

Veterans Higher Education Affinity Group Meeting

McCormick Foundation and CAEL

July 22, 2013

Meeting Summary

Introduction

The ninth meeting of the Veterans Higher Education Affinity Group was held on July 22, 2013 at Benedictine University. There were 20 attendees, including representatives from 16 colleges and programs serving the Chicago area. A full list of attendees is provided at the end of this summary. The group welcomed representatives from three new institutions: North Central College, the College of Lake County, and IIT.

IJF Update

Amy Sherman, co-chair of the Education Working Group, provided an update on Illinois Joining Forces (IJF). Faculty training continues to be a major priority for the working group. At its July meeting, the Education Working Group unanimously endorsed a proposal for CAEL to take the lead, resources permitting, on the development of faculty training, with the aim of having training ready by fall of 2014. The Education Working Group also discussed the possibility of including faculty training as an item on the mandatory survey given to public colleges and universities concerning veterans. The group agreed that fall would be the best time of year to offer the training. Learning outcomes for the training will include understanding the transition from the military culture to the civilian culture and gaining knowledge and practical tips on what this means for the classroom.

Affinity group members were encouraged to join the IJF Education Working Group. The membership of the Education Working Group sets priorities for higher education in Illinois, so being at the table provides an opportunity to help set priorities.

Group Communications

Charlotte Cahill reported that, at the April meeting, the group briefly discussed the reasons that the LinkedIn group didn't work for some group members as a way of communicating with one another outside of the group's meetings. The group agreed that it would be helpful to find another platform for communicating between meetings.

Two options are Facebook and Google Groups. However, some members of the group had privacy concerns related to linking their personal Facebook accounts to a group's page. Members of the group also liked the ability to specify how often they would receive emails from Google Groups. The group voted unanimously for Google Groups, and Charlotte said she would set up a group.

Military Friendly Schools Survey

Becky Klein-Collins facilitated a discussion on whether schools that received “Military Friendly Schools” designation from GI Jobs should pay for additional marketing packages related to that designation. Members of the group had had mixed experience with the marketing services. While some institutions have had success with GI Jobs recruiting tools, other members of the group noted that they have not had any student veterans enroll as a result of the GI Jobs listings. Some members of the group also noted that their institutions would generally prioritize spending on student services over recruitment.

The group also discussed the Military Times/EDGE survey; no one in the group has had direct experience with it. The group was reminded that another resource for veterans who wish to identify institutions that adhere to best practices in serving student veterans is the list of Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (SOC) Consortium members.

Setting Priorities and Engaging Leadership

Amy Sherman and Pete LaHaie spoke with the group about a proposal for members of the group to engage in activities focused on setting priorities for their veterans programs and on building on the Valuing Veterans event and pledge by developing more ways to engage leaders to their institutions. This idea grew out of a meeting that Amy, Becky, and Charlotte had with affinity group members who volunteered to help plan this meeting of the group. CAEL would, resources permitting, provide technical assistance to members of the group as they engage in strategic-planning activities. The process would engage – and depend on input from – members of our group, student veterans, and deans and other administrators from the institutions in the group.

This process might include the following activities:

- Members of the group could complete a self-assessment tool to determine priority areas of focus, possibly using the military friendly schools survey by Military.com as the framework
- Members of the group could work with CAEL to conduct a survey of their students to help VHEAG members identify areas of strength and where they need to improve services
- CAEL could survey or interview mid-level administrators responsible for veterans services at the affinity group institutions to gain a better understanding of what they view as priorities
- CAEL could take all of the information from the various sources and create a report for each school that summarizes how it is serving student veterans

The idea would be to conclude this process with an event for college leaders that updates them on the progress that their institutions have made in implementing the principles in the Valuing Veterans pledge.

The group agreed that surveying student veterans would be an especially important activity because student feedback is likely to capture the attention of administrators. The affinity group could collaborate in the development of a survey instrument. Julia Jenkins shared that Northwestern recently conducted a survey of student veterans and had a 90% response rate; the survey asked students for information about their military service as well as their experiences on

campus. UIC is already regularly surveying its student veterans, and Annette Wright agreed that she could serve as an advisor to other members of the group. Some members of the group noted that it would also be helpful to have data from other institutions that might be used as a point of comparison in conversations with administrators. If it is available, national-level data, as well as information about other institutions in the affinity group, would be useful. Because schools differ organizationally, some may find that there are better points of comparison for the veterans programs in other parts of the country than in the affinity group. The group agreed that the strategic planning process would be especially helpful because the institutions represented in the group are at different stages in developing their programs for student veterans.

Several members of the group volunteered to help CAEL develop and plan the activities that would be part of this process. The volunteers were:

- Emily Drake
- Haydee Nunez
- Charles Goodrum
- Sheri Gross

Open Mic

Charles Goodrum, who facilitated the open mic time, started by asking members of the group to share their experiences with budgeting. Members of the group have had a range of experiences with reporting fees, which are \$12/student and \$15 if the student is getting advance pay, from the VA. Some are able to use this money to fund their veterans programs or specific activities such as conference fees, but others have had difficulty determining where this money is going within their institutions. Three members of the group reported that their institutions have dedicated budgets for veterans programs. The group also discussed the possibility of seeking grants to fund some programs; there might be a possibility that the group could apply together for a grant.

Becky Klein-Collins reminded members of the group to let CAEL know if they have any concerns about CAEL's plan to put together an appendix to the best practices survey. The appendix, which would show which institutions are doing the activities that the survey asks about, would be distributed only within the affinity group. Members of the group should also let CAEL know if they have concerns about posting a summary of the survey results on CAEL's website. The group also discussed the possibility of using the appendix to determine topics for future meetings. Institutions that have already implemented practices of interest to other members of the group could be asked to share their experiences with the group.

Next Steps

- Charlotte will set up a Google Group for the affinity group.
- The next meeting will be held on October 21, 2013. The group agreed that they would like to hold the next meeting at another location outside of downtown Chicago.
- If you know of other institutions that should be part of the affinity group, please let CAEL know so that we can reach out to them.

Meeting Attendance

Name	Institution
Linda Owens	Benedictine University
Charlotte Cahill	CAEL
Becky Klein-Collins	CAEL
Amy Sherman	CAEL
Charles Goodrum	Chicago State University
Ryan Frey	College of Lake County
Haydee Nunez	DePaul University
Carl Vizza	IIT
Anna Laubach	McCormick Foundation
Emily Drake	National Louis University
Renard Jackson	North Central College
Julia Jenkins	Northwestern University
Cliff Casey	Oakton Community College
Sharron Irvin-Williams	Olive-Harvey College
James Flagg	Robert Morris University
Pete LaHaie	Roosevelt University
Chris Chalko	Veterans Upward Bound
Sheri Gross	Saint Xavier University
Tim Davis	Truman College
Annette Wright	University of Illinois at Chicago