

# Veterans Higher Education Affinity Group Meeting

## McCormick Foundation and CAEL

June 19, 2014

### Meeting Summary

#### Introduction

The twelfth meeting of the Veterans Higher Education Affinity Group was held on June 19, 2014 at DePaul University. There were 18 attendees, including representatives from 13 colleges and programs serving the Chicago area. A full list of attendees is provided at the end of this summary.

#### DePaul University Program

Haydee Nunez, Director of Adult, Veterans, and Commuter Student Affairs of DePaul University, presented an overview of DePaul's program for veterans. Haydee's presentation included the program's structure, student veteran population breakdown, on-campus veteran support, and metrics of outcomes for referrals and services provided for veterans.

The program uses a partnership model as opposed to being a one-stop shop for veterans. The office serves as a central point of contact to connect veterans with peers, benefits, and other resources provided by university partners. The four main tiers of support are the following:

1. Core network – Admissions, Financial Aid, and Advisors.
2. Support services – veteran liaisons, Dean of Students, Counseling Services, and Student Legal Services.
3. Veterans Resource Network – each area has a lead and annual meetings are held.
4. Academic and professional development – UCWbL (Writing Center) and Career Center.

DePaul is home to a veteran community of 500 students with the largest concentration in the College of Business and School for New Learning. Haydee has noticed the student veteran graduation rate tends to be higher than the rest of the student population and the veterans' GPAs are roughly the same.

Haydee's office trains DePaul's veterans work study positions with a structured training program and will share the training system with the group at one of the group's upcoming meetings. There was some discussion of Annette Wright and Cindy Rathunde working with Haydee to do a presentation or possibly a webinar on training work study students.

## **Road Home Program-Rush University**

William Beiersdorf, Director of the Road Home Program at Rush University, presented on the scope and services provided by the Road Home Program and the Center for Veterans and Their Families. The Road Home program opened in February 2014 and has seen 34 clients through May. The presentation included criteria for service members, veterans, and their families (SMVF) to access the center's services, current participants' statistics and their challenges, as well as areas for expanded services in the future. The program's main focus is to provide out-patient mental health counseling for PTSD, depression, TBI evaluation, and family counseling. William has a staff of 10 full-time employees who work with SMVF and partner with other organizations and service providers to make referrals as needed.

James Flagg, Governors State University, provided positive feedback on the value of the program. He has seen first-hand how it helped a battle buddy that he referred to the program.

## **CMG: Create a Vision, Make the Case, Get it Done Update**

Becky Klein-Collins, CAEL, reported the first individualized report is complete. St. Xavier's beta report was shared with the group and included data from their student survey, interviews with the deans and supervisors which were analyzed to come up with recommendations to improve programs and services for veterans. Becky noted several institutions were working on this project and were at various stages.

Robert Morris University and Joliet Junior College are now ready to begin working on their individualized reports which will commence over the next several weeks.

## **Commercial Club Collaboration**

Amy Sherman, CAEL, provided details on collaborating with the Commercial Club (CC) and the member institutions of the Affinity Group. Group members and their applicable career services directors are invited to attend the next quarterly meeting of the Commercial Club on August 7 from 10:00 am – 12:00 pm in Chicago. Meeting details to follow.

The focus is to determine ways for institutions and employers to work collaboratively to provide student veterans better linkages to employment. CAEL is planning a survey for the club members to look into the CC members' recruiting practices and any partnerships they may have with schools. A survey will also be sent to the VHEAG members to look at the ways their institutions currently interact with employers.

After discussion on creating intentional partnerships, it was determined CAEL will gather data from the schools to create a profile program to share with the Commercial Club members at August 7<sup>th</sup> meeting.

## **Faculty Training Update**

Amy and Cindy reported on the outcomes of the train-the-trainer sessions throughout Illinois for the IJF faculty training initiative. The sessions were attended by almost 50 institutions with over 100 participants. The materials for the sessions were created to allow the schools to customize

the materials to their institution's needs. Overall, the training reviews were positive. An online recorded version of the training is scheduled to be completed by the end of the summer. If there is sufficient interest, another session or two may be done in the future.

### New Directions

Amy asked the group what they would like to accomplish over the next year. Some ideas offered were:

- Guest speakers
- More interactive presentations
- Using Kognito training within institutions, possibly as a follow up to the faculty training.

### Open Mic

Julia Jenkins from Northwestern brought up the new version of the DOD MOU. Several schools were still reviewing the document and not sure if they were going to sign it. Cindy stated she had an interpretation of the changes and a link to the FAQ which she will send to the group.

IJF is hosting a webinar on state and federal veterans benefits on June 23 at 10 am. Amy stressed the importance of getting students to participate on the webinar to help them figure out how to best maximize their available benefits.

James requested examples of pre and post deployment policies to assist him with writing one for GSU. Members were asked to send copies of their policies to Cindy to share with James and other members who may need them as well.

### Next Steps

- Haydee, Cindy, and Annette Wright will work on a presentation or webinar for training work study students.
- Cindy will send out the Kognito training information to the members
- Cindy will send out the interpretation of the DOD MOU and link to the FAQ
- Joliet Junior College can possibly host the next meeting the week of September 8. Once the location and date are confirmed a save the date will be sent to the members.

### Meeting Attendance

Name	Institution
Richard Kennedy	guest
Amy Sherman	CAEL
Becky Klein-Collins	CAEL
Cynthia Rathunde	CAEL
Loretta Coleman	CAEL
Rick Olson	CAEL

Ed Davis	City Colleges of Chicago- Wilbur Wright College
Ryan Frey	College of Lake County
Haydee Nunez	DePaul University
Anitra King	Elgin Community College
James Flagg	Governors State University
Paige Vanderhyden	Joliet Junior College
Paul Knudtson	National Louis University
Riley Wright	National Louis University-AmeriCorps Vista
Julia Jenkins	Northwestern University
Pete LaHaie	Roosevelt University
William Beiersdorf	Road Home Program-Rush University
Sheri Gross	Saint Xavier University
Annette Wright	University of Illinois at Chicago