

**Department of Veteran Services
Program Review**



**WEBER STATE
UNIVERSITY**

Summer 2017

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History

Weber State University is a multi-campus institution that serves over 26,955 students. Of those, 6,015 are concurrent enrollment. The Regional Veteran Affairs tracking website, referred to as VAONCE, lists 785 Veteran students and family members utilizing benefits for the 2016-17 academic year. While these students receive services from several departments within the University, the WSU Veteran Services Office assists and supports students through the often complicated and multi-layered veterans educational benefit process.

The Veteran Services Office has evolved since its inception. Beginning in the early 1970's, the office processed veteran educational entitlements through Weber State "College" administrative and financial services program administrator, George E. Whalen (a Medal of Honor recipient). Many veterans returning from Vietnam used their educational benefits; however, because the war was so unpopular, there was a stigma by many veterans to self-identify. George Whalen was very successful in helping these vets come forward to use their entitlements during the seven year period he worked in the office. In the 1980's, with the inception of an all-volunteer force, the number of veterans using their benefits dropped significantly. Those on active duty military service had to pay into their education similar to the Vietnam era vets. This was not a great incentive for members of the Armed Forces. However, as enlistment numbers dropped in the service, the Department of Defense created the Chapter 30 GI Bill in which the Federal Government matched the dollar amount that the service member paid. National Guard and Reserve service members were excluded from these benefits until the mid-1980's at which time the National Guard Bureau and individual states provided educational incentives based upon job classifications.

From the 1980's until 2008, the Veteran Services Office was located on the first floor of the Miller Administration Building at the Ogden Campus. Services were limited to keeping track of student progress and course changes and reporting these statistics to Veterans Affairs (VA). Monthly pro-rated entitlements were sent by the Federal Government to the student to pay their own tuition and fees based on the amount of semester hours each student was taking. During the early 1980's, Veteran Services consisted of a program administrator, a secretary, and 2-3 work study veteran students. Budget cuts over this period resulted in cutting the secretary position, and when the program coordinator quit in 2006, an hourly employee was hired to oversee the program. In 2006, the Veteran Services Coordinator position went unfilled for 6 months.

In 2006, the program coordinator position was filled on a full-time basis. In mid-2008, the Veteran Services office moved to the Student Services Building to create a more welcoming environment for veterans. In August of 2009, the Post 9-11 GI Bill created a significant change to educational entitlements. Whereas under the old Montgomery GI Bill, stipends for tuition and fees were mailed directly to the student, entitlements for tuition and fees would go directly to the college, with an additional monthly stipend and book allowance going to the student. This created a tremendous increase in veteran student enrollment and revenue for the University and accounting management for the WSU Veterans Services office. Policies, procedures, and requirements were changing frequently placing great hardship on students, the Bursars office, and Veteran Services. To meet this challenge, a Certifying Official was hired to assist the

Coordinator and the number of work-study students increased. In addition, growth and demand for services required part time coverage on the Davis Campus. In 2015, Veterans Services on the Ogden Campus moved to its current location Annex 5, on the south-side of campus, across from the residence halls. Within the last 3 years, a Utah State funded Veterans Integration To Academic Leadership (VITAL) clinical psychologist also provides weekly counseling for Veterans who are finding it difficult to navigate through the VA medical system or are trying or are in need of personal adjustment counseling.

Mission Statements

Weber State University

Weber State University provides associate, baccalaureate and master degree programs in liberal arts, sciences, technical and professional fields. Encouraging freedom of expression and valuing diversity, the University provides excellent educational experiences for students through extensive personal contact among faculty, staff and students in the out of the classroom. Through academic programs, research, artistic expression, public service and community-based learning, the university serves as an educational, cultural, and economic leader for the region.

Student Affairs

The Division of Student Affairs promotes student learning, well-being and success through comprehensive services and programs provided in an inclusive environment. Student Affairs serves the needs of a diverse student population by offering educational experiences, leadership opportunities, and academic support that advances the social, intellectual, cultural and civic development of students.

Veteran Services

Veteran Services provides veterans and their dependents with quality, comprehensive support in the use of their educational entitlements and recognizes the educational aims of those students in a diverse college experience. Veteran Services provides supportive services, to include counseling and mentoring to assist in making education a positive experience for Veterans and their family members both academically and socially.

Veteran Services Overarching Goals and Outcomes

- Veteran Services will provide excellence in customer service and support that reflects the highest level of respect and professionalism for Veteran students and family members.
- Staff and Veteran work-study students will process and audit educational entitlements accurately and in a timely manner to insure educational recipient entitlements and the University's reimbursement for tuition and fees.
- Veteran Services will foster the nontraditional and diverse culture and experience of Veterans and family members by assisting them in making informed decisions in pursuit of their educational goals.

Core Programs and Services

Application/processing of Veterans Benefits. Entitlement applications are digitally processed using the Box Sync cloud storage tool and Weber Sync, club and organization management tool, for using required VA forms, university Bursar protocol, and VAONCE forms. VAONCE is the online system through the United States Department of Veterans Affairs used to submit student forms. Students are advised through the application process that they must include documentation of service activity (DD-214), certificate of eligibility defining which Chapter (30, 31, 33, 35, 1606, or 1607 [See Appendix A]) they are entitled, their detailed class schedule and student bill.

Data Collection. When processing benefits for veteran students, our office enters a code for veterans into the Banner student data system. This provides an advanced registration opportunity and parking permit lottery (vocational rehabilitation status). Coding students as a veterans provides them with the opportunity to register as senior regardless of number of earned semester credits. Automated data collection through University Banner and the Federal VA ONCE systems reflect student numbers of semester of semester hours and identifies which VA payment and entitlement chapters they are assigned to. This data also includes semester hours and total number of students per semester. The two reporting systems have historically not aligned to provide the same number of students attending.

Monitoring Student Progress. We monitor student progress through internal semester audits using ARGOS. Students must maintain a 2.0 grade point average, and those falling below are reported to the Educational Liaison Representative (ELR). Veterans Services routinely audits student files to monitor add/drops, which can effect payments to the University and Veteran student or family member. Specific guidance for maintaining student files is contained in the WAVES manual. WAVES is the Web Automated Verification of Enrollment System run by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs. We also educate students about their responsibilities to submit all semester class schedules and class changes in a timely manner to insure payment to both the school and the student.

Counseling Services. In partnership with the Regional Veteran Affairs, a grant was approved in 2012, awarding Weber State University direct counseling support from Veterans Integration To Academic Leadership (VITAL) a State sponsored clinical psychologist for Veterans suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. In October, the psychologist and one intern began this support two days a week at the Ogden Campus. Services are located in a private office Ogden Campus Veterans Services. Mentoring is provided by a grant-sponsored hourly employee and federally funded work-study mentors.

Site Visits

The State Educational Liaison conducts yearly visits to ensure WSU Veterans Services is correctly maintaining student records and verifying accurate reporting of class certification and changes in class schedules.

Programming, Outreach, Campus Relations and Collaborations

Programs and services are initiated through consultation with the Veteran Services staff, the veterans senator and his/her area council, Military Outreach for Veterans Education (MOVE) committee, the Student Veterans of America Chapter President, and various community agencies. The senator attends weekly meetings, is involved in service projects, and participates on the senate council to review University policy and activities that effect student Veterans. During this past year, the senator successful secured a designated parking space for Veterans.

Advertisement for Veteran activities is published on the WSU Veterans website, emails, the campus newspaper (Signpost), posters, word-of-mouth and within the Veterans Services office. In addition, the MOVE (Military Outreach for Veterans Education) committee provides input and guidance into programs and services.

Veterans Emphasis Week, held in November, provides opportunities for Weber State students to view the contribution of veterans past, present, and those attending the University. Examples of some of the activities included notable guests as Congressman Rob Bishop, the reading of over 6,000 Armed Forces service members killed in Iraq and Afghanistan static displays of various war uniforms, equipment, rations, vehicles and aircraft, and military themed band concerts conducted by University and community musicians, and a Veterans Award and Appreciation Luncheon. These activities are held at both Ogden and Davis Campuses.

Over the past 3 years, WSU Veteran Services has re-evaluated its customer service relationships and modified its focus from a strictly clerical relationship with students, to a comprehensive Veteran center providing services and referrals to Veteran support agencies. Specifically, the move from a limited space at Student Services Building to the current upgraded stand-alone facility provides for increased information privacy and a more "veteran friendly" atmosphere.

Collaboration

The Veterans office has participated in numerous on and off campus venues in order to reach out to currently enrolled and potential students including the following: Hill Air Force Base education and community job fairs, Major Fest, Block Party, student orientation, and marketing activities in the Student Union. In addition, veterans have been featured in the campus newspaper (the Signpost), Ogden Standard Examiner, Salt Lake Tribune, and New York Times. This media exposure has generated interest by students and community organizations and leadership.

Veteran Services refers veteran students to tutoring opportunities with both academic and Veteran Upward Bound resources. In addition, veterans are encouraged to contact Career Services to improve success in their career choices and the education required to accomplish their goals. The Counseling and Psychological Services Center has partnered with Veteran Services to address the challenges facing Veteran Students returning from a stressful and often lethal combat environment. The Women's Center and Nontraditional Student Center are also collaborative partners.

MOVE. This committee consists of representatives from different campus offices that interact regularly in behalf of student veterans. The committee addresses challenges facing student veterans including registration, degree competition, quality of campus life, student policy and provides faculty/staff training. The committee is comprised of but not limited to the following: Admissions, Academic Advising, Faculty, Honors, Financial Aid, Legal Assistance, Continuing Education, Veteran Services, Veteran Upward Bound, Army ROTC, WSU Liaison to Hill AFB, Registration, Dean of Students, and Davis Campus. Additional committee membership under consideration could include a representative from Career Services. At its inception, MOVE met every month but currently meets every three months.

MENTORING. Mentoring is also available in Veteran Services through a grant provided by the State of Utah Veterans Affairs Office. An hourly employee supervises the work of other work-study mentors to help veterans navigate through the, often cumbersome, VA medical and benefit system. This program is designed to improve academic success and provide a greater sense of well-being for the veteran. The Mentor Supervisor is located in the Veteran Services office and that position is funded by a state two-year grant. The effectiveness of the Mentor Supervisor and other mentor positions will then be evaluated to determine if future State Funding is available or Weber State University will assume the funding base for the position.

Future Growth

Based on local projections, we anticipate an increase in Veteran student enrollment over the next five years at the Davis Campus and the enrollment at the Ogden Campus to remain stable. The Davis Campus Veteran Services Office provides limited space for processing student records, but Administration is pursuing expansion. With regard to support services to both Ogden and Davis Campuses, it will be necessary to provide ongoing counseling services to include support groups, individual therapy sessions from both the WSU Counseling Center, the VITAL program, advocacy and connection to Veteran support services in the Ogden and Regional, Salt Lake City offices and career services (see Programming, Outreach, Campus Relations and Collaborations).

Leadership and Staffing

The Veteran Services personnel consist of the following:

Coordinator (Professional-pay grade 5) Charles Chandler is the full-time liaison between Weber State University and the US Department of Veterans Affairs for educational benefits for veterans and dependents eligible for the GI Bill. The Coordinator serves as a Certifying Official and as the primary point of contact for WSU on all matters concerning veterans, veteran benefits, and related issues. The Coordinator provides support services to assist in making education a successful experience for veterans, both academically and socially. The Coordinator must have at least five years of experience in an academic environment as academic advisor, student services staff member or other equivalent or combination of management experience. The position requires a master's degree, and preference given for military background and experience and a working knowledge of higher education. Other coordinator responsibilities include the following:

- Training and supervising office staff in the handling of student financial records to ensure proper management and security.
- Ensuring federal guidelines are followed in the management of records
- Ensuring that staff provide professional customer support, accuracy and correctness in Veteran records in accordance with pertinent Federal and University policies and regulations.
- Providing guidance and direction to the veterans senator and chapter leadership of Student Veterans of America pertaining to all matters regarding Veteran student issues.
- Providing mentorship in management, leadership and planning.
- Integrating the process of veteran issues regarding admissions, registration, computer support, nontraditional services, women's services, individual college and departments, Career Services, the Disability office, and Counseling Services.
- Sits on various university committees, and community and national organizations.

Veteran Technician (1 employee) Bryan Kuchak (Classified-pay grade 16) Provides full-time administrative support to Veteran Services as an additional Certifying Official and assists in supervising VA work-study students. The Technician ensures files and documentation meet Federal Government requirements and guidelines. The Technician assists in research and reporting all adjustment in students' schedules to the Federal Government and VA Rehabilitation Counselors. Other responsibilities include the following:

- Working in partnership with the Accounting Office to process payments to the University from VA funding.
- Researching problems regarding tuition paid to the University.
- Entering data on VAONCE and WSU Banner computer system to certify students in a timely manner.
- Assisting in training and supervising of VA work-study employees.
- Researching and reporting students "last Dates of Attendance" and preparing academic probation letters for students whose GPA fall below the VA-required 2.0.

- Assisting the Coordinator with visits from the Department of Workforce Services, Vocational Rehabilitation, Veterans Administration, and other associated agencies.
- Resolving student problems regarding the receipt of benefits and debt letters.
- Maintaining up-to-date files of VA regulations and monthly reconciling of Purchase Card transactions. This position requires a baccalaureate degree and experience with veterans and a working knowledge of higher education.

Veteran's Educational Services Specialist – Classified N25- Sheila Simko

This position is the result of a job audit funded through a one-year grant from the State Department of Veterans Affairs. In addition to all responsibilities listed in the Veterans Technician, Sheila will be responsible to provide 3 days coverage at the Davis Campus, 2 days at the Ogden Campus, all veteran publicity to outlying Weber State centers and all events and activities at the Davis Campus.

Veteran/Military/Family Member Work Study Students The primary responsibilities of the five to eight work-study students are to assist veterans with initial processing of educational benefit entitlement paperwork and conduct audits to ensure veteran students receive correct benefits. These students are encouraged to work at least 15 hours a week to provide the support that veterans deserve. Policy dictates that work-study veteran students must be attending at least $\frac{3}{4}$ time during each academic semester. Veteran work-study positions are unique because they are paid by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Work-study students must adhere to FERPA and maintain a professional relationship with both students and other University departments. Termination of work-study students is at the discretion of the Coordinator. Both staff and work-study students receive extensive training in policy and procedures and are monitored in their performance by senior work-study students, technician, and coordinator. Monthly staff meetings instruct all members of Veteran Services in policy review and changes, and provide opportunities for questions.

Recruiting

Both the exempt and non-exempt positions are advertised on the University employment website as well as other local, regional, and national employment resources. Qualifications for these positions are listed in accordance with Human Resources. Candidates for employment are processed through a University selection process. A selection committee is convened for screening applications and interviewing candidates. Work-study students are recruited by email, signage in the Veteran Services office and word-of-mouth. Work-study students may be interviewed by the Coordinator, Veteran Technician, and/or senior Veteran work-study students. This ensures a willingness to work in a fast-paced and sometimes stressful working environment.

Training and Professional Development

All Veteran Services staff and work-study students attend University training offered by various departments. These departments include but are not limited to Veterans Upward Bound, Academic Advisement, Registration, Financial Aid, Bursars, Legal Services, Women's Center, LGBT Resource Center, Disability Services, and Human Resources. The Veteran Technician attended new employee training and was an instructor for the Bursars statewide training conference.

The Coordinator is a member of the National Association of Veteran Program Administrators (NAVPA), an organization of institutions and individuals who are involved or interested in the operation of veteran's affairs programs and/or the delivery of services to veterans as school certifying officials across the country. NAVPA is governed by an annually elected Board of Directors. The purpose of NAVPA is to promote professional competency and efficiency through an association of members and others associated with, and involved in, veterans educational programs; to promote the development, improvement and extension of opportunities to any veteran or dependent of a veteran for his or her personal growth and development to its fullest potential. The WSU Coordinator currently serves on the NAVPA Board which meets in the spring to interface with Congress to advise them on legislation that could positively or negatively affect Veterans educational benefits. In addition, the Coordinator attends an annual NAVPA membership meeting (typically held in October), designed to educate other certifying officials and address issues that affect them directly.

Both the Coordinator and Technicians are members of the WAVES (Western Association of Veterans Education Specialists) organization, which provides training to remain current with regard to Federal policies and procedure. Staff are required to attend annual (WAVES) conferences and trainings on topics such as compliance surveys, challenges of payments, reporting tuition and fees, refunds, debts, grade reporting, PTSD, TBI, military friendly campuses, various campus Veteran organizations, and best practices. The Coordinator also participates on various University committees/organizations and community including Block Party, Wrestling Club, Homeless Veterans Shelter Board, and the Northern Utah Veterans Council and MOVE.

Veteran work-study student job performance is constantly monitored and training is provided in the administration of their duties. Hands-on training is conducted to insure a thorough working knowledge of policies and procedures affecting veterans educational entitlements.

Employee Evaluation

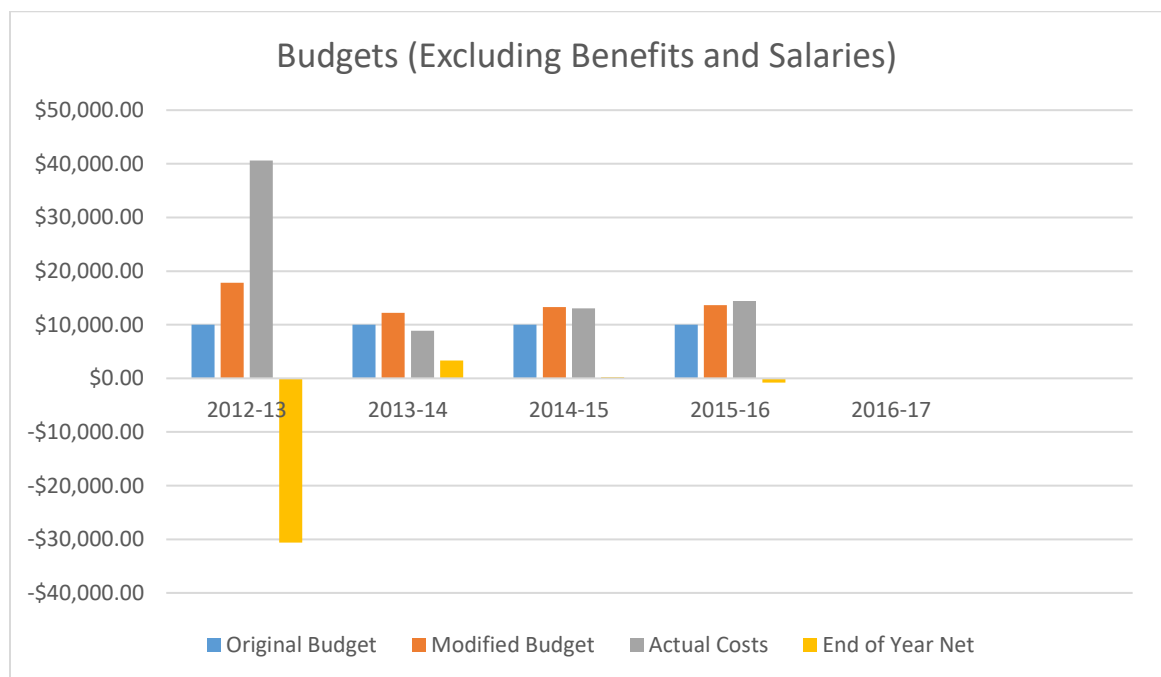
Employees must demonstrate competence in learning procedures to accurately process veteran student files. Failure to process correctly may result in a student not receiving their entitlements and the University not receiving payment for tuition and fees. If a work-study student consistently makes errors on student files after receiving remedially training, that work-study student's employment may be terminated. In addition, if the work study student fails to use good

customer service skills or creates a negative work environment for the staff or other University departments. Veterans and family members deserve professionalism and technical expertise from Veteran Services staff in order to facilitate a successful higher education experience. In addition, full-time employees are subject to annual performance review. Both the Coordinator and Veteran Technician participate in the Performance Review and Evaluation Process (PREP) on an annual basis. PREP defines job standards, requirements and level of performance.

Financial Resources and Budget

Veteran Services is funded primarily through Education and General (E & G) state funds. Additional funding is provided through student fees and VA Reporting Fees reimbursement (an amount based on total number of veteran students during an academic year). Over the past five years, the reporting fee rate of reimbursement to the University ranged from \$6.00 per student to \$15.00 per student. The 2017 Federal legislation has capped Reporting Fee reimbursement at \$7.00 per student for the next five years beginning 2018. Reporting Fees awarded in 2016-17 included \$4,000.00.

The current expense (non-salary) budget for Veteran Services has remained static over the past three years with the an overall budget increase represented in FY 2014 due to an additional full-time salaried employee funded through Student Fees.



The 2012-13 end of year net budget was due to offsets resulting from the Department of the Treasury mandating a VA nationwide audit following the implementation of the Post-9/11 GI Bill. Weber State University reimbursed students any overpayments rather than holding on to the money to send back to VA. The University was unwilling to go after students for overpayments charging that the school was responsible to return the overpayments. This created a huge offset for universities nationwide. There was such an outcry by institutions that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs called for the Treasury temporarily ceased pulling money from campus veteran departments and financial aid budgets. However, the VA has since clarified their policy, and WSU no longer experiences offsets.

	Total Budget	Number of Students Served
2014-2015	93,269	956
2015-2016	94,934	862
2016-2017	97,659	785

Veteran Services is committed to support the needs of veterans and their family members. With the increase in veteran student enrollment and the complexity of necessary services, it will be crucial that resources are expanded to meet this challenge of the remaining "Veteran Friendly."

Facilities, Equipment, and Technology

Weber State University Ogden Campus Veterans Services is located at 1352 Village Drive, Ogden, Utah 84408 (Annex 5) housed in a stand-alone facility with Assessment and Institutional Research located in the basement of Annex 5. Veterans Services at the Davis Campus is located at Building D-2, 2750 University Park Blvd, Layton, Utah 84041, room 255. The Ogden office has a front entrance and rear emergency exit. This office consists of a waiting area, welcoming window, separate processing stations, a call center, three private employee offices, ADA compliant unisex bathroom, break and conference area, counseling room for the VITAL counselor and a lounge area for veterans to relax. The office often provides a TV, food and drinks to help veterans feel welcome.

Veteran Services also has a presence at the Davis Campus on the 2nd floor. Due to lack of space, services are located next door to Veterans Upward Bound. The office is small and provides no place for veteran respite. Veteran Services functions on a 2-day per week basis. Hours of operation may change each semester depending on the schedule of our work-study staff. A certifying official oversees this operation. Administration is coordinating efforts for expansion of Davis Campus Veterans Services. The State of Utah Veterans Affairs has awarded a one-year grant to pay for a full time certifying official at that the Davis Campus.

Both Ogden and Davis campus offices are accessible to individuals with disabilities. Restrooms and emergency exits are located on same levels. Veteran Services offices on both campuses have plans for fire evacuation and earthquake protection. The Ogden office has an emergency first aid kit including food, flashlight and medical supplies.

Computers/Printers

Each desk and workstation at the Ogden campus has a computer. There is a laptop and projector available for mobile presentations. The Ogden office has a copier leased and maintained by the University Copy Center. Other equipment includes six desktop and one laptop computers, two printers, and a fax machine with scanning capability. The Davis campus office has two computers and shares a printer and a fax machine in Student Services reception area. Connectivity with different University systems including Cat Tracks (an internal WSU site monitoring degree process), Banner, Weber Sync and Box has been an ongoing challenge. These systems require both initially data entry and weekly monitoring to check each students real-time number of credit hours. Student Affairs IT support has responded quickly to any software problems. Authorization for work-study students has been streamlined.

Plans for Rotation of Technology Replacement

The procedure to replace aging equipment is on an as-needed basis, primarily by acquiring four-year-old lab computers through the campus surplus each year. In order to remain current with regard to technology and equipment, Veteran Services would like to begin a rotation system by earmarking money each year as carry forward to spread out costs of new equipment. By moving to a three-year rotation for computers, the office will ensure that staff members will have new

systems under warranty, and the replaced computers are moved to the open lab area for lower priority student use. This will ensure there will be no computer older than five years in the office area. Other equipment, such as printers, the fax machine, and the copier are replaced on an as needed basis due to their low costs.

Technology Security

Information kept on office computers includes student IDs, Social Security Numbers (due to requirements by the Federal Government for issuing educational reimbursement), names, addresses, phone numbers, email addresses, and class schedules. Although, Veteran Services has transitioned to a digital format, three-year archived file information is kept in a hard copy and locked in the Veterans Services office. Student data is transmitted via a secure website to the VA. Current Student information is transmitted by secure systems.

Veteran Services receives faxed information with student information, however the documentation is either placed into the student's digital file or is shredded immediately. The office does not share this information with other campus departments. University Policies and Procedures outlined in Section 10-1, 10-2, 10-3 are followed for best practices. Due to the sensitive information (social security numbers, Wildcat ID) transmitted via office computers, it is necessary to maintain firewall protect that will prohibit the hacking of information. The office is investigating additional security measures to protect electronic transmission of student information.

The Davis office maintains two certifying official computers and uses digital processing rather than maintaining hard copy files. All other security systems are followed to ensure privacy of student information.

Ethical and Legal Responsibilities

Confidentiality is a critical component of Veteran Services. The office maintains personal academic files on every veteran student. Social Security numbers (SSN) are part of the file because VA requires SSNs as their VA f in addition to the name of the veteran. These hard copy files remain locked up each night and are only accessed by Veteran Services staff and work study students. In addition, all staff must comply with FERPA. In order to ensure that policies and procedures are met, Veteran Services is constantly providing training for staff and work-study students with regard to policy and procedure changes, both institutional and federal.

In April 2012, President Obama released an Executive Order (see attachment) to all educational institutions serving service entitlement recipients. Although, the order has undergone modification, it is still remains in effect to-date. Specifically, the order requests the establishment and implementation of principles of excellence and the strengthening enforcement and compliance of such mechanisms. Weber State University is transparent (see University webpage) to public scrutiny and does not participate in any “predatory” recruiting practices to exploit veteran’s entitlements. In using those entitlements, veterans are encouraged to visit Career Services to determine which major is suited to the ability, interest and career opportunity, and are encouraged to meet with their college’s academic advisor to ensure academic progress is maintained. WSU Veteran Services has already established a thorough briefing to all VA recipients to ensure they follow their degree plan and are encouraged to maintain academic excellence to retain their educational entitlements.

Prior to each semester, the Veteran Services staff reviews a student’s Cat Tracks to ensure the classes taken go toward the veteran’s major. If veterans are struggling with any academic subjects, they are encouraged to contact the Veteran Services office immediately to assist in finding tutorial resources. This may include Veterans Upward Bound and academic tutoring services offered on campus. If a student fails a class, they may retake a class twice; however, if their GPA drops below 2.0, they may be subject to academic probation and if placed on suspension may lose their entitlements until the University removes the suspension. If the veteran stops attending class and receives a UW (unofficial withdrawal), they must pay back to the VA all entitlements up until the last date of attendance. The Veteran Services office encourages veteran students to maintain a mutual working relationship to provide every opportunity for academic success and degree or program completion.

Security Concerns and Risks

The Veteran Services office maintains hard copies of student records that are locked in metal filing cabinets at the close of business. VA requires that we record personal information to include social security numbers. This information is maintained in the VA processing and identification system known as VAONCE. The system processes student data, which is sent to the Treasury Department, and tuition and fee payments are distributed to the university and entitlements given to the student. Staff members individually maintain passwords for each computer. Veteran Services staff are authorized to discuss personal information with the Federal

Department of Veterans but are prohibited from sharing any student information outside of the workplace. Duplicate or unnecessary documents containing student information are shredded.

Veterans who may be experiencing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) may display symptoms that interfere with academic performance or sociality among other students, staff, and faculty. These students may be referred to WSU Disability Services, Counseling and Psychological Services, the VITAL counselor, or Regional VA Center in Salt Lake City. In consultation with Disability Services, if PTSD or TBI is creating problems in the classroom, the veteran should contact the instructor to protect both the rights of the student and faculty member and work toward a positive outcome. If the problem cannot be resolved at that level, it may be necessary to contact the Dean of Students.

Deployments and Annual Training

Deployments are defined as those absences in which members of the Armed Forces are placed on orders to participate in military operations that would affect Veteran student attendance from 30 days to one year or more. Annual Training (AT) includes operations extending from one to two weeks and are characteristic of members of both the National Guard and Reserve. Students deploying must provide the University and instructors with copy of orders. In some cases, veterans may consider not taking some courses if the syllabus discourages prolonged absences. These actions will protect the student from incurring tuition and fee indebtedness and punitive grades. Students attending annual training must contact their instructors prior to the beginning of the semester to assess if the one to two week period of absence will affect their grade or if the work can be completed in advance or upon return.

Assessment and Evaluation

Historically, the Veteran Services office has not provided students with an opportunity to evaluate the quality of service. Assessment has been anecdotal veteran comments and has been in direct proportion to the quality of training resulting in errors on the student account and also the customer service.

Federal and State evaluation of how efficiently high education veteran centers services veterans and their family members. Educating these students on following VA policy and procedures can affect academic performance and retention. This is an on-going educational process. For example, the old Montgomery GI Bill required minimal scrutiny because the educational entitlements were paid directly to the student. If a student changed his/her schedule, Veteran Services submitted a 1999-b and the VA contacted the student to work out a repayment plan. Beginning August 2009, with the new Post 9-11 GI Bill, the process became more complicated. Tuition and fees are paid directly to the University. If a student changes his or her schedule, it creates an over or under payment. The Veteran Services office generates a 1999-b and coordinates with the Bursars office to return funds from overpayments and requests funds from VA if there is an increase in hours. Frequently, students are not contacting the Veteran Services office when they change class hours. Students are briefed at the beginning of each semester that they must let us know if they change their classes. The failure to do so has resulted in significant paperwork for Veteran Services staff and the bursar. It requires constant monitoring of over 700 student files.

During the 2016-17 academic year, veteran students have commented to Veteran Services office tht customer service has improved. The staff spends quality time in explaining what of students need to know with regard to their entitlements, class changes, student schedule bills and referral to financial and tutoring resources. Recently, we have compiled a list of email addresses for veteran students. Our intent is to develop a satisfaction survey to send through mass email.

Compliance Surveys

At the request of Federal Veterans Affairs, the Salt Lake Department of Veterans Affairs, School Approving Agency (SAA) conducts annual Compliance Surveys. Due to the large Veteran population at WSU, SAA representatives select 50 random student files to ensure correct certification procedures are followed. (Appendix B). The most recent survey was conducted 2015.

Student Information

Veteran statistical data is tracked through VAONCE, a Federal system and only accounts for those students who have submitted a request for use of educational benefits at any given point within the academic year at the Weber State University.

It is the intent of Veteran Services to include identification of Veteran students in the Banner system on campus to provide a more accurate reflection of enrollment. This will allow for better

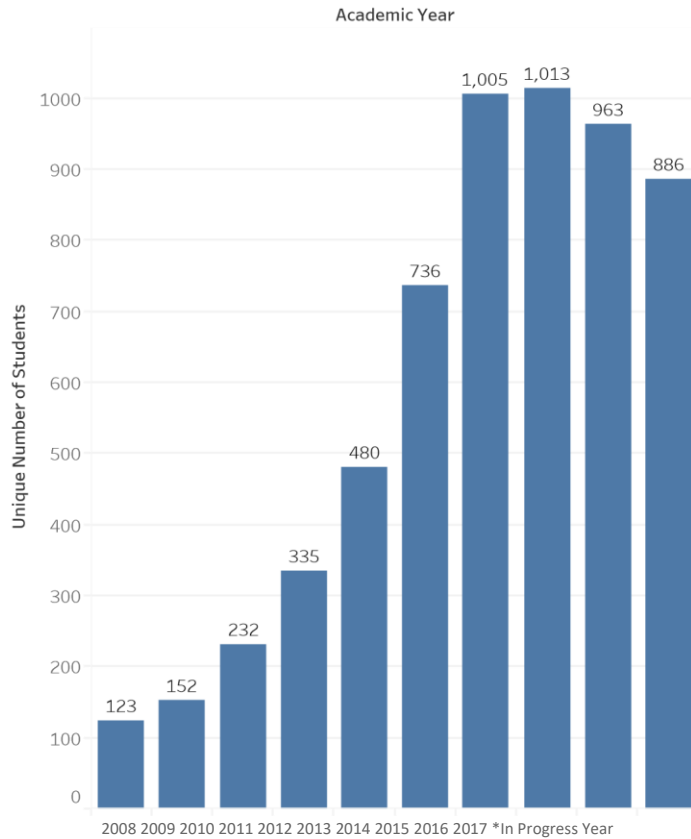
reporting by the Institutional Research Office, and will hopefully ensure that the numbers provided by the university and the numbers included in VAONCE align.

Veteran Affairs Student Dashboard

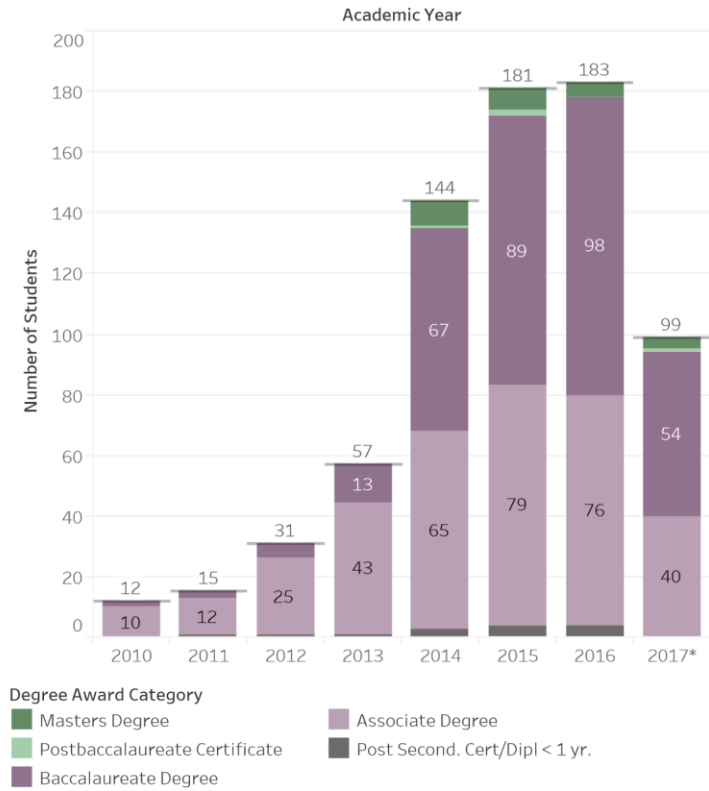
This dashboard includes anyone that has been coded within the Veteran Affairs processing system. Due to missing start and end dates for eligibility, a student may be counted for enrollment in which they did not receive funding.

Data as of January 23, 2017. Please request a refresh of the data when needed.

Enrolled Actual Students by Academic Year



VA Code and Received Degree



Six Column Model Data

On an annual basis, departments within the Division of Student Affairs track their goals and learning outcomes for students in the six column model (See Appendix C). Below is summary level information for the years in which our department has these data available:

2012-2013. Monitoring add/drops, developing Veteran specific orientations, institute compliance with Executive Order 13607 “Principles of Excellence.

2013-2014. Focus on Diversity during Veteran Emphasis Week, hire a ¾ time certifying official, procure new office furniture for Veterans Services office, procure new computers, begin process of paperless student files, and establish a customer satisfaction survey.

2014-2015. Implement a comprehensive training program for Veteran work-study students, improve the Veteran Student facility, and develop a mentoring program for student Veterans.

2015-2016. Develop a training program for faculty and staff across campus about how to work with Veteran Students.

2016-2017. Launch paperless student files using iPad Mini's on Weber SYNC and BOX. Establish a stronger working relationship with Veterans Upward Bound and VITAL. VetSuccess-on-Campus pre-approval was granted to WSU however, Federal funding was frozen. Continue training for work-study students. Invite the Women's Center to give an overview of their program.

Areas of Improvement

Marketing and information distribution to Veterans is an on-going challenge. Veteran Services continues to update their website. Student Affairs has a dedicated person to input current events and information onto the Veterans Services website. Posters and fliers are expensive. Most universities and colleges report low Veteran activity beyond the educational entitlement relationship. They report that student Veteran organizations typically have low attendance, and programs are marginally supported. WSU Veteran Services have a website on the WSU Portal and is pursuing YouTube, Titter, and Facebook. WSU has now re-established a Student Veterans of America Chapter with a newly appointed President.

Reporting statistical and demographic data has proved to be a difficult task however there is gradual improvement. ARGOS and Institutional Research have improved data collection and are helping with the tracking of retention and graduation rates. This is necessary for the VA's current request for such data.

Summary

Priorities for Improvement Include:

- Educating Veterans and Family members on VA procedures to insure they receive education entitlements.
- Ensure that certifying officials are trained on VA policies and procedures.

- Improve marketing strategies
- Explore assessment and reporting resources to track retention and graduation
- Provide access to campus and community organizations
- Pursue all funding resources to improve the quality of services

Weber State Veteran Services has evolved into a comprehensive program to assist Veterans, military, and family members in the use of their educational benefits. A stand-alone Veterans facility, peer mentors and supervisor, two VITAL clinical psychologists, and two full-time certifying officials have improved the quality of services. However, the challenges faced by Veteran Services are ever-changing policies and regulations requiring training to all school certifying officials, Veteran student retention and graduation, local funding, and a decrease in VA student reporting fees paid to all colleges and universities to support training and services.

Over the past three years, Veteran Services has evolved in the quantity and quality of services it provides. Our new space has provided Veteran Services with more space and privacy for Veterans and staff.

Today, the office is a highly efficient team of professionals. Files are scrutinized carefully to help ensure that Veterans and family members are getting the educational benefits for which they are entitled. In addition, all Veteran Services staff display a great deal of compassion, dignity and respect for these recipients.

Examination of Veteran Services through the process of this program review enables the Coordinator, Technicians (certifying officials) and work study students to not only “see where we have been” but to examine the comprehensive way in which we should administer a program for the future that meets the ever-changing needs of Veterans and family members. In addition, the Veteran Services office has taken on the responsibility for University tuition and fee adjustments that were previously handled by the Bursar’s office. This has required the certifying officials to become thoroughly knowledgeable in the process of Banner adjustments. Due to the competency and technical expertise of the certifying officials, Sheila Simko, and Bryan Kuchak, adjustments are being made in a much more efficient and timely manner. This has improved the quality of service to Veterans and streamlined the processing and changing of claims.

Flexibility is a key component to this success. Policies and procedures change, technology breaks down, communication with VAONCE is lost but Veteran Services continues to provide quality service. Unfortunately, these changes are an ever-present reality initiated by the Federal Veterans Affairs and the Regional Office located in Muskogee, Oklahoma. Funding, personnel shortages to handle student claim processing, and changes in legislation provide challenges for WSU Veteran Services and other Veteran support organizations assigned to institutions of higher learning across the country.

Over the next five years, Veteran Services will see an increase in Veteran Student enrollment at our Davis Campus. A college or university can no longer claim they are “Veteran Friendly” unless they provide comprehensive services including a well-staffed, adequately housed Veteran Center.

With regard to support services, in order to keep pace with this influx, it will be necessary to provide an increase in counseling services to include support groups, therapy sessions, and advocacy and connection to Veteran services in the Ogden and Regional, Salt Lake City offices and career services.

Weber State University welcomes the Site Review Team to examine closely every aspect of the program to make recommendations that will improve the quality of services to Veterans and their family members.

Appendix A

VA Chapters 30, 31, 33, 35, 1606, 1607

Chapter 30: Category One - Entered active duty for the first time after June 30, 1985. Had military pay reduced by \$100 a month for the first 12 months. Continuously served for 3 years, or 2 years if that is your first term of enlistment; or 2 years if you entered the selected reserve within a year of leaving active duty and served 4 years (2 by 4 program). Category Two - Entered active duty before January 1, 1977. Served at least 1 day between 10/19/84 and 6/30/85 and stayed on active duty through 6/30/88. On 12/31/89, you had entitlement left from the Vietnam Era GI Bill.

Chapter 31: Vocational Rehabilitation is a program of services for service members and veterans with service-connected physical or mental disabilities. Often these individuals experience limitations in getting and keeping a job, as well as in their daily living activities. This program can prepare veterans for a suitable job, help them get and keep that job, and assist them in becoming fully productive and independent. Veterans must first be evaluated by the VA regional office before they can be accepted into the Chapter 31 program. If you have a service disability, it is highly encouraged that you apply regardless of percentage. If you are eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation benefits, you may receive up to four years of rehabilitation services. Generally, you must complete a rehabilitation program within twelve years from the date VA notifies you of your entitlement to compensation benefits. Veterans have a maximum of 48 months of benefits. Chapter 31 pays for training expenses, including tuition, fees, necessary books, supplies, and equipment, and will provide you with a monthly subsistence allowance during training.

Chapter 33: The Post-9/11 GI Bill provides financial support for education and housing to individuals with at least 90 days of aggregate service on or after September 11, 2001, or individuals discharged with a service-connected disability after 30 days. You must have received an honorable discharge to be eligible for the Post-9/11 GI Bill. As of August 1, 2009, the Post-9/11 GI Bill is effective for training. Approved training under the Post-9/11 GI Bill includes graduate and undergraduate degrees, and vocational/technical training. All training programs must be offered by an institution of higher learning (IHL) and approved for GI Bill benefits. Additionally, tutorial assistance, and licensing and certification test reimbursement are approved under the Post-9/11 GI Bill. The Post-9/11 GI Bill will pay your tuition based upon the highest in-state tuition charged by a public educational institution in the state where the school is located. The amount of support that an individual may qualify for depends on where they live and what type of degree they are pursuing.

Chapter 35: Dependents' Educational Assistance provides education and training opportunities to eligible dependents of certain veterans. The program offers up to 45 months of education benefits. These benefits may be used for degree and certificate programs, apprenticeship, and on-the-job training. If you are a spouse, you may take a correspondence course. Remedial, deficiency, and refresher courses may be approved under certain circumstances. You must be the son, daughter, or spouse of a) a veteran who died or is permanently and totally disabled as the

result of a service-connected disability sustained during active duty in the Armed Forces; b) a veteran who died from any cause while a service-connected disability existed; c) a service member missing in action or captured in line of duty by a hostile force; or d) a service member forcibly detained or interned in line of duty by a foreign government or power.

Chapter 1606: The Montgomery GI Bill - Selected Reserve program may be available to you if you are a member of the Selected Reserve. The Selected Reserve includes the Army Reserve, Navy Reserve, Air Force Reserve, Marine Corps Reserve, Coast Guard Reserve, Army National Guard, and the Air National Guard. You may use this education assistance program for degree programs, certificate or correspondence courses, cooperative training, independent study programs, apprenticeship/on-the-job training, and vocational flight training programs. Remedial, refresher and deficiency training are available under certain circumstances. Eligibility for this program is determined by the Selected Reserve components. VA makes the payments for this program. You may be entitled to receive up to 36 months of education benefits. Your benefit entitlement ends 10 years from the date of your eligibility for the program or on the day you leave the Selected Reserve.

Chapter 1607: GI Bill (REAP) Reserve Education Assistance Program (REAP), more commonly known as Chapter 1607, was established October 28, 2004 in recognition of the sacrifices made by Reserve Component members' in answering the call to duty. Chapter 1607 can be used in conjunction with Federal Tuition Assistance (FTA), kickers, loan programs and state funded programs (GTIP) to assist with educational expenses. To be eligible for the benefit, a soldier must be mobilized for 90+ consecutive days since September 11, 2001. There is no delimitating date, soldiers do not have to pay in \$1200 or have a 6x2 enlistment contract; however, they must remain in the ARNG to receive the benefit. If a soldier gains eligibility then leaves the Selected Reserves, their eligibility for 1607 terminates forever (even if they re-enlist within the 12 month window). Eligibility also terminates if a soldier participates in a Dedicated Guard ROTC program after becoming eligible or if the soldier uses all of their monthly entitlements. If a service member is ordered to active duty and released before completing 90 consecutive days because of an injury, illness or disease incurred or aggravated in the line of duty, they may receive 1607. Soldiers separated because of a disability (not willful misconduct) on or after the date on entitlement (91st day of deployment) will have 10 years to use 1607 from the date of entitlement.

Appendix B

Compliance Survey

For each of these students we will need the following information:

- Current unofficial transcript showing courses taken, grades, term-by-term GPA, and overall
- GPA
- Class Schedules
- Degree Plan(s)
- Ledger Sheets
- Enrollment Agreement signed

These documents should be complete and current through the last term completed by the student. (We will keep the copies; they will be used as a work sheet.)

We will also need to review other information in the students' files, including the usual things like:

- Add/Drop Information
- Parent Institution Letters
- Probation or Suspension Information
- Prior Credit Evaluations (with copies of transcripts from prior schools)
- Copies of any VA paperwork that you have submitted

We will need to see all these things, even if they are in some file(s) other than the student's "VA" file.

Copy of the student's program plan- This document is sometimes referred to as a degree audit, graduation checklist, curriculum guide sheet, academic advising checklist, etc. (A copy of the curriculum from the catalog under which the student was certified is sufficient.) It should reflect the courses required for the student's program of study. If the student has pursued more than one program at your school, include program plans for each program.

Copy of the transfer credit evaluation form (if applicable)- Hopefully, in most instances, the credit for transfer will be indicated on the degree check sheet; otherwise, please furnish a document showing the credit given for transfer work. The document should show subjects for which credit has been granted toward the student's program as a result of previous education, training, and / or experience. Transfer work, military credit, CLEP information, etc., should be reflected on the student's transcript. If the student has pursued more than one program at your school, please furnish a transfer credit evaluation form or similar document for each program. Please remember that "credit for previous education" is that which applies to the student's program and fulfills one or more requirements for successful completion of the program.