

Presentation

Reintegration of our Service Members at the University of Vermont

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Problem Statement

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2013), more than 250,000 veterans who served in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars are unemployed; nearly 12% of the generation compared with the 7.9% nationwide. A significant portion of this population has found themselves in an academic institution with hopes of bolstering their chances for a promising career. Until a few years ago at the University, the eligibility requirements for Veteran financial assistance severely restricted their access to educational opportunities; furthermore, there were no programs, grants, committees, or liaisons to aid this unique and diverse population. This problem was confounded by the fact that neighboring colleges had already begun to address this dilemma which further deterred our Service Members from attending the resident University.

Methods

- Investigation on the University's current programs for Service Members
- Analysis on neighboring states and academic institutions' Service Member programs
- Interviews with University officials and local Armed Forces leaders
- Policy development, recommendations and implementation

Results

As a result of this problem, the University of Vermont has instituted Service Grants, a Veteran Advisory Committee, a Veteran Support webpage, a three-course military counseling certificate, and Yellow Ribbon contributions. On the whole, the institutional culture has shifted to support our Service Members and become a "Vet-friendly" institution. In the end, the University is becoming a competitive choice for our Service Members.

Conclusion

These programs provide incentives for our Nation's Service Members at a time when our forces are being reduced and incentive programs are being eliminated. Although 250,000 Veterans are currently unemployed, most are under-employed given their skills and experience. In short, higher education has the ability to contribute to this very real problem through education, support and reintegration.