

Veterans Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes September 26, 2007

Present: Carin Anderson, Carol Cline, Justin Drees, Liz Hruska, Mary Koskan, Joyce Laher, Aaron Ledebuhr, Doug Leonard, Kathleen Macosko, Greg Sawyer, James Silda, Karen Starry, Phil Stedje, Mary Vincent-Franco, Diane Wartchow, Amelious White

Review of Veterans Advisory Committee Charge

The purpose of the Veterans Advisory Committee is to facilitate dialog between departments that directly impact the academic success and well-being of University of Minnesota veterans and their families. This committee works to create awareness of the issues faced by veterans, develop programs to support veterans and military families on campus, and offer a forum for student veterans to provide feedback. Methods to gather feedback are an online comment card and an online survey on how to improve current services. The group discussed how to get the survey to all veterans, not only those receiving benefits, since student ID numbers would be needed. Some ideas were an ad in the Daily or on the UPortal, talking to CAPSA, Facebook, posters, and a suggestion box.

Warrior to Citizen Campaign

Dennis Donovan of the Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs explained that the State of Minnesota is serving as a sort of laboratory for the Warrior to Citizen Campaign. This program involves the Citizens League, veterans, churches, faculty, and students with a focus on easing the transition from warrior to citizen. The program created a working team in May 2007 that meets bi-weekly. Just 300 hours after serving as a warrior, veterans return as citizens with skills that can benefit and contribute to Minnesota. The team seeks to educate the public on interacting with returning veterans and how to get involved. Donovan said he would like to link up the working team with the Veterans Advisory Committee.

Work will be done to revitalize and reinvent the VFW since many veterans do not use the VFW in its current form. A virtual VFW is also under consideration. The team is also collaborating with a commander of a VFW post to preserve their current traditions and connect to recent soldiers. One idea they've had is to start an oral history group in which veterans discuss memories and plan events.

Veterans Orientation Sessions

Carin Anderson said approximately 55 students attended the new veterans orientation sessions. Informational packets were given out containing Carin's and Duane Bauer's contact information as well as information on benefits and the Veteran's Transition Center. A presentation on veterans benefits and how it can affect financial aid was given and students had a chance to meet Carin, Duane, and the One Stop counselors who processes benefit certifications. Some students thought the session was mandatory. The morning session had the best attendance. For the future, Carin recommended one session in the morning and one in the evening. The goal is to get the students in before the term starts.

Board of Regents Presentation

Mary Koskan gave an overview of the presentation she recently gave to the Board of Regents. Key points were:

- How the One Stop is supporting veterans to achieve academic success and wellbeing

- The number of certifications and the increase in veteran enrollment
- One Stop's desire to create an online veterans benefit certification status tracker
- An explanation of the registration and benefit certification process
- The Governor's Yellow Ribbon initiative
- The Veterans Transition Center and the challenges that veterans face upon returning home
- A review of comments and concerns such as a specialized orientation, learning assistance, a veterans academic adviser, and a guide or workshop on benefits

Veterans Day Event at the University of Minnesota

Logistics and details of the event were discussed. The group discussed whether this is an event for students and faculty/staff and if the event should be extended to all veterans. A member said that this event will help create a bond between faculty/staff and students and suggested giving out buttons or stickers saying "Thank You Veteran." Other members suggested thank you cards or appreciation sweatshirts or t-shirts. The current plan is to have a short luncheon from 11 a.m. – 1 p.m. outside Coffman Memorial Union or the Armory. Coffman would draw a larger crowd and more publicity. Most back-up rooms, in case of rain, are currently booked. Tables and a tent are a possibility. As for food, pizza was recommended with Coke as the beverage. If the food is from an off-campus source, a permit will be needed. Mary Koskan will look into prices. Funding could possibly come from a Coca-cola grant for student groups or an existing TCF grant.

President Bruininks is unable to speak at the event since he's out of town November 12-16. Governor Pawlenty doesn't commit to events more than three weeks in advance. If necessary, a letter from Bruininks or Pawlenty could be read during the event. Provost Tom Sullivan and Associate Vice Provost Jerry Reinhart are also out of town during those dates. The group would like to find a speaker that would connect with veterans. A student representative suggested Chaplain Morris.

Regarding publicity, Coffman only allows banners three times a year. An ad could be placed in the MN Daily and the local media could be alerted. Mary Koskan recommended being cautious about the content of the ads and to be aware that there may be protesters at the event. A suggestion was made to use the screen by Williams Arena to publicize the event and to recognize veterans at the football game on the weekend after the event. Mr. Whyte is working on organizing a military flyover and having the ROTC color guard march on the wall.

Other

The Veterans Transition Center may get a better space in Wesbrook Hall.

The Minnesota Career Development event will have roughly 80 employers and a focus of the event is on veterans with disabilities.

A veterans section is being added to the Mental Health website.

Student Affairs is creating a behavioral intervention team to track students creating problems in multiple places at the University. The goal is to prevent any incidents similar to what occurred at Virginia Tech.