MISSION POSSIBLE

POSTSECONDARY PROGRAMS DESIGNED FOR THE STUDENT VETERANS’ TRANSITION FROM BOOTS TO BOOKS

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Introduction: History of our programs

• **2008-2009**
  - Director of Veterans’ Affairs contacted various campus resource centers based on the needs of the current student veterans

• **2009-2010**
  - MFRI Grant “Operation Diploma” was awarded
  - Learning Center open house was held
  - SVO was established
  - Weekly email study tips were implemented
History of our programs (cont’d)

- **2010-2011**
  - MFRI Grant “Operation Diploma” renewed
  - GA was hired for Veterans’ Affairs Office
  - Muncie Area Veterans Career Skills Workshop held
  - Student veteran orientation program drafted

- **2011-2012**
  - MFRI Grant “Operation Diploma” renewed
  - Online orientation program established
  - Student Veteran Orientation Day held
  - SVO events and SALUTE Honor Society established
  - Indiana Veterans Career Skills Workshop hosted in Indianapolis
Orientation Program Objectives

1. Build community among the student veterans
2. Ease the transition into a postsecondary institution
3. Understand campus and community resources available to student veterans
4. Interpret and understand veteran benefits
Transition to college modules

Development of modules

- Initially developed as a one-semester course
- Adjusted to meet needs prior to arriving on campus
- 4 modules were created and placed on Veterans’ Affairs Website
- Included a verification of completion option
- Available for students and family members
- Participation with the modules is an area of concern

Scholarships and Financial Aid

Welcome to this series of modules which have been created especially for you and your family. The intent is to introduce you to valuable information about Ball State University, thus making your transition easier. At the end of each module, you can pose questions and we will follow-up with you in a timely manner. The modules will stay online so you can refer to them as often as you would like.

1. Office of Veteran Affairs and Veterans Benefits
2. College Terminology
3. Moving to Muncie and Ball State
4. Getting off to a Good Start Academically
Understanding Your Veterans’ Benefits:

• Introduction to Ball State’s Veterans’ Affairs office and office personnel
• Brief description of the types of benefits available to veterans, service members, and family members
• Contact information provided

College Terminology:

• Explanation of common terminology seen in higher education
• Information on resources and offices on campus provided
• Links to websites provided
College Modules

Moving to Muncie and Ball State:
• Information regarding
  • Utilities
  • Recreations
  • Medical
  • Housing
  • Schools
  • Parks
  • VA Clinic
  • Transportation
  • Maps

Getting off to a Good Start Academically:
• Focuses on utilizing a syllabus
• Interacting with professors and instructors
• Time management tips
• Access to tutoring and academic support

Syllabus – On your first day of class, your professor will distribute a syllabus or outline of your course. Generally, a syllabus will include the course description, course objectives, textbook name, professor’s name, office hours, and basic contact information; assignments; grading scale; attendance policies; calendar of when the assignments and exams are due; and all other important information related to the course. There will also be an invitation to meet with the professor to discuss disability-related issues if you desire accommodations for this class. It is important to keep the syllabus as it acts as sort of a contract between you and the professor. Things can change, but basically, this is what will be expected of you for a successful completion of the class. Some professors put their syllabus online, so note if this will be true for your class. Keep your
Student Veteran Orientation Day

- Implemented the Saturday before classes began
- 21 “New to BSU” student veterans participated
- Orientation leaders were SVO members (upperclassman)
- “Mission Possible” t-shirts made
- Objectives included
  - Building community
  - Getting to know the campus and Muncie
  - Understanding resources available to students
Student Veteran Orientation Day

Structure of the day

- Ice breaker activities
- Small groups formed; “commonalities and uniqueness” activity
- Scavenger hunt around campus
- “Roadblocks” activity lead by SVO leaders
- Introduction of online student resource center and Ball State services
- Bus tour of Muncie
- Bowling and pizza
- Pleasant surprise: family members attended Orientation Day
Online Student Veteran Resource Center

- Information available to students and family members throughout the academic year
- Campus procedures and processes (i.e. registering for classes)
- Campus resources and contact information
- Study tips
- Career tips
- Mental health information
Student Veterans Organization (SVO)

Student Veterans of America-
http://www.studentveterans.org/

• SALUTE Honor Society-
http://salute.colostate.edu/
Student Veteran Organization

- Established in 2010 as a campus organization
- Funding raised through participation in grant competitions
- GA served as advisor
- Attended and presented at leadership conference
- Presented and participated in Veterans’ Day ceremonies
- Social events included tailgates, bowling, rock wall climbing, pizza parties
- Sponsored a Toys for Tots collection on campus
- Executive leaders serve as orientation leaders
- SALUTE Honor Society established in 2011

Student Veteran Organization (SVO)

Today’s veterans face tremendous obstacles in their path of attaining a college degree. These challenges range from a missing sense of camaraderie to a lack of sensitivity to the unique needs of student veterans. Ball State’s Student Veteran Organization (SVO) builds a sense of community among this population and helps make the goal of a college degree a reality.

Ball State’s SVO was established in 2009 and is led by the current student veterans on campus. They meet regularly throughout the academic year for various events such as bowling, tailgates, and group dinners. This past year, Ball State’s SVO participated in Ball State’s Relay for Life and Toys for Tots.

In the Spring of 2011, Ball State’s SVO became an official chapter of the Student Veterans of American (SVA) national organization.
Other Initiatives

Building Community:

• Veterans’ Day Ceremony
• SVO Tailgate at Ball State vs. Army football game
• Rock wall climbing event
• Blackboard Community
• Mid-semester check-in meetings
• Small group coffee discussions
Other initiatives cont’d

Academic and Campus Outreach:

- Learning Center office hours and tutoring
- Weekly newsletters
  - Feature article
  - Upcoming events
  - Study tip
  - “5 Questions with…”
  - Archived on Veterans’ Affairs website
- Research endeavors
- Brown bag focus workshops
- Career Readiness Workshops
  - 1st year hosted locally, 2nd year state-wide
Results

Participation

- 61.7% of the incoming student veterans would not have been involved in any college transitional programs prior to attending college
- Participation rate of new the BSU student veterans was 38.3% (23/60)
- Participation in Orientation Day was 35% (21/60)

Grade Point Average (GPA) *Fall 2011 Semester

- The average semester GPA for students who completed both the online modules and orientation day earned a 3.527 GPA compared to 2.795 of the remaining students who did not complete this combination of activities
- Those who participated in a Veterans’ Affairs orientation activity had a higher average GPA (3.264) compared to those who did not participate (2.576)
- The average GPA for all new BSU student veterans was higher (2.844) compared to the GPA of all Ball State freshmen (2.732)
Retention *Based on Fall 2011-Spring 2012

- Student veterans who participated in the Student Veteran Orientation Day had 100% retention rate.
- Student veterans who participated in an orientation activity were retained at 95.7%.
- Student veterans who completed both the online modules and attended Orientation Day were retained at 100%.
- Of all the 60 “New to BSU” student veterans, the retention rate was 90% compared to a 92.7% retention rate of all BSU matriculating freshman.

Credit Hour Completion

- The “New to BSU” student veterans who did participate in an orientation activity attempted more credit hours, completed more credit hours, and had a higher completion rate than those student veterans who did not participate in a Veterans’ Affairs orientation activity.
Food for thought

- English 103 class (English Composition) for combat veterans
  - Class was planned, but instructor reconsidered participation
- Discussion board on Blackboard Community
  - Difficulty getting consistent use
- Workshops
  - Student veteran participation
- Accessibility to Veterans’ Affairs website
  - How many clicks away is the page from your college’s homepage?
- Faculty/Staff Recognition for Student Veteran Support
  - Awarded at Veterans’ Day Ceremony
- Campus-wide student veteran support network
  - Mission Possible Corps
- Brochures, marketing materials and social media
Honors and Recognitions

- “Military Friendly University”
  - GI Jobs Magazine

- Publication: National College Learning Center Association (NCLCA) newsletter about Ball State’s academic support programs for student veterans

- SVO invited to participate in MFRI SVO ‘Hall of Fame’ grant competition

- Manuscript under consideration for publication in National Orientation Directors Association (NODA)
Questions?

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