

Veterans Advisory Meeting

May 30, 2007

Meeting Minutes

Attendance: Carin Anderson, Dr. Gary Christenson, Carol Cline, Matt Hanson, Liz Hruska, Mary Koskan, Joyce Laher, Aaron Ledebuhr, Doug Leonard, Ross Macmillan, Duane Bauer, Amelious Whyte, Chris Schlichting, Mark Galarneau

Introduction: Duane Bauer was introduced as the replacement for David Schrader as the new state representative for Higher Education Veterans Programs at the University of Minnesota. He has an office in the One Stop Student Services Center in Fraser Hall. David Schrader is now the Veterans Program Coordinator for southern Minnesota and will be based in Mankato.

Veterans Newsletter: General feeling was that the latest issue looked very good. Amelious Whyte intends to possibly share with other Big Ten schools as example of University outreach efforts.

Veterans Orientation: Times and dates for four orientation sessions are now scheduled (Wednesday, August 15, 8am - 11am; Tuesday, August 28, 3 pm - 6 pm; Thursday, September 6, 1pm - 4 pm and Wednesday, September 12, 6 pm - 9 pm). Carin Anderson brought a sample folder of information to be distributed at orientation and solicited others to supply/suggest other information that they thought should be included. Carin will work with Duane to obtain outside presenters that are relevant to veterans needs, e.g., from the National Guard, Reserves and VA.

Carin noted that a past 1607 briefing was poorly attended. Questions were raised about how these orientations were going to be publicized. E-mails will be sent to students currently receiving VA benefits as well as newly admitted veteran students. These sessions will also be advertised in the next veterans newsletter.

VA Hospital Issues: Carin's experience is that VA is very cooperative and record information is readily available with the maximum wait being a couple of days. VA is going to a paperless record system which could possibly speed process with release and sharing of this information. Duane stated VA sometimes thinks of disability issues in terms of compensation package. Dr. Christenson reflected that sometimes student problems are expressed/received in terms of specific health issues and not in the broader context of the whole patient. It was suggested that University work with the VA in evaluating information in terms of the whole patient, this could lead to a more complete assessment of a student's possible disability.

Application Fee Waiver: Fee waiver is now available to all veteran undergraduate candidates who are currently deployed. Mary is working with Graduate School to extend this waiver to graduate students (this could possibly affect 10-20 new graduate admits). Currently, simply trying to 'get the word out,' Carin has talked to a Minnesota National Guard Officer in Iraq about returning soldiers who possibly might attend the University of Minnesota. Regardless, fall admission could be difficult for most new students even though a large contingent of reserve members should be returning this summer. It was suggested that these soldiers could still attend through the College of Continuing Education.

Presentation to the Board of Regents on Veterans Issues: Mary Koskan stated that she would most likely present VA issues to the Regents in September as an earlier date is probably not possible. The presentation will be allotted 20 minutes. Content would include information about the Veterans Advisory Committee, the newsletter, the veterans survey, and the application fee waiver. It would also include information about Mary's participation on Governor Pawlenty's Yellow Ribbon Panel intended to help with veteran re-integration on campus and across the state. It was noted that Dean Johnson, a new Regent, has National Guard experience as a Chaplin.

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

Amelious Whyte noted that he had a conversation with Jeremiah Peterson from the Veterans Transition Center about new space, specifically the addition of a private area for meeting with students as well as additional academic support programs. Jerry Rinehart, Vice Provost for Student Affairs, agreed to ask that their space needs be considered if additional space becomes available.

It was mentioned that the University student mental health site should be updated to include information specific to veterans.

The issue was raised about how the University might help veterans include their military experience/training so that it might count for University credit, which at this time is usually difficult to do. Ross Macmillan suggested that in CLA through a directed studies program, this can sometimes be accomplished. Examples are the Sociology Department's studies in 'Military Organization' and 'Military Society.' The decision as to the possibility of this approach is one of departmental policy and might be more difficult to implement in some departments than others. A question was raised about how such a plan could be set up with a broader application and perhaps sample plan verbiage could be set up by reviewing one of the existing directed studies plans. It was suggested that the veterans newsletter in the future could include information about this approach.

Mary distributed the latest version of the Minnesota GI Bill Program. She specifically referenced the eligibility and benefits portion of the bill and noted that care will need to be taken to examine how this might impact the University. The benefits expressed in the bill could be difficult to administer particularly because of the occasional late payments of some veterans benefits (e.g. application of a late kicker agreement) and this in turn might necessitate the late removal of some types of previously awarded financial aid. It was asked if scholarships would count against student benefits in this program. Mark Galarnau thought probably not based on how the University has administered previous federal, state, and University grant aid programs.

The next meeting will be in August.