

Creating Interdisciplinary Partnerships for Enhancing Well-Being of Military-Connected Students



The rising STAR of Texas

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with

The TxState Veterans Advisory Council

Texas Veteran Higher Education Symposium 2021

Overview of Presentation

- I. Texas State University & Interdisciplinary Teams: Our Veterans Advisory Council & Partners
- II. Where is the Field of Student Veterans in Higher Education in Terms of Research Efforts?
- III. Theoretical Frameworks for Developing Programs
- IV. The Veterans Initiative Model @ TxState:
Pursuing Well-Being
- V. Tools- The New Needs Assessment Survey, Canvas, Interns, & Well-Being Innovations: Virtual Reality Lab, Sleep Center, Acupuncture. Adventure Therapy
- VI. Q & A

I. Texas State University

- 38,077 students (Fall 2021)
- An emerging research university
- A federally designated Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) (39%); about 57% overall ethnic minority (Fall,2021)
- Long tradition of supporting the military with two ROTC units & in a military corridor



This Generation of Student Veterans @ Texas State

- 3827 military-connected (Fall,2021) (TxState VA Office)
- 23% increase since 2015
- 864 veterans, 2963 dependents

Student veteran profile: (Institutional Research, 2021)

- **Classification:** 11% Graduate 89% Undergraduate
- **Gender:** 54% Male 46% Female
- **Ethnicity:**
Hispanic 42% African American 13%
Anglo 41% Other 4%
- **Full time** - 90%
- **First Generation College Students-** 60%
- **One Year Retention Rates** – 80% (Institutional Research, 2021)
- **Six Year Graduation Rates-** 60-73% over past several cycles (Institutional Research)

Veterans Advisory Council

Interdisciplinary Coordinating Model

- All veterans and military family members; diverse roles & departments
- **Covers Transition: Departments:** Admission---> Career Services including Student Veteran organization
- **Disciplines:** education, social work, business, counseling, legal, computer science, sociology, student affairs
- **Hybrid Model:** Coordinating Model & Core Area of Well-Being
- Meet monthly since founding in 2008
- **Off Campus Partnerships:**
Samaritan Counseling Center
Project Healing Waters
Restoration Ranch



II. Where Is the Field in Terms of Research Efforts?

- In our infancy on research on student veterans (1)
- Some studies have reported on transitions: feeling isolated, having physical injuries, psychological stress, feeling alienated, concerned about less structure (2)
- There is some evidence overall in how student veterans are doing – outcomes – like retention & graduation but some of it is still less rigorous (3)
- Studies on graduation rates are mixed but Cates' 2017 NVEST study has moved the needle (4)

Where Is the Field in Terms of Research Efforts?

Challenges on Campus :

- Tracking systems for following student veterans are not well established (5)
- Campus-wide programs have little to no data on describing, explaining, or predicting effectiveness (6)

Where We've Been

- Progress in program development since 2008
- Phases of Model Development@ TxState:
 - Phase 1: Preparing for arrival of student veterans on campus- standing up benefits and organizing
 - Phase 2: Growing our programs with a focus on describing our veterans & understanding the transition
 - Phase 3: Strengthening services through outside partnerships, collaborations, and campus training of faculty & staff
 - Phase 4: Innovating Programs & Focusing on outcomes and graduation rates and moving towards well-being

Theoretical Frameworks Guide

Program Development

Theoretical Frameworks

- Macro: Role Transition
- Micro: Person-In Environment
- Micro: Peer Driven
- Micro: Well-Being



Focus on Predictors & Indicators

- Engagement
- Belonging
- University Environment
- Well-Being



Outcomes

- GPA
 - On Time
 - Graduation
 - Retention
- Impacts
- Career Follow up

Theoretical Frameworks: Supporting Through Transitions

Moving into the University: Military Service to Student

Office of Veteran Affairs

New Student Orientation

University Seminar (2)

Veteran Alliance of Texas
State



Moving through the University: Student Veteran

Veterans Advisory
Council

VATS & Connection
to other Student
Veterans

Faculty Mentoring &
Academic Advising

University Support
Services

Link/List to Campus
& Community
Services & Resources



Moving out to Work: Student Veteran to Civilian Employee

Career Services

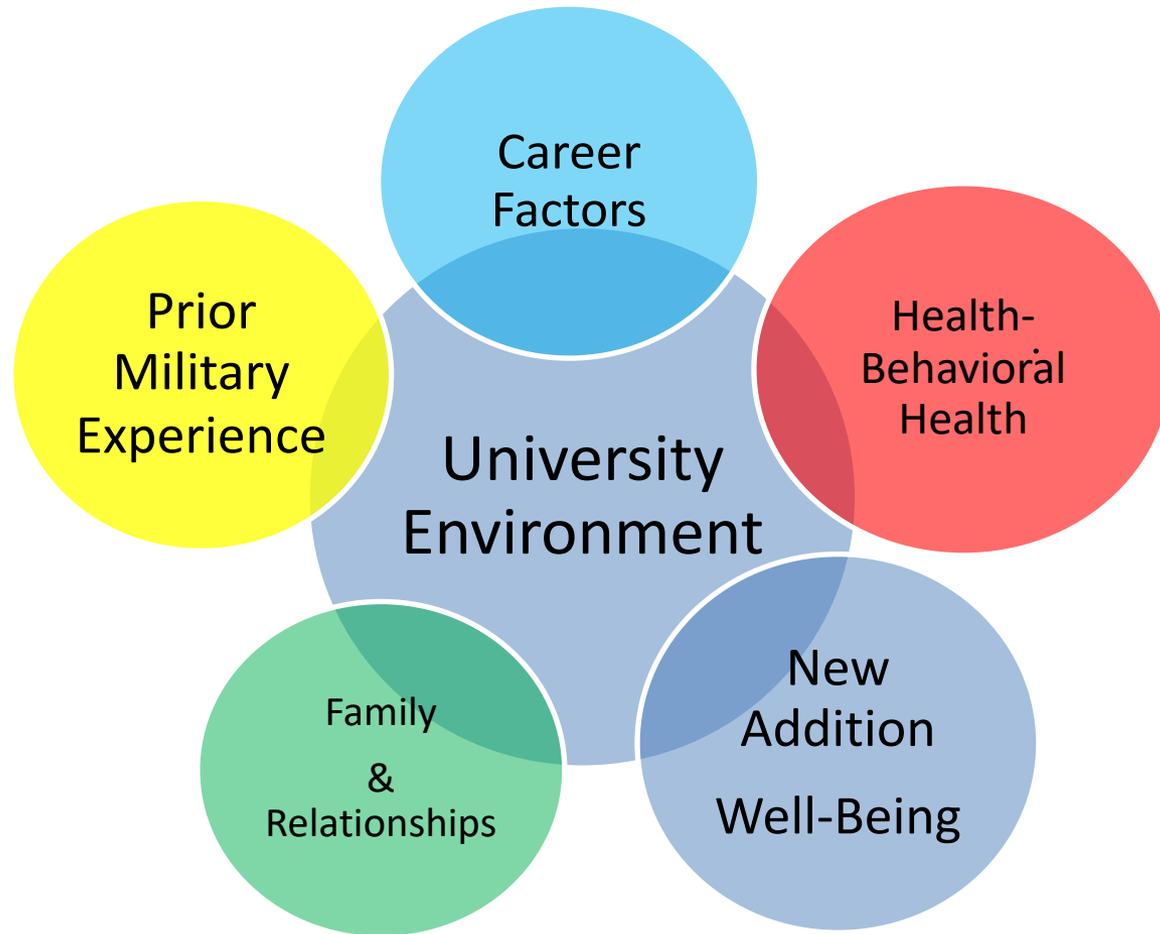
Resume & Employment
Search

Connection to Alumni

Link to Community
Resources

Key: Texas State University Model: (Adapted from DiRamio et al. 2008)

Micro- Understanding the Individual Student Veteran



Peer Framework : Navigating Campus

Peer Mentors Guide, & Reduce Stigma

Perform Outreach	Perform Training	Develop Self Care	Link to Referrals
Employ Veterans Alliance- to reach out to vets	Adapt materials from peer-to-peer models used in other settings	Promote use of self care	Refer to Counseling services provided by staff who are vets
Outreach to increase enrollment of diverse veterans	Train veterans in resiliency skills to deal with stress & help each other	Promote Exercise	Refer to sleep assessment center
Launch campus-wide outreach campaign for faculty/staff	Faculty mentoring program	Promote Meditation, Adventure Therapy	Refer for Tutoring, Disability Services

What is Well-Being?

PERMA +4

P = Positive Emotions = Feelings of Joy & Happiness

E = Positive Engagement = Focus & Absorption in our activity

R = Positive Relationship = Feeling Cared For Mutually Satisfying

M = Positive Meaning = Sense of Purpose in Life

A = Positive Accomplishment = Striving for Achievement

+1 = Positive Mindset = Future oriented, Growth Mindset, Perseverance

+2 = Positive Physical Health = Biological, Functional, & Psych. Health

+3 = Positive Economic Security = Perceived Economic Security

+4 = Positive Physical Environment = Access to Natural Light & Nature

Reference (7)

III. Highlight: Services on Campus



III. Services for Military-Connected @ Texas State

Academic Support and Orientation Services

Health and Behavioral Health Support

Services → Moving to Well Being

Career and Leadership Services

Training and Technical Assistance Services

Academic & Orientation Support Services

- Orientation sessions
- Welcome Back events
- Call list for welcoming & for low GPA's
- Veterans Tutoring Veterans (Student Learning & Academic Center (SLAC))
- Veterans Guiding Veterans
- Veteran Recognition Cords at graduation
- Veterans Graduation Ceremony
- Disability Services by Veterans

Academic Support & Orientation Services

One-Hour Freshman Seminar

- Vets Only Sections—receive one hour credit
- **Topics:** Campus & Community Services; Financial Aid; Employment; Career Advising; Self Care; Stress Management; Relaxation & Sleep Needs; Relationships



Dominique LaVista ©



Dominique LaVista ©



Dominique LaVista ©

Health & Behavioral Health→ Well-Being

- Individual Counseling Services by Vets—
- Group Sessions- Example- Afghanistan Processing session
- Support for Basic Needs- Food; Housing Support-legal services



Health & Behavioral Health Support

Peer-to-Peer Support



Veterans Alliance
TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY

Sample Events: Monthly pizza luncheons with speakers, Tailgating, 5k race, Veterans Day, Intra-mural Sports, Golf Tournament, Clean-up of River with County, Monthly officer meeting, Monthly off-campus socials, Warrior Challenge

Health & Behavioral Health Support

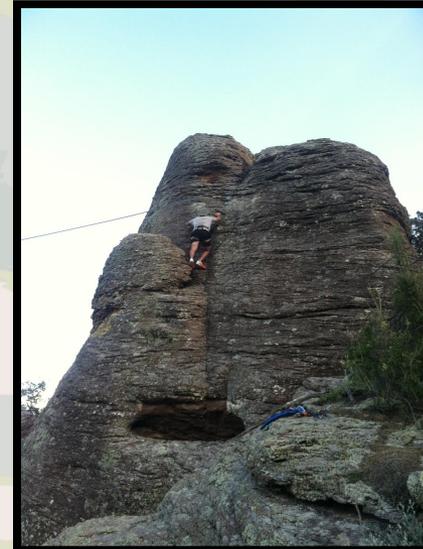
Case Management & Peer Approach Assessment, Referral, Linkage, Follow-up

- Social Work **MSW/BSW Interns** Assigned to Veterans Initiative- since 2010 placed about 60 BSW/MSW interns in the program
- Supervised by faculty
- Called Veterans Initiative Interns
- Outreach to vets
 - From Veterans Affairs Office & Other Campus Offices
 - Calls for those on Alert List due to low GPA
 - Self referrals
 - Referrals from faculty, staff- disability services
 - Voluntary
- Focus on first year student vets

Well-Being : Sample of Events



Adventure Therapy Hikes
Scuba for Vets
Wilderness Camping
Meditation Group



Relaxation and Meditation Skills

Groups/Team Outdoor Activities Student Veterans:
Managing Stress and Promoting Wellness



Career and Employment

- **Workshops for Vets only: resume writing, business etiquette, networking**
- **Clothes Closet**
- **Mock Interviews**
- **Career Fairs**



Training and Technical Assistance

Campus-Wide Training for Faculty & Staff :

- Topics: Helping Veterans Succeed: who are vets, where have they been, challenges, tips for working with, campus resources
- Workshop format 1 ½ to 3 hours
- Twice a year & by special request
- Tied into Veteran Friendly Office Program Award Plaque



Campus Training

Social Work Elective Course — SOWK 5332

- Train social work and other students to work with veterans & families (400+ students trained) since 2009
- Student Vet Interviews & Team Projects—250+ individual vet interviews, 45 team projects, 2500 hours of service learning



Student Vet Panel



Student Project: Donations for Troops Down Range

Training and Technical Assistance

- Helping other universities
- Grants—developing grants for resources
 - Health Resources Services Administration (HRSA) 2012-2015 (\$479,000) . Training Masters of Social Work students to work with military
 - HRSA 2014-2017 (\$1.2 million) partially dedicated to military social work training
 - JP Morgan Chase grant 2014-2015 (\$150,000) develop academic support services and close the gap in vet graduation.
 - Foundations (\$ 150,000)
 - Other Research Grants (\$100,000)

Training and Technical Assistance

Faculty-Based Field Unit

- Students placed in Veterans Initiative on campus with faculty supervisor for BSW or MSW field.

Interested MSW Students Can Focus on Veterans Services at Texas State

- MSW students can take:
 - Elective: Helping Troops Transition Back to Communities
 - Field: Year 1 of MSW program : Veterans Initiative internship
 - Field: Year 2 of MSW Program: diverse VA locations, Vet Centers in San Antonio, Ft. Hood, Ft. Sam Houston and a variety of other community, state, and federal military related options

V. Program Development Tools @ TxState

- Communication via Canvas Site
- Enhancing outreach to Round Rock Campus
- The New Needs Assessment Survey
- Logic Models
- Innovations- Virtual Reality Lab, Sleep Center, Acupuncture, & Adventure Therapy

V. Tools : Needs Assessment

Online, anonymous survey – IRB approved

Domains

- Demographics
- Military Background
- Transition to College
- Academics & Self Reported Progress
- Service Utilization on and off campus & Engagement
- Health/ Behavioral Health & Wellbeing
- Career & Work
- Financial Concerns

References

- (1) Philips & Lincoln, 2017
- (2) Barry et al., 2014; Elliott et al., 2011; Rudd et al., 2011.
- (3) Bosari et al., 2017
- (4) Cate, 2017
- (5) (6) Boasari, 2017; Selber, 2021; Weiss, 2021
- (7) Seligman 2011; Donaldson 2019; Donaldson et al., 2021; Weiss, 2021

Credits

My VAC Colleagues

My Veterans & Military Connected Students Since 2004

My Son- Lt Col. Will Selber

My Afghan Allies in the Resettlement Process

My mentors— Dr. Kathryn Kotrla, Dr. Eugenia Weiss

