

Veterans Higher Education Affinity Group Meeting

January 27, 2016

Meeting Summary

Welcome and Introductions

The eighteenth meeting of the Veterans Higher Education Affinity Group was held on January 27, 2016 at 55 East Monroe Street in Chicago. There were 32 attendees, including representatives from 20 colleges and programs serving the Chicago area, and CAEL staff. A full list of attendees is provided at the end of this summary.

Missing Perspectives: Servicemembers' Transition from Service to Civilian Life

Amy Sherman introduced Corri Zoli, Ph.D., Director of Research and Assistant Research Professor, Institute for National Security and Counterterrorism (INSCT) and Rosalinda V. Maury, Director of Applied Research and Analytics, Institute for Veterans and Military families (IVMF). Dr. Zoli began by saying that while there is broad public support for Post-9/11 veterans, there is little understanding, research or even interest in veterans' after-duty experiences. She said that there is a need to get academic institutions up to par in supporting veterans' success and understanding what veterans have to offer academia. Dr. Zoli also said that there is an absence of information on veterans' perspectives. IVMF and the Department of Veterans Affairs conducted a national survey in an attempt to provide an evidence-based picture of student veterans and their educational aspirations and experiences. This survey was distributed to 8500 veterans and achieved a 60% response rate. Dr. Zoli and Ms. Maury gave an overview of the survey responses and trends. It was noted that education was a major reason in why people chose to serve in the military. Also, veterans greatly valued navigational support by colleges and universities to access military benefits. A PowerPoint presentation of the survey results is enclosed with this meeting summary.

Meeting participants expressed interest in scheduling a conference call with Dr. Zoli and Ms. Maury to continue the questions and discussions about the survey at a later date. The call is now scheduled for Friday, February 12 from noon to 1 pm. For details, contact Chip.

Insights from the "Create Your Vision, Make Your Case, Get It Done (CMG)" Strategic Planning Process Conducted for VHEAG Members in 2015

At a previous VHEAG meeting, some members expressed an interest in learning more about the strategic planning process. This planning process was conducted to collect both quantitative and qualitative data on the veteran services provided by 13 VHEAG member institutions. Andrew Miller of CAEL gave a brief summary of the survey results from the Affinity Group Strategic Planning Survey. Amy explained to members that the summary was intended to show a snapshot of the survey responses while allowing the participating schools to remain anonymous. Anitra King and Sheri Gross said that the survey did generate improvement of services on their campuses. The strategic planning summary report is enclosed with this meeting summary.

All-inclusive on-campus programming and diversifying the audience for veteran-related programming

Kevin Smith of Governors State University and Robert Thompson of Malcolm X College each gave tips and suggestions for campus diversity and veterans programming. Some highlights were: campus-wide activities such as celebrating military birthdays, Veterans' day, and 9/11 tributes. Kevin said that members could email him for ideas for flyers and handouts. Kevin also said that his senior work study assistant would be featured in an upcoming magazine article, and he would disseminate copies of the article to meeting participants. Robert's presentation focused on the different types of veteran-specific services provided the City Colleges of Chicago; the importance of understanding college culture; utilizing social media; and offering food to increase attendance at events. The presentations are included with this summary.

Update on Illinois Joining Forces (IJF) and Bridges to Employment

Roman Ortega shared upcoming events of the Illinois Joining Forces Working Group and updates on Bridges to Employment.

February 3, 2016, Military PLA Task Force Meeting

Feb. 23, 2016, Len Harris to present *The Power of Networking* on Google Hangouts

<https://plus.google.com/events/csiu09q26qpk8jvsdc2b4r0tb4>

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=llG_T0zufNk

Bridges to Employment Events

March 2, 2016, Lincoln Land Community College

March 22, 2016, Lewis University

March 30, 2016, Northeastern Illinois University

April 5, 2016, Student Veteran Leadership day

Roman and Amy stressed the importance of members spreading the word to increase student participation in the Bridges to Employment events.

Military PLA Task Force Update

CAEL received an anonymous donation to conduct a scan on military prior learning assessment. A task force led by IBHE was formed as a result of legislation and will convene on February 3, 2016. Amy will present the findings of the scan at the meeting, which are attached to this summary. Amy suggested PLA as a topic for the next VHEAG meeting. In response to strong interest from members, Amy suggested she and Cindy collaborate to create a training on how to use the Joint Services Transcript. Finally, CAEL is currently searching for funding for a series of faculty trainings on military PLA, and if funding is secured, Amy will involve the VHEAG in this project.

Future Activities for VHEAG

With the support of the Robert R. McCormick Foundation, CAEL is making plans to conduct workshops for career services staff at VHEAG colleges and universities to improve the student veteran employment pipeline. VHEAG members expressed interest in these workshops and agreed to inform Chip of their availability. Workshops will be hosted by Governors State University in University Park, Friday, March 18, 2016; North Central College in Naperville on Wednesday, March 23, 2016; and Malcolm X College at a Chicago City College site. The site and date have yet to be confirmed.

Amy also noted that CAEL is also planning to hold a retreat for veterans, akin to an employment boot camp, preferably in a relaxed setting with professional meeting facilities, and overnight accommodations. This retreat will be offered in partnership with National ABLE and SVA-IL. Len Harris of National ABLE provide an overview of the training. The retreat is likely to take place in late September or early October – details to follow.

Members agreed to increase the length of the upcoming VHEAG meetings from 3 hours to 5 hours, with the last two hours of the meetings to be reserved for training.

Once the decisions were made regarding the new meeting format, ideas for the content and topics of the professional workshops were discussed by the meeting participants.

Suggestions

1. Connecting with military students online.
2. How to build SVA chapters and student veteran organizations
3. Work Study programs and internships

Len Harris suggested that additional ideas for the professional development workshop could possibly be gleaned from the Affinity Group Strategic Planning surveys. Amy agreed to review the surveys for possible suggestions by the survey respondents that could be used for content for the professional development workshop.

Consultant Search: As part of CAEL's work with Midwest Higher Education Compact/Multi-State Collaborative on Military Credit, CAEL is creating an online guide for student veterans. CAEL is presently seeking consultants to assist with interviews for best practices programs to post online; interviewing students in the healthcare field; and organizing and researching information from various states veterans' resources. In addition, CAEL wants to identify potential veteran services consultants for future activities. Amy asked that any members who were interested in applying to the consultant position submit their CV and a writing sample to Chip for consideration.

Open Mic

Cindy Rathunde, who is a member of the regional board of the National Association of Veterans' Program Administrators (NAVPA), stated the NAVPA members would be meeting with the Senate Veterans' Advisory Committee and Illinois Representatives as well as visiting the VA central office on an upcoming visit to the Capitol. Cindy asked members to contact her if there were any "burning issues" that could be included on NAVPAs legislative agenda during the visit.

Issues mentioned were:

Low cost exams

Veterans Discount Card

Georges Sanon mentioned that there were fewer discount services provided to veterans on the south side of Chicago via the discount card. As a result, South side veterans have orchestrated a drive to increase registration among the veterans of the South side for the discount card. An increase in veteran registration would serve to show that there is a demand for discount services on the South side of the city.

Georges agreed to provide Amy with contact information for the appropriate staff person responsible for the discount card registration. Once the contact information is received, Amy suggested that IJF could attempt to offer assistance in identifying businesses.

Megan Everett briefly described [America Serves](#), a collective impact model from IVMF and USO of IL. America Serves is a community-based coordinated network of public, private, and non-profit organizations working together to connect veterans to the most appropriate services and resources. In partnership with **Accenture**, IVMF launched [NYServes](#), a pilot program that began 1.5 years ago in New York City. NYServes connects veterans to New York City’s public, private and non-profit resources.

Megan also gave an overview to members of the USC Survey/Chicagoland Veterans Survey. A grant by the Robert R. McCormick Foundation is funding the Chicagoland Veterans Study, a comprehensive-needs assessment developed by the USC Center for Innovation and Research on Veterans & Military Families. USC, in partnership with Loyola University Chicago (LUC), will survey 2,000 veterans in Chicago and surrounding counties, providing local leaders and philanthropists with valuable, detailed data on the needs of their military population. More information about the survey can be found here: <http://cir.usc.edu/research/research-projects/chicagoland-veterans-study> Amy and Karen Hernandez discussed ways in which CAEL and VHEAG members could offer assistance. Karen agreed to provide Amy with contact information for the staff person administering the survey in Chicago.

New Business

Going forward, members agreed to schedule the next two meetings:

Next meeting: May 26, 2016, Training topic will be PLA

Following meeting: July 27, 2016, Training topic TBD.

In Attendance:

Gregg	Beglau	Moraine Valley Community College
Joseph	Bochantin	College of Lake County
Julie	Carballo	North Central College
Moire	Corcoran	Robert R. McCormick Foundation
Megan	Everett	Robert R. McCormick Foundation

Jeremy	Giacomino	Elmhurst College
Brian	Gilligan	Morton College
Chip	Gross	CAEL
Sheri	Gross	St. Xavier University
Vincent	Guzman	Harry S. Truman College
Len	Harris	National Able Network
Karen	Hernandez	Daley College
Julia	Jenkins	Northwestern University
Connie	Johnson	CAEL
Howard	Kantoff	Northwestern University
Anitra	King	Elgin Community College
Denise	Ledsinger	Northwestern University
Emily	Livingston	Northwestern University
Andrew	Miller	CAEL
Lance	Morrison	Roosevelt University
Roman	Ortega	Lewis University
Ramon	Prieto	National Louis University
Cynthia	Rathunde	City Colleges of Chicago
Georges	Sanon	Prairie State College
Amy	Sherman	CAEL
Kevin	Smith	Governors State University
Robert	Thompson	Malcolm X College
Bryan	Tuika-Soske	Wilbur Wright College
Derek	Tyson	Olive-Harvey
Marcus	Williams El	Harold Washington