



Contingency Report

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Narrative

The Adams State University Veterans Center services around 300 – 460 students a semester. The majority of students that we service are incarcerated Veterans and Dependents. The Veterans Center serves as a “One-Stop Shop” for Veterans and Dependents, assisting them in navigating the VA system for both educational and resource needs.

Mission Essentiality

The mission statement for the Adams State University Veterans Center is to assist and support student Veterans and dependents in their educational and life goals. This includes maintaining and improving Veteran retention and graduation rates at Adams State, providing assistance and support in transitioning from military life to the civilian world, and providing a “Veteran Safe Space” that fosters inclusivity and respect. Currently those that utilize the resources provided are at a 94% retention graduation rate overall.

Cost & Benefit

Veterans Center Expenditures total - \$45,000

The chart below shows 2016/2017 numbers of those utilizing Chapter 33 VA benefits and the revenue received during that period for just that chapter.

Type of benefit/assistance	Number of students receiving benefits/assistance	Total dollar amount of benefits/assistance awarded through the institution	Average dollar amount of benefits/assistance awarded through the institution
<u>Post-9/11 GI Bill Benefits</u>			
Undergraduate students	51	267,156	5,238
Graduate students	32	154,130	4,817
Total	83	421,286	5,076

Chapter 31 – Vocational Rehab – 10 students, \$30,015.39

Total for just Chapter 31, 33 – \$451,301.39. These numbers do not include Chapter 30 or 35 benefits which go directly to the student.

The Adams State University Veterans Center has signed and updated a MOU with the Department of Defense in order for Veterans students to utilize their VA benefits both on campus and through Extended Studies. The center also has 2 AmeriCorps VISTA positions. The AmeriCorps VISTA program enhances educational experiences by giving the Veterans an



opportunity to enhance their higher education experience. The VISTA program allows them to focus on an area that they feel passionate about, and gives them purpose, and it also pays them a small stipend. If they complete two years of the program, it gives them around \$12,000 for educational benefits. Getting Veterans connected to activities in which they can feel purposeful again is a huge contributing factor in retention and graduation rates. Various programs on campus and valley wide were able to be put together because of these positions and it has helped with recruitment and retention. All those in these positions have either graduated from Adams State University after their term of service, or will do so within a semester, and because of the programs put into place with the help of the VISTAs other veterans/dependents who utilize the center and programs benefit. With these positions, not only have other organizations grown such as SLV Veterans Coalition, Women Veterans of the San Luis Valley, Veterans of Foreign Wars and the American Legion, but other programs have come from this such as the SLV Horse Rescue (applying for equine therapy), test project to combat Veteran suicide with the Department of Veterans Affairs, Adams State University and WHICE, and the Veteran Fields program. By having these positions accessible to Veterans, it allows them to stay in their focus area, adding the involvement and ownership which directly correlates with Veteran success.

Quality of Outcomes

Combining the Fall 2016 and Spring 2017 semesters, we certified 175 students to use VA benefits. Of those 175 students, 35 students actively utilized the center and the resources we provide or give information on. The retention rate from Fall 2016 to Fall 2017 is 94% for students who actively utilized the center and resources, compared to a retention rate of 58% for students using benefits but not utilizing the center. The center and the resources we offer have a positive impact on not only retention, but also GPA. The students using the center had an average GPA of 2.82, compared to the average GPA of 2.31 for students not using the center or resources offered.

The following information comes directly from the Veterans Action Teams 2011 report initiated by ASU President Dr. David Svaldi in September of 2011. This update will provide information on which items recommended by the action team have been met or not, new initiatives, and current data collected. It is intended to show progress in the area of Veterans Affairs on the ASU campus.

In the 2011 summary, the following items were addressed as recommendations:

1. ASC needs to make a modest multi-year financial investment to improve its current service to veterans, to develop a comprehensive military/veteran recruiting plan and to pursue a "Military Friendly School" designation



- The Committee is keenly aware of the current institutional budget issues and the competing campus financial needs but believes developing a comprehensive military/veteran focus is one way to offset the continued loss in state revenues with more secure federal funding

Update: ASU did make a modest investment in the program by furnishing computers and some supplies as well as a location for the Veterans Center. At the time the location was the third floor of Richardson hall. The space was large enough to host meetings and gatherings for the veterans club. Operating dollars came from the Veterans Club so no investment for operating was offered by the university at that time.

We currently have 3 work study positions. Additionally, we have a fellowship program through The Mission Continues, and an AmeriCorps VISTA SECond Mission program which started in August 2015. We also have a Veterans AAA course ready to go in which to further help Veterans in their transition to the civilian life, however it has not been implemented at this time. We have currently hosted 5 community Veterans Resource Fairs, which helped progress Veterans issues in the San Luis Valley forward as well as educational issues. We have built prominent relationships with the SLV Veterans Coalition, Women Veterans of the SLV, VFW, American Legion, Sargent School District, City of Monte Vista, as well as various county Veterans Service Officers in the SLV. With these prominent relationships, the Veterans at Adams State have helped the community by helping bring a doctor back the local Veterans Affairs clinic, as well as hosting two 3rd Congressional District debates, and 5 Veterans Banquets for the San Luis Valley's Veterans. The center was also given a \$10,000 grant from Xcel to help connect Veterans in the valley to job opportunities.

2. ASC should establish a Vetetan's Affairs Office initially staffed by a dedicated half-time Veteran's Services Liaison/Coordinator to manage veteran enrollment certification and to serve as a campus focal point for veteran issues and actions
 - The Veteran's Office should initially report into the Office of the President to ensure the necessary management visibility and institutional priority
 - As military enrollments grow, the Committee anticipates that the director/specialist position will become full-time
 - ASC should apply for a VA-funded work-study to support the Veteran's Office

Update: ASU was able to establish a Veterans Office as described above as well as hire a part time person to run the services offered at a salary of \$10,000 for a 10 month position. This is not what the committee recommended however it was a good start to get the ball rolling and create a foundation for the program. The Veterans Office reports to the Vice President for Student Affairs and at this time we feel that is a good fit for the program. The position has been increased to a ¾ time position, with a salary of \$24,000. The person in this position has been given full access to



Banner records, and has taken over the certifications of enrollment through the VA. The center has also applied for a VA-funded work-study, pending approval.

3. The Committee believes that recruitment of active duty military, veterans and dependents should be a distinct component of ASC's Strategic Plan
 - Extended Studies and Enrollment Management should develop a comprehensive, coordinated recruiting plan for military/veterans
 - The travel budget for each organization should be modestly augmented to support additional travel for veteran recruiting
 - As veteran-enrollment grows, the Committee anticipates that additional part-time recruiting staff will be needed to support this effort
 - Potentially, Noel-Levitz could be tasked to assist in developing a veteran-focused marketing strategy
 - The College should consider applying for a Veterans Upward Bound (VUB) Program. Currently, there are 46 VUB programs nationwide.

Update: The recruitment piece is one that continues to need improvement and direction. It will eventually need a larger budget and a specialized recruiter. We have not applied for a Veterans UB Program at this time because the number of Veterans it would take to maintain the program year after year seems difficult to uphold. Additionally, we have applied for a ROTC program, but unfortunately at this time, the funding sources are not available. However, we have initiated the ConAP program with the U.S. Army that will concurrently enroll them while they serve on Active Duty.

Recruitment efforts began in 2015. These efforts have included recruiting Veterans and dependents from Buckley Air Force Base and Fort Carson in Colorado at their respective education fairs. While these education fairs have some Veterans that are transitioning out, a majority of the participants are looking for colleges for their dependents. Currently the yield on these students has been low, but continuing these on a consistent basis and expansion, I have full confidence that these numbers will increase. We also recruit incarcerated veterans and dependents at the United States Disciplinary Barracks and Joint Regional Correctional Facility at Fort Leavenworth, the Naval Consolidated Brig at Miramar, and Camp Pendleton. In the Fall 2013 semester, 14 incarcerated Veterans were enrolled at Adams State University. As of recently, the number has grown to around 350.

4. A new cross-campus action team should be formed to develop a plan and timeline to satisfy the "Military Friendly" criteria



- Being designated a Military Friendly School is critical to establishing name recognition in the military market and shows a strong commitment to military/veteran-student issues

Update: We have not put together a cross campus action team and the Veterans seem to be running things very well on their own. As for a Military Friendly school we have committed to the DOD by writing an MOU supporting its guidelines for being a Veteran Friendly school. The MOU can be found through the Office of Student Affairs or the Veterans Center.

5. The college must do a better job of collecting, analyzing and acting on military data gathered from current and prospective students
 - Currently, it's extremely difficult to even ascertain how many military/veteran-students are enrolled at ASC
 - A plan must be developed to monitor and track key indicators of student-veteran enrollment and success

Update: The Veterans Office has continued to gather data of the last five years to meet this recommendation. We now have an accurate record of all the students who are veterans or dependents of veterans. We have also created policy to offer instate tuition to all veterans including all members of the National Guard. This currently makes us more accommodating to Veterans than other schools in the state. Some members of the Veterans Center helped pass and implement House Bill 17-1004, giving meaningful college credit for military experience. This greatly improves the students' chances of success.

Conclusion

In less than a decade, the program has gone from not having resources to one of the best veterans programs in the state. The Veterans Center and club have received congressional recognition and a letter stating so from Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard, (HI). Veteran students who utilize the center gain the support and comfort they need to have a smooth transition back into civilian life. They maintain their grades, their job(s), their families, and more importantly, their mental health. The Nation-Wide drop-out rate for Veterans in higher education is 88%. However, students utilizing the center are at a 94% retention rate. Additionally, Veterans using the center have an average GPA of 2.82 compared to an average GPA of 2.31 for those using benefits but not using the center. The Adams State University Veterans Center is a crucial and necessary piece to veteran success in their higher education goals, and has proven in its short existence that Veterans can and do succeed with the proper support systems both on and off campus.