

# MEETING SUMMARY

*Veterans Higher Education Affinity Group*  
*April 19, 2017*

## Welcome and Introductions

The twenty-third meeting of the Veterans Higher Education Affinity Group (VHEAG) was held on April 19, 2017, at the CAEL headquarters in Chicago. There were 19 attendees. A full list of attendees is provided at the end of this summary.

## Effective Practices for Tracking Student Veterans

Chris Tipton, Director of Veterans Initiatives and Outreach  
University of Maryland University College (UMUC)

Chris Tipton provided an overview of the student veteran tracking procedures at UMUC, where 60% of students are military-connected. UMUC uses the following tools as part of its tracking procedures:

- PeopleSoft as system of record (customized)
- A document management system (DMS)
- Salesforce customer relations management (CRM)
- Tableau (data warehouse)


He advises others to capture all the data they can, you never know when it might be useful. The fields that UMUC captures include:

- service branch
- duty station
- duty status (AD, NG, R, other)
- military status (sponsor/dependent)
- military indicator
- military - TA pay indicator
- military occupation
- military rank
- ETS date
- VA-benefit indicator
- VA-benefit type
- VA-first time indicator
- VA-process action

The VA-first time indicator allows UMUC to help ensure that first-time VA benefit users are prepared to successfully navigate that process (UMUC sends students a packet with all the do's and don'ts). A lot of the information comes from UMUC's application, which automatically populates PeopleSoft. Students have to submit their military documentation in order to get the military tuition rate. There is also a custom VA benefit page in PeopleSoft that captures student veteran information.

## *Joint Services Transcripts (JSTs)*

UMUC requires the submission of JSTs just like other kinds of transcripts and awards credit based on military occupations *and* coursework (both from ACE recommendations). Once ACE



credit is evaluated for the very first time, it is put into PeopleSoft as a query in order to simplify the process for future JSTs with the same ACE recommendations. UMUC also uses portfolio assessment to bridge gaps when ACE credit recommendations do not cover an entire course (i.e. only 1 of 3 credit hours). The group discussed how helpful it would be to tie ACE recommendations to SOC codes.

### *Programmatic Support*

**Mil-Vet Checkpoint:** This online resource offers UMUC military-connected students an online community where they can interact with other students, work with military/veteran advisors, access the information they need about academic success and career opportunities, and get the support they need to successfully transition to civilian life.

**One2One Peer Mentoring Program:** This program pairs military-connected students with military-connected mentors and is ideal for students who are new to UMUC or struggling after their first semester. To incentivize mentor participation, UMUC has incorporated it into requirements for the SALUTE National Honor Society. UMUC has an indicator for participants in the mentoring program so that outcomes can be tracked.

**Assistance Fund:** A UMUC alum made a donation to support veteran programming. The fund provides financial grants to student veterans who face additional costs connected to academics, completion, or their transition to a career.

**Tutoring:** UMUC used the data it collects to identify patterns in military students' academic success in different subject areas. To address academic challenges students were facing in certain subject areas, UMUC introduced live online tutoring services through Tutor.com. UMUC has tracked students who utilized these services and found an increase in course completion rates for these students.

**Events:** Chris also noted that UMUC has seen increased military-connected student participation in their events when those events are *not* marketed specifically towards veterans and servicemembers. Chris noted that self-perceived military affiliation diminishes over time; using the words 'veteran' and/or 'military' may not resonate with some members of the target audience.

### *Partnering Across Institutions*

UMUC has implemented a 2-year to 4-year articulation program with nearby community colleges with the goal of maximizing student success. This program allows for individualized transfer points to maximize the benefit for the student. Requirements for the 2-year degree can be accounted for through reverse transfer if students transfer to UMUC before completing the 2-year degree. There are multiple benefits for student veterans. One is that the community colleges don't grant as much JST credit as UMUC does, so the transfer program can help them get more credit. Another is that if student veterans stay longer at the 2-year (instead of starting the online program at UMUC), they are eligible for a larger VA housing allowance.

Please find Chris Tipton's slide deck attached with this meeting summary.

## Veterans Upward Bound

Chris Chalko, Director

Michelle Smith, Assistant Director

Veterans Upward Bound (VUB) is a U.S. Department of Education-funded initiative that aims to prepare military veterans to successfully complete a college education. Through individual and group tutoring, VUB offers free preparatory educational services in English, grammar, writing, mathematics, reading, science, and Spanish. VUB also helps participants advance their college study skills, test-taking, financial literacy, and computer literacy. VUB provides some services online, but program participants do need to visit the office at Roosevelt for their initial intake session.

Recognizing that preparedness for college goes beyond academics, VUB also offers academic advising and career counseling, as well as assistance with college admission, financial aid, referrals to veteran and other social service organizations, and veterans benefits.

The program's eligibility requirements are as follows:

- Home of record: Illinois
- Honorable discharge
- Minimum one year of active duty service

The local branch of VUB is housed at Roosevelt University, but program participants attend colleges across the Chicago area. If you find that prospective students require remediation, please consider referring them to VUB so that they receive the preparation they need without using their limited GI Bill entitlement. Please find Chris and Michelle's slide deck attached with this meeting summary.

## VHEAG Best Practices Survey Results

Amy Sherman, CAEL

Amy Sherman provided an overview of the final results from the VHEAG Best Practices Survey conducted in late 2016. Highlights from the survey report include the following:

- CAEL was able to identify three veteran-related state and national measures contained in the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) that could be used for comparison. In *all three instances*, the Affinity Group members **significantly outperformed** other institutions.
- Eighteen (95%) of the survey respondents indicated that they:
  - Have a single point of contact for student veteran services
  - Host an SVA chapter or similar student veteran organization
  - Accept credit through some form of prior learning assessment (PLA)

- There is work to be done in the area of student veteran tracking. Only 5 (26%) of the respondents currently track veterans, while the majority (12, or 64%) are currently working on establishing a tracking system.
- Although nearly all respondents indicated that PLA options are available at their institution, only 5 (28%) stated that most or all student veterans take advantage of PLA.

For more information, please see the full survey analysis that is attached with this meeting summary.

## Going Forward

Discussion of the VHEAG Best Practices Survey results led the group to consider the following as potential topics for future VHEAG meetings:

- Continued focus on best practices in tracking student veterans
- Veterans' resource centers on campus
- VA work-study positions
- Special orientation for student veterans
- Women veterans
- Raising awareness of PLA opportunities among student veterans
- Providing basic training to faculty/staff on mental health issues affecting veterans

## Announcements

**May 15:** Illinois Joining Forces (IJF) Education Working Group open meeting - anyone who is interested in learning more about the working group is welcome to attend. There are three meeting locations across the state (including one at National Louis University), but you can also participate remotely. Contact Kevin Smith ([ksmith9@govst.edu](mailto:ksmith9@govst.edu)) to learn more and RSVP.

**May 26:** Chicago Veterans Ruck March - raise awareness of veteran suicide and help end this epidemic by participating in or volunteering for this 20-mile march. [Click here](#) to learn more and sign up.

**May 27:** Memorial Day Parade - Any veteran is welcome to march with Veterans Upward Bound in the parade. Contact Chris Chalko ([CChalko@roosevelt.edu](mailto:CChalko@roosevelt.edu)) or Michelle Smith ([mdsmith@roosevelt.edu](mailto:mdsmith@roosevelt.edu)) if one of your student veterans would like to participate.

**June 2:** Encourage your students and associates to volunteer for the Veterans Garden Spring Planting Event at the Shedd Aquarium. Contact Ramon Prieto ([rprieto@nl.edu](mailto:rprieto@nl.edu)) or [click here](#) to learn more and sign up.

**June 9-10:** Chicago Standdown for Homeless Veterans at General Jones Armory. [Click here](#) to learn more and sign up to volunteer.

**June 30 - July 8:** The 2017 Department of Defense Warrior Games will be held in Chicago. Approximately 250 wounded, ill and injured service members and veterans will participate in the competition. The wounded warrior athletes will represent the Air Force, Army, Marines, Navy,



Coast Guard, and Special Operations. For more information, please visit <http://www.dodwarriorgames.com/>

**October 23-26:** Annual Conference of the National Association of Veterans' Program Administrators (NAVPA) in Atlantic City, NJ.

## In Attendance

Christopher	Chalko	Veterans Upward Bound
Paul	Copeland	Southern Illinois University (on phone)
Vincent	Guzman	Truman College
Jacob	Hill	Elmhurst College
Julia	Jenkins	Northwestern University
Anitra	King	Elgin Community College (on phone)
Andrew	Miller	CAEL
Amy	Morys	CAEL
Roman	Ortega	Lewis University (via phone)
Ramon	Prieto	National Louis University
Cynthia	Rathunde	City Colleges of Chicago
Amy	Sherman	CAEL
Kevin	Smith	Governor's State University
Michelle	Smith	Veterans Upward Bound
Bryan	Soske	Wilbur Wright College
Cari	Stevenson	Kankakee Community College
Christopher	Tipton	University of Maryland University College
Colleen	Tomanek	Harper College
Marcus	Williams El	Harold Washington College