Focus Forward Fellowship

A Model For Building Women Student Veteran Portfolios
Audience Interaction

• Please access poll everywhere by texting stacyparnell627 to 22333 or navigate to the online website using this code
How would you best describe your attendee role today?

- A - Student Veteran
- B - Student veteran support team (spouse, parent, friend, etc.)
- C - School veteran office staff
- D - Employee of a military-connected organization
- E - None of the above
MFRI Mission

Created in 2000 by Purdue’s Center for Families, the Military Family Research Institute:

– Conducts research and outreach for communities and professionals who serve military and veteran families.

– Collaborates to help shape policies, programs and practices that improve their overall well-being.

– Helps communities and organizations use research and best practices to achieve their goals within the military and veteran space.
MFRI Strategic Vision

We are guided by five strategic goals:

• **Support** the military infrastructure that supports families.

• **Strengthen** the motivation and capacity of civilian communities to support military and veteran families.

• **Generate** important new knowledge about military and veteran families.

• **Influence** policies, programs and practices supporting military and veteran families.

• **Sustain** a vibrant learning organization.
Unique Lives of Female Veterans

Women are more likely than their male counterparts to develop depressive symptoms.

More likely to develop PTSD after deployment (3.7%-13.2% vs 2.4%-6.2%)

More likely than males to be member of a single parent family (11.8% vs 4.1%)

More likely than males to have non-biological children (nieces or nephews) living in their home (9.4% to 6.5%)


Focus Forward Fellowship #FWDFellows
1.8 million female Veterans in US

16.3% of all living veterans expected to be women by 2043

Roughly 200,000 servicemembers transition from active duty each year, likely to attend college within seven months

27% of women students are veterans


#FWDFellows
Women Student Veteran Needs

• 2016 Disabled American Veterans report identified education as a serious gap in current systems for support of women veterans

• Women student veterans share characteristics of non-traditional students
  – 79% 25 or older compared to 14% of nonveteran student population
  – 62% first generation students, compared to 43% (Lauff & Ingels, 2014)
  – 33% members of ethnic minority group (National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics, 2018)
  – 12% are single parents (Patten & Parker, 2011)
  – 41% survivors of military sexual trauma (Barth et al., 2016)
Women Student Veteran Needs

• 54% of female veterans did not feel prepared to navigate their community resources

• Transition challenges:
  – 59% of female veterans report a loss of connection with military community
  – 56% of female veterans report a loss of sense of purpose/camaraderie
What is the most important need for women student veterans on campus, in your opinion?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Women Student Veterans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic Challenges</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Less engagement with professors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Less positive undergraduate experiences overall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Professional Challenges</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Fewer mentoring experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Challenges</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Less emotional support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Goldrich, 2015
Focus Forward Fellowship

National mentoring program

• Build a sense of community among veteran and active duty peers
• Access to career mentors to promote professional growth
• Understand individual strengths and ways to maximize
• Identify strategies and resources to increase connections and their campus experience
• Gain confidence in problem solving
• Develop skills to help foster academic and career goals

• First cohort in 2016
Program Delivery

In-person residency

- Four-day intensive workshops on Purdue University campus
- Meet with fellow veterans, career and coaching mentors, Fellowship faculty
- Sessions to build skills to fill gaps identified

Online Community

- Held online through academic year
- Currently delivered via Facebook
Lessons Learned and Preliminary Evidence from the Focus Forward Fellowship

A program designed by the Military Family Research Institute specifically for women student veterans in higher education

The Focus Forward Fellowship:
A four-day retreat followed by a year-long online community offered to women student service members and veterans (Fellows).

Program goals included:
1. Promoting social connectedness
2. Increasing understanding of one’s strengths and identities
3. Developing professional skills

19 Fellows provided data at baseline, 6-month, and 12-month measurement points.

Fellows reported statistically significant gains in their:
- Identity integration
- Knowledge and use of personal strengths
- Networking skills
- Resume preparation

They had positive reactions to the program:
- Fellows said in-person activities were engaging and effective
- Fellows participated often in the year-long online community

Evaluation data showed that the Focus Forward Fellowship was feasible to implement, well-received by participants, and effective in achieving program goals


#FWDFellows
Where are the Fellows from?

- 133 women
- 8 cohorts
- 80 schools
- 33 states and Washington, D.C.
- 5 branches of military
What do the Fellows study?

- 65% undergraduate students
- 24% STEM, 21% business programs
Who are the Fellows?

- 43% of Fellows have dependents at home
- 70% self-disclosed military related injury or disability
- 58% over the age of 30; Fellows from 20-50
Focus Forward Fellowship

Academic Outcomes

• Academic Impact
  – 91.3% of respondents to 2022 alumni survey completed the program they were enrolled in, compared to just 31% of non-traditional students nationally
  – 39% of Fellows began an additional program
  – 13% began, and graduated from an additional program
  – Average GPA of 3.59
Reaching New Heights

• Jeni Brett
  – 2018 Fellow
  – 2019-2020 Coaching Mentor
Focus Forward Fellowship
Professional Outcomes

• Professional Impact
  – 77% of Fellows currently working in a field related to their educational program
  – 65% of Fellows began a new position or have been promoted since the Fellowship
Landing the Dream Job

- Alyson Chmielewski
  - 2021 Fellow
  - 2022 Coaching Mentor
Focus Forward Fellowship
Social Outcomes

- 39% of Fellows have some connection with a Mentor, and an additional 13% have regular contact with their Mentor
- 78% of women have developed connections with other women veterans

Focus Forward Fellowship

#FWDFellows
2022 Focus Forward Fellowship

Highlights:

– Fellows learning about their own strengths and that of others
– Fellows developed communication skills to use in their school and professional careers
– Spent time considering and crafting goals to work on in coming year
– Received professional headshot for use on social media and professionally
– Fellows connected with at least two mentors
  • Career Mentor in their field (all women)
  • Coaching Mentor who was a former Fellow
– Online community with monthly themes for continued learning and growing
2023 Focus Forward Fellowship

- Applications are currently open through January 31, 2023
- Info sessions available for you or potential Fellows to attend for more information
- Information available here and at SVA Campus
- 2023 Fellowship Residency
  - 4 day intensive, week of July 17
  - Purdue, West Lafayette campus
- 2023 Online Community
  - Begins immediate before residency and continues through academic year
  - Continued learning from residency
  - Further connections which began during residency

- All costs covered thanks to generous donors
How many women student veterans do you know that could benefit from additional academic, professional, and/or social support?

- 5 or more
- 3-4
- 2
- 1
- None, yet
How Can Women Become Fellows?

Submit application
• Applications closed for 2023, but 2024 applications will open in the fall

Eligibility requirements
• Attending higher education institution during 2023-24 academic school year
• Honorably discharged from armed forces or current active duty, National Guard or Reserves
• 2.0 or higher cumulative GPA

Selection decisions announced in spring
Want to Know the Latest

Sign up for the Focus Forward Fellowship mailing list
Questions?

Stacy Parnell
Senior Education and Employment Specialist
parnells@purdue.edu

www.mfri.purdue.edu
765-496-6580
facebook.com/MFRIIPurdue
twitter.com/MFRIIPurdue