

**Department of Veteran Services  
Program Review**



**WEBER STATE  
UNIVERSITY**

**Fall 2012**

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## History

Weber State University is a multi-campus institution that serves over 25,000 students. Of those, on average, approximately 650 students use their veteran's education benefits on an annual basis to pursue a degree or certification at the university. The Veteran Affairs website referred to as VAONCE lists 966 Veteran students and family member utilizing benefits for the 2011-12 Academic year. While these students receive services from several departments within the university, the 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 veterans' educational entitlements through Weber State College's 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 7-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 in the basement of Miller Administration Building. 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 the 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 of time 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 Department Head position went unfilled for 6 months.

In 2006, the program coordinator position was filled on a fulltime basis. In 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 was changed significantly. Whereas stipends for tuition and fees were sent previously to the student, these entitlements would now go directly to the school, with an additional monthly stipend and book allowance going to the student. This created a tremendous increase in veteran student enrollment and paperwork for our office. Policies, procedures, and requirements were changing frequently placing great hardship on students, the Bursars office, and Veteran Services. To meet this challenge, a Veteran Services

Technician was hired to assist the Coordinator of Veteran Services, and the number of work study students increased from 4 to 9. In addition, services are also now provided on a part time basis to the Davis Campus.

## **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 which 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 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 educational entitlement claims 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 pursuit of their educational goals.

## Core Programs and Services

Programs and services provided through the Veteran Services Office at WSU can be divided into four main areas:

*Application for Veterans Benefits.* Process applications for all entitlement and chapter requests using required VA forms, university Bursar protocol, and VAONCE forms. VAONCE is the online system through the United States Department of Veterans Affairs that is 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.* Code veterans for university data collection, advanced registration opportunity, and parking services. Data collection reflects student progress towards graduation and demographic information. Coding students as a veteran provides students with the opportunity to register as senior regardless of number of earned semester credits. Veterans may apply for parking privileges through a lottery system if they are identified as Chapter 31 (vocational rehabilitation status).

*Monitoring Student Progress.* Monitor student progress through internal semester audits. Students must maintain a 2.0 grade point average, and those falling below are reported to the State Educational Liaison Representative. Specific guidance for maintaining student files are contained in the WAVES manual. WAVES is the Web Automated Verification of Enrollment System run by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs. Educate students about their responsibilities to submit semester class schedules and class changes in a timely manner.

*Counseling Services.* In partnership with the Regional Veteran Affairs, a grant was approved in 2012, awarding Weber State University direct counseling support through 2014 from a clinical psychologist for Veterans suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. In October, the psychologist will begin this support one day a week at the Ogden Campus. Logistical support for room location and IT support is under final review.

In addition, resources are available for a therapist to provide weekly support group counseling as well as a medical treatment representative for Veterans who are experiencing difficulty navigating through the VA medical treatment system.

### Site Visits

Yearly site visits are conducted by State Educational Liaison Representatives or State Approving Agency to insure that the WSU Veteran Services office is correctly maintaining student records and that everything is accurately reported to VA.

### Programming, Outreach, Campus Relations and Collaborations

Programs and services are initiated through consultation with the Veteran Services staff, the Veterans Area council, the Student Veterans of America Chapter President, and the Veterans

Senator. 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. Advertisement for these activities is published on the WSU Veterans website, the campus newspaper (Signpost), on posters, word-of-mouth and with the Veterans 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 see the contribution of Veterans past, present, and those attending the University. Examples of some of the activities include notable military guest speakers (i.e., the Commander of Combat Forces in Iraq), the reading of over 6,000 Armed Forces service members killed in Iraq and Afgahnastan static displays of war uniforms, equipment, rations, vehicles and aircraft, and military themed band concerts conducted by University and community musicians.

Over the past 5 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. The move from the basement of the Miller Administration Building to the Student Services Building provides a more "veteran friendly" atmosphere even though the space is small.

### **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: Hill Air Force Base education and job fairs, Major Fest, Block Party, 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 encourages Veteran students to explore 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 Psychological Services and Counseling Center has partnered with Veteran Services to address the challenges facing Veteran Students returning from a stressful and often lethal combat environment

*MOVE.* This committee consists of representatives from different campus offices that interact regularly in behalf of student veterans. The committee is designed to address challenges facing student veterans including registration, degree competition, quality of campus life, and faculty/staff training. The committee is comprised of but not limited to the following: Admissions, Academic Advisement, 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 representatives from Counseling and Psychological Services and Career Services. At its inception, MOVE met every month but currently meets every two months.

**Future Growth**

Based on national and local projections, we anticipate an increase in veteran student enrollment over the next 5 years. In fact, during the 2011-12 academic years, WSU Veteran Services has experienced an enrollment increase of more than 100 veteran students. It is not unusual during registration, due to limited space, for veteran students to have to wait outside the office to have their paperwork processed. 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, individual therapy sessions from both the WSU Counseling Center, 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). Currently the University is considering expanding the Veteran Services to include part of a conference room in an adjacent room. Based on the increase in Veteran student enrollment and increased services, it is anticipated that this modest improvement will not keep pace with student needs. Ideally, it would be more advantageous to move to a larger facility on the Ogden campus.



## Leadership and Staffing

The Veteran Services personnel consist of the following:

**Coordinator.** (Professional-pay grade 5) 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, veterans 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 5 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 Degree, and preference is given for military background and experience and a working knowledge of higher education. Other coordinator responsibilities include the following:

- Trains and supervises office staff in the handling of student financial records to insure proper management and security.
- Ensures Federal guidelines are followed in the management of records
- Ensures that staff provide professional customer support and accuracy and correctness in Veteran records in accordance with pertinent Federal and University policies and regulations.
- Provides guidance and direction to the Veterans Senator and chapter leadership of Student Veterans of America pertaining to all matters regarding Veteran student issues.
- Provides mentorship in management, leadership and planning.
- Integrates 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.

**Veterans Technician.** (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 will also ensure files and documentation meet Federal Government requirements and guidelines. The Technician will assist in research and reporting all adjustment in students' schedules to the Federal Government and VA Rehabilitation Counselors. Other responsibilities include the following: Works in partnership with the Accounting Office to process payment to the University from VA funds. Researches problems regarding tuition paid to the University. Enters data on VAONCE and WSU Banner computer system to certify students in a timely manners. Assists in training and supervising of VA work-study employees. Researches and reports students "last Dates of Attendance" and prepares academic probation letters for students whose GPA fall below the VA-required 2.0. Assists the Coordinator with visits from the Department of Workforce Services, Vocational Rehabilitation, Veterans Administration, and other associated agencies. Resolves student problems regarding the receipt of benefits and debt letters. Maintains 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/Military/Family Member Work Study Students.*** The primary responsibilities of the 8 work study students are to assist veterans with initial processing of educational benefit entitlement paperwork and conduct audits to insure veteran students receive correct benefits. These students are encouraged to work at least 15 hours a week to provide the support that veterans deserve. The work study veteran students must be attending at least  $\frac{3}{4}$  time in order to be hired by the Federal Government in these positions. They are distinguished from WSU work study students.

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 constantly monitored in their performance by senior work study student, technician, and coordinator. Monthly staff meetings are designed to instruct all members of Veteran Services in policy review and changes, and provide opportunities for questions.

### **Recruiting**

Both the professional and classified 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. A selection committee is convened for screening applications and interviewing candidates. Work study students are recruited by signage in the Veteran Services office and word-of-mouth. They are interviewed by the Coordinator, Veteran Technician, and senior Veteran work study students to insure 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 Academic Advisement, Registration, Financial Aid, Bursars, Legal Services, Services for Students with Disabilities, and Human Resources. The Veteran Technician attended new employee training, participated in the recent Student Affairs Division Directors/Program Heads Retreat, and was an instructor for the Bursar's statewide training conference. The Veteran Services office also attends all staff development meetings (diversity, women in education, etc). The Coordinator co-instructed Suicide Prevention (Question, Persuade, Refer) at staff development training.

The Coordinator is a member of the National Association of Veteran Program Administrators (NAVPA), which is 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 a Board of Directors elected annually. 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. This is achieved through assisting with the assessment and

attainment of individual needs, communicating and cooperating with communities, schools, agencies and organizations at the local, state, regional and federal levels; developing productive relations with the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA), Department of Education, Department of Defense, and other federal or national Veterans Service Organization or agency serving veterans; participate in efforts to facilitate the education and/or training of educationally or otherwise disadvantaged veterans; and promote cooperative studies, research, evaluation, workshops, seminars, conferences, and other activities as may be desired or required to fulfill the purposes of NAVPA. The WSU Coordinator serves on the NAVPA board which meets in the spring to interface with law makers in Washington D.C. to advise them on legislation that could positively or negatively affect Veterans educational benefits. In addition, the Coordinator attends an annual meeting (typically held in October), designed to educate other certifying officials and address issues that affect them directly.

Both Coordinator and Technician 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 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.

WSU Veteran work study students are constantly monitored and trained 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**

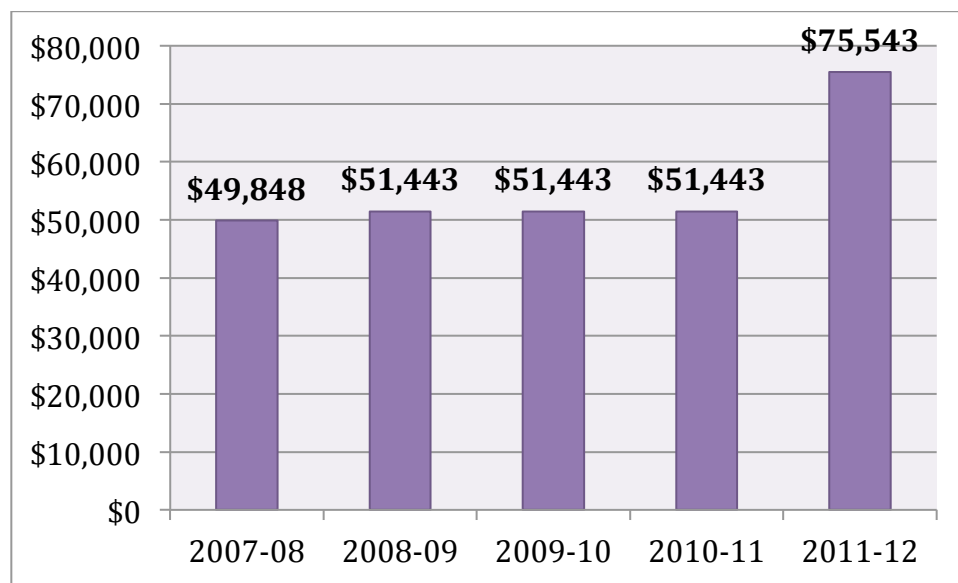
Employees must demonstrate competence in learning procedures to process Veteran student files. Failure to process correctly may result in a student not receiving their entitlements and the University not receiving payment for tuition and fees. If a Veteran work study student consistently makes errors on student files after being remedially trained, 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.

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. These reviews were submitted for 2012.

## Financial Resources and Budget

Veteran Services is funded primarily through an E & G state funded account. Additional funding is received from the VA Reporting Fee System at a rate of \$15.00 per student. Over \$12,000.00 was awarded for the 2012 fiscal year. Prior to 2012, the university was reimbursed at a rate of \$7.00 per student. The amount received is based on the total number of veterans served in the academic year.

The budget for Veteran Services has been stable over the past five years with the only budget increase represented being in FY 2012 due to an additional salaried employee. The large majority of the Veteran Services budget is allotted for salary monies with only \$10,000 allotted annually for spending on professional development travel and current expenses. The graph below represents the budget over the past five years.



While the budget has remained relatively constant, the number of students and dependents served by our office has increased over time, which is demonstrated by the cost per student served table below. The recent addition of a classified staff member has brought our cost per student served back to a similar level as 2008-09.

	<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>Number of Students Served</b>	<b>Cost Per Student Served</b>
<b>2007-08</b>	\$49,848	653	\$76.34
<b>2008-09</b>	\$51,443	673	\$76.44
<b>2009-10</b>	\$51,443	907	\$56.72
<b>2010-11</b>	\$51,443	931	\$55.26
<b>2011-12</b>	\$75,543	966	\$78.20

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 the expand resources available to our department to meet this challenge of the remaining "Veteran Friendly.

## **Facilities, Equipment, and Technology**

Veteran Services is located in room 154 of the Student Services Building, west of the Shepherd Union on the WSU Ogden Campus.. Veteran Services moved to Student Services after the Nontraditional Student Center moved out in 2006. The office has one entrance with a waiting room/computer room, which is separated from individual workspaces by a partition. The work area includes a station for the Veteran Technician and 4 desks for work study students. The Coordinator has an attached, separate office, which allows for oversight into day-to-day operations and closer contact with student veterans. The office often provides food/drinks to help veterans feel welcome and relaxed. Partitions separate a student file section, which is restricted to Veteran Services work study students and support staff.

Veteran Services also has a presence at the Davis Campus on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. Due to lack of space, services are co-located with Veterans Upward Bound. The office is small and provides no place for veteran respite. Veteran Services functions on a part-time basis, and hours change each semester depending on the schedule of our work-study staff.

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. There is only one exit from the Ogden office.

Simply stated, the office for Veteran Services is not large enough for all the services currently provided and projected. During registration periods, Veterans are often forced to wait outside the office or return later. There is no space for support groups, counseling, or respite. There are plans in place Summer 2012 to relocate the office entrance and create a small conference room.. Once that project is completed, Veteran Services will evaluate facilities and equipment to see if the renovation meets the needs of Veterans and their family members.

### **Computers/Printers**

Each desk and workstation at the Ogden campus has a computer. There are 6 computers in the center. Two have been purchased within the last year through the use of central capital monies, and the others are 4 or more years old. 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 2 small desktop printers and a fax machine. The Davis campus office has 1 computer, a printer and a fax machine in a shared office with Veterans Upward Bound. Connectivity with different University systems including Crystal Reports, Cat Tracks, and Banner has been an ongoing challenge. It takes several levels of IT support and authorization and is still not available to all our work study students. The Department of Human Resources has been unable to clarify the problem after several attempts to grant access to the Banner system for 2 of Veteran work study students. In addition, during registration periods,

there is limited access to Crystal Reports during high traffic campus-wide. This slows down the process completing Veteran registration and creates bottlenecks in the flow. Not being able to complete registration processing results in Veterans having to unnecessarily returning to the Veteran Services office in order to complete the process.

### **Plans for Rotation of Technology Replacement**

Currently, the procedure to replace aging equipment is on an as-needed basis, primarily by acquiring 4 year old lab computers through the campus surplus each year. In order to remain current with regard to technology and equipment, Veterans 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 3 year rotation for computers, the office will ensure that staff members will have new systems under warranty, and the preplaced computers will be moved to the open lab area for lower priority student use. This will ensure there will be no computer older than 5 years in the office area. Other equipment, such as the small desktop printers, fax and copier will be 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. This information is kept in a hard copy file, locked in the Veteran Services office. Files are locked each evening. This information is transmitted via a secure website to the VA and is located in their files. There are no electronic copies of student information located on the office machines. Student information is given to Veteran Services by face to face or by phone, and we do not give out information over the phone.

Veteran Services does occasionally receive faxed information with student information enclosed, but the documentation is either placed into the student's hardcopy 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, Wild Cat 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.

There is a computer available at the Davis office, but instead of maintaining files there, Veteran Services faxes and emails each veteran student's file information to the Ogden Campus. The Davis campus then shreds the information. All other security systems are followed to insure 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 due to the fact that VA works with SSN as their VA File Number in addition to the name of the Veteran. These hard copy files are locked up each night and only available to Veteran Services staff and work study students. In addition, all staff must comply with FERPA. Veteran Services is constantly providing training for staff and work study students with regard to policy and procedure changes, both institutional and Federal, and maintaining efficiency.

In April 2012, President Obama released an Executive Order (see attachment) to all Educational Institutions serving service members, Veterans, spouses and other family members. Specifically, he requests the Establishment and Implementation of Principles of Excellence, and Strengthening Enforcement and Compliance of such mechanisms. Weber State University does not participate in any “predatory” recruiting practices to exploit Veteran’s entitlements. Veterans are encouraged to visit Career Services to determine which major is suited to the ability, interest and career opportunity, and must meet with their college’s academic advisor to ensure academic progress is maintained. WSU Veteran Services has already established a thorough briefing to all customers to ensure that Veterans follow their degree plan and are encouraged to maintain academic excellence to retain their educational entitlements. Prior to each semester, the Veteran Services staff thoroughly reviews a student’s Cat Tracks (an internal WSU site monitoring degree process) 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 are allowed to retake a class until they pass, however, if their GPA drops below 2.0 and they are on academic suspension, they will lose their GI Bill entitlements. If the Veteran stops attending class and receives a UW, 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 close 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 close of business. VA requires that we record personal information to include social security numbers. This information is also entered and maintained in an automated system called VAONCE. This system is used to process student payments to the university and entitlements to the student. Passwords for each computer are not shared and are individually maintained by staff members. 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, or Regional VA Center in Salt Lake City. In some cases, if PTSD or TBI is creating problems in the classroom, it may be necessary to contact faculty 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 the students attendance from 30 days to 1 year or more. Annual Training (AT) includes operations extending from 1-2 weeks and are characteristic of members of both National Guard and Reserve. Students deploying, must provide the University and instructors with copy of orders. 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 1-2 week period of absence will affect their grade or if the work can be competed 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.

The 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 their 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 2011-12 academic year, Veteran students have commented to Veteran Services office that we have provided better customer service. The staff spends quality time in explaining what is expected of students 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. In addition, the University is developing a card swipe system that will allow us to tabulate demographic and customer service data.

### 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 June 19-22. Results will be submitted to the University before Fall 2012 begins.

### Student Information

Veteran statistical data has historically been 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.

2007-2008	653	2009-2010	907
2008-2009	673	2010-2011	931
		2011-2012	966

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.

**Six Column Model Data**

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

*2010-2011.* The goals of this period were to improve training for all work study students, hire a full time employee to assist the coordinator, and increase collaboration within the University and community. The results were more supervisory and peer training. The University hired a full time employee to assist the coordinator. Veteran Services collaborated with the Women's Center in providing a special Women Veteran luncheon.

*2011-2012.* The goals of this period were to expand services to students on the Davis Campus, continue to improve training to Veteran work study students, improve interface with faculty, provide access to tutoring to Veteran students and measure Veteran student satisfaction with Veteran Services. The results were a minimum of 20 hours weekly for Davis Campus, closer coordination with faculty to determine dates of attendance for students dropping classes, and directing Veterans to tutoring resources. An assessment of Veteran students was established for both the Ogden and Davis Campus.

## **Areas of Improvement**

Publicity has been a big weakness. Only recently has Veteran Services collected the email addresses of all WSU Veterans and family members, and we have yet to put the addresses into a configuration that allows for mass emails to be distributed. Veteran Services is working with the University Information Technology department to make this distribution of information a reality. Posters, fliers, and newspaper article do not seem to generate significant participation. 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 and Twitter. Some universities are using a military type Inprocessing Center atmosphere to the Veteran office. They are also providing weekly orientation sessions for new Veteran Students.

Reporting statistical and demographic data has proved to be a difficult task. Inputting data into the Banner system will improve Veteran Services reporting. In addition, the task of the University is expanded IT systems to avoid the inability to grant speedy access to Banner and more Crystal capacity.

## Summary

Weber State Veteran Services has evolved into a comprehensive program to assist Veterans, military, and family members in the use of their educational benefits. However, the challenges faced with ever-changing policies and regulations, increasing Veteran student population, and insufficient Veteran Services staff. In addition, after observing Technician position and tasks performed, it is clear that the position requires a higher job classification than currently listed.

Over the past 5 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. In August of 2009, the implementation of the Post 9-11 GI Bill created many challenges to staff due to frequent changes in policy and procedure and hardships for Veterans maneuvering through paperwork, inadequate IT support from VA and long wait periods for benefits to begin. In addition, the work study students in Veteran Services did not respond well to the increased workload accompanying the new requirements. As they transitioned out of their employment, it was necessary to thoroughly screen new applicants who would be willing to learn the new regulations and improve the customer service for the department of Veteran Services.

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 compassion, dignity and respect for these recipients. Based on national and local projections, we anticipate an increase in veteran student enrollment over the next 5 years. During the 2010-11 academic years, WSU Veteran Services experienced an enrollment increase of more than 100 veteran students.

Examination of Veteran Services through the process of this program review enables the Coordinator, Technician 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 Veteran Services Technician to become thoroughly knowledgeable in the process of Banner adjustments. Due to the competency of the Technician, Sheila Simko, and Rachel Ruiz in the Bursar’s office, 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 5 years, Veteran Services will see an increase in Veteran Student enrollment and hopes to see an expansion of services it provides as well as its facility. 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. Not only do the Veterans and family members deserve it, but an institution of higher learning is a recipient of large revenue by Veterans Affairs.

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. If it is not possible to expand space in the existing office, it may be necessary to relocate into a larger facility to accommodate services.

It is the intent of WSU Veteran Services to encourage the Site Review Team to examine closely every aspect of the program.

## 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 copies of:

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

- o Add/Drop Information
- o Parent Institution Letters
- o Probation or Suspension Information
- o Prior Credit Evaluations (with copies of transcripts from prior schools)
- o 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.

Following is an additional explanation of some of the above.



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.



## Veterans' Services

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Initiatives	Goal	Means of Achieving	Outcome	Methods of Assessment	Results	Result Use
Select Objective	Improve services to Davis Campus.	Get signage, storage space and larger facility.	Enter Student Learning Outcome	Ask work study students if their work environment has improved service delivery.	We have 2 work study students providing part-time service 4 days a week.	Enter Use of Result
Select Objective	Improve knowledge of VA policies and procedures for work study students.	Have more staff training meeting involving all work study students.	Enter Student Learning Outcome	Student files will contain fewer errors.	Work study students are better trained and the files are being reviewed more closely by senior work study stuents and certifying officials.	Enter Use of Result
Select Objective	Empower veteran students to interface with their professors if they are struggling with calss assignments or perceive they will be deploying.	Provide students with a fact sheet on how to interface with faculty.	Enter Student Learning Outcome	Fewer failing grades, unoffical withdrawals and confrontations with faculty..	We do not have a count as to the number of student who are failing but through recent audits, the number appears to be decreasing. If they do fail, we are encouraged by the fact that students are retaking the classes rather than dropping out.	Enter Use of Result
Support	Establish veterans only tutoring for developmental math students. (Diversity outcome)	Work with Amanda from math tutoring to have sessions at least 3 times a week, 2 hours each session.	Veteran students will pass developmental math at a higher rate.	Math grades and pre and post surveys.	Amanda left the math department and the tutoring program has not had consistant support.	Enter Use of Result
Select Objective	Measure veteran satisfaction with the service they receive in the office.	work with Jessica to provide a student survey.	Enter Student Learning Outcome	satisfaction survey	Although we have not developed a survey as of yet, we are getting verbal input both in person and the phone with compliments on the quality of customre service we are providing.	Enter Use of Result

**Veteran Services  
2010-2011 Six Column Model**

Goal	Means of Achieving	Outcome	Methods of Assessment	Results	Result Use
Plan and implement training for work study employees after professional staff attend conferences	Plan retreat after training. Organize written materials	Enhance student employees' proficiency in handling student records and problems	Decrease in number of errors reported. Number of complaints filed by students or work study employees.	The majority of the errors we are seeing are due to additional sources of funding such as grants and scholarships and also students withdrawing or dropping classes. When we hire our technician for our office, we will have them work closely with accounting to reduce these problems.	Determined one of our work study students was entering incorrect data. Completed necessary training and will monitor progress. Met with bursers office. They have developed a more effective way to decrease errors.
Hire assistant coordinator for Veterans Services.	Submit to Human Resources and find funding source.	Enter Student Learning Outcome	Assistant Coordinator hired.	The position is currently under review with HR. We are hopeful for the position to be filled by mid February, 2011.	Hired full time employee to assist with student files. She will attend comprehensive WAVES conference training, July 2011.
Increase collaboration with university and community partners.	Work with Nontrad and Women's Center to organize a dinner/information brief for veterans. Organize evening dinner. Prepare information to share about other services Invite Counseling Center to be included.	Enter Student Learning Outcome	Dinner/information brief is planned. Evaluations to indicate success of dinner and information briefs.	We have scheduled a dinner for verteran/military women for the month of March 2011.	Collaborated with women's center. 85 in attendance

## Veterans' Services

[Print](#)

Goal	Means of Achieving	Outcome	Methods of Assessment	Results	Result Use
Disseminate monthly headcount reports to departments. Distribute cohort information each semester. Disseminate department specific survey summaries (from university-wide surveys) as applicable.	Create new headcount template. Regularly update cohort information. Breakdown overall summary information into department specific information.	N/A	Reports created and disseminated.	Headcount template has been created with the timely dissemination of reports (minus November 2009). Cohort reports will be distributed at the end of the year.	In the future, cohort reports will be distributed once per semester.
Create assessment page for each department.	Create template for department webpages. Meet with Chip to force pages to department sites. Meet with DPH to share webpage features and expectations.	N/A	Department level webpages created and updated regularly.	6-column models for each department can now be publicly viewed from the Student Affairs Assessment webpage; however, department level webpages have not yet been created. This will probably be looked at more during the summer.	Checking to see if this is feasible and/or necessary.
Develop department level learning outcomes.	Meet with each department to draft outcomes. Continually refer to these in planning conversations with directors and coordinators.	N/A	Department level outcomes drafted and posted to website.	January 12: Department level outcomes have been developed for Counseling Center, Nontraditional Student Center, and have been worked on for MSC. Due to the nature of this year being a "catch-up" year for everyone in regards to assessment in Student Affairs, this goal will have results at a rate slower than originally anticipated.	May 24: Continue working with departments in the coming years on developing departmental level outcomes; however, for now, focus on the use of division learning outcomes first.
Complete draft of website outline and timeline, which would move annual reports, accreditation information, and program review online.	Create website outline. Work with SAT department to complete timeline.	N/A	Website outline created. Draft of website will be in progress.	Accomplishments and the annual report have been integrated with the 6 column model.	Accreditation documents will be integrated in the future along with the ability to upload documents. This goal will be carried into next year.
Implement and refine program review processes for the first five departments.	Schedule kickoff meetings for each department. Meet with departments to setup self-study meetings and site visit. Post summaries of program review to departmental websites. Refine process based on reviewer and department level feedback.	N/A	PRs scheduled. Summaries posted to assessment and department websites.	Student Affairs Technology and the Testing Centers have completed program review. Women's Center and Career Services' reviews have been scheduled.	Tutoring/Testing reviews have been rescheduled for spring 2011. All other reviews are on target.
Develop an effective veterans outreach program. Due to heavy commitments on our SVA President and responsibilities placed on the veterans services coordinator, we have had limited success	As a result, we are hiring a work study whose specific responsibility will be outreach. His	Students will become more involved in student/community activities. Students	Contacting veterans through data base and face to face		Wen have selected a specific work study veteran student to help develop our SVA. He is currently

## Veterans' Services

<p>in student veteran involvement. As a result, we are hiring a work study whose specific responsibility will be outreach. His responsibility will be to update the WSU Veteran website, and use data base to contact students. In addition, he will visit National Guard armories to encourage veterans to use their educational benefits as a method of recruitment.</p>	<p>responsibility will be to update the WSU Veteran website, and use data base to contact students. In addition, he will visit National Guard armories to encourage veterans to use their educational benefits as a method of recruitment.</p>	<p>will continue their educational processes beyond the first semester or academic year.</p>	<p>contact at unit drill weekends.</p>		<p>compiling a database of all our veteran students to enable us to contact them and update them on all veteran activities. Because he must contact each veteran individually, he will complete the database the end of June 2010.</p>
<p>Adopt regular assessment training meetings facilitated by the assessment committee.</p>	<p>Meet with assessment committee to develop assessment professional development workshops. Work with assessment committee to refine skills. Incorporate assessment pyramid into new employee training. Gather feedback from Division on the effectiveness of training.</p>	<p>Staff members will increase knowledge and understanding of assessment and the processes associated with assessment.</p>	<p>Trainings developed. Feedback from Division (survey) and assessment committee (focus group) on the effectiveness of trainings. Individual feedback from staff members regarding assessment trainings.</p>	<p>A document has been completed detailing assessment trainings, focus groups have been held with DPH, trainings will be held periodically with groups that have like interests.</p>	<p>DPH liked having focus groups to discuss assessment, so we will hold these on an annual basis. More focus will be place on departments' used of results in the coming years.</p>
<p>Implement student employee project and assess effectiveness of the project.</p>	<p>Distribute pre and post tests to student employees. Load employee evaluation onto StudentVoice. Work with pilot departments to refine process throughout the year.</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>Analyze pre and post tests, case studies, and supervisor evaluations to determine the effectiveness of the student employee program.</p>	<p>One year of trainings have been held with 2010-11 currently being scheduled, and results are currently being analyzed.</p>	<p>We will continue the student employee for 2010-11 as we continue to make refinements and assess its effectiveness.</p>