



Inside/Outside Training: A Campus-Based Field Unit Approach for Working with Veterans

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Abstract:

This article reports on the development and implementation of a campus-based, faculty-supervised field unit used to train Bachelor's and Master's-level social work students to work with military personnel, veterans, and their families. The model starts with working inside the campus environment by using services to student veterans to both respond to needs of the student veteran population and to teach competencies for serving the veteran population outside of the campus in community veteran service organizations. It discusses the lessons learned from student outcomes and program outcomes over the past three years and implications.

Introduction

After over a decade of conflict, 2.4 million military personnel are transitioning home from combat zones, and many are rejoining civilian life (Hassan, 2013). The nation now faces long-term challenges in this transition back to communities where the capacity to support the multiple transitioning needs of military personnel, veterans, and their families may be inadequate. According to Eric Shinseki, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, history indicates that the needs of veterans for services will continue to increase over the next decade or more, as the costs of war continue to increase long after war's end (Dao, 2012).

For social work education, the challenge to support the care of our returning veterans requires

training the next generation of service providers. Social work educators must produce a generation of culturally-competent social workers who can serve the needs of this population across many systems of care. Traditionally, social work has had a long history of serving the military population. But Rubin (2012) issued a call to action pointing out that the profession has been slower to respond to the current need for trained social workers to meet the challenges of our veterans and their families. As the Veterans Administration (VA) system strains under the likelihood that as many as one in five veterans and their families face health or behavioral health concerns, veteran service organizations in the community have also indicated increases in demand for services and a lack of sufficient training to deal with the special needs of the population (Dao, 2012; Coll & Weiss, 2013; Rubin, 2012; Selber, Chavkin, & Williams, 2012; Smith-Osborne, 2012). The need for skilled social workers to meet this demand for services is increasing, pushing the profession to develop standards and competencies for work with this population and explore innovative methods for expanding both classroom and field education resources to train competencies for work with this population (CSWE, 2010).

Addressing this gap between an increasing demand for services and an insufficient number of trained service providers will require innovative approaches for enhancing the training capability of schools of social work. The campus environment provides an excellent opportunity for expanding our capabilities for teaching these skills, with the doubling in recent years of veterans entering higher education (Selber, in press). As these veterans transition to campus, they bring with them leadership skills but also challenges from their military experiences. Chief among these challenges are posttraumatic stress, mild traumatic brain injury, depression, relationship difficulties, and substance abuse (Hassan, 2013). The need for social work education to train students to work with military personnel, veterans, and their families coincides well with the needs of campus environments to help transition these student veterans (Selber, in press).

This article reports on the development and implementation of a campus-based, faculty-supervised field unit used to train Bachelor's- and Master's-level social work students to work with military personnel, veterans, and their families. The model starts with working inside of the campus environment by using services provided to student veterans to both respond to the needs of the student veteran population and to teach social workers the competencies they will need to serve the veteran population outside of the campus environment in community veteran service organizations. The authors describe the overall service initiative and the field unit model. This article discusses the lessons learned from field student outcomes and program outcomes. It also presents implications for social work education and practice.

Background: Serving Student Veterans in Higher Education

To help our military personnel and veterans transition into, through, and out of universities will require that universities provide supportive services beyond access to the veterans' educational benefits laid out in the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill. Current research indicates that student veterans have

multiple needs while transitioning into and through campus life (Rudd, Goulding, & Bryan, 2011). For example, student veterans can arrive on campuses in as little as months after returning from combat zones and exiting the military. Among the demands of this transition are the needs for veterans to understand their new roles as students and the campus bureaucracy, learn to interact with campus faculty and students who may not understand their past military experiences, and face a variety of academic challenges, including the strain of returning to academia after having been absent for five years, and the disabilities with which one in five veterans enter higher education (Griffin & Gilbert, 2012; Wurster, Rinaldi, Woods, & Liu, 2013). Moreover, in recent surveys of student veterans, one university reported that approximately 39% were from a first-generation college family; 64% indicated having up to three deployments; 40% reported having been injured or wounded during their enlistment; 40% reported feeling high levels of stress on campus; and 58% reported sleep issues. In addition, 6% reported having experienced a concussive event at some time during their military experience (Gwin, Selber, Chavkin, & Williams, 2012; Selber & Kupcho, 2013). These reports reveal that some student veterans enter the campus environment at-risk for a number of health and behavioral health issues, reinforcing the need for access to supportive services (Glover-Graf, Miller, & Freeman, 2010).

To respond to these challenges, the primary author of this article, a faculty member at a school of social work, provided campus-wide leadership in the development of the Veterans Initiative, a coordinated approach to the identification, development, and implementation of campus services for student veterans that includes a campus-based field unit for training social work students. The four-year university, with an enrollment of over 35,000 students, is located in a southwestern state with major military installations and National Guard units in the area. The campus has a long tradition of supporting the military, with two ROTC units on campus and a current enrollment of over 2,800 primarily full-time student veterans and dependents.

In 2008, the social work faculty member approached the university to create the Veterans Advisory Council (VAC) of faculty and staff from key departments to address the needs of student veterans on campus. Meeting monthly over the past five years, the VAC guided the university in developing services for student veterans and their families across an array of areas and challenges common to the student services field. The framework used for developing these supportive services included a veteran-centered approach with an emphasis on transitional assistance and active outreach to the student veteran population, a peer-to-peer approach that develops leadership skills among the student veteran organization members, and increasing understanding, knowledge and awareness on campus to enhance coordination among university departments. Services included in the Veterans Initiative consist of: academic support; health and behavioral health; career and employment guidance; and training, technical assistance, and research. [Table 1](#) provides further detail on campus services for veterans in the Veterans Initiative model.

Since its inception, the service model has expanded its services driven by ongoing student veteran needs assessments, tailoring services to the identified needs and hiring veterans in key service units throughout the campus to consolidate the program development gains. The university program has been recognized nationally and was ranked 11th among four-year institutions as best veteran-friendly campus in the nation in 2011 (“2011: Best for vets”).

Adding a Campus-Based Faculty-Supervised Field Unit for Training Social Workers

Training the next generation of social workers to work in veteran-serving organizations requires schools of social work to have not only classroom resources but also field education resources. Because field education has been referred to as the signature pedagogy by the Council on Social Work Education (2010) and has been a long-standing tradition of importance to social work, it is a crucial factor in training. However, as most field instruction is agency-based, it is dependent on agency resources and conditions. This variability can pose challenges to quality field instruction, and there have been recent calls for more focus on building evidence-based field education processes (Holden, Barker, Rosenberg, Kuppens, & Ferrell, 2011; Leon, Kazmerski, & Dziegielewski, 2001; Selber, Mulvaney, & Lauderdale, 1998; Wayne, Bogo, & Raskin, 2010). In addition, the Council on Social Work Education (2010) developed practice behaviors for the ten core competencies within the 2008 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards to guide military social work that have helped focus the profession on the need to provide more training for working with this population.

A faculty-supervised field unit approach for field education can provide many advantages for training social work students, and such an approach has been used by social work education in fields such as criminal justice, juvenile justice, child welfare, and school settings (Leon et al., 2001; Selber et al., 1998). This approach to providing field instruction especially for the veteran population can extend social work services in areas where there are few social workers employed for field supervision, including some veteran service organizations in the community. Field units can also provide a practice setting for bridging classroom curriculum learning and skill building. With training for competence with veterans, this is crucial because many agency settings do not have the knowledge base or skill set with veteran populations. In addition, field units also have the advantage of supporting service provisions for settings with fewer resources and capabilities, such as university campuses that serve student veterans. Field units are also well suited to the innovation needed to address hard-to-solve social problems, because it is possible to more easily blend practice and research priorities within them (Selber, et al., 1998).

After developing the Veteran Initiative and running this program on campus for two years, we decided to add a faculty-supervised, campus-based field unit for training social work students for work with this population in order to extend services on campus and to add field resources for training purposes. This model focuses on having our social work student interns learn by helping student veterans. The school of social work is located in a military corridor, and the interest of social

work students in working with veterans was rising, due in part to the nation's recent wars, the increase in veteran enrollment in universities, and the needs of local agencies for trained personnel to work with military personnel, veterans, and their families. As a result, in 2010, the university developed a field unit for Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) and Master of Social Work (MSW) students within the Veterans Initiative service structure. A faculty member of the Veterans Advisory Council is responsible for supervising the field unit and helping link the educational and service goals. BSW students, beginning first-year foundation MSW students, and advanced concentration second-year MSW students in both Direct Practice and Administrative Leadership concentrations are interviewed and accepted into the unit each semester. To date, 16 students have participated in the field unit and have provided over 9,000 hours of service delivery within the Veterans Initiative services structure. Interns perform outreach, case management, program development, and research functions and assist in developing service initiatives, such as organizing fundraising and outreach events and helping develop partnerships and new programs. Student interns attend Veteran Advisory Council meetings, the campus student veteran organization meetings, and community events. A faculty member who is a military family member with over ten years of field education experience provides the field instruction. Field educational supervision is done in a group format meeting weekly for two hours with individual supervision on an as-needed basis. BSW and first-year MSW interns who complete their internships in the Veterans Initiative field unit move on to pursue advanced concentration second-year placements with veteran service organizations in order to continue their training with the population.

In addition, all student interns must enroll in the Troop and Veteran Transition social work elective course. This social work elective course covers such topics as the culture of the military, combat operations and its impact on troops and families, health and behavioral health services inside the military, post traumatic stress, mild traumatic brain injury, behavioral health challenges faced by troops and veterans, including the impact of sleep issues, family topics, military widows, systems of care in the community, special populations, including female veterans and campus veterans, and civilian career transitions.

Although 75% of the enrolled students in the elective course are BSW and MSW students, a growing number are from other majors such as psychology, recreational therapy, and educational psychology. In addition, an increasing number of students taking the course are veterans. Students enrolled in the class also complete a veteran interview, attend veteran events, participate in service learning projects, and complete a literature review on an identified topic related to the service learning project.

Field Student Outcomes: Lessons Learned from a Survey of the Social Work Interns

[Table 2](#) provides an overview of the descriptive characteristics of the social work interns trained since 2010. Interestingly, there is a balance in ethnicity and level of student internship. There is more female than male participation in the unit, but that is not unexpected in a female-dominated profes-

sion such as social work.

A recent electronic survey of the interns in the field unit (93.7% response rate) suggested that they were motivated to pursue the internship in the field unit because of their desire to work with veterans (57%) and to help veterans, including many respondents who had family members who were veterans (57%). One intern stated, "My sibling and other close friends were serving our country, and I was compelled to learn how to give back and support not only the service members but their families." It is worth noting that 93% of the interns in the field unit thought they were better prepared to work with veterans after this internship experience. This view is captured by one intern's comment: "This experience taught me empathy and gave me the power and knowledge to advocate for better/enhanced services for veterans and their families."

[Table 3](#) shows examples of the responses to two open-ended questions. The first question was, "Please list the three most important things you learned from this internship." The majority of the respondents listed learning about the needs of veterans, the culture of veterans, the importance of the peer-to-peer model, and the necessity of networking. Of particular note are student comments, such as: "Meet the veterans where they are" and "connecting veterans to each other is one of the best services you can provide."

The second question was, "Please tell what the internship meant to you as a social worker." In addition to being very satisfied with the internship, many of the respondents mentioned the importance of a systems view. For example, one student said, "This internship has allowed me to grasp the 'bigger picture' in regards to advocating for veterans." Other students commented, "Social work at its core looks at the person in the environment" and "Doing the Veterans Initiative internship has enabled me to see the client from a more holistic view."

The field unit has had success in helping interns find jobs after graduation in veteran-serving organizations, and agencies report that the students are more prepared than other schools' students with skills in place for work with the population. Some of the agencies that have employed these graduates include the Wounded Warrior Project-National Headquarters, Veterans Administration (VA) hospitals and clinics, and Operation Homefront.

Of those who have graduated, 62% stated they were working with military personnel, veterans, and their families in a veteran service organization, and 15% stated they were working with the population in other settings, while 23% stated they had not yet worked with the population. Thus, 77% after graduating had jobs working with the identified population. All respondents (100%) also stated that they were highly likely or likely to work with the military, veterans, and/or their families in the future. For example, one intern stated, "I had a veteran focus/interest before this internship, but I now have a professional career centered around it." These data indicate the success of the field unit in

teaching and preparing social work interns for practice with the population as well as enhancing the commitment of social work students to this population.

In addition, [Table 4](#) shows selected training and evaluation of the social work interns in the field unit within the context of the CSWE guidelines for practice in military social work. The links to CSWE's Educational Policy are only examples and vary by level of student and placement. The table provides an overview of some of the main training topics provided to interns who participate in the field unit and its multiple training techniques. These modules are used to train and evaluate interns who participate in the faculty-supervised field unit. Training occurs using field educational contracts to focus field internship training by level of student, faculty supervision of field tasks, the troop and veteran transition social work elective course, and added outside interdisciplinary training workshops and modules.

Program Outcomes: Lessons Learned in the Field Unit

After three years of implementing the field unit, some valuable lessons have been learned:

A Unifying Social Work Perspective. Social work brings a systems perspective and a person-in-environment approach to the task of program development that is needed in developing this field unit from both the inside and the outside. The systems perspective helps focus attention on the need to coordinate services across university administrative units that is crucial in providing seamless services to student veterans. The person-in-environment perspective also helps the campus view student veterans holistically and not just focus on processing their educational benefits. The need to focus on academic, career, health, behavioral health, social, and financial areas as well as across family issues is crucial for supporting veterans' success. In addition, social work's strengths-based perspective encourages considering veterans as the leaders they are but with an eye towards helping support them, which decreases the stigma sometimes associated with accessing services, because it focuses on strengths instead of a deficit model.

Social Work Faculty Leadership that Blends Goals. Social work faculty leadership is essential to the field unit operation. The faculty member chosen to lead the field unit also serves on the advisory council and blends the educational and service goals. The faculty member should have a background working with the veteran population as a veteran or family member and actual work experience with the population. The faculty member must also have experience in providing field instruction to interns and understand the use of research to guide program development, as many of the activities in the unit will be geared toward developing services for the student veteran population. The faculty member must be committed to working both inside, with the campus community, and outside, with the veteran community.

Social Work Interns that Conduct Outreach and Serve. Selecting mature students who demonstrate a

career commitment to military personnel, veterans, and their families is also central, as veterans can be hesitant about seeking help. The importance of cultural competence with the population has been well documented (Coll & Weiss, 2013; Coll, Weiss, Draves, & Dyer, 2012). Other factors, such as prior work or volunteer experience, background with veteran issues, veteran or family member status, and a diversity of perspectives are important to having a balanced field unit (Selber & Chavkin, 2012). Outreach to recruit students for the field unit was accomplished within the Troop and Veteran Transition social work elective course, by working with the field faculty who assist students in choosing field placements, and by speaking to classes across the BSW and MSW programs about the benefits of the field unit. In addition, former interns were also great ambassadors for the field unit and reported that their peers asked about the value of the unit as an internship site. Any student could apply for the field unit, and no special criteria were announced for this application process except an interest in working with the veteran population. Students who applied were interviewed, and decisions were made based on the student's commitment to the population, ability to work independently and as a team member, and interest in the activities and educational tasks available in the unit, including an outreach model for service delivery. Ultimately a goodness of fit approach prevailed for choosing the interns for placement. There were always about twice as many student applicants as slots, and the field unit continued to gain in popularity.

It was important that interns be interested in being out in the university community. Veterans are often hesitant about outsiders and must see people involved on campus and committed before they open up and engage fully in the helping process. Interns perform case management (both inside and outside of the university), and a priority is given to any referrals from faculty and staff, as well as identified student veterans with a low grade point average who are at-risk for dropping out. More clinical experiences are arranged with a local veteran service provider that provides a peer-to-peer service model for services in the community.

Operating a Seamless Field Unit. Both BSW and MSW students can enter in fall, spring, or summer semesters and complete a block or concurrent field internship in the field unit. The numbers of student interns vary, and as many as 6 students and as few as one have been in the unit in a given semester. Student interns are given an initial orientation that covers basic elements, such as a profile of student veterans on campus, guest speakers from key campus administrative units and points of contact, roles and responsibilities, case management functions, and resources available. Additional topics on health and behavioral health issues are provided in the social work elective course described above. Group supervision supplemented by individual supervision is routinely provided. Interns are often placed in offices in the campus administrative units, such as the student veteran organization space, Writing Center, Career Services, the Veterans Affairs Office, and Disability Services. This strategy promotes outreach, helps the administrative units individualize services for veterans, and helps interns become more visible to student veterans and more accessible.

Integrating Levels of Practice and Research While Developing Programs. This field unit setting lends itself to teaching practice and research skills. All student interns must be involved in needs assessment work with veterans, focus groups, gathering, and analyzing data using survey methodology, as well as case management and outreach. Teaching the steps in program development—needs assessment, pilot testing, analysis, feedback and correction—and rolling out the program is possible in any given semester. For example, when a student veteran needs assessment revealed that a high percentage of student veterans had sleep issues, a partnership with the Respiratory Care Department was formed, and sleep studies using mobile actigraphy watches were done. Data analysis by respiratory care staff identified veterans with sleep disorders, and this step was followed by social work interns working with the veterans to refer them to the Veterans Administration (VA) clinics and other resources for treatment. In addition, another step was taken to introduce a meditation skills group to campus veterans in order to deal with the stress identified by many of the veterans as an underlying part of the sleep issues.

Embracing an Interdisciplinary Setting. Universities are filled with opportunities to work with multiple disciplines to support student veterans. Psychologists, student development specialists, counselors, allied health professionals, and many academic majors are partners on campus. This represents a rich learning environment and a dynamic setting that encourages innovation, yet it brings challenges to maintain a social work focus. For example, student affairs staff are common partners for supporting student veterans, yet they often have a different perspective from social workers and are less likely to go outside the campus to the community to seek partnerships for program development. Maintaining a social work focus in the field unit by reviewing theoretical perspectives, discussing the topic in supervision, and staffing case vignettes and program development protocols can be valuable in educating the student interns.

Developing Other Training Resources. It is important to support the development of additional placements for students who serve in the field unit as a BSW or first-year foundational MSW student but need advanced concentration placement experiences to complete their degrees. Helping the Field Office develop other placements that serve veterans is crucial so that these interns have equally high-quality placements in which to get further training. Vet Centers, Veteran Administration (VA) placements, and veteran service organizations are all part of the continuum of training needed to produce social workers with the cultural and practice skills needed to work with the population. In addition, in 2012 this field unit also contributed to the training of MSW students who are part of a three-year federal training grant from the Health Services Resources Administration (HRSA) to provide competitive training stipends to MSW trainees who commit to working with military personnel, veterans, and their families after graduation. Project Stand Up for Veterans, the \$479,035 training grant, was built on the Veterans Initiative model's outreach strategies and partnerships, and adds a focused training effort for MSW students.

Students trained in the field unit are also often recruited by other placement and employment settings that require understanding of trauma, mental health issues, and other interdisciplinary training topics. This field unit approach can also be adapted to prepare social work students to work with other populations. For example, our model for working with student veterans and preparing social workers to work with this population has been adapted by other faculty on campus to work with students who have aged out of the foster care system and are entering the university.

Outcomes of Providing Service to Veterans. The Veterans Initiative overall model of service provision to student veterans has continued to develop more comprehensive services since its inception in 2008 and has served to raise the visibility and commitment to serving student veterans both across campus and among other universities in the state. The model has been recognized nationally, and for three years in a row, the university has been named one of the top four-year universities in the country for being “military-friendly” (“2013: Best for vets”).

In addition, the Veterans Advisory Council has placed a priority on working to develop a comprehensive evaluation of the model in its latest strategic plan. However, data from the campus Office of Institutional Effectiveness on retention rates for student veterans is encouraging, and these rates have increased since work on the model began. In 2007, prior to beginning our work, retention rates for student veterans were at 52%, and in 2010, two years after the Veterans Initiative began, the rate was 61.5%, followed by a 65.2% retention rate in 2011. These data on student veterans are tracked campus-wide for those student veterans who access and use veteran benefits. Closing the existing gap with traditional student graduation rates of 76% is a priority for our future work. In addition, in a recent online needs assessment of 1028 student veterans (N=300, 27% response rate), respondents self-reported grades well above average, with 69% reporting a grade point average above 3.0. In addition, 75% of respondents reported that the university was meeting their needs and that they were on track with meeting their goals for graduation. Also, 81% of student veterans reported that that they were currently not experiencing any difficulties that might cause them to stop attending the university (Selber & Kupcho, 2013).

Implications

After a decade of conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan, the nation faces a familiar challenge of helping troops and veterans transition back to their home communities and into civilian life. The social work profession has slowly begun to prepare to serve the needs of military personnel, veterans, and families in this transition but more concerted efforts are needed (Rubin, 2012). Social work can and must do more to prepare the next generation of service providers to work with this population. However, this requires a focus on preparing more quality field education resources. Social work can lead the way by considering an “inside/outside” approach wherein a faculty-supervised, campus-based field unit is formed to work with student veterans on campus and is then moved to outside placements that serve the population in the community. The inside/outside field unit

approach takes advantage of the surge of veterans entering campuses and provides a naturally occurring “training laboratory” so that our graduates are truly prepared to work on the outside with this population.

Traditional methods of field education for this population, mainly the Veterans Administration (VA) placements, have been at the center of the field education endeavor in this practice arena and continue to be excellent field placement settings. But due to demands for service provision in the VA and bureaucratic limitations, VA field internship slots are often limited and not able to accommodate all students interested in the population. Community-based veteran service organizations also present limited placement opportunities because of a lack of MSWs for field supervision and a lack of cultural competence for working with this population (Selber, Chavkin, & Williams, 2012). Using the campus as a practice setting and focusing on practice with student veterans provides social work education with a practice setting that is accessible and dynamic.

This inside/outside approach is not without its challenges, as universities must be open to a number of opportunities, including examining and responding to the needs of its student veterans; promoting supportive services to the student veteran population; being innovative in service delivery; and partnering both on campus and off campus to develop and deliver services (Selber, Chavkin, Marshall, & Shaffer, 2014). Campus departments and units must be willing to coordinate and focus on providing academic, health, behavioral health, and career services to student veterans. These services will require persistent focus and prioritizing of student veteran needs by university administrators in a time of limited budgets. However, it is also a time of legislators’ and policy-makers’ attention on graduation rates, and all of these efforts help boost rates of degree completion among student veterans. In addition, from a marketing perspective, student veterans come with their own funding and federal benefits, but university administrators who promote this outreach must provide the supportive services to help student veterans succeed.

In addition, the inside/outside field unit is an intensive endeavor and requires social work faculty time. Administrative support for developing and operating this model is important, and faculty hopefully can negotiate some release time to do so. This is a long-term commitment, as it takes several years to get the model in place and established within the student veteran community. This model also requires that faculty be present in veteran service organization issues in the community. All of the pieces – the field unit, the troop and veteran social work elective course, the development of other community-based field resources, the campus services for student veterans, the commitment to veteran service organizations in the community – are part of the overall model that provides the momentum for producing graduates ready to work with the population. The program development of the field unit and its other components takes considerable time, dedication, and follow-through but is richly rewarding and can be extremely productive.

The work so far on the overall Veterans Initiative model for providing services to student veterans as well as the field unit component indicates the need for continued development and research. Future directions for research on the field unit component include a comparison of data from social work interns who are trained in the model and those who are trained in other veteran services settings and other social work training sites. In addition, more exploration of the outcomes of the CSWE practice competencies for military social work across students trained in the field unit and those trained in follow-up settings is currently being explored. In addition, a follow-up survey of employers and field instructors is planned for the current year. Likewise, more in-depth evaluation of graduation rates, service utilization needs for wounded warriors on campus, and other service outcomes for student veterans is currently underway and can help other universities in their attempts to replicate these services and become more “military-friendly.”

As our troops return from combat zones in distant lands, they will arrive at their home communities with leadership qualities such as resourcefulness, exposure to diverse cultures, maturity from dealing with life-and-death issues and having shouldered high levels of responsibility, and mission-oriented and team-oriented perspectives. Many will also come home with a number of health and behavioral health challenges, including sleep issues, posttraumatic stress, mild traumatic brain injury, hearing loss, joint and mobility problems, and exposure to harmful chemicals and environments. The nation must plan for and provide resources for those whom we have asked to serve and fight. Part of this promise to care for our veterans also includes training the service providers to care for them. Can social work mobilize to increase its commitment to serve this generation of veterans returning from the battlefields? Hopefully, the answer lies in our profession’s ability to embrace the soldiers’ creed—leave no soldier behind.

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Table 1: Highlights of Veterans Initiative Services for Student Veterans

Academic

- Educational benefits assistance by expert veteran staff members.
- Open house for veterans.
- Veteran sections of a one-hour credit course (US 1100 Seminar) that orients them to campus and off-campus services and trains them in self-care techniques.
- Orientation sessions for new student veterans by successful student veterans.
- Mentoring program with faculty and staff who are veterans
- Low GPA calls.
- Tutoring and writing skills assistance by the SLAC lab on campus.
- Recognition at graduation ceremonies with special regalia—red, white, & blue cords.
- Resource Fairs.
- Writing assistance by the Writing Center on campus.

Health and Behavioral Health

- Mental health counseling, support groups, bio-feedback, and one-hour workshops by Counseling Center staff and a partnership with a local Vet Center to provide on-campus counseling services to our vets.
- Case management by Social Work interns to refer and link student veterans to campus and off-campus services
- An active student veteran organization – Veterans Alliance of Texas State (VATS).
- Pilot mobile actigraphy sleep study capability by the Respiratory Care Dept.
- Meditation skills group for veterans to improve stress management.
- Outreach to wounded warriors focusing on adaptive sports.
- An initiative to offer training on campus for vet-to-vet self-care skills.
- Partnerships in the community are developed to expand our services for veterans

Career and Employment Services

- A Career Services unit that provides resources for career and job search with veteran staff members.
- Workshop series for veterans on resume writing, networking, business etiquette, and mock interviews.
- Partnerships with leading state/ county service providers for job search assistance.
- Networking through golf. Golf skills clinics.

Training, Research, and Technical Assistance

- State of the art training each semester for campus faculty and staff on veterans' issues connected to a Veteran Friendly Office designated program.
- Federal grant (Health Resources and Services Administration) to pay Social Work Masters students to work with veterans and families
- A Troop & Veteran Transition social work elective course taught each semester to social work students and other majors on how to work with this population.
- Needs assessments, focus groups, and veteran interviews for program development.
- Technical assistance has been provided to many state universities, community colleges, national university campuses, and educational associations.

Table 2: Profile of the Interns in the Field Unit

Educational Level:	
BSW	29%
1 st Year MSW	21%
2 nd Year MSW- Direct Practice	21%
2 nd Year MSW- Administrative Leadership	29%
Military Background:	
Veteran	40%
Family Member	60%
Ethnicity:	
Anglo	73%
African-American	7%
Hispanic	20%
Gender:	
Female	67%
Male	33%
Age:	
20-25	33%
26-30	27%
31-40	40%

Table 3: Examples of Intern Responses

Three Most Important Things I Learned	What This Internship Meant to You
Veteran culture on a college campus	Looked at person in their environment
Need for more supportive services	Viewing the population from another perspective
Building rapport	Seeing the veteran from a more holistic perspective
Importance of peer-to-peer model	Helped me gain confidence
Needs of veterans, families, and active duty	Shaped me into the social worker that I am today
Impact of war	Helped me grasp the “bigger picture”
The struggles veterans deal with	Equipped me with tools
Need for outreach	Gave me insight into professional social work
Close bonds of veterans	Helped better prepare me
Importance of patience	Expanded my knowledge
Importance of giving veterans time	Broadened my horizons
Connecting veterans	Taught me to look at background information
Meeting the veterans where they are	Gave me power and knowledge
Importance of empowerment	Value of relationships
Role of self-determination	Become a well-rounded social worker
Importance of needs assessments	Opened my eyes to a larger view
Issues veterans face	Learn how to collaborate
Culture they are surrounded in	How to make a career out of my passion
Need to be aware of issues	Helped me grow
Networking	
Need for more professionals in field	

Table 4: Selected Veterans Initiative Field Unit Training Content by Topic and Examples of the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) EPAS Addressed

Training Content/Topic	Examples of CSWE Military Practice Behaviors and Education Policies (EP) Addressed in Participation in Training within Veterans Initiative (abbreviated)
Military Culture	<p>EP 2.1.1 Demonstrate a professional demeanor that reflects awareness of and respect for military and veteran cultures.</p> <p>EP 2.1.1 Recognize boundary and integration issues between military and veteran cultures and social work values and ethics.</p> <p>EP 2.1.4 Communicate with a culturally responsive approach that includes service members with varying statuses including active duty, retired, guard/reserves, combat/garrison, and so forth.</p>
The Impact of Combat on Troops and Families	<p>EP 2.1.6 Recognize the impact of military transitions and stressful life events throughout the family’s life cycle.</p>
Post Traumatic Stress	<p>EP 2.1.9 Apply knowledge of practice within the military context to the development of evaluations, prevention, and treatment strategies.</p>
Mild Traumatic Brain Injury	<p>EP 2.1.9 Apply knowledge of practice within the military context to the development of evaluations, prevention, and treatment strategies.</p>
Suicide	<p>EP2.1.10 (a) Demonstrate a knowledge base related to risk and protective factors associated with deployment, military service, and other aspects of life and role transitions that service members and veterans experience.</p> <p>EP 2.1.10 (b) Select and modify appropriate multi-systemic intervention strategies based on continuous clinical assessment of military or veteran issues.</p>
Student Veteran Issues	<p>EP 2.1.6 Identify issues related to losses, stressors, changes, and transitions over their life cycle in designing interventions.</p>

Table 4: Selected Veterans Initiative Field Unit Training Content by Topic and Examples of the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) EPAS Addressed

<p>Women Veteran Issues</p>	<p>EP 2.1.6 Identify issues related to losses, stressors, changes, and transitions over their life cycle in designing interventions. EP 2.1.9 Assess service system’s history, trends, and innovations in social work practice with service members, veterans, their families, and/or communities.</p>
<p>Systems of Care, Policy & Advocacy</p>	<p>EP 2.1.1 Recognize boundary and integration issues between military and veteran cultures and social work values and ethics. EP 2.1.2 Identify the military culture’s emphasis on mission readiness, support of service, honor, and cohesion and how these influence social work service delivery at all levels. EP 2.1.9 Assess service systems’ history, trends, and innovations with population.</p>
<p>Information & Referral, Resources on Campus & In Community</p>	<p>EP 2.1.5 Identify the needs of the military and veteran individuals, families, and communities to civilian providers and workplace management</p>
<p>Military Family Issues</p>	<p>EP 2.1.6 Identify issues related to losses, stressors, changes, and transitions over their life cycle in designing interventions.</p>
<p>Military Widows</p>	<p>EP 2.1.6 Identify issues related to losses, stressors, changes, and transitions over their life cycle in designing interventions.</p>
<p>Troop and Veteran Needs</p>	<p>EP 2.1.2 Employ strategies of ethical reasoning in an environment that may have policy and value conflicts with social work service delivery, personal values, and professional ethics. EP 2.1.6 Use of Research Literature on military life. EP 2.1.7 Recognize and assess social support systems and socioeconomic resources specific to service members, veterans, their families, and their communities.</p>
<p>Sleep Issues</p>	<p>EP 2.1.3 Analyze appropriate models of assessment, prevention, intervention, and evaluation within context of military social work. EP 2.1.6 Use of Research Literature on military life.</p>

Table 4: Selected Veterans Initiative Field Unit Training Content by Topic and Examples of the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) EPAS Addressed

<p>Treatment Tools & Techniques</p>	<p>EP 2.1.6 Use of Research Literature on military life. EP 2.1.3 Analyze models of assessment, prevention, intervention, and evaluation within context of military social work. EP 2.1.3 Use appropriate practice models with service members, veterans, their families, and their communities. EP 2.1.6 Apply different literature and evidence-informed and evidence-based practices in the provision of services across the DoD/VA continuum of care and services.</p>
<p>Challenges such as Substance Abuse, Depression, & Homelessness</p>	<p>EP 2.1.3 Analyze models of assessment, prevention, intervention, and evaluation within context of military social work. EP 2.1.6 Use of Research Literature on military life.</p>
<p>Use of Peer Models with the Population</p>	<p>EP 2.1.3 Analyze models of assessment, prevention, intervention, and evaluation within context of military social work.</p>
<p>Intern Roles and Responsibilities & Administrative Issues</p>	<p>EP 2.1.1 Practice self-reflection and continue to address personal biases and stereotypes to build knowledge and dispel myths regarding service members, veterans, their families, and their communities. EP 2.1.1 Demonstrate professional demeanor that reflects awareness of and respect for military and veteran cultures. EP 2.1.2 Recognize and manage appropriate professional boundaries within the military and veteran context. EP 2.1.3 Demonstrate effective oral and written communication using establish DoD/VA professional standards and practices. EP 2.1.8 Communicate effectively with various veterans' service organizations to provide effective social work services and accurate benefits, entitlements, and service information to clients, their family members, and their communities. EP 2.1.10 (a-d) Engage, assess, intervene, and evaluate with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.</p>