Fostering and Enhancing the Success of Student Veteran Learners

Monteigne S. Long
Assistant Director
Office of Veteran Services
Texas A&M University System
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Monteigne Long is the Assistant Director of the Office of Veteran Services with The Texas A&M University System. She has been working with student veterans in higher education since 2010, when colleges and universities saw a large influx of Post 9/11 veterans.

Monteigne is currently pursuing a doctorate in Higher Education Administration at Texas A&M University.
Agenda

I. History of Veterans in Higher Education
II. Current Profile of Student Veterans
III. Transition to Higher Education
IV. Veterans as Adult Learners
   a. Strengths & Barriers
   b. Veteran Critical Theory
   c. Andragogy
V. Implications
   a. Student Affairs Practitioners
   b. Administrators
   c. Faculty
VI. Student Panel
1. History of Veterans in Higher Education
History of Veterans in Higher Education

1918 - Smith-Sears Vocational Rehabilitation Act
  ○ Rehabilitation and retraining programs

1944 - Servicemen's Readjustment Act (G.I. Bill)
  ○ Had the largest impact on higher education by provided benefits to WWII veterans
  ○ Over 2 million veterans attended college (1944-1949)
  ○ Veterans dominated campuses in numbers and academic superiority
  ○ Expired in 1956 but was extended as the Montgomery G.I. Bill

1984 - Montgomery G.I. Bill is made an enduring benefit for veterans during peacetime

2008 - Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act (Post-9/11 G.I. Bill)

2017 - The Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act (Forever G.I. Bill)
2. Current Profile of Student Veterans
According to PNPI (2019) and the 2019 Student Veterans of America Census Report...

3 in 5 are employed and work at least 35 hours a week

Over 60% are between the ages of 25-44

75% of student veterans are considered full time students

47% of enrolled student veterans are parents
Current Profile of Student Veterans

According to the 2019 Student Veterans of America Census Report...

What is your gender?
- Female/Woman: 31.90%
- Male/Man: 68.10%

What is your Ethnicity?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity1</th>
<th>% of Total Count of Ethnicity1</th>
<th>Count of Ethnicity1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African-American/Black</td>
<td>9.74%</td>
<td>474</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>3.43%</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino/a</td>
<td>10.97%</td>
<td>534</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Eastern</td>
<td>0.16%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American/American Indian/Alaska Native</td>
<td>0.76%</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>0.68%</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White/Caucasian</td>
<td>69.61%</td>
<td>3,388</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer not to say</td>
<td>2.73%</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1.91%</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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3.
Transition to Higher Education
The Transition

The Challenges...

- Transition from military to civilian life
- Experiences and perspectives
- Enduring stereotypes
- Financial concerns/Veteran education benefits
- Acculturating to campus life
- Loss of a sense of camaraderie
- Physical, emotional, and psychological issues
- Bureaucratic and unstructured nature of higher education
- Family responsibilities
- Multiple dimensions of identity
The Transition

How we can support...

- Veteran orientation programs
- Veteran's space/ Veteran support office
- Student veteran network/Student veteran organization
- Peer advisors/Peer mentoring program
- Network of supportive staff across campus
- Creating a supportive classroom environment

4. Veterans as Adult Learners
Strengths of Student Veterans

- Maturity, Discipline & Work Ethic
- Diverse Experiences
- Leadership Skills
- Core Values
- Communication
- Collaboration
- Respectful of Leadership
- Interpersonal Skills/Team Player
- Comfortable with Diversity
- Focused on Achievement & Success
- Goal/Mission Oriented…They just know how to get things done!
Barriers to Success

- Transition
- Isolation or Alienation
- Change of Identity ("Hero to Zero" & "Priority of Self")
- Time Management
- PTSD/TBI
- Anger Management
- Substance Abuse
- Relationship & Trust Issues
- Transfer Student “GPA Drop”
- Liminality
- Competing Life Priorities
- Underprepared Faculty/Staff

- The BIG 5:
  - GI Bill benefit processing
  - Health Care and Insurance
  - Childcare
  - Academic Advising
  - Finances (bills, billing cycles, living expenses)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Veteran Mindset</strong></th>
<th><strong>Higher Education Mindset</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I can fix my own problems”</td>
<td>Asking for help is positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Those who need help are weak”</td>
<td>Help-seeking behaviors are a sign of strength</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used to structure, regiment, taking orders, chain of command</td>
<td>Less structured, leading by committee work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Push” mentality</td>
<td>“Pull” mentality</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Let’s examine the 11 tenets of Veteran Critical Theory (Phillips & Lincoln, 2017) of the student veteran identity:

1. Structures, policies, and processes privilege civilians over veterans
2. Veterans experience various forms of oppression and marginalization including microaggressions
3. Veterans are victims of deficit thinking in higher education
4. Veterans occupy a third space (country) on the border of multiple conflicting and interacting power structures, languages, and systems
5. VCT values narratives and counternarratives of veterans
6. Veterans experience multiple identities at once
7. Veterans are constructed (written) by civilians, often as deviant characters
8. Veterans are more appropriately positioned to inform policy and practice regarding veterans
9. Some services advertised to serve veterans are ultimately serving civilian interests
10. Veterans cannot be essentialized
11. Veteran culture is built on a culture of respect, honor, and trust
Knowles' Andragogy

5 Assumptions of Adult Learners
1. Self-Concept
2. Adult Learner Experience
3. Readiness to Learn
4. Orientation to Learning
5. Motivation to Learn

4 Principles of Andragogy
1. Adults need to be involved in the planning and evaluation of their instruction.
2. Experience (including mistakes) provides the basis for the learning activities.
3. Adults are most interested in learning subjects that have immediate relevance and impact to their job or personal life.
4. Adult learning is problem-centered rather than content-oriented.
5. Implications
Implications

▷ Top-down support
▷ Policies, practices, processes
▷ Designated veteran contacts/dedicated offices
▷ Moving to “veteran inclusive”
▷ Military Cultural Competency Training
▷ Campus and community partnerships
▷ Data collection and tracking
▷ Development
Critical Areas for Support

1. Pre-enrollment advising
2. Financial Aid
3. Academic support
6. (Virtual) Student Panel
Meet Your Panel!

Robert Liu

Shawn Lopez

Shawna Uhl
Shawn Lopez
References


References


Thanks!

Any questions?

Monteigne S. Long
mlong@tamu.edu
https://www.tamus.edu/veterans/