CIC Military Services Conference

Purdue University

Conference Background:

The conference was a response to several Big Ten staff members expressing an interest in meeting to discuss common concerns and initiatives related to services for student veterans. Jamie Richards, Director of the Veterans Success Center at Purdue, offered to organize and host a meeting at the Purdue University campus. Mike Carrell (The Ohio State University) and Steve Abel (Rutgers University) were involved in the early discussions and offered assistance in planning this conference. Mike Carrell also suggested that the group become a Committee on Institutional Cooperation Peer Group and applied with the CIC for that designation. Jamie Richards organized the conference program, invited key personnel from the CIC institutions and arranged for the speakers, including Purdue’s President Mitch Daniels. Mr. Richards was in close contact with the schools to designate the key discussion topics. He requisitioned the space and computer equipment in the Krannert School and Purdue Memorial Union as well as selected the menus and ordered the food. Mr. Richards prepared conference packets with the attendees’ contact information, souvenirs, and t-shirts.

Over the summer, Mr. Richards contacted the Military Family Research Institute, which is located on Purdue’s campus, to inform MFRI of the conference and inquire about our level of interest in collaborating with him. MFRI was very interested in supporting this conference and offered to facilitate his efforts. Jackie Harris, within MFRI’s Education and Employment unit, assisted Mr. Richards. During the conference, she presented a session which included an overview of the services of MFRI, a profile of what student veterans are experiencing on campus, and examined the current landscape of higher education nationally for veterans and how the members of the CIC compared. Additional MFRI staff offered support through publicity and by preparing registration materials, such as name tags. Financial support was provided for food and related conference items through a small grant from MFRI. The conference’s survey was also designed and summarized by MFRI staff.

The conference was designated a CIC Military Services Conference. This group acted under present CIC policy as stated on their website, “Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC) is both a committee appointed by the presidents of the member institutions (traditionally the chief academic officers, or provosts), and an organization (an unincorporated association of universities). Insofar as the CIC has a public voice, it is the voice of its member institutions speaking in unison through their representatives.”
Participants:

University of Illinois – Nicholas Osborne
Indiana University – Margaret Baechtold
University of Iowa – Allen P. Roberts, Jr.
University of Maryland – Marsha Guenzler-Stevens, Brian Bertges
University of Michigan – Philip Larson
Michigan State University – Nicole Rovig
Military Family Research Institute – Jackie Harris
University of Minnesota – Julie Selander
University of Nebraska – Michelle Waite
Northwestern University – Julia Jenkins, Natalie Furlett
The Ohio State University – Michael W. Carrell, Mike Forrest
The Pennsylvania State University – Ted Timmerman, Geneive Newman
Purdue University – Jamie Richards, Dan Carpenter
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey – Steve Abel, Robert Bright
University of Wisconsin – John G. Bechtol, Joe Rasmussen
University of Chicago – Rita Vazquez, Heather Mayer

Tuesday, October 1, 2013:

A reception was held in the Krannert Center’s Weiler Lounge across from the Purdue Memorial Union. Appetizers from Red Seven Restaurant were served. The reception was held from 5:00-7:00. There were approximately 20 people in attendance, including some personnel, such as Melissa Evens from the Krannert School.

Wednesday, October 2, 2013:
All the meetings on Wednesday and Thursday were held in the Purdue Memorial Union Room 263 A/B. Breakfast was from 7:30-8:00. Every institution in the CIC was represented at the conference.

The meeting began at 8:00 AM when Jamie Richards opened with a welcome to all, announcements of logistics for the meeting, and set the tone for the meeting. Group introductions were made.

Each institution presented summary slides of their program.

- Purdue presented usage numbers and even though overall numbers are down, there are more military and veteran students using GI BILL benefits. Purdue has an orientation, an SVO, Green Zone training, and has a Student Success Center. For the future, he is planning more career opportunities, military excusal policy, and a process for military transcripts.
- Michigan State - The Registrar houses the military supports and academic policies. The programs occur in Student Affairs. They have a Student Veterans Information Portal, a Veteran’s Resource Team, recognitions, institutional financial aid and are part of the Yellow Ribbon program. They are a SOC institution and MAAP. They offer a class for military members. They are anticipating an in-state tuition offering for veterans as well as multi-state collaborations for military credit.
- University of Iowa – The Veterans Services Office is in place. They have a peer mentoring network, specific admissions criteria, Veterans Day programs among other initiatives. The Iowa Consortium of Veteran Excellence will focus on transitioning into the workforce. They have a project, “A Day in the Life” to document veterans’ experiences.
- University of Minnesota – The veterans’ office has been a “one stop” service since 2006. There’s strong support on campus for student veterans. Programs include an orientation program, an annual student veterans’ appreciation event, a SVO, and an advisory board. They annually conduct a veterans’ satisfaction survey. Initiatives include more partnerships, tracking system for students, and a course.
- Northwestern – The services are in Student Affairs. Management and Continuing Studies are the main majors. The Veterans Services Committee offers a website and a student group. They are part of the ILCC which supports the Illinois Compact. A veteran staff member is helping to advise students. They need space, resources, better communication, and support to advance the veterans’ efforts.
- Wisconsin – This university has established an engagement strategy for people who have self-identified. They visit with people in summer orientation. Benefits are identified at this time and they refer students to the vet’s organization. They have a large job fair for
veterans. A plan for dedicated space is underway. Concerns exist about Yellow Ribbon slots.

- University of Maryland – Veterans Student Life Office exists to “enhance the mind, body, and soul of student veterans.” They held a Maryland Collaborative Conference to expand group knowledge. They recognize students, faculty, and staff at a football game. Services are housed in Student Affairs. A Peer Advisors for Veteran Education program is being developed. Training is done for faculty and staff and an online handbook is available. They have a veterans’ orientation program along with a spring meeting. It is important to bring the community into the veterans’ lives as well as connect veterans to the larger community in a variety of initiatives.

- Michigan – The Veterans and Military Services Office houses the services for student veterans. Student services and programs are in one area and the other services are in the Registrar’s Office. There is a UM Council on Student Veterans which links many on-campus services/offices. In-state tuition rates, priority registration, Yellow Ribbon Support, being a founding chapter of SVA, and pre-paid tuition for all certified Post 911/GI Bill for eligible participants are offered. There is close contact with Ann Arbor VA Hospital. In-state tuition is offered to veterans.

- The Ohio State – In-state tuition is in place. The Veterans Affairs Office started in Human Resources. A new Military & Veterans Services office opened in 2012. In addition to academic advisors as resources they have a “Vet Success on Campus” employee, work study students, and others in the network. They held a university conference on teaching/servicing student veterans and on-going meetings are offered. They meet with new employees. The Alumni Center purchases honor cords. A “Hold Harmless Policy” & free credit by exam are offered to veterans. The veterans’ lounge is centrally located on campus.

- Penn State – The “World Campus” is an online portion of the campus. Over 90 degree programs are offered. They are a SOC member. There is a team of services and offices that meet to address veterans’ needs. There are dedicated academic advisors and admissions counselors for undergraduates. MyCAA is for Military Spouses. Public tuition rates are reduced for military students. They hold a Military Appreciation Day at a football game. Web resources and marketing brochures have been reorganized and streamlined. A military online course is being developed as a resource for faculty and staff. Priority registration has been established. Yellow Ribbon funds are available. A SVA chapter plus other student veteran groups are offered. A Veterans Plaza was given to the university by the 2011 class.

- Rutgers – Efforts began in 2008 for services on campus. A standing university committee now exists for ongoing campus discussions for veterans’ programs. They have a single point of contact for on- and off-campus concerns. They have established a network of
services/offices on campus. They have an 8 room veterans’ house in New Brunswick where many services and activities are held, including tutoring and counseling. They have and recommend having a VA employee on campus.

- **University of Chicago** – Many decisions for selecting Yellow Ribbon slots are decentralized and relate to specific departments. The university has a smaller student body and hence, a smaller veterans’ population. Discussions are underway to implement a formal tracking/reporting process for students to self-identify. The Registrar’s Office houses the VA Certifying Official. There’s not a formal veterans student group but there is an active veterans’ alumni group in Booth Hall. There is an annual Veterans Day event and the Provost is initiating more awareness for veterans’ issues.

- **Nebraska** – They are initiating more effective ways for students to self-identify. There is an active alumni group. There is a Student Veterans Task Force to better coordinate and collaborate among university department on behalf of veteran students. There is currently a mentoring program with on-going forums to educate the mentors. There is a women’s center and therapist for females. An AmeriCorps Rep who advises the SVO and oversees freshman orientation. It is hoping that more colleges accept military credit in accordance with ACE. Currently students may now apply for 4 credit hours to satisfy general education requirements. They are pursuing residency tuition. They have a goal for a Veterans’ Resource Center. Community involvement is occurring but it’s also expected to expand.

- **Indiana University** – The Veterans Support Services and student lounge are in the Memorial Building. The majority of veterans are in the graduate Business program. They have been building a better computer system to pick up and track students who self-identify. Their priority is financial benefits. There are other academic supports offered in their office such as math tutoring, library research, academic planning workshop, and honor cords. There are many social events such as a welcome dinner, SVA chapter, and a veterans’ lounge in IMU. There are resume workshops and career fairs. Students report a comfort with campus counseling services. Challenges include assessment, maintaining interest in SVA, keeping networks to other resources.

- **University of Illinois** – The Veteran Student Support Services is on campus. A Wounded Warrior Center is in the development. In-state tuition and Yellow Ribbon programs are in place. He makes many efforts to facilitate a campus dialog. There’s a veterans advisory board on campus and a designated POC in each college which facilitates information. A veterans’ lounge is open to all students but mostly used by veterans. There’s a month-long veterans’ display to increase visibility. He is also making an effort to create an institutional “brand” for student veterans. He is creating networks so separate sections in many offices will address veterans’ issues. They plan to look more closely at awarding military credit. Recognition of veterans at a football game is done.
Session 2: Military & Veteran Services Peer Group – Nicole Rovig

Purpose and Expectations: Establish a real set of best practices for the schools. A “veterans in transition only” course or priority registration are examples. Perhaps having a survey of best practices and a shared resource would be helpful. Have an official CIC position which represents the Big Ten for use and to externally validate what is being done. CAS guidelines were mentioned as a place to start. A reminder that one size fits all is not necessarily a goal. Will there be a website? CIC won’t do a collaborative website but there are some examples already available. Can there be a way to share aggregate data and information? Could there be a central port to share data and resources? It was suggested to collaborate on common needs (ex. Transitions class?) There needs to be a way to continue the discussion among the groups on a regular basis so accomplishments can occur more rapidly. Conducting a monthly conference call was one suggestion. Thinking more about establishing visionary policies rather than being reactionary was discussed. Tracking national bills and trends and sharing are important. Woods & Associates is a daily online resource.

Membership: The group wanted to keep the membership quite open even though CIC had some limits on how they defined membership. We must follow the rules with CIC but at the conference and with the monthly calls, membership can be open. This will involve other experts and faculty colleagues on campus. It would be helpful to showcase/share the research that various campuses are doing. Eventually, it might be worthwhile to think about having specific areas of expertise on special campuses and then discussing how we market it to students. Create a newsletter to brand us, update others, and provide outreach. Should there be a membership fee to get the website started? Concerns existed that not all schools can afford a membership fee. If people pay money, should there be a charter? Probably. Having an annual metrics might be useful to track changes.

Moving Forward:

Session 3: MFRI Introduction, Data and Benchmarking – Jackie Harris

See handout

Session 4: Competing Initiatives – Steve Abel

The Presidential Executive Order doesn’t have teeth but it sets up the DOD MOU. He shared the Dept. of Education and Veterans Affairs 8 Keys to Veterans’ Success. Pennsylvania has designated 5 guidelines for the schools to follow. For example, if a student has been mobilized,
an “M” is placed on their transcript to indicate the stop out. Some schools give the student the choice if they want this designation. He suggested:

- Establish a committee on campus to address issues.
- Clearly highlight educational opportunities and support.
- Have a single point of contact on campus.
- Have multiple off campus relationships.
- Leverage what’s on and off campus and you don’t have to have big budgets. Kognito – Avatar trainings are used.

They call this their recipe for success: Principles of Excellence, 8 Keys to Success, DOD MOU, and numerous state initiatives. Discussion question, “What do these mean to our campuses and how do we best balance our time?”

How can you get the attention of the higher authorities on campus?

- Try to find the highest people you can to be your advocate and arm them with financial information.
- Get faculty buy in for your programs.

How can you increase attention to the campus veterans?

- Draw lines between issues and the key people in as many ways as possible.
- Help students articulate the conversation and give them sound bites so the message is conveyed.
- Have SVA help get the message out. Use the most articulate students as spokespersons.
- People may want to do things but they want to know how it will be paid for. Make sure you can document where the money is going.
- Try to set your office as the front door for anything that comes to the university regarding veterans.
- Market being Veteran Friendly and note the risks of appearing veteran unfriendly.
- Place it as a diversity issue. Tie it to “It’s the moral thing to do because this is a diversity issue.”
- Use the rivalry factory among other Big Ten schools.
- Make sure your plan fits the goals of the university’s strategic plan and the goals of the Board of Trustees.
- Create a Foundation fund so gifts can go into specific scholarships.
- Be prepared to explain the concrete differences between how this group of students is different from other students.
• Tap into parents’ organizations, if possible.
• Argue that orientation is costly but these students often don’t go through this program so they not only don’t get this information but they are owed some money because money wasn’t spent on them at orientation.
• “This is a small population but they did the dirty work for us during the longest war in US history while we had a comfortable way of life.”
• Encourage local congressmen to come to campus and talk.

What do the various Principles, Keys, and MOUs do for you on campus?

• It can heighten awareness across the university.
• It can also drive changes in tracking.
• It turns into good PR for the Department of Education.

Break

Session 5: The Measure of Success – Nicholas Osborne

Diversity, underrepresented groups, and looking at other populations are keys for pushing issues out. Examine the climate. Is the campus welcoming and clear? Do faculty know what the issues are? Nick suggested looking at themes and research across campus.

In the beginning, he went to best practices and schools with similar profiles. He defined what “veteran friendly” meant for his campus; we need to define it on our own campuses. We need to get beyond the idea of plaques. Authenticity is more important. He suggested formulating a committee with a wide range of people across campus. Make contact early and identify students accurately. Journal of Innovative Higher Education which was published last week had content he recommended reading. Break down the “us versus them” mindset of students. One way he does this is to set coffee conversations. The younger, immature students were reported as concerns by his veterans. Crucial Conversations is recommended. He sends a weekly email to the veterans with updates, coupons, etc. The students report back that they like the regular contacts. He met with 2 focus groups which included 14 students 2 times. Once he looked at this information, he sent it out to the larger group. Identify thematic problems. TAP experience is geared toward employment, not education. Other issues include:

• Academic fears – There’s been a break in education and high school performance
• Lack of transitional support – Students are being referred across campus
• Initial fear of being in a “liberal” and “anti-military” climate
• Fear of being misunderstood or viewed as traumatized
• Not feeling recognized
• Maneuvering the campus culture.

From capturing this information, he set up outcomes:

• Update the webpage with student veteran input
• Profile the veterans’ experiences
• Host conferences
• Prepare welcome packets for prospective students
• Set an informal kick off for veterans
• Create the Veteran Ally training for faculty and staff
• Establish a designated POC at each college
• Obtain student veteran lounge approval
• Partnered with athletics to recognize students at athletic events.
• Conduct faculty/staff training, give a snapshot into their backgrounds, examine course requirements (Do they fit these students?) Arm the faculty/staff with tools to begin discussions with students.

Other ideas: Learning communities may be good places to introduce veterans’ issues to the larger student body. It was suggested to tie this to Veterans Day or another campus event. Place info on the campus radio station. Have a veteran’s appreciation day/meal. Have a campus conversation on civility and relate this to veterans. Set a panel on debunking military myths. You can support these groups but you don’t have to handle them all yourself. Let the campus newspaper know for additional coverage. Take a multi-pronged/multi-media approach. Be prepared for things to take time to change but focus on climate and relationships.

What other issues exist?

• Veterans have housing concerns.
• Withdrawal policies may arise.
• There’s a U of Illinois library project which displays a historical progression of veterans’ issues. Students have supplied additional artifacts.
• Assessment needs to be broader than the vet office. Staff may investigate SVO data.
• Address the fact that the student veterans may need to build skills to be academically successful. Math and writing tutors come to their center.
• Host job fairs and offer career information.
• Branding should involve many offices around campus. List them.
• LAS – 101 Course is a veterans section. It’s expanding to other colleges on campus.

96% of the students strongly agreed that the campus has become more veteran friendly.
Challenges exist – metrics, participation, awarding credit, asking for assistance. Language of “disability” has a stigma. 25% of student veterans have a disability with the VA but a much lower % register with DS. Let them know if they use DS it won’t jeopardize VA money or status. Couch it as, “You may know someone who could use DS services because it could be beneficial in these ways…”

CAS may be willing to build surveys for CIC. It also might be helpful to share surveys that we are using. It would be helpful to pool information but we would need to have consistent data points. The programs aren’t all the same so the surveys won’t be the same but if there was a core of questions that the CIC institutions could use, these might be helpful to us. Acquiring qualitative data takes a long time and it changes so fast. There’s a need for us to tell others what and why we collect this data rather than having others telling us what we should measure. We need to define our metrics and maybe this group can play that role. Numbers of veterans (2.5 million) won’t go down for 15 years but the goodwill to support them may diminish. Now is the time to act and build sustaining programs.

Feedback – Some young faculty feel intimidated by young veterans. It’s a good way to take advantage of them as resources in the classroom. Change the conversation.

What are schools tracking? Schools need to ask for more explicit information than, “Are you a veteran?” When you have an event, do a quick card swipe and that will give background information that you can analyze.

Identify and dispel military myths. For example, Underrepresented/poorer people are not the ones most often in the military.

The group dismissed at 4:30 to take a brief tour of Purdue’s veteran’s facility. The current and future sites were visited.

Thursday, October 3, 2013:

Session 6: Spreading the Good Word – Margaret Baechtold

Notes: Council of College Military Educators is a professional organization for voluntary educators.
University of Louisville also hosts a conference in February which is also very good.

Margaret suggested this be a brainstorming session.

- An idea is to share the value of the military education. For example, place information on the Big Ten network during football games to talk about our efforts to help the student
veterans. Involving students in the PSA would be powerful and SVA might be able to help. The common message is that a traditional, brick & mortar campus is a good option and should be investigated.

- Send educational messages to parents so they’ll be informed about options once their soldier returns.
- Invite SVA/SVOs from competing football teams to tailgate together. Shout out on social media to get it organized.
- Do a virtual education fair and put it on You Tube. Admissions people could be on hand to move ahead with the students.
- Rewarding students who participate in the marketing with a badge was suggested.
- ROMA = Release of Military Addresses. This comes from the VA. Names and addresses can be obtained every month and letters are sent with information about schools, FASFA, grants, etc. Penn State does this. It’s a low return, but it is an effort to reach out to people in the geographical area. A return postcard is included for those interested.
- The importance of collecting data to back up the value of veterans to the campus was emphasized. There is a great need to do an effective internal “sell.”
- Keep communications open between local community colleges. Ex. Give student veterans at community colleges free football tickets.
- Encourage the Admissions Office to hire a veteran or someone sensitive to veterans’ issues.
- On the VA website, it is possible to get demographic data so projections can be made to the number of students coming back to specific areas.
- Selling points: “It’s the right thing to do” (diversity). Also, they come with their own revenue stream.

**Session 7: Establishing a Veterans Center** – Jamie Richards

Purdue recently established a Veterans Success Center. The center co-houses the the certifying officials to make a one-stop shop. The new center in the Union will open next summer.

Brainstorming:

- Prime real estate is hard to find. Bring in campus staff in Facilities to see how space can be expanded.
- Rutgers and Ohio State have veterans’ houses. Meet with students and get their opinions. Look at small incremental steps to demonstrate progress. At Rutgers it fits into other “cultural centers” on campus. The Ohio State Residence Hall Housing office manages the house.
- Some students want lounges and others don’t. Students are more interested in priority registration, job fairs, etc. Identify the veterans’ needs at this time.
- Small efforts can have a big impact. The Ohio State Bookstore gave the students a 10% bookstore for a week around Veterans’ Day which they liked.
- Know your students; survey your students. Don’t try to force a square peg into a round hole.

See Power Point handout and Veterans Success Center Program Statement handouts.

**Visit with President Mitch Daniels, Jr.**

President Daniels welcomed the conference participants and extended an invitation for the group to meet at Purdue every year. He acknowledged the challenges facing returning veterans.

**Session 8: Initiatives** – Philip Larson and Mike Carrell

See VetSuccess handout.

The goal is to maximize graduation and retention rates. Its intention is to help students with all services. A Voc Rehab counselor is usually assigned to this job but the focus of the program is not Voc Rehab. An extended conversation ensued on how to make this connection and how various schools were able to get into the program. Mike feels a benefit of having this office on campus is that it can be reassuring to the students to have a VA employee on campus. It helps to build university credibility. Videoconferencing is one way the counselors can extend services to additional campuses. The counselors have been quite helpful in referring students to the campus’ disability services. Counselors do not carry a normal case load but they can do some counseling on an as needed basis.

See VITAL Mission and PAVE handouts.

The VITAL Mission program exists to get veterans to sign up for VA health care services. It’s often located near a hospital where services can be accessed. Works in coordination with Voc Rehab but they are separate units. Not all schools want or need both programs. Not all counselors require offices. For students who sign up now, there’s a base level of where they are now to be used for comparative services. Service-related disabilities can occur later and at least they’re signed into the system. On the university level, the more students that sign up, more funds are provided for the university.

Be aware that the VA has outreach regional teams. They will come to the university and offer benefits such as eBenefits information.
PAVE – Peer advisors for veterans are dedicated to outreach, support, and resource linkages. If the peer advisors uncover mental health issues, they refer them to existing campus programs. They approach it through a holistic approach (study skills, transitions, mental health, etc.) It’s not a counseling system. Incoming students are automatically assigned a peer advisor. Outreach occurs at that point at least once a month. SVA is involved with the peer advisors. Note the online data collection form that is used to gather information. This model can be used at other schools. It is hoped that this can become a nation-wide program. Contact Philip Larson for more information.

**Session 9: Closing, the Way Ahead, and Assessment** – Jamie Richards, Mike Carrell, and Steve Abel

The consensus with the group was that the conference was a very useful event. In looking ahead, Northwestern expressed an interest in hosting it at CIC in Chicago next year. Julia Jenkins will investigate the Chicago option. The University of Chicago also expressed interest in helping Northwestern. Jamie offered to act as the contact person until the next person is designated.

Penn State offered to host the conference in two years. Nebraska and Rutgers also expressed interest in hosting the conference at some point in the future.

If information was missed or not interpreted correctly the please send corrections and revisions to me and I’ll be happy to update the notes.

Respectfully submitted,

Jackie Harris

Military Family Research Institute, Education and Employment