

Strategies to Build Academic Confidence

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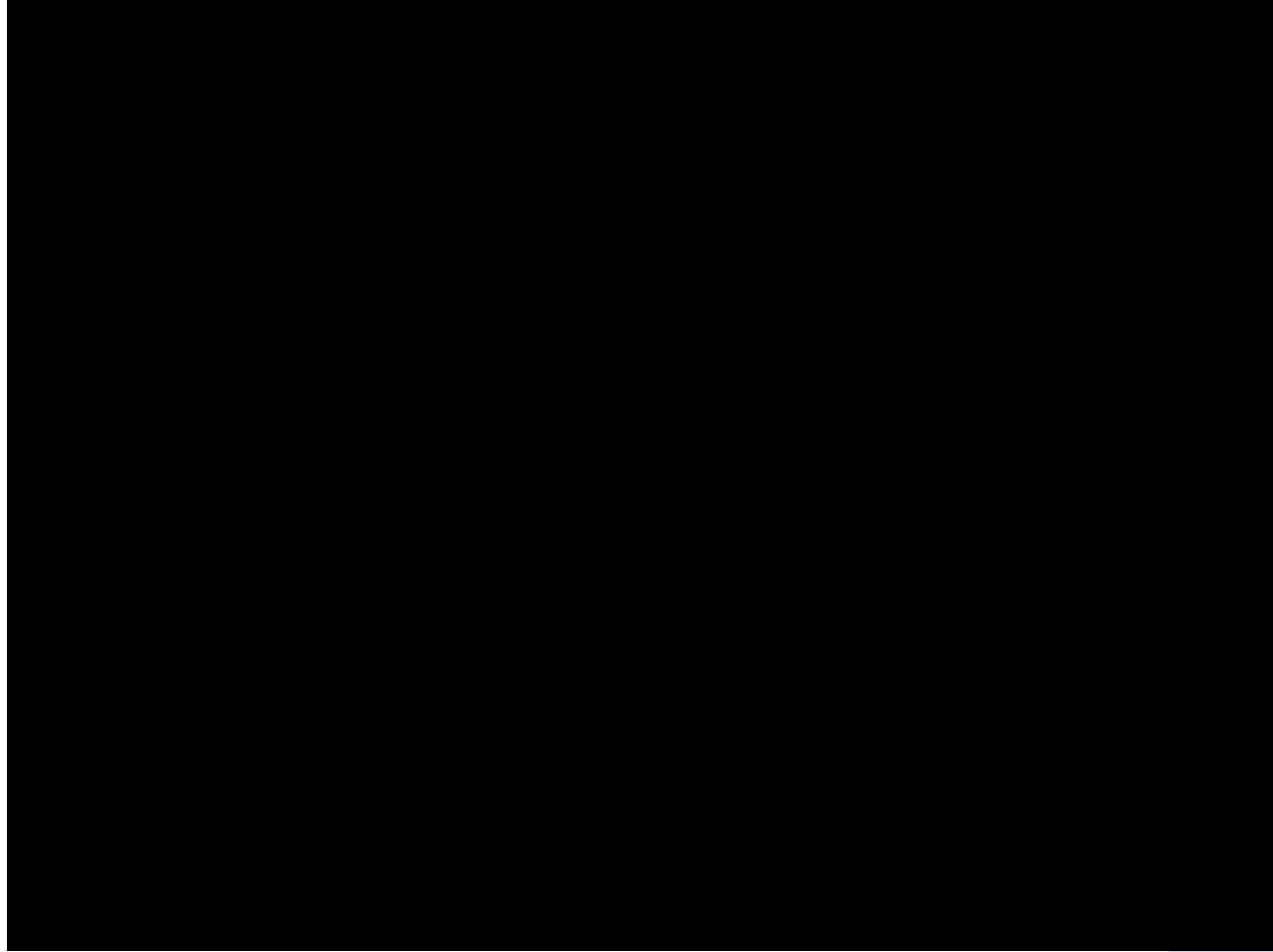
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First-Gen Student Veteran Perspectives



Session Plan

Session Overview

In this session, we will discuss data-driven strategies institutions are employing to help build academic confidence in both student veterans and the staff and faculty who support those students.



Session Structure

1. Why focus on confidence?
2. Student vet overview
3. Research on building confidence in first-gen students
4. Models to build confidence in student vets
 - a. Warrior-Scholar Project
 - b. Columbia University Center for Veteran Transition and Integration
 - c. IVMF / Syracuse University
5. Building confidence in staff, faculty, and institutions supporting student vets

**Why
focus
on
first-gen
confidence?**



Student Veteran Overview

- Student vets benefit from specialized support in higher ed.¹
- Post-secondary education is the top resource needed by most veterans.²
- Students using GI Bill benefits are more likely to be enrolled full time.³
- Community colleges are the preferred student vet entry point into higher ed.⁴
- 65% enroll at low-graduation-rate IHLs, compared to 51% of all students.⁵
- **62% of student vets are first-generation college students.⁶**
- Student vets:
 - Generally have higher GPAs than non-vets and have skills that add tremendous value
 - Are less likely to finish degrees, may have little knowledge of the college landscape, are often unaware of available resources, may not feel like they belong, and may struggle to seek help



1. Ackerman, R., DiRamio, D., & Garza Mitchell, R. L. (2009). Transitions: combat veterans as college students. *New Directions for Student Services*, 126, 5-14. DOI: 10.1002/ss

2. Euto, L., Maury, R., Armstrong, N., Stone, B., & Linsner, R. (2020). Top Resource Needs of Veterans and Active Duty Service Members. Institute for Veterans and Military Families at Syracuse.

3. Institute for Veterans and Military Families & Student Veterans of America. (2019). *Student Veterans: A Valuable Asset to Higher Education*. Syracuse University.

4. Evans, J. J., Pellegrino, L., & Hoggan, C. (2015). Supporting veterans at the community college: a review of the literature. *The Community College Enterprise*, Spring 2015, 47-65.

5. Hill, C. B., Kurzweil, M., Pisacreta, E. D., & Schwartz, E. (2019). Enrolling More Veterans at Higher Graduation-Rate Colleges and Universities. Ithaca S+R.

6. National Conference of State Legislatures. (2014, May 30). *Veterans and College: State and Community Roles in Supporting College Completion for Veterans*.

Research on Building Academic Confidence

- In a 2006 study,⁷ Bermeo, et. al identified three crucial steps to support first-gen students:
 - ▷ (1) Raising aspirations for college
 - ▷ (2) Navigating the college admissions process
 - ▷ (3) Easing the initial transition to college
- In a 2014 study,⁸ Ford & Vignare noted key challenges students face with respect to coursework, including:
 - ▷ lack of knowledge regarding academia and academic culture
 - ▷ rusty study habits
 - ▷ difficulties balancing school and life
- In 2020, Moneva, J. & Tribunalo, S., found a significant relationship between level of confidence and performance tasks: students with high levels of self-confidence can easily accomplish tasks in school and are not afraid to participate in activities, but those with low self-confidence showed low performance tasks and were hesitant to participate in activities.

7. Bermeo, A., Grigsby, M., Mortenson, T., Muraskin, L., Stokes, L., Tinto, V. & Upshaw, W. (2006). Straight from the Source: What Works for First-Generation College Students. The Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education.

8. Ford, K. & Vignare, K. (2014). The evolving military learner population: a review of the literature. *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks*. 19(1), 7-30. DOI: 10.24059/OLJ.V19I1.503.

9. Moneva, J. & Tribunalo, S.M., Students Levels of Self-confidence and Performance Tasks. (2020). *Asia Pacific Journal of Academic Research in Social Sciences*, Vol. 5, No. 1,

Confidence Building at WSP



The Model

In partnership with colleges and universities, WSP hosts intensive college-prep boot camps for enlisted vets in Humanities, STEM, and Business disciplines. Through faculty lectures, workshops and research projects, tailored assignments, and one-on-one tutoring, warrior-scholars acquire the skills to succeed in higher education and navigate the cultural shift from military service to college.

The Results

Warrior-Scholar Project data shows connection between increased confidence and increased degree persistence rates (90%+).

Participants noted how WSP helped them “feel more confident participating in lectures and interacting with peers,” and others noted how WSP gave them confidence to apply to top-tier schools, apply themselves in the classroom, take risks that felt uncomfortable, along with the confidence and tools needed to succeed in a demanding academic environment.

Confidence Building at CVTI



The Model

Columbia University launched the Center for Veteran Transition and Integration to have a direct and lasting impact on the issue of veteran transition and upward mobility by creating best-in-class programming veterans need as they transition from active service to college and the workforce.

The Results

- CVTI curriculum participants report several key indicators of persistence: lower rates of academic distress, lower rates of academic probation, increased performance coming out of probationary status, and critically, earlier outreach to support
- On-demand support from anywhere, and for free, for both student *AND* administrators

Confidence Building at Syracuse University



First-Gen Support

- 19% of undergrads at Syracuse identify as first-gen.
- Cuse-First-Pre-Welcome Program: 3-day curriculum designed to:
 - ▷ Provide support where the first-gen students need it most: navigating resources (*e.g.*, location of the financial aid and student services offices) and understanding terminology (*e.g.*, what MWF means).
 - ▷ Give students a sense of community and a glimpse of what campus and student life will be like.
- While these SU resources help students find where they need to go to find the right support, they also help them feel connected to the right areas in order for them to remain successful and stay.

Office of Vet and Military Affairs Support

- Helps transitioning vets acclimate to campus life through a series of programs:
 - ▷ Peer Advisors for Veteran Education (PAVE)
 - ▷ Warrior Scholar Project
 - ▷ Student Veteran Welcome and Resource Fair
 - ▷ “Operation Welcome”
 - ▷ Student Veteran Organization
 - ▷ Campus Events

Other Considerations

- Access = Admission + Support + Resources
 - It's insufficient just to admit students to college or university
- Taking a broader view of “benefits”
 - Benefits are more than just the funds to pay for college – they also include the support programs that help ensure success once on campus
- Institutions are not on their own
 - IHLs should leverage support offered by nonprofits such as WSP, CVTI, and IVMF to ensure students succeed
 - There is value in IHLs themselves gaining confidence in their ability to fully serve student veterans
- When serving these populations:
 - Know your research
 - Know what first-gen students are up against
 - Take steps to make them feel like they belong

