

INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE

Red Rocks Community College

March 2015

*Veterans' Services
Addendum*

Introduction

Our veteran students are one of our greatest assets at RRCC. While our veteran students are integrated into all aspects of our college, they often face additional challenges that their non-military counterparts do not. In order to best serve this group, we must lay out a plan to align our practices, policies, and programs with the needs of those returning from military service.

We must align our services for veterans with established benchmarks and best practices. Through the experiences of others and the existing research, we can devise our own path forward. Some of our initiatives will be the results of agreements with federal agencies. Others will be modeled from existing, successful programs at other institutions. All programs will be customized to fit our veterans here at RRCC and work within our existing frameworks, but we also need to be prepared to be innovative and change course if we are not meeting the needs of our students.

Principles of Excellence

The Principles of Excellence are guidelines for educational institutions receiving Federal funding. RRCC has already committed to participation, which requires that we:

- Provide students with a personalized form covering the total cost of an education program.
- Provide educational plans for all Military and Veteran education beneficiaries.
- End fraudulent and aggressive recruiting techniques and misrepresentation.
- Provide accommodations for Service Members and Reservists absent due to service requirements.
- Designate a Point of Contact for academic and financial advising.
- Ensure accreditation of all new programs prior to enrolling students.
- Align institutional refund policies with those under Title IV.

“We all owe a great debt to those who have served this country. Giving schools tools they can use to truly welcome and support our returning service members is one way we can help repay that debt by making sure we are providing our veterans and military families with an education worthy of their exceptional talents and experience.”

–Sarah Baker, whitehouse.gov

The 8 Keys to Success

Developed by the Administration, the Department of Education (ED), and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) in conjunction with more than 100 education experts, the 8 Keys to Success on campus are eight concrete steps that institutions of higher education can take to help veterans and service members transition into the classroom and thrive once they are there.

The 8 Keys to Success on campus are:

- Create a culture of trust and connectedness across the campus community to promote well-being and success for veterans.
- Ensure consistent and sustained support from campus leadership.
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- Implement an early alert system to ensure all veterans receive academic, career, and financial advice before challenges become overwhelming.
- Coordinate and centralize campus efforts for all veterans, together with the creation of a designated space (even if limited in size).
- Collaborate with local communities and organizations, including government agencies, to align and coordinate various services for veterans.
- Utilize a uniform set of data tools to collect and track information on veterans, including demographics, retention and degree completion.
- Provide comprehensive professional development for faculty and staff on issues and challenges unique to veterans.
- Develop systems that ensure sustainability of effective practices for veterans.

Per whitehouse.gov:

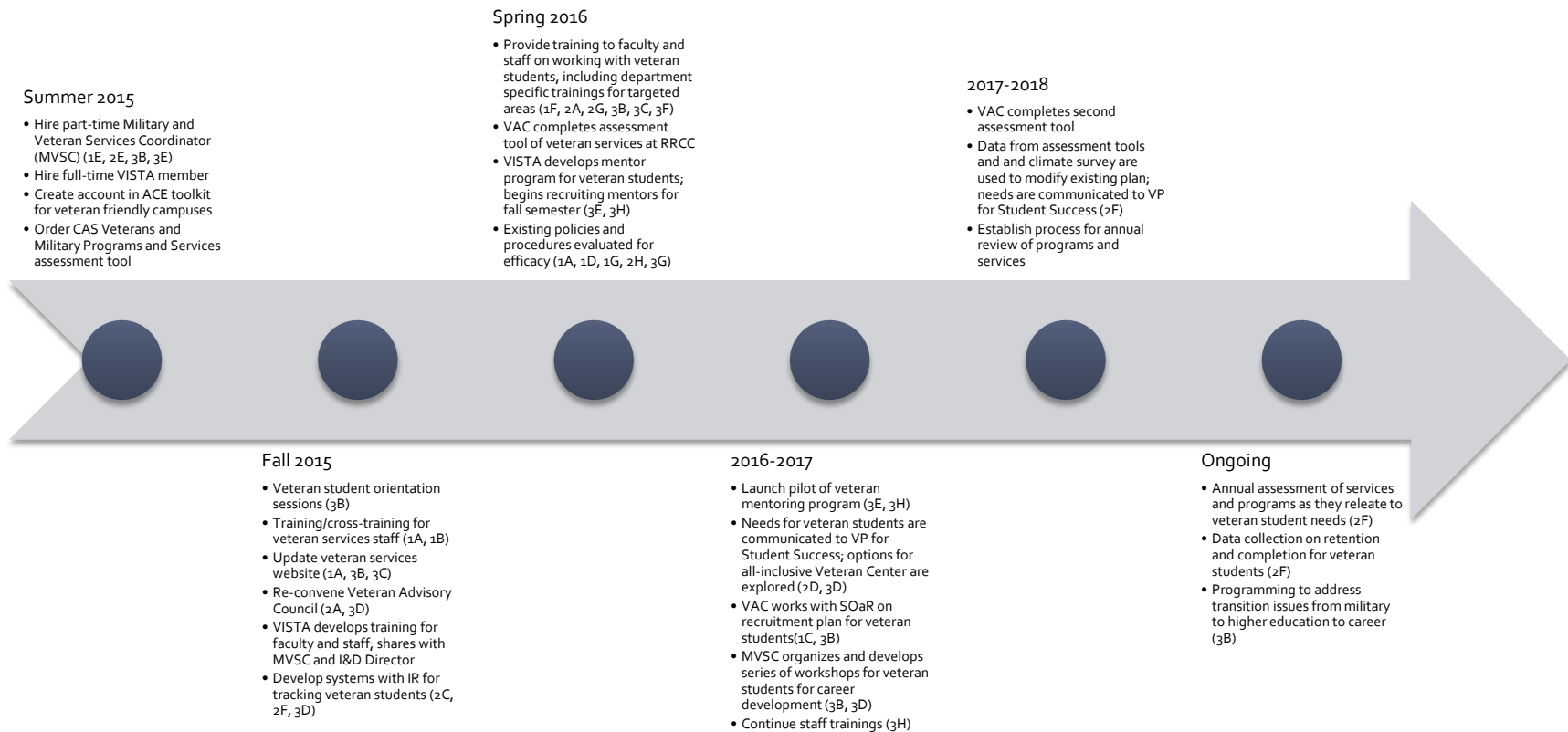
The 8 Keys to Success are only part of the Administration's efforts to support and protect service members in the classroom. The Keys build on the Administration's Principles of Excellence, which President Obama established by Executive Order in April 2012. The Principles of Excellence provide protections for our military and veterans in institutions of higher education to prevent against dishonest recruiting and predatory practices... Together, all of these measures will help provide our veterans and military families with the high-quality, affordable education they deserve.

Best Practices

In addition to the Principles of Excellence and the 8 Keys to Success, there are a wealth of established resources and best practices available to guide our services to veteran students. The primary sources utilized for the development of this plan were the "Best Practices for Serving the Student Veteran" from the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL), "Promising Practices in Veteran Education" and other resources from the American Council on Education (ACE). As new research emerges in this area, modifications will be made to ensure that student veterans at RRCC receive the highest level of support that we can provide.

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

The implementation timeline was based on the following criteria: level of impact, level of complexity for implementation, availability of outside resources, relationship to other activities, and establishment of necessary infrastructure.



VETERAN ADVISORY COUNCIL

This addendum is a work in progress, and as such will be revisited periodically for updates and modifications. The task of providing input and recommendations for progress will come from the Veteran Advisory Council. This once-active group will be re-convened and new members will be added from relevant departments in order to ensure the veterans issues are heard and addressed with areas of the college.

ASSESSMENT

Data tracking will be critical to the success of veterans' services. Not only do we need to be able to identify veteran students in order to connect them with resources and support services, but we also must be able to track their retention and completion rates in order to know that we are serving them well. In addition to data tracking through institutional research, online assessment tools will be utilized to evaluate our services. Options for such assessment include the CAS Standards for Veterans and Military Programs and Services and the ACE Veteran Toolkit. The Military and Veteran Services Coordinator will determine the most appropriate instrument for our needs.

Veteran Services Implementation Guide

		Training	Programming	Systems/Data Collection	Marketing/ Messaging	Personnel	Space	Other
1	Principles of Excellence							
1A	Provide students with a personalized form covering the total cost of an education program.	Cross-train Outreach Coordinator with Financial Aid		Review financial aid form and adjust as necessary	Provide general cost/links to financial aid information on veteran website			
1B	Provide educational plans for all military and Veteran education beneficiaries.	Cross-train Outreach Coordinator with Advising						
1C	End fraudulent and aggressive recruiting techniques and misrepresentations.	Provide SOaR department with accurate and comprehensive information about our veteran services						
1D	Accommodate Servicemembers and Reservists absent due to service requirements.				Review policy and include it on appropriate RRCC websites			
1E	Designate a point of contact to provide academic and financial advice.					Hire a part-time veteran services coordinator; transition to full-time coordinator if appropriate		
1F	Ensure accreditation of all new programs prior to enrolling students.	Train advisors, veteran services staff, and academic departments on requirements to enroll veteran students in new programs.		Flag enrollment in new programs for veteran students.				

1G	Align institutional refund policies with those under Title IV, which governs the administration of federal student financial aid programs.	Review financial aid policies for compliance.						
2	The 8 Keys to Success on Campus:							
2A	Create a culture of trust and connectedness across the campus community to promote well-being and success for veterans.	Provide training for faculty and staff on working with veteran students; re-convene the Veteran Advisory Committee						
2B	Ensure consistent and sustained support from campus leadership.				Engage President and VPs in veteran services initiatives			
2C	Implement an early alert system to ensure all veterans receive academic, career, and financial advice before challenges become overwhelming.			Review systems for identifying veterans facing various issues				
2D	Coordinate and centralize campus efforts for all veterans, together with the creation of a designated space (even if limited in size).						Identify larger space to house both veteran services staff and the veteran resource center	
2E	Collaborate with local communities and organizations, including government agencies, to align and coordinate various services for veterans.					networking between Military and Veteran Services Coordinator and local agencies		

2F	Utilize a uniform set of data tools to collect and track information on veterans, including demographics, retention and degree completion.			Develop appropriate tracking systems in collaboration with Institutional Research; collect adequate data for national student clearinghouse; implement 6-week checks on veterans to ensure they have what they need for the semester				
2G	Provide comprehensive professional development for faculty and staff on issues and challenges unique to veterans.	Provide training for faculty and staff on working with veteran students						
2H	Develop systems that ensure sustainability of effective practices for veterans.			Document relevant policies and procedures; conduct annual review of programs and services				
3	Best Practices for Serving the Student Veteran							
3A	Provide top-down support					Engage the President and VPs in veterans services initiatives		

3B	Outreach and Information	train call center staff on where to direct questions about veteran services	Develop and deploy veteran-specific orientation session; offer workshops or information on financial planning along with benefit information		Make sure links to veteran information are on all relevant websites; include appropriate forms on The Rock for downloading; update and consolidate all relevant info for veterans on veteran website; tailor marketing efforts to veterans	MVSC will serve as single point of contact for veterans;		
3C	Recognition of Skills and Competencies	train advisors to ask about military service for credit; assess PLA and military service			Make sure information about PLA for military service is included on website			
3D	Recognition of Veterans as a Group with Distinct Needs and Contributions		Host programs that allow veterans to self-identify; Establish special outreach and services for women veterans; Become a chapter member of the SALUTE National Honor Society for Veterans?	Re-convene the Veteran Advisory Council to assesses services and address issues; track veteran enrollment and progress and identify retention and completion benchmarks			Provide space for veterans to congregate (Veteran Center)	
3E	Student Support		Provide opportunities for veterans to connect with each other (establish a veteran peer mentoring program)			Provide after-hours support for adult, non-traditional learners		Sustain student veteran club
3F	Transition Support	Provide training for faculty and staff on working with veteran students						

3G	Administration: Policies and Procedures							Establish and communicate policies to help service members who are deployed; Evaluate policies and procedures for impact on veteran students (i.e. fees for late payments if using G.I. Bill)
3H	Disabilities and Mental Health	Train Accessibility Services staff on TBI and PTSD; train counseling staff	Raise faculty awareness of disability and mental health issues; create a peer mentor program					