks. In the case of the Post 9/11 GI Bill, some students payments were delayed well past 8 weeks.

**SUGGESTION:** Offer deferred tuition payment or no late fees for students waiting on veteran's benefits. Be clear on your Post 9/11 GI Bill late payment policy.

## Students Called to Duty

**ISSUE:** Student veterans may be called to active duty or must participate in annual drill trainings during a semester. Preparing for a deployment is difficult enough without adding the stressors of being unsure of the schools policies and procedures.

**SUGGESTION:** Make it clear at the beginning of semester what the department or institution's policies are when students are called to active duty or must attend drills.

## Part-Time/Full-Time Veteran Support Staff

**ISSUE:** Student veterans often have to navigate multiple departments to utilize their benefits and resources available to them. They are often handed from one department to another, "pinball effect", to minimize this, establish a go to person for veterans.

**CONCERN:** Colleges & Universities often do not provide full time staff members to act as the point of contact for veteran's benefits and programs. This leads to frustration on the part of student veterans and often leads to lack of quality service. The institution must provide quality service to retain students, especially student veterans.

**SUGGESTION:** Establish point of contacts within your institution that can assist veterans. Please make sure they are properly trained to work with veteran's benefits and programs at your institution. Add full time staff, Utilize the VA work study program, graduate students, and add this responsibility to a current employee, if deemed necessary.

## Availability of Information

**ISSUE:** Information specific to veterans is often not easy to find or is organized on institution's websites with information spread through many areas.

**CONCERN:** It can be frustrating to not be able to easily find information specific to your needs as a student veteran. Delays in finding this information, or outdated information can have a negative impact on the view of your institution in the eyes of student veterans.

**SUGGESTION:** Create online resources specifically for veterans and promote the information. An organized and concise website may assist in recruiting veterans.

## PLAN OF ACTION FOR COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES

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### Step One: Develop a Veterans Support Committee

- Include members from each department of your institution.
- Find out the number of student veterans and what types of benefits or resources they are using.
- Draft a letter to these students that shows support from the administration and solicit their feedback regarding the quality of your program.

### Step Two: Support a Student Veterans Organization

- Contact all student veterans about establishing a student veteran's organization.
- Host a "call out" meeting to assist students in standing up the organization.
- Ensure they have access to all resources available to other student organizations.
- Realize that this student organization will have specific needs that other organizations may not have.

### Step Three: Veterans Affairs Work Study Position(s)

- Determine if your institution is eligible for Department of Veterans Affairs work-study position for a student veteran.
- File for the work-study position.

- Employ the work-study student veteran assisting other student veterans and prospective student veterans. Train the student veteran to carry out these duties. This will increase the credibility of institution regarding student veterans.
- Provide office space and information technology resources as needed.
- **LINK:** <http://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/22-8691.pdf>

## Step Four: Develop Online & Print Resources

- Build a website to provide quality information and resources to student veterans.
- Create and distribute brochures.
- Ensure they have access to all resources available to other student organizations.
- **EXAMPLE:** <http://registrar.wisc.edu/students/vets/>

## Step Five: Educate Administration, Faculty & Staff

- Incorporate educational material on student veterans into annual professional development training programs.
- Ensure the on campus counseling resources and disability resources are trained to handle student veteran issues and are able to handle them.

# VA WORK STUDY

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## Step One: Request to be an Approved Worksite

- A letter from the person who will be the work-study supervisor needs to fax a letter, on official letterhead from the institution, requesting to become a worksite. This letter needs to contain the following information:
  - Who the supervisor is, along with contact information
  - What the supervisor does (brief job description)
  - Number of enrolled veterans at the institution (this will determine how many work study hours that will be allotted to the site).
  - The mission of the veteran office or center. Include qualitative information such as number of veterans served.
  - The anticipated job duties of the student worker.
    - § Do not use catch phrases such as “and additional duties as assigned”.
    - § Include “veteran” in bullet points.
  - This letter must be very clear and concise. Keep it to one page. It must be clear the student worker will work directly and only with veterans issues.

- Submit this letter to the VA Work Study Office.
- You will NOT be notified where or not you are approved. You must contact the VA Work Study Office.
  - After submitting the initial letter, call to verify the received it.
  - They should be able to give you an anticipated approval date.

## **Step Two: Hiring a Student**

- Once you have selected the student(s) you wish to hire for VA work study, call the VA Work Study Office to have them verify the student(s) qualify. Ensure you know the students social security number and which chapter they are using. The student must be actively receiving VA educational benefits. If the student has applied for benefits but not received their first check they will be denied.
- Have the student complete VA Form 22-8691 – Application for Work Study Allowance.

## **Step Three: Timesheets**

- Students cannot work more than 25 times the number of weeks in the semester so, if they are working a full term they can only get 25 hours per week.
- Timecards need to be submitted after a student works 50 hours. Depending on how many hours per week they work, they may not be paid every two weeks.
- Do not send a cover sheet – any communications should go in the “remarks” block of the time sheet.

# **SUGGESTIONS**

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## **For Administrators**

- Develop a survey and send it to your student veterans and solicit their opinions on your program.
- Work with student veterans during registration periods to ensure they are able to quickly enroll in classes.
- Develop easy to use procedure to notify institution (all parts of it to include professors, departments, programs, support offices) in the event they are called to duty. Ensure point of contact is clearly defined and easy to find.
- Add “student veterans” training in faculty and staff development programs.

- Maintain veterans committee to host dialogue between student veterans and campus administrators.
- Host events on campus to make sure veterans feel welcome on campus.
- Consider establishing a foundation account to assist student veterans with tuition, book, and other fees.
- Keep in mind that Department of Veterans Affairs benefits and programs may not cover all the needs of student veterans. Consider developing your own scholarships, programs and other student veteran's specific resources.
- Evaluate the admissions process to ensure veterans are not disadvantaged. Student transitioning out of active service face a host of admissions difficulties. They are not your typical freshman admissions candidates.
- Veterans have dramatically different life experiences, especially younger veterans.
- Develop veteran specific orientations. Partner with local veterans organizations and military units for presentations and assistance.

## **For Faculty**

- Include information on syllabus about your policy on these students who are required to attend annual drills during the semester.
- Student veterans may not feel comfortable publicizing their veteran status. This is especially true when speaking about sensitive topics such as politics.
- Be flexible with attendance for student veterans who have appointments with the VA. Rescheduling these appointments is often not possible or result in a long delay.
- Be aware of military spouses and family members with individuals deployed. This is a very difficult period for them as well.

## **Sample Letter to Student Veterans**

Dear Student,

We are contacting you in an effort to reach out to students that have been identified as military veterans.

On behalf of the INSITITUTION community, thank you for your service to our country. You have undoubtedly made sacrifices and faced hardships unknown to most other students. You have experiences few of us will ever understand.

INSTITUTION would like to assist you in your transition to academic life. We have many departments and individuals who are available to helping veterans adjust to civilian and campus life. In particular are the programs below.

- Counseling Service provides XYZ services. It is located at \_\_\_ and can be contacted at 555-555-5555.
- Disability Services provides XYZ services. It is located at \_\_\_ and can be contacted at 555-555-5555.
- Veterans Support office provides XYZ services. It is located at \_\_\_ and can be contacted at 555-555-5555.

In addition to on campus resources, please be aware of the many resources available to you. MilitaryOneSource ([www.militaryonesource.com](http://www.militaryonesource.com)) is a very comprehensive source of information.

We would appreciate if you would complete the questions enclosed and return it to \_\_\_\_\_. Doing so will allow us to better understand your needs and assist you in succeeding in your academic life.

Sincerely,

Name

INSTITUTION

Service Branch: \_\_\_\_\_

Interested in meeting other veterans: [yes] [no]

How can we assist you in your transition to academic life?

Would you like to schedule a meeting with supportive faculty & staff? [yes] [no]

Do you have family members or close friends that would like information or support

[yes] [no]

Would you prefer to NOT be contacted regarding your veteran status? [yes] [no]

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

# QUICK LINKS & RESOURCES

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## VA & DOD Hotlines

VA Education Office	1-888-442-4551
VA Healthcare Office	1-877-222-8387
VA Benefits	1-800-827-1000
WAVE (Verify Your Attendance)	1-877-823-2378
VA Gulf War Help Line	1-800-273-8387
DOD Direct Veterans Hotline	1-800-497-6261
Suicide Hotline	1-800-273-8255

## VA Websites

GI Bill	<a href="http://www.gibill.va.gov">http://www.gibill.va.gov</a>
Apply for GI Bill Benefits	<a href="http://vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-22_1990.pdf">http://vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-22_1990.pdf</a>
GI Bill WAVE	<a href="https://www.gibill.va.gov/wave/">https://www.gibill.va.gov/wave/</a>
Veterans Online Application (VONAPP)	<a href="http://vabenefits.vba.va.gov/vonapp/main.asp">http://vabenefits.vba.va.gov/vonapp/main.asp</a>
VA Hiring – Student Programs	<a href="http://www.va.gov/JOBS/hiring_programs.asp#5">http://www.va.gov/JOBS/hiring_programs.asp#5</a>
VA Medical Centers	<a href="http://www1.va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp">http://www1.va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp</a>
VA Compensation & Pension	<a href="http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/">http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/</a>

## Other Useful Government Websites

Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES)	<a href="http://www.dantes.doded.mil/Dantes_web/DANTESHOME.asp">http://www.dantes.doded.mil/Dantes_web/DANTESHOME.asp</a>
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Army/American Council on Education Registry Transcript System (AARTS)	<a href="https://aartstranscript.army.mil">https://aartstranscript.army.mil</a>
Community College of the Air Force Request Forms	<a href="http://www.maxwell.af.mil/au/ccaf/transcripts.asp">http://www.maxwell.af.mil/au/ccaf/transcripts.asp</a>
Coast Guard Military Transcripts	<a href="http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cgi/offical_transcript.asp">http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cgi/offical_transcript.asp</a>
Sailor/Marine American Council on Education Registry Transcript (SMART)	<a href="http://www.navycollege.navy.mil/transcript.html">http://www.navycollege.navy.mil/transcript.html</a>
National Center for PTSD	<a href="http://ncptsd.va.gov">http://ncptsd.va.gov</a>

## Veteran Service Organizations

The American Legion	<a href="http://legion.org">http://legion.org</a>	1-800-433-3318
Veterans of Foreign Wars	<a href="http://www.vfw.org">http://www.vfw.org</a>	1-800-VFW-1899
Disabled American Veterans	<a href="http://www.dav.org">http://www.dav.org</a>	1-877-426-2838
Paralyzed Veterans of America	<a href="http://www.pav.org">http://www.pav.org</a>	1-800-424-8200
AMVETS	<a href="http://www.amvets.org">http://www.amvets.org</a>	1-877-726-8387
Vietnam Veterans of America	<a href="http://www.vva.org">http://www.vva.org</a>	1-800-882-1316

## Servicemember Opportunity Colleges (SOC)

SOC Consortium member institutions provide flexibility to service members, their families, and veterans seeking college degrees. In turn SOC colleges and universities

benefit from the enrollment of mature, highly-motivated adult students who make use of tuition assistance or the GI Bill. <http://www.soc.aascu.org>