From military life to college life

Kathleen Normandin
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“I think the faculty needs to know who we are”
**BATTLE MIND** is the Soldier’s training in combat skills and facing fear and adversity to sustain survival in the war zone
Battle mind injuries can occur to a Soldier when combat skills and mindset are not adapted to the “home zone”
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“I believe that I being a soldier will always be a part of me, but I think that I have become a student again.”
"The first few weeks were very difficult for the transition. . . . For a year I had a very close-knit support system that was just gone. That made it difficult, being surrounded by strangers instead of people I knew."
Accountability vs controlling

“I have a lot of responsibilities as a parent, a husband as well. . . . I find it difficult...I’m still trying to balance family life, more than anything else.”
Tactful awareness vs hyper vigilance

“There was a practical experiment, a hydrogen and oxygen mix . . . that created quite a loud boom and set me on edge that entire day because it brought back a little bit of panic. I wanted to drop down and duck for cover. Literally panic. I’m breathing fast. My heart’s beating. I’ve got my hands clenched on that desk.”
Emotional control vs anger/detachment

“I definitely went through kind of a year-long feeling out of place here combined with being sad about the state of the world and feeling like I wasn't doing well in school. That I didn't belong here. That was all a function of just being bummed out about what I'd seen and deep and depressing thoughts about the world. . . . It was just something I brought with me here.”
Individual responsibility vs guilt

"Hey man, I'm a 30-year-old grown-ass man. I don't need you to hold my hand."
In the military you either do what you’re told or you tell other people what to do, so it’s really cut-and-dry. Out here in the real world, it’s not.”

“It benefits you to not be a free thinker in the military. You actually go less crazy if you just do what they say. . . . And then transitioning into being a student, it’s totally the opposite.”
Adapt combat skills to be just as effective in “home zone” as they were in combat

Build upon strengths
“One thing that being in the military does teach you is that you can really withstand a lot more than you think. . . .”

Adapt and overcome
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Remember:

A lot of transition will be happening outside of student experience
  • Relying on family, friends, and comrades
  • Readjusting to old roles and connecting to new ones

There are many reasons why veterans choose to come to school
  • To take advantage of G.I. Bill
  • Disability that prevents continuing service
  • It is expected
  • Lack of job opportunities
  • “I want to do something with my life.”

Never make assumptions
Advisors on the “front lines”

As an advisor, you may be the first point of contact on campus.

Work to provide a sense of control and hopefulness.
Create a safe space

- “Vet friendly” insignia
- No backs to the door

Provide connection and develop relationships

- Assess and understand own biases
- Do not fake interest or your own experience
- Do not say you understand how they feel
- Ask questions focusing on college experience
- Be dependable and authentic
  - Be confident and competent in what you do and do not know
- Perform and do things fully
Give protocol

• Create educational objectives (mission)
  • Use motivational interviewing
    • What is going well?
    • How have you been able to resolve problems and handle difficulties?
    • What do you like to do and what can you do well?
• Advise using a more prescriptive technique
• Be direct and directive
• Know the benefits
• Have resources at hand
• Minimize run around
Challenge and support

- No special treatment
- Perform and do things fully
- Work to continue to build organizational skills
- Challenge to be proactive rather than reactive
- Work to distinguish between what is and is not important
Be an advocate for the creation of visible resources and support staff

- Faculty, staff, Vet Success Rep, student fellows, work-study
- Mentor programs
- Student groups
- Ceremony
- SPACE!
References


Walter Reed Army Institute of Research. (2013). Battlemind training: Transitioning from combat to home. Silver Spring, MD.
Quick Reference and Resources – Student Veterans

Benefits

U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs
http://www.va.gov/

GI Bill Website
http://www.gibill.va.gov/
The Department of Veterans Affairs provides access and information to veteran services. Specifically the G.I. Bill website is the home for all educational benefits provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs. This site outlines benefit types as well as aids in the selection of school, applying for benefits, and navigating the certification process.

WEAMS Public
http://inquiry.vba.va.gov/weamspub/buildSearchInstitutionCriteria.do
This site allows for the search of institutions of higher learning and programs approved to receive VA educational benefits. This is helpful in determining what courses are certifiable or not.

To view the list of approved programs for your institution:
1. Click on HI on the map
2. Click on “the name of your institution”
3. Click on Programs (near the top of the page)
4. Click on "Institution of Higher Learning" to view approved lists of degrees
5. Click on "Non College Degree" to view approved lists of undergraduate certificates, graduate certificates, and post-baccalaureate certificates

Student Organizations

Student Veterans of America
http://www.studentveterans.org/
Student Veterans of America (SVA) exists to provide military veterans with resources, support, and advocacy needed to succeed in higher education and beyond.

Hawaii Alliance of Student Veterans
https://www.facebook.com/HIStudentVeterans
Hawaii state-wide Alliance of Student Veterans has been formed. The Alliance serves as a great referral to student veterans looking to get involved and connect to other veterans on campus and in the community.

Local Resources

Vet Centers
http://www.vetcenter.va.gov/
Offers counseling services to combat veterans and their families.
Honolulu Vet Center: 808-973-9387
West Oahu Vet Center: 808-674-2414
The transition from military life to college life
ACE Military Students and Veterans
http://www.acenet.edu/Content/NavigationMenu/ProgramsServices/MilitaryPrograms/index.htm
This site was created as a means to connect the U.S. Department of Defense with higher education through outlining the military training student veterans receive. These outlines can help colleges determine how to award college equivalent credit for military service. Additionally, it is an online source to help college administrators better understand the experiences of military personnel and connect to many resources, studies, programs, and services.

Leadership Exchange: From Soldier to Student I and II
http://www.leadershipexchange-digital.com/lexmail/2009fall/?sub_id=Dq9v2rVwcJls&folio=22
http://www.acenet.edu/news-room/Documents/From-Soldier-to-Student-II-Assessing-Campus-Programs.pdf
Outlines the current characteristics of contemporary student veterans and assesses college programs for veterans and service members.

Social work and service members
http://www.socialworkers.org/military.asp
A guiding to helping and working with service members. Includes online training resources.

Articles


Other resources
Military terminology:
Department of Defense dictionary of military terms: http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/dod_dictionary/

Ted Talks: “War Tapes”
http://www.ted.com/talks/deborah_scranton_on_her_war_tapes.html
Deborah Scranton talks about her documentary, The War Tapes. She gave three National Guardsmen fighting in Iraq cameras to document their own tours of duty, the result was a documentary of firsthand accounts of the war in Iraq.

In their own words: Montgomery College student veterans
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bXle120tpSA
Documentary about student veterans produced by Dr. Esther Schwartz-McKinzie.