

Employment Services for Student Veterans

Introduction:

As the result of the survey that was provided to student veterans during the Spring 2013 semester, there were four groups of services that the students identified as being among their highest priority for access on campus. Of these identified areas of interest, access to assistance with off-campus employment was noted as a service that was highly desirable. Based on this feedback, a subcommittee of the larger Veterans' Task Force was formed to develop a proposal for addressing this expressed need. Subcommittee members included: Janith Norman, Business Department Professor, David Wahl, Program Manager for Workforce Development Projects, and Gail Newman, Senior Dean of Student Services.

Research/Review Process:

To begin learning more about potential employment services that might be offered to our student veterans we explored the various resources and best practices that are offered through other colleges that appear to have a full array of veterans' services. By delving deeper into resources that were acknowledged on other two and four college web sites, we learned about potential partnerships that might be developed with the Department of Veterans Affairs, as well as a variety of community resources.

In our research, it became evident that few colleges actually had career/employment services that were dedicated specifically for student veterans. It was common to see links on college web sites that referred these students to community agencies, for example: the Employment Development Department (EDD), the Department of Veterans Affairs or other community agencies. With further exploration, we learned that there are many existing resources within our own local community that can certainly play a role in helping our student veterans connect with potential employment opportunities. These resources include:

- EASTBAY Works One-Stop Career Centers – these sites are staffed with Employment Development Department veterans' specialists who provide services to all veterans, based on Title 38 eligibility. Their efforts are determined by their respective roles and responsibilities, concentrated on outreach and the facilitation of direct client services to veterans who are identified with need for intensive training and employment assistance. EASTBAY Works One Stop centers are in convenient locations for our veteran populations, in Antioch, Brentwood, and Concord.
- Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) – this program includes specialists and Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVERs) who provide outreach with employers, developing hiring opportunities within the local work force. This is facilitated by raising awareness among employers of the availability and the benefit of hiring veterans.

DVOP specialists emphasize intensive services to serving those veterans that are economically or educationally disadvantaged, including homeless veterans and veterans with barriers to employment. These specialists coordinate with the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program Offices, DVA Medical Centers, various veterans' service organization groups, military installations, Native American Trust Territories and other areas of known concentrations of veterans or transitioning service members. The DVOP specialists use a case management approach taught by the National Veterans' Training Institute, a preferred method for providing vocational guidance to eligible veterans that are identified as needing intensive services.

The LVER staff conduct outreach to employers and engage in advocacy efforts with hiring executives to increase employment opportunities for veterans, encourage the hiring of disabled veterans, and generally assist veterans in gaining and/or retaining employment. This group offers seminars for prospective employers and job search workshops for veterans seeking employment.

To facilitate the specific needs of veterans, particularly veterans with barrier to employment, DVOP and LVER staff are thoroughly familiar with the full range of job development services and training programs available at the State Workforce Agency One-Stop Career Centers and Department of Veterans' Affairs Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program locations.

- Veterans Employment Committee of Contra Costa County - whose mission is to assist Contra Costa veterans in securing employment, by lobbying for legislative support, by vigorous outreach to veterans and veteran organizations, by partnering with employers, and by providing tangible transitional aid to veterans who have obtained employment.

The committee works with the California Employment Development Department (EDD) and veteran service organizations (VSO). For example, if a veteran secures an employment opportunity, but needs gas money or transit passes for commute to the job, the committee will assist. If a veteran secures employment but needs a set of tools, the committee will assist.

Donations of cash and in-kind contributions will be solicited from local corporations, community groups and individuals. VSOs and other community organizations will help identify veterans requiring assistance. The committee will participate in veterans job fairs and assistance events.

All committee members are unpaid volunteers. The committee will not engage any paid employees. Information is available at admin@vecofccc.org.

- Helmets to Hardhats - works with Veterans in helping them find a job that suits them. Most candidates will enter an apprenticeship program where they learn a trade through on-the-job training supplemented by classroom instruction at state-of-the-art training facilities. Typically, there is no charge for the training and veterans will be paid for the time they are working. The pay received from an employer can be supplemented by education benefits under the G.I Bill, adding hundreds more dollars each month to take home pay. An apprentice's pay increases periodically over the course of the job, and as the apprentice becomes more skilled. Many apprenticeship programs have arrangements allowing individuals to obtain college credit for classroom work. Upon graduation, they will become a journeyman, a craftsperson recognized for his or her knowledge and ability in the selected trade. In some cases their military experience can give credit towards journeymen status and allow entry into an apprenticeship program at an advanced level or be classified as a journeyman immediately. California contact Information, (530) 644-1389, mellowney@earthlink.net
- Veterans' Network – offered through DOW Chemical, open to all DOW employees and local contractors. This group works closely with various veterans' resource groups within the community, providing support to DOW employees that are veterans. They actively pursue connections with local contractors to support job placement within the trades: for pipefitters, welders, and in the local refineries. They focus on community outreach and are very interested in becoming involved in LMC events and in offering support and mentoring to our student veterans.

The Veterans' Network group is closely aligned with "Returning Veterans of America", a support network in Danville. This group provides counseling support for veterans, as well as other support services.

Proposal:

As contacts were made to these various agencies, we learned there are a number of resources in proximity to the college that are eager to form partnerships with our staff in order to offer employment assistance to our student veterans.

It is our recommendation to advertise the availability of these services to our student veterans and bring the various representatives to the college for regularly scheduled site visits. Students can schedule appointments to meet with the representatives and learn about the type of support that they have access to through these community agencies and networks. The students will also have access to the One-Stop locations to take advantage of workshops and additional training, to further prepare them for entering or re-entering the job market.

The coordination and scheduling of these on-campus visits might be facilitated through the new Career Services Center or through a veteran's coordinator, as the college begins to build capacity on campus for supporting a broader array of veterans' services.

Another outcome of our research of other college and agency web sites turned our attention to the need for modifying our own college web site that has been developed for student veterans. Following up on that interest, our group met with Webmaster, Eloine Chapman, and we discussed possibilities for developing a more robust and appealing site. We identified desirable information we would like to include on this site and Eloine confirmed the scope of the project that would be feasible within her schedule. This is another project we would like to encourage and support on behalf of our student veterans. Again, the development and maintenance of updated information for the web site is a responsibility that might be assigned in the future to a coordinator for veterans' services.