

Veterans Advisory Meeting
April 19, 2007
Meeting Minutes

Attendance: Carin Anderson, Dr. Gary Christenson, Carol Cline, Amber Kissner, Mary Koskan, Joyce Laher, Aaron Ledebuhr, Lonna Riedinger, Andrew Schoenecker, James Silda, Karen Starry, Amelious Whyte

Proposed State of Minnesota GI Bill Legislation: The House has proposed additional aid to student veterans (who have served or received benefits after 1990) receiving educational assistance to fill the gap between existing aid and the cost of attendance. To be considered, students must complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. Determination will be made based on the cost of attendance and taking into consideration the Pell Grant and other GI Bill benefits. The proposed maximum is \$1,250 per semester with an aggregate of \$10,000 per eligible student. Institutions will each receive a lump sum. The Minnesota Office of Higher Education will coordinate the disbursements. There is concern about funding and allocation procedures. Currently, the legislation would be for a 'one-time' allocation, but the hopes are to continue each year. More information about this bill can be found at: <http://ww3.house.leg.state.mn.us/hrd/bs/85/HF0162.html>

Veterans Orientation: The idea to create a veterans orientation program was formulated after receiving feedback from the veterans' survey. This program will begin fall 2007. A welcome packet will be available to students at orientation. The packet will include GI Bill information, certification requests, business cards, and other information about services around campus. The plan is to schedule one to two informational/orientation sessions for veterans and survivors/dependents. These sessions will be open to freshman and returning students and will be held in August and September. Topics to be covered are: financial aid policies, reintegration, peer support/mentoring, benefit overview, and claims.

Suggestions from advisory members are:

- have packets available at the Graduate School orientations and when prospective students are taking campus tours
- think of an alternative to the word "reintegration," instead maybe use "transition"
- on the admission application, explain why the University is asking if the student is a veteran
- and insert a slide in the presentation about mental health services available, but in a subtle way

One Stop Veterans Services: The process has started for Carin Anderson and David Schrader to be in the same area in 200 Fraser Hall. Students will soon be able to go directly into their offices, without having to check in at the One Stop counter.

The veterans' newsletter will be sent out shortly and will also be viewable on the One Stop Web site (along with the archived newsletters). Newsletter highlights include: reintegration training for faculty and staff, information about the veterans advisory committee, and results of the veterans survey.

Including Information on www.mentalhealth.umn.edu: This site was designed to serve as a 'one stop' place where everyone can go to find out about mental health services available on campus and site will include guidelines and contact information. The question was raised if there should be a specific link for veterans and the response was that it would be a good idea because that person is already seeking assistance.

Misc. Updates/Information Sharing: (The committee discussed a variety of issues at the end of the meeting)

Concern from Disability Services: How difficult is it for veterans to obtain medical records/diagnosis paperwork from the VA? Staff from Disability Services have had mixed experiences. Possible solutions are:

- Implement a system whereby Boynton and the Veterans Center can be integrated and try to establish a liaison
- Student could be seen at Boynton and have diagnosis sent to Disability Services. Note: Carin will do some research and contact the VA hospital for more information.
- Disability Services includes their cards with admission paperwork, but could also maybe include their cards with the orientation packets, and/or in the general orientation session
- Another way to get information to veterans could be to correspond with county VA representatives and have packets mailed. Note: It would be a good idea to check with David Schrader.

The deadline has passed for submitting veteran service information in the 2007-2008 Gopher Guide, but would be a good idea for the following school year.

Every student will participate in Welcome Week '08. Devise ideas on how this week could incorporate veterans.

The admissions and credit for military service transcript policy is determined by the University Senate and the decision on themes is usually up to the faculty. The learning experience has to be similar to that of a particular course offered at the University. Student should contact their department for more information. Approval can be very difficult. Legislation cannot require the University to accept credit. The committee

encouraged Aaron to present a proposal regarding the possibility of waiving specific Liberal Education “themes” as a result of military service. After reviewing the proposal the committee would determine whether to support it or to suggest other avenues for achieving its desired outcomes.

The University wants to acknowledge Veterans Day as a way of helping to recognize the sacrifice made by our veterans.

The new stadium will have an addition that recognizes veterans.

Disabled parking spots and para-transit need to be reviewed because there will be large numbers of veterans returning.

The committee will check into working with the Writing Center and other tutor offices to offer their expertise to veterans.

Amelious will review policy regarding class attendance accommodations for military training, etc.

The next meeting will be in May, and a tentative meeting date will be in July.