

Partnership Development Guidelines

August 2007

Best Practices Committee
A Subcommittee of the California
Veterans Education Opportunities Partnership
Troops to Colleges

Acknowledgements

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The following people contributed to these guidelines by sharing their experiences with successful partnerships in their areas. Individually and collectively, they are valuable resources for anyone wanting to establish a new partnership or enhance an existing partnership.

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INTRODUCTION

Troops to College (formerly the California Veterans Education Opportunities Partnership (VEOP)) was created in April 2006 to implement Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's vision of making California the Nation's leader and model in providing educational opportunities and assistance to active duty military personnel and Veterans. The Troops to College Oversight Committee was established as the formal body to discuss educational issues between California's public colleges and universities and the military, identify best practices, develop common goals, and measure progress toward those goals.

The Troops to College Best Practices Task Force has determined that a best practice in current use for transitioning military personnel to public colleges and universities is the use of partnerships between military installations and the public colleges and universities. Establishment of viable partnerships provides the support, coordination, and commitment needed to assure successful college experiences by active duty and Veteran students.

SUMMARY: BEST PRACTICES

The Partnership Guidelines identify model military/public university partnerships as well as key elements for successful partnership development. Specifically, the Task Force determined that the formation of regional partnership groups that meet regularly, the development of internal systemwide communication, and the implementation of strategic use of available resources are the keys to partnerships that are the most effective in assisting active duty personnel and Veterans in achieving their academic goals.

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REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP GROUPS

KEY ELEMENTS

The task force found that regional work groups composed of military leaders, military Education Service Officers, and college personnel are essential to educational partnerships between military installations and public colleges and universities that work. These partnerships meet regularly; and they have formal structures, formally recognized leadership, and formal agendas. Such relationships foster the recognition of common goals and a shared commitment to creating an educational pipeline. They also lead to improved student advisement and services in all segments of the partnership and at all academic levels. Strong partnerships promote and recognize academic achievement by active duty and Veteran students.

CHALLENGES

The task force recognized the importance of improving student services across all segments along with the need for effective communication among all participants are challenges that require constant and consistent effort. Furthermore, achieving flexibility within the educational systems is recognized as a challenge for the partners. The task force further noted that a lack of understanding of institutional cultural differences between the military and educational institutions also needs to be addressed. The perception of hurdles created by institutions, such as fees and definitions of charges; differing admission criteria for freshmen, lower division transfer, and upper division transfer students; and the mobility of active duty military personnel are some of the issues successful partnerships must address.

OUTCOMES

Formation of active regional partnership groups should lead to successful relationship development, improved services for military personnel at California public colleges and universities, and the sharing of resources. Hence, effective regional partnerships also result in the more effective use of available educational support resources.

EXAMPLE

Solano Community College Travis Air Force Base

Solano Community College (SCC) operates an off-campus center at Travis University Center on Travis Air Force Base. At this site, Solano provides lower-division general education courses that can be used toward SCC certificate or degree programs or for transfer to Bachelor Degree programs at CSU or UC. Solano also offers on-line courses to the military and the general public.

Amy Utt, Solano College Veterans Certification Specialist, states that involvement with the Troops to College Task Force has provided her with the opportunity to also work with the Veterans Transition Assistance Program (TAP) to assist individuals who are separating from the military at Travis Air Force Base. Through her relationship with Troops to College, she has also been able to partner with the Vet Centers in Redwood City and Concord, the Women's Veterans Health Program, the VA Medical Center, and the Employment Development Department to better serve active duty military and Veterans at Solano Community College.

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INTERNAL SYSTEMWIDE COMMUNICATION

KEY ELEMENTS

Constant formal and informal communication, through conference calls, e-mails, or direct personal contact, was also found to be a key element to the success of educational partnerships. Such communication promotes honest dialogue, the sharing of internal best practices as well as human, intangible, and physical resources, and the provision of support to one another. Furthermore, on-going communication leads to a shared commitment to provide positive educational experiences for military personnel.

CHALLENGES

While the task force members all agree that regular communication is essential and that face-to-face encounters are best, they also observed that getting everyone together at the same time is always a challenge. Competing schedules, limited travel budgets, and scarce resources are obstacles that need to be overcome in achieving successful communication. Archiving recordings of meetings and sharing information with those who are unable to attend is suggested as a method for keeping everyone involved and sustaining communication across the partnership.

OUTCOMES

Effective and sustained communication among partnership participants results in relationship building. Such communication also leads to the recognition of potential problems and solutions. Solutions to problems and outstanding campus efforts can be shared with other partnerships and through the Troops to College meetings so that they can be replicated at other sites. Effective systemwide communication is a key element in partnerships that provide responsive educational services to active duty military personnel and Veterans.

EXAMPLE

*BEPAC – Base Education Planning and Advisory Committee
Los Angeles Air Force Base, CA*

BEPAC, Base Education Planning and Advisory Committee, operates under a formal charter signed by the Base Commander and requires meetings at least two times per year. Participants include the education staff, on-base college directors, senior enlisted advisor, career advisor and representatives from other on-base organizations such as the Top Three Enlisted Association, Company Grade Officer Association, and Junior Enlisted Association.

Committee members are requested to provide topics, in advance, for each meeting based on contacts with students, day-to-day operational issues, or concerns for improving the general operation. Each topic is tracked to make sure progress is made, and taskings are managed by a project officer.

Stephen Howard, Los Angeles Air Force Base, states that finding time to manage the BEPAC and accomplish goals is a challenge. However, the ability to come together as a team enables BEPAC to address education issues, to seek program improvement, and to successfully implement new programs of value to students and leadership.

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STRATEGIC USE OF RESOURCES

KEY ELEMENTS

Through the appropriate use of all available resources, educational partnerships maximize their abilities to support educational opportunities and academic success for active duty military personnel and Veterans. Resources include but are not limited to campus Veterans' offices, disabled student programs, campus financial aid officers, student services officers, admissions/outreach officers, VA student organizations, military Education Services Officers, etc. The coordinated use of all resources and offices involved in student support is the most effective approach in meeting veteran and military student needs. Strategic use of resources through partnerships reduces duplication, allows for the identification and fostering of common interests, and promotes communication.

CHALLENGES

The task force, representing various state and federal military and educational organizations, recognized that finding compatible needs that are mutually beneficial can be a challenge to the successful and strategic use of resources. Cultural and operational differences need to be recognized and addressed in order to successfully meet the needs of the Veterans and active duty members. It is important for the organizations to work cooperatively in order to properly allocate resources in an efficient and effective manner. Limitations on fiscal resources can also be a challenge to the strategic use of resources. Sustained communication, as well as identification of top priorities, is necessary when dealing with limited means. Effective partnerships need to actively use all available means to identify and implement the strategic use of resources.

OUTCOMES

The end result of the strategic use of resources should be Veterans or active duty members who are satisfied and have been provided the best possible services by the state school of their choice. Proper allocation of resources will ensure Veterans are provided services necessary to achieve their education goals through the California Community College, California State University, or University of California system.

EXAMPLE

*Palomar College
CSU San Marcos
Camp Pendleton*

Palomar College provides classes in residence and on-line at Camp Pendleton Marine Corps Base. With these course offerings, Palomar College, Camp Pendleton serves military students, their family members, and base personnel.

As Palomar is one of the three feeder community colleges to CSU San Marcos, Janet Hoffman, Manager/Counselor for Palomar College, Camp Pendleton, states that there is a natural relationship and partnership between Palomar and CSUSM. To meet the needs of military students planning to transfer to CSUSM, Palomar College has arranged for a CSUSM representative, Vicki Hernandez, to meet with students at Palomar College, Camp Pendleton. Palomar College staff at Camp Pendleton advertises the opportunity to meet with a CSUSM representative and schedules the appointments. Palomar College also provides office meeting space and the use of a computer for the CSUSM representative. The CSUSM representative then works with the prospective transfer students on-line as he/she follows up with them.

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CONCLUSION

New partnerships continue to be formed and existing partnerships continue to evolve. All segments dedicated to providing and supporting educational opportunities for active duty military and Veterans can benefit from the best practices identified by this working group. The formation of regional partnerships, the sustaining of internal systemwide communication, and the appropriate and strategic use of available resources are keys to the effective provision of service and to the academic success of active duty military members and Veterans.