Advising Transfer Military Students
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Abstract

Today's students can come from a larger area than just high school. With the entire world's conflicts and today's society, more and more of our present day students may have come from the military ranks. Though we have not come to an actual draft system, more and more modern day students have served their time in the military, to keep America strong, these strong-willed younger folks have been populating our colleges and universities. They are anxious to start a new life and want to feel as if they are part of the university system.

Introduction

How should we advise our Students that are Veterans?

As a veteran myself, adjusting to a civilian lifestyle can be a little overwhelming, but can you imagine these students going to basic training, off to a strict military school, and then serve time in a regimented style and be on guard for the next couple of years? You literally don't have any time for leisure or time for yourself, because of the discipline that is drilled into you. They may have tunnel-vision in the way of their attitudes towards fraternities or sororities. They have "been there, done that" sort of thing and most will not feel comfortable doing it now.

So at RISD I have implemented a group area for these veterans of other countries and for our American veterans that served in the military and have come back to school. To help them re-adjust to their work and to hopefully gain back their artistic edge, so that they too can compete with other fine arts students when they get into the work force. I have guided, helped these students with their homework, and have helped them to study in ways that they can adjust back to this type of mentality and to also work alongside with their peers. We may even just sit and talk about how the civilian life is different than the military and the stories that we have shared. We have study hours and groups for mostly the Liberal Arts courses that RISD offers. The studio work is a whole different aspect of the educational process here.

Military personnel are in fact a unique group of students as you can find anywhere. Most will come on campus and right away take charge of any orientation planning that a campus is sponsoring and will directly tell the staff members what needs to be done and how it should be done. They will not mess around waiting for answers; they will generally hold you responsible for how they are to be treated and how long it will take them to graduate. This new breed of student has seen it all or will be on the frontlines of any conflict and just want an honest description from advisors, when will I be done, and when can I get my degree? They do not want fluff, they have been yelled at, shot at, and even have had grenades or bombs tossed at them, they do not want the luxurious run-around of facts or scenarios as most other students will receive.

Advisors who work with military students should remember that these students are eager and motivated to use the benefits they earned to start new academic endeavors. They are not seeking special treatment; they only hope that that their instructors and advisors will be mindful of their

many responsibilities which are unparalleled when compared to those faced by more traditional students (Bash, 2003). Communication, collaboration, and commitment will show students that their education success matters. Advisors can make a difference by helping these students connect with the resources that will help them overcome obstacles and successfully adjust to college life (Redden, 2008).

More importantly is how the military credit system will be used to allow these students to transfer in all the knowledge they have gained by either on-the-job training or actual military school experience. Most of today's catalogs are outdated and most need to be adjusted to allow military students ease of transferring in these credits and how they can be applied towards their degree requirements. Most of the experience for most of these students will be for their liberal arts requirements, but if looked at with a magnifying glass, may also be interpreted as part of their core degree requirements. Most of these students will be in disagreement, because of an institutions lack of knowing what the job description is and how they can be applied correctly.

Most veterans may be upset, too, when they have gone through intensive training and now find out that most of their experience may not be used towards any of their degree program. This needs to be considered extensively throughout the academia field as we could lose these intelligent students to community colleges that are willing to give credits for most of their past experiences. Advisors need to study up on the correct interpretation of military MOS' and quickly have an answer for these students so that we are not wasting their time or their money unnecessarily.

Every year, too, around Veterans Day, our Student Affairs office honors our military students with a nice dinner and a recognition event, so that our military veterans feel comfortable coming back to school and not have to worry about stress or how to deal with younger students, when they get out. This program that I run seems to have helped a lot of our students get through these tough times and many have written to me after they have graduated and thanked me for offering this program, so that they can handle the ordeals that may have come their way. It's funny to say that our veterans have to put up with trying not to get shot at, stepping on an IED, or have missiles or even torpedoes shot at them, but they have a tough time adjusting back to a fine arts mentality at school.

References

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