ACADEMIC AND STUDENT AFFAIRS ANNUAL REPORT
Veteran and Military Student Services
2015-2016
a. Executive Summary: Overview of past Academic Year successes and challenges

Successes

- **Learning the Job and Establishing the Center**: With the full time permanent coordinator in the position for over a year now, this has been a big year of learning the University, getting to know the veteran and military students, and establishing policies and procedures in the center. Thanks to a very generous special budget from the office of the Provost, we were able to complete renovations in May 2015, giving the center a much needed facelift with new paint, new carpet, and new furniture. The result has been a very welcoming and comfortable center for the students to enjoy, and feel as if it is a place they can relax and connect. Student visits to the center have exploded, with it being utilized by a very diverse group of students each school day. Many of the student’s report that they have found their niche and friend group through their visits to the center.

- **Successful Event Programming**: Veteran and Military Student Services held many events throughout the year, including a fall new veteran student welcome event where families were invited along, the Annual Veterans Day Celebration, the Annual Veterans Lunch & Graduation Ceremony, Veteran and Military Student Orientation, and the Veteran Friendly Employer Breakfast before the employment fair. In partnership with the Center for Faculty Excellence, we also offered a new and updated training for faculty and staff on working with Veteran students.

- **Community Outreach**: We are trying to improve student and community knowledge of the Center, so Veteran and Military Student Services created and produced a professionally designed trifold brochure to educate students about Veteran and Military Student Services. We also did a redesign of the website (see [www.msudenver.edu/veterans](http://www.msudenver.edu/veterans)), and have developed a more robust social media strategy through our Facebook group, Facebook page, and Twitter accounts.

Challenges

- **Staff turnover**: Every semester, we have had VA work study students leave, and then hired new ones. Some students have left MSU Denver temporarily; some have switched universities, and some have run out of GI Bill (which is a requirement of being a VA work study student). This has meant that each semester we are in some ways starting from scratch on Center staff knowledge, and with every student having a very different class schedule, it makes training incredibly difficult. We also have had a lot of turnover with the AmeriCorps VISTA program, some due to poor job fit, and others due to family emergency situations that required quick relocation out of state.

- **One-person shop**: Because there is only one of us at the center full time, it can mean many things competing for attention at the same time. With event planning, relationship building, academic interventions, crisis situations, student questions and resource referral, staff management, center oversight, meetings, and new program development all needing to be accomplished, it can be difficult to find the time or quiet space to accomplish all that needs to be done. To help with this problem, I secured an Internship position in the center for the Spring 2016 semester, and it proved to be incredibly helpful. We haven’t been able to fill the same position this summer or fall with a student, because it is an internship most applicable to a student with a management related degree, and none have come our way since spring semester.
• **Competing uses of space/Establishing an Inclusive culture** - The Center meets many needs, and wears many hats. At any given time, it is a study space, lunch and meal space, place to visit and share with one another, ask questions, get homework help, print papers, meet with the coordinator about a personal issue, meet with a Vocational Rehabilitation counselor about career goals and academic progress, hold a student Veterans club meeting, hold a Veteran services update meeting, plan a group volunteer day, or make initial inquiries about MSU Denver. Because it fulfills so many needs and functions in so many different ways, it can be very difficult to establish and uphold behavioral expectations for the veteran and military students. This past year has been a learning experience in ways to redirect inappropriate language and conversation topics, and to ensure that the center is a safe and welcoming place for all of the very diverse student groups that MSU Denver is proud to contain.

b. **Unit Accomplishments**
   1. Review your completion and progress toward the previous academic year’s goals in line with the institutions Strategic plan and current initiatives.

   1) **Retention Plan** - From Strategic plan theme 1, student and academic access, Goal #2, MSU Denver enhances student success through relevant curriculum and targeted student support services and programmatic innovation. This year I would like to further develop a comprehensive retention plan for military and veteran students. This plan will be used to determine targeted support services and programs for veteran and military students, including such areas as early alerts for academic support, collaborative programs with areas such as Career Services, faculty and staff training, and accurate data tracking. We currently participate in the early alert program, but lack metrics to see how effective those interventions have been thus far. We are working with Team DELTA to develop a baseline for what metrics we need on a regular basis, and which ones can give us a more accurate picture of what is happening with veteran and military student retention, graduation, early academic interventions, and outcomes after graduation.

   2) **Advisory Board** - From strategic plan theme 1 mentioned previously, and from Strategic Plan Student and academic success Goal D: MSU Denver continues to seek and sustain innovative resources for student and academic success, and Strategic theme II) Community Engagement and Regional Stewardship: This year I will further establish and Coordinate the Veteran/Military Student Services advisory board, per plans from the Veteran-Military student task force report, to support this goal. The advisory board will ensure that programs offered through the Veteran/Military Student center are relevant and effective to help veteran/military students persist to degree completion.

c. **Supporting metrics:**
   1. **Program Metrics** - 5-year enrollment and/or participation trends

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Participants in VET/MIL Program</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15-16</td>
<td>2654 logged visits to center by 485 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-15</td>
<td>not tracked</td>
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<tr>
<td>13-14</td>
<td>829</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-13</td>
<td>142</td>
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</table>

These numbers are hard to track, since I am not certain how in 12/13, 13/14 participation was tracked—via contacts of all types, or meetings with the past position of program specialist, or attendance at official functions. Now these numbers are tracked with logins to the center, but seeing this data makes me realize that to track this data, we also need to be
somehow entering in the numbers of persons who attend our outside of center events. We collect this data, but have never manually entered it into the computer login system to track the greater numbers.

Please see below data breakdown on center visits from our current login system at the Center: The Center logged 2654 check-ins between August 2015 and August 2016. Visitors are encouraged by staff to login at the check-in computer by the front entrance upon arrival. There is data for numbers of students utilizing Veteran Student Services from before the Center, but this login system was just implemented in August 2015. Below are the reasons for visiting that students selected from a drop down menu on the login screen. They provide their 900 number, and choose a main reason for their visit.

5 year retention rate trends and 5 year graduation rate trends:
## 2. Employee Professional Metrics - Professional Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staff Member Name</th>
<th>Training Name</th>
<th>Date(s)</th>
<th>Sponsoring Organization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lauren Sullivan</td>
<td>The Department of Veterans Affairs: Reporting Post-Secondary Veteran Outcome</td>
<td>6/25/2015</td>
<td>American Council on Education (ACE)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Measures with Institutions of Higher Learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lauren Sullivan</td>
<td>Supervisor Development Training Parts 1 &amp; 2</td>
<td>7/8/2015, 10/29/2015</td>
<td>Office of Human Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lauren Sullivan</td>
<td>Colorado Adult Learner Symposium</td>
<td>7/31/2015</td>
<td>Colorado Adult Learner Symposium (CALS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lauren Sullivan, work study staff</td>
<td>Forum on Global Leadership</td>
<td>7/31/2015</td>
<td>U.S. Global Leadership Coalition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lauren Sullivan</td>
<td>Veterans in Higher Education Summit</td>
<td>8/7/2015</td>
<td>Colorado Advisory Council on Military Education (CO-ACME)</td>
</tr>
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<td>Lauren Sullivan</td>
<td>Senator Bennett Annual Veterans Conference</td>
<td>9/1/2015</td>
<td>Senator Michael Bennett's office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lauren Sullivan</td>
<td>VA Mental Health Summit</td>
<td>9/12/2015</td>
<td>Denver Dept of Veterans Affairs (VA)</td>
</tr>
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<td>Lauren Sullivan</td>
<td>Admission Accomplished-Service to School’s Approach to Assisting Transitioning</td>
<td>9/17/2015</td>
<td>American Council on Education (ACE)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lauren Sullivan, Dominic Pillitteri</td>
<td>Train the Trainer Veteran Training with Faculty</td>
<td>9/23/2015</td>
<td>Supporting Education Resources for Veterans (SERV)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Study Staff</td>
<td>Reacting to Veteran Students in Crisis</td>
<td>10/9/2015</td>
<td>MSU Denver Counseling Center</td>
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<td>Work Study Staff</td>
<td>Safety on Campus- procedures for Campus Lockdown or Emergencies</td>
<td>10/16/2015</td>
<td>Auraria Campus Police</td>
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<td>Bystander Intervention Workshop</td>
<td>11/5/2015</td>
<td>Phoenix Center</td>
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<td>Transfer Affinity Group Facilitator Blackboard Training</td>
<td>1/12/2016</td>
<td>MSU Denver Transfer Student Services</td>
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a. Scholarly activities (summary of publications, exhibits, performances, presentations, etc.).
   - Presented to Board of Trustees June 2015
   - Facilitated and presented at Faculty/Staff Training Jan 2016
   - Present to United Veterans Committee (UVC) March 2016
   - Presented to all Academic Advisors during their All Advisors monthly staff development training August 2016

b. Service Activities
   - During the 2015/16 year, Lauren Sullivan served on the Leadership team as a Strike Team Leader for The Mission Continues (TMC), a Veteran serving community service organization. Throughout the year The Mission Continues completed many community service projects in which she was involved, including highlighted ones such as Memorial Day flag laying and pick up at Fort Logan national cemetery, and sorting clothes with World Vision to send to victims of international natural disasters.

   - In Summer 2015 Lauren Sullivan and 4 VA Work study student staff spent the day volunteering with Habitat for Humanity on a critical home repair in the Globeville neighborhood.

Veteran Serving Organization Involvement- Lauren Sullivan is an active and participating member of the following groups/committees:
   - United Veterans Committee
   - The Mission Continues (TMC)- Leadership Team
   - Team Red White & Blue (Team RWB)
   - Team Rubicon- attended Strike Team Leader Training in October 2015
   - Colorado Advisory Council on Military Education (CO-ACME)
   - NASPA Veterans Knowledge Community

List the strategic priorities (goals) for your unit for the upcoming academic year.

   - Advisory Board/Council/Committee

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• Veteran Retention Plan and Implementation
• Development of more comprehensive Student Work Study Performance Evaluation & Training Program
• Start tracking program for outside of center visits
• Partnership with Career Services for career program
• Veteran Peer Mentoring Program
• More specialized programming for Women Veterans
• Updated, more comprehensive Veteran/Military student website, in collaboration with admissions and task force
Annual Assessment Report

Program Name: Veteran and Military New Student Orientation
Department Name: Veteran and Military Student Services
Staff member completing report: Lauren Sullivan, Veteran & Military Student Services Coordinator

Brief program description:
Veteran and Military Student Services New Student Orientation serves to welcome all incoming Veteran and Military affiliated students to MSU Denver, while giving them the tools and resources to be successful from start until graduation. The program serves to introduce new students to the key programs and personnel that will be supporting them throughout their studies, so that they know where to go when any needs or challenges arise. The goal is to proactively give them these resources, so that they know where to go before the need arises. The program also serves to introduce them to other Veteran and Military students so that they can develop new friendships and a feeling of camaraderie, and see how much MSU Denver recognizes and values their service to their country.

Key program learning outcomes assessed:
As a result of participation in the program/service/experience, students will be able to identify key support resources on the MSU Denver Campus.

Brief description of assessment activities:
Originally, the intent for this assessment was to survey Veteran and Military students who had participated in the planned group Veteran and Military New Student Orientation in January. That orientation ended up being cancelled due to extreme lack of participation, due to what we attributed to being a tough time of year just after the holidays, (too far before classes started for new students to be in the area). As a result, and alternative, I reached out to each individual new student who we were tracking as veteran or military, and invited them to attend a one on one orientation with me. I also reached out to new Vet/Mil students starting classes in the summer. I established contact with these students before meeting with them, by getting a list of all VET coded students who were registered to attend a new student orientation session throughout the spring and beginning of summer semester, from the office of new student orientation. I then reached out to all of the students via email, inviting them to come 30 minutes early to their scheduled orientation, for a meeting on Veteran and Military student services. I gave all of the students’ packets with a Veteran and Military new student checklist, as well as other handouts on policies and resources applicable to Veteran and Military students. I then gave them a brief presentation, went through all of the handouts, showed them around the Veteran and Military Student Center, and answered their questions. In May, I compiled a list of all these students, and created a Qualtrics Survey tool. In early June, I sent out the anonymous survey (Appendix C) via an email link to the 16 students which I had met with between January and May. There were 9 questions on the survey, 8 being multiple choice, and one open ended response. In July, I sent out a survey reminder since my responses had been low thus far. After the reminder, 2 more students completed the survey, bringing my total response count to 5. I analyzed the results through Qualtrics report generating function.
Results of assessment of student learning outcomes:

Overall, I was very pleased that most of the student respondents had positive reactions to their orientation experiences, and that they felt they knew where to go for assistance and resources.

I was very surprised to see that all student respondents answered the question about where the office of Veterans Education Benefits was located incorrectly. 60% of respondents thought that the office of Veterans Education Benefits was housed in the office of Admissions, and the other 40% thought that it was in the Veteran and Military Student Center. The fact is that Veterans Education Benefits does hold office hours in our center, and any one of my staff can easily help and guide a student to the correct place when the student does have a question that is best answered by Veterans Education Benefits and the Office of the Registrar. This widespread wrong answer made me realize that repetition is definitely needed to educate students about where this particular office is located.

I was very glad to see that 60% knew the Counseling center is one place they could go if experiencing a mental health crisis. The fact that this resource is available on campus for them free of charge was something I tried to hugely emphasize in my meetings with these new students.

One of my questions was regarding who a student would talk to if they had questions about their military transfer credit. It was split 40% and 40% between the transfer credit counselor in admissions, and the prior learning specialist with the Center for Individualized Learning. This actually makes sense, because both parties do have a hand in student military transfer credit. The transfer credit counselor in admissions automatically evaluates the DD214, and awards the student the automatic transfer credit package. The prior learning specialist works with the students individually with their JST (Joint Services Transcript) to see what other credit options make sense, and how they can best help the student achieve their academic goals. So I was happy with this response breakdown. The remaining 20% answered the Veterans Education Office, which is incorrect, but I know that the folks there would lead the students in the right direction and connect them with the appropriate party.

Question 4 asked students if they had turned in their DD214 to take advantage of the military transfer credit package. 80% responded that they already had, and 20% responded that they hadn’t yet, but planned to. Not one answered that they weren’t aware we had the automatic credit package. This was a huge success, as it means that students are completely aware of the package after meeting with me, and all are proactively turning it in to the office of admissions (or have plans to).

Question 5 asked students if they had visited the Veteran and Military Student center in Tivoli 243. While some students had met with me in the center, many had not. 4 of the 5 respondents said they had visited the center, and only one had not.

80% of respondents stated that they had made connections with other military students through either visiting the center, or through their orientation. Only one student responded that they had not made these connections.

100% of respondents stated that they had received a Veteran and Military new student checklist, and 100% also responded that since their orientation with the coordinator, they feel comfortable referring other Veteran/Military students to campus resources. This was my main goal in this assessment, was to see if the students felt they had learned enough about the resources available to them around campus, to be able to refer their classmates to those same resources with confidence.
The final question was open ended and asked respondents what they found most useful to come out of their meeting with the coordinator. Their answers can be viewed as requested, but overall they communicated that the meeting was helpful, and they felt prepared for when their classes started.

**Next steps/closing the loop:**
From my assessment, I discovered that overall, Vet/Mil students were happy with their one on one orientation experiences, and that for the most part they were correct in knowing where to go on campus to utilize applicable resources. From their answers, I takeaway that students are using the center, feel comfortable referring other Veteran and Military students to resources, and know what resources are available to them.

Since all of the students answered the question about where the Veterans Education Benefits office is located, it shows me that for the future we need to emphasize the different office locations more. We have created a new trifold pamphlet since this survey, which clearly lists all of the applicable resources, as well as their physical location, website, email and phone numbers, so I think having this resource available in offices around campus will increase our visibility, and students ease in finding the resources most applicable to them as Veteran and Military Students.

I believe the student learning outcome of identifying key support resources has been met more often than not, but I would still like to see the responses increase to 100% of all students surveyed knowing exactly where certain resources are, such as the Veterans Education Benefits office.

I am interested in using this survey tool again in the future after Veteran Student Orientations, to see what has changed, and to alter the Orientation program content accordingly. I plan to survey the 30 students who will participate in Veteran New Student Orientation in August 2016, to see how their results are similar/different from this group, since they will have taken orientation in a much larger group setting, without the one on one. Based on those results, I may continue to offer one on one orientation to students in addition to the group orientations, or not, if it’s found to be redundant. That being said, all of the Vet/Mil students know that I have an open door policy and am always available to set up meetings if desired.

**Additional reflections:**
This was my first experience with assessment, and I found it incredibly useful. I was a bit surprised that only 5 of 16 students responded, but this seems to be the difficulty with students and email.

**Supporting documents (attached in appendix)**
Copy of survey tool sent to students
Qualtrics survey results report is available upon request.

Appendix C: Assessment Survey Tool
Where is the Office of Veteran Education Benefits located?
☐ The Office of Admissions in the Student Success Building
☐ The Veteran and Military Student Center in Tivoli 243
☐ The Office of the Registrar in the Student Success Building
☐ The Auraria Health Center

If I have a mental health crisis, where can I receive help on campus?
☐ The Provost's Office in the Student Success Building
☐ The MSU Denver Counseling Center in Tivoli
☐ The CU Denver Counseling Center in Tivoli
☐ Veterans Upward Bound in the Cherry Creek Building

If I have questions about the transfer credits that I received from my military trainings, who would I talk to about this?
☐ A transfer counselor with the Office of Admissions in the Student Success Building
☐ The MSU Denver Board of Trustees, by attending one of their public meetings
☐ The Prior Learning Specialist with the Center for Individual Learning in the Admin building
☐ The Veterans Education Benefits Office in the Student Success Building

Have you turned in your DD214 to take advantage of the military transfer credit package?
☐ Yes
☐ No, but I plan to
☐ No, I was not aware of the credit package

Have you visited the Veteran and Military Student Center in Tivoli 243?
☐ Yes
☐ No

Which of the following services are available in the Veteran and Military Student Center
☐ Computing and printing
☐ Quiet study space
☐ Rotating office hours from Campus and Community Resources
Online Survey Software | Qualtrics Survey Solutions

☐ Job board
☐ Food court
☐ Resource referrals
☐ Pet sitting

Have you made connections with other Veteran/Military students through your orientation and/or visits to the Veteran and Military Student Center?
☐ Yes, through orientation
☐ Yes, through visiting the center
☐ Yes, through both orientation and the center
☐ No

Have you received a Veteran and Military New Student Checklist?
☐ Yes
☐ No

Since your orientation, do you feel comfortable referring other Veteran/Military students to campus resources?
☐ Yes
☐ No

What aspect of your Veteran/Military new student visit with the coordinator did you find to be most useful?

Survey Powered By Qualtrics

https://insider.surveys.qualsr.com/BE?SID=SV_fHc9w4gTTW1v2A&Q_JFE=0&Preview=Survey/9/18/2016 5:01:39 PM
5-year Technology Request

We are incredibly lucky to have computer workstations available in the center. In the past year, we addressed a problem with having cheap printers constantly breaking, by working with the IT department to develop a solution, which was for us to buy a commercial grade, high-output printer from them, which would link to students printing accounts, and IT would supply paper and ink cartridges whenever both ran out. This has been the perfect solution, but it took up a decent chunk of our budget last year. In the next 5 years, I would like to see us get our own high quality scanner, as currently my staff have to go upstairs to the office of Student engagement and wellness to scan their timesheets to me, and other paperwork that I need scanned to email.

We also do not currently have a projection system or screen available to share presentations in our conference room. There are appear to be some cords for such use coming out of the ceiling where it would make sense for a television/computer screen to be, so possibly we just need the LCD screen part.

Items requested:

Commercial grade scanner

Large computer monitor for conference room to be mounted on wall for presentations
Appendix G

5-year space request

We are incredibly grateful for our space, but are already quickly outgrowing it. With the heavy student traffic, the biggest complaint I hear lately is that there isn’t enough space, computer workstations, or places to sit. Especially over the middle of the day timeframe, there are many times when every possible seat and surface is taken, and students are left standing around. Usually when this happens, the student will stand around for a while, but then leave if no spots open up. We have max utilization of every study desk, computer, seat on the couch and loveseat, and high stool, routinely in the center during busy times. Students are now spilling into the office hours’ space, which is fine but requires a lot of energy on my part to make sure that the office is clean, empty of personal items, and ready, each time when a visiting office or agency holds their office hours after student use.

A larger space for the center in the next 5 years would support the huge increase we have in students utilizing the center and services, and would allow for us to continue to expand our programming and offerings.