Supporting Transitioning Student Veterans and Servicemembers

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Presentation Outline

- Introductions
- Historical Perspective
- Transition Theory and Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity
- Methodology and Methods
- Findings and Implications
- Recommendations
- Resources
### Who are we?

1. Graduate Student
2. First Student Affairs Job
3. Early-Career Professional
4. Mid-Career Professional
5. Senior Student Affairs Officer
6. Faculty
7. Other

![Bar chart showing the distribution of roles among respondents]

### What unit or area in student affairs do you work (functional area)?

1. Financial Aid
2. Veterans’ Affairs
3. Residential Life
4. Student Activities/Orgz
5. Admissions
6. Student Development
7. Career Services
8. Advising
9. Counseling
10. Other

![Bar chart showing the distribution of work units among respondents]
Are you a veteran?

1. Yes
   - 89%
2. No
   - 11%

Historical Perspective/Literature Review

- Longstanding relationship between military and higher education
- Citizen soldiers
- ROTC, 1916
- Lowering of draft age
- GI Bill during WWII
Historical Perspective/Literature Review, cont.

- Veterans of previous wars
- Increased reliance on National Guard and Reserve troops
- ROTC and Simultaneous Membership Program
- Contemporary student servicemembers and veterans
- New GI Bill coming in August 2009

Transition Theory
(Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006)

- What is a transition?
  - Based on the tenets of Schlossberg's theory, Goodman et al. (2006) described a transition as "any event, or non-event, that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles" (p. 33).
  - Events can be either anticipated or unanticipated (or a non-event).
  - Individual, Relationship, Work transitions
  - Transitions can have positive and negative effects on a person's life (Schlossberg et al. 1989)
Transition Theory, cont.

(Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006)

The Transition Process:
- Moving “in,” “through,” and “out of”
  - **Situation** (e.g., nature, duration, roles)
  - **Self** (e.g., characteristics, resources)
  - **Support** (e.g., social, network, institutional)
  - **Strategies** (e.g., coping responses)

Multiple Dimensions Of Identity

(Jones, & McEwen, 2000)

- Conceptual model of multiple dimensions of identity
- Reconceptualization of model
- Meaning making capacity
- Meaning making filter
Meaning Making Filter


**Methodology and Methods**

- Social Constructionism
- Interpretivism
- Phenomenological Research
- In-depth, semi-structured Interview series
  - Informed by transitions model considerations
- Observations (limited) – ROTC, coursework, social
- Campus newspaper articles
- Extended engagement with respondents, member checks, triangulation
Site and Respondents

- Major research and land-grant university in Midwest US
- Interviewed six student-veterans, five males and one female, who had returned to college following a war zone deployment
- The respondents: Bob, Karen, Joe, Richard, Steve, and Jim

Your Institution: Public or Private?

1. Public
2. Private
3. Other/Unsure

75% Public
25% Private
0% Other/Unsure
Institution Type

1. Community/Associate’s college
2. For-profit college or university (primarily online)
3. Baccalaureate college
4. Master’s college or university
5. Doctoral/research university
6. Other type

How many veterans on your campus? (estimate)

1. Fewer than 50
2. 51 to 200
3. 201 to 500
4. More than 500
5. Unsure
**Situation**

- College re-enrollment was anticipated
- Deployment experience influenced decisions to re-enroll
- Respondents felt behind in school compared to peers
- Environmental inputs included validation, stereotyping, or limited awareness or support

**Self**

- Heightened maturity
- Increased commitment to life goals
- More focused
- Greater appreciation for cultural diversity
Support

- Challenged to make new friends and establish new relationships
- Selectively sought out or associated more with military personnel and other veterans
- Some support did remain constant (i.e. pre and post deployment) but sources of support tended to flux

Strategies

- Seeking company of veterans
- Attempting to form a student veteran group
- Identifying supportive environments
- Figuring out how to structure time
- Staying busy (may not be indicative of a resolved transition)
Multiple Dimensions of Identity

- Stereotyped assumptions filtered out through active meaning making process
- Recognized importance of their social identities and sought out affirming environments
- Actively engaged in meaning making process to arrive at new senses of self that incorporate multiple social identities

Implications for Student Affairs

- Create receptive and supportive environments for veterans
- Be proactive
- Initiate working partnerships
- Raise awareness campus wide
- Think outside the box
- Future research
Implications for Student Affairs

Does your campus have a "Veterans Affairs Officer"?
(Separate from financial aid & benefits certifying official)

1. Yes
2. No
3. Unsure

Does your campus have a Student Veterans Organization?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Unsure
[Implications for Student Affairs]

Does your campus have support programs specifically for veterans?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Unsure

Some Recommendations

- Staff and faculty training/awareness building
- Veterans’ Club and/or Veterans’ Lounge
- Transition Center w/ Veterans’ Advisor(s)
- Partnerships with community organizations
- Counseling and disability support services for veterans
- Courses for veterans
- Student veteran orientations
- Credit for military experiences
- Scholarships for veterans
Helpful Resources

- heroserv-l@LISTSERV.INDIANA.EDU
  Contact Corey Rumann at crumann@iastate.edu
- http://louisville.edu/student/veterans/
  Veterans Symposium for Higher Education
- http://www.studentveterans.org/
  Student Veterans of America
- http://www.soc.aascu.org/
  Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges
- http://www.gibill.va.gov/GI_Bill_Info/benefits.htm#CH33
  New GI Bill information

References

Questions?

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