

Veterans Higher Education Affinity Group Meeting

McCormick Foundation and CAEL

July 12, 2012

Meeting Summary

Introduction

The fifth meeting of the Veterans Higher Education Affinity Group was held on July 12, 2012 at Roosevelt University's new building on Wabash. There were 19 attendees, including representatives from 15 colleges and programs serving the Chicago area. A full list of attendees is provided at the end of this summary.

Holly Stadler, Dean of the College of Education at Roosevelt, welcomed the group and stressed the university's commitment to serving student veterans.

Update on Policy Issues

ISAC Letter

Amy Sherman shared the draft letter to ISAC, asking ISAC to change Illinois regulatory language for the IVG and ING, so that they could be designated as "last payer." In this way, student veterans will have greater flexibility to use state and federal education benefits in whatever combination or sequence that is most beneficial for their needs. Currently, signatories include Kennedy King College, Olive-Harvey College, Richard J. Daley College, Wilbur Wright College, National Louis University, Northeastern Illinois University, and Oakton Community College.

Amy asked the group for feedback on the process and whether it could be possible to get additional signatures. Some of the members representing private institutions noted that their leaders were not sure their voices were relevant. Another said that the college leaders wanted to know who else was signing.

The group discussed that having the private institutions sign would be a) the right thing for supporting student veterans in Illinois, b) a way to show that there is a unified voice for our group, and c) in the interest of private institutions because students attending public two-year colleges may ultimately transfer to a private institution for the bachelor's or master's degree and need to preserve their financial resources.

CAEL will resend the letter, with signatories to date, along with a cover memo explaining these important reasons. Affinity group members can then send along to college leadership. **New deadline for getting agreement to sign letter is July 31.**

Federal legislation

Amy Sherman reviewed several new bills introduced in the U.S. Congress that the group might find of interest. One bill, with versions passed by both houses, seeks to facilitate veterans' efforts to gain civilian credentials based on military experience.

Other bills introduced include:

- A bill creating a three-year pilot program that provides TAP resources for up to three years following separation
- A bill that creates a centralized process for veterans to report complaints of fraud and abuse against colleges
- A bill that requires the VA to provide academic advising prior to enrollment in postsecondary institutions
- A bill that requires the VA to make information available to veterans about the institutions they wish to attend, while also providing education and career counseling.

Descriptions of these bills were provided in a handout that is attached to the end of these minutes.

Amy also reviewed the directives in the new executive order, which establishes Principles of Excellence for institutions enrolling student veterans, directs the VA to trademark the name "GI Bill" to prevent its use in aggressive marketing efforts, and requires colleges to provide student veterans with a "Know Before You Owe" document to provide transparency in education costs.

One member noted that the bill supporting the recognition of military experience for civilian credentials could help support the notion of military transfer credit. Amy asked the group if they were interested in learning more about this topic, and many said yes. A suggestion was for others to be included as well, particularly registrars.

The group discussed the challenges with the "Know Before You Owe" document. Many schools have opted not to sign the principles of excellence statement because the timing is wrong: you can't give students a complete financial picture until they are enrolled and all financial aid documents are submitted.

Future Policy Interest and Role

Amy asked if this group could be a sounding board for state officials considering regulatory or legislative changes that could affect veterans education benefits. Members noted that there is a lot of knowledge in the room, but not everyone would be in a position to comment on specific financial aid issues. Anna Laubach proposed that there might be a special working group for those who would be interested in serving as an informal sounding board.

Update on Valuing Veterans Event for College Leaders

Amy Sherman updated the group on the college leaders event, now titled Valuing Veterans: How Our Campuses Can Better Support Those Who Served. It will be Thursday, September 27, 8 am – 10:30 am at the University Club. The host committee consists of Dr. Nivine Megahed, National Louis University, Dr. Cheryl Hyman, Chancellor, City Colleges of Chicago, and Dr. Sharon K. Hahs, President, Northeastern Illinois University.

Colonel David Sutherland, U.S. Army (Ret.), will be providing the keynote address. Becky Klein-Collins of CAEL will provide a short overview of institutional best practices in serving veterans. There will also be a panel discussion, with the panel to consist of a student veteran, a faculty member, and two national experts on what institutions should be doing to serve veterans. The meeting will end with a call to action (to be determined).

CAEL will be asking the group to nominate a student veteran for us to consider for the panel; an email will follow next week with the details.

Becky asked if anyone would like to be part of a working group to provide feedback on the best practices presentation. Those interested were: Janelle Wade, Annette Wright, Ed Davis, John Dill, Chris Chalko, Scott Stratton, Haydee Nunez, Ivan Hernandez, and James Flagg.

The group noted that some school presidents are veterans – notably the president of Olive-Harvey. CAEL agreed to consider how to involve them in the day.

Open Mic Time

Sharron Williams shared information about an upcoming Transportation jobs expo at Olive-Harvey on July 19.

Scott Stratton asked the group about their experiences with the VRAP (Veterans Retraining Assistance Program).

- Details of the program: veteran receives \$1400/month directly for up to 12 months; if the student comes with a Certificate of Entitlement, there is no problem.
- Scott said that it has to be an “in demand” career listed on a website. His team ended up referring the vet to College of DuPage for a short-term program.
- One person said that the certifying official at her school doesn’t understand the new rules; they are working on identifying appropriate one-year programs.
- Another learned from the St. Louis office that it’s possible to get waivers for a three month extension (beyond the 12 month limit), but it is on a case-by-case basis.

Julia Jenkins asked if anyone would be going to the regional meeting in St. Louis the next week; she asked if people could report back at the next meeting about what they learned.

Someone asked who would be going to the DOD Worldwide meeting at the end of the month. Attendees included Becky Klein-Collins, Keith White, Ivan Hernandez, and Richard Kennedy. They were asked to report back to the group as well with any important information or model programs they would learn about.

James Flagg announced information about the Illinois Warrior Summit on August 9 at UIC. Becky promised to share information with the group.

Annette Wright shared information about the 100,000 Jobs Mission event that UIC co-hosted with JP Morgan-Chase, Illinois VA and IDES earlier that day. About 3,000 were in attendance.

Career and Education Advising Presentations

Advising research

Becky Klein-Collins shared some background on CAEL's work with adult learners and the importance of career and education advising for making informed decisions about where to go to school and what to study. For many years, CAEL managed tuition assistance programs for employers. As part of that service, CAEL encourages employers to offer tuition benefits to all workers, not just management. CAEL has always advocated for the need for advising service with tuition benefits so the money is well-spent and students do not waste effort, time, and money with poor choices.

CAEL saw parallels between employer tuition assistance and military education benefits, and so we did research on what kind of advising is currently available to help veterans make informed decisions about how to use their education benefits. What we learned was that there is a real gap; most veterans only get advising help after they are already enrolled in college.

CAEL's definition of career and education advising includes the following:

- Skill and interest assessments
- Review of military training and experience to identify existing skills, knowledge and competencies that may be evaluated for college credit, or that suggest a related civilian career pathway
- Career exploration: including discussion of jobs in high demand, career pathways, and how educational programs can be chosen to prepare for a job on that pathway or to advance to a higher level position along that career pathway
- Exploration of past experience in education – type of learner, type of learning environment, type of services needed
- Development of a career plan and related education or learning plan
- Discussion of military education benefits and which combination of benefits is right for that person
- Exploration of educational institutions offering programs in the chosen career pathway and the services and supports offered to veterans at these institutions

- Assistance in seeking additional information on and guidance from the educational institution of choice

CAEL is planning to publish a paper that raises awareness of this issue nationally and that proposes solutions at different stages of the reintegration process. The next two presentations would offer some solutions that currently exist to help close this service gap.

The group discussed this topic. One person mentioned that a lot of students come to them with no idea of what kind of benefits are available to them. Another noted that most vets are told to go get a two- or four-year degree and don't realize that shorter term training and certifications are covered by the GI Bill as well.

Veterans Upward Bound

Chris Chalko provided information about the Veterans Upward Bound program. It is one of the Department of Education's TRIO programs, and it is designed to help low-income and first-generation college student veterans. The program staff provide most of the things in CAEL's advising description: guidance and pre-tests, skill training as needed, help in deciding where to go to school, and information about what financial aid or benefits are available.

The programs will provide CTA fare cards for transportation to VUB, and it provides prep classes in basic math through calculus, reading, writing, computer basics, foreign language and science lab (there is not as much demand for language and lab). Any veteran who has served since 1951 is eligible – average age is 52.

Chris conveyed that VUB is not permitted to recruit for Roosevelt University, even though that is where VUB is housed. Others can refer vets to the program to receive services, and VUB will send them back to that institution when they are ready. Chris pointed out that this could benefit vets who might otherwise use their education benefits for remedial classes.

Complete the Degree

Amy Sherman shared information about the Complete the Degree initiative, which has been launched by a partnership of the Chicago Workforce Investment Council (now part of the new Chicago-Cook Workforce Partnership), Council for Adult and Experiential Learning, Women Employed, and One Million Degrees (formerly Illinois Education Foundation). The project will reach out to the over 300,000 Chicagoans with college credits but no degree and help them return to college and finish a degree, especially in high-growth fields. It will create walk-in and virtual "advising centers" that provide counseling and assistance to "comebackers" and work with colleges to create pathways for students to graduate. The project is funded by the City of Chicago, Chicago Community Trust, Illinois Student Assistance Commission, the McCormick Foundation, and Bank of America (the McCormick Foundation is helping to support additional outreach and specialized advising for veterans). There is virtual advising available, and a physical center for in-person advising opened in July 2012 at 35 East Wacker Drive, Suite 1750,

Chicago. For more information about the program, the group was directed to the following staff at Complete the Degree:

- Michelle Sanford, msanford@completethedegree.org
- Donna Clayborn, dclayborn@completethedegree.org

Amy promised to send the slide presentation to the group through email.

Next Steps from This Meeting

- ISAC Letter: CAEL to resend the letter to ISAC listing the signatories to date and providing additional rationale for schools to sign
- Valuing Veterans/College Leaders event:
 - CAEL to send invitation to group to nominate a student veteran for the panel
 - When CAEL sends email invitations out to presidents and affinity group members, affinity group members will forward that to college president to reinforce invitation
 - Becky to follow up with advisory group for best practices research
- CAEL to send group:
 - Power point presentation on Complete the Degree
 - Warrior Summit information
 - new Linked In invitations to group members not yet on the site
- Future consideration: a state policy working group to serve as sounding board for state policy/regulatory changes
- Next meeting
 - Do some planning around the military skills transfer issue and how our meetings should address that topic
 - Invite several group members to share what they are doing with/for their student veterans, and how their departments are structured
 - Hear back from those who attended the St. Louis meeting for certifying officers, and from those who attended the DOD Worldwide meeting in Las Vegas (Ivan, Richard, Keith, and Becky).

Dates to Remember

- September 27, 8:00-10:30 am – Valuing Veterans event (college leaders)
- October 17, 2:00-3:30 pm – Veterans Higher Education Affinity Group Meeting at CAEL
- December 12, 9:00 am – 1:00 pm – Veterans and mental health workshop

Meeting Attendance

Name	Institution
Ivan Hernandez	American InterContinental University
Kendrea Atkins	City Colleges of Chicago - Daley College
Marla Davis	City Colleges of Chicago –Kennedy King College (Formerly of Harold Washington College)
Sharron Williams	City Colleges of Chicago - Olive-Harvey College
Edward Davis	City Colleges of Chicago-Wilbur Wright College
Haydee Nunez	DePaul University
Scott Stratton	DeVry University
Keith White	Governors State University
Janelle Wade	Loyola University
John Dill	National Louis University
Julia Jenkins	Northwestern University
James Flagg	Robert Morris
Peter LaHaie	Roosevelt University
Asia Mitchell	Roosevelt University
Annette Wright	UIC
Christopher G Chalko	Veterans Upward Bound
Amy Sherman	CAEL
Becky Klein-Collins	CAEL
Anna LauBach	McCormick Foundation



Recent Federal Policy Initiatives and Proposals on Issues Related to Education and Career Advising for Veterans

July 11, 2012

Legislative Proposals

H.R. 4155/S. 2239: Veteran Skills to Jobs Act of 2012

- **Introduced by:**
 - H.R. 4155: Rep. Jeff Denham on March 7, 2012
 - S. 2239: Sen. Bill Nelson on March 27, 2012
- **Description:**
 - Seeks to facilitate veterans' efforts to gain civilian credentials based on military experience.
 - Directs federal agency heads to consider accepting relevant military training to satisfy training or certification requirements for federal licenses
 - The version of the bill passed by the Senate directed agency heads to accept military training to satisfy federal licensing requirements; it was amended by the House before passage to say that agency heads "shall consider and may accept" military training to satisfying licensing requirements
- **Status:** S. 2239 was passed by the Senate on June 29, 2012; H.R. 4155 was passed by the House on July 10, 2012. The legislation is now being held at the desk in the Senate.

H. R. 4051/S. 2246: TAP Modernization Act of 2012

- **Introduced by:**
 - H. R. 4051: Rep. Marlin Stutzman on February 16, 2012
 - S. 2246: Sen. John Boozman on March 28, 2012
- **Description:**
 - Creates a three-year pilot program that would provide interested veterans with access to TAP resources and programming for up to three years following separation from the military.
- **Status:**
 - H.R. 4051: The bill is in committee; it was referred to the House Veterans Affairs and Armed Services subcommittees. The Veterans Affairs Committee held a hearing on the bill on March 28, 2012.
 - S. 2246: The Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs held a hearing on the bill on June 13, 2012.

S. 2179: Military and Veterans Educational Reform Act

- **Introduced by:** Sen. Jim Webb on March 8, 2012
- **Description:**
 - Requires the VA and DoD to create a centralized process through which veterans can report complaints of fraud and abuse against colleges.
 - Makes the VA and Department of Defense responsible, “to the extent possible” for providing veterans with one-on-one educational counseling that includes the “development of a personalized academic and career plan.”
 - Requires postsecondary institutions that enroll 20 or more student veterans who are receiving education benefits to provide veterans with career counseling.
- **Status:** Hearing held by the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs on June 13, 2012.

S. 2206: GI Educational Freedom Act

- **Introduced by:** Sen. Frank Lautenberg on March 20, 2012
- **Description:**
 - Requires the VA to provide all veterans with academic advising, including guidance on the development of an academic plan, *before* enrollment in postsecondary institutions. Only veterans who explicitly opted out would not receive education advising.
 - The bill also specifies that the education counseling provided would include a discussion of asking questions about the availability of career advising before selecting or enrolling in a postsecondary institution.
- **Status:** Hearing held by the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs on June 13, 2012.

S. 2241: GI Bill Consumer Awareness Act

- **Introduced by:** Sen. Patty Murray on March 27, 2012
- **Description:**
 - Seeks to assist veterans in choosing a postsecondary institution by requiring the VA to make available statistics related to colleges’ veterans enrollments, policies on education benefit payments, students’ average student-loan debts, and job-placement rates.
 - Expands educational and career counseling options for veterans already enrolled in postsecondary institutions by requiring those institutions to provide veterans with education and career advising.
 - Supports veterans transitioning from the military to postsecondary institutions and careers by requiring the Veterans Workforce Investment Program (VWIP), which is funded by the U.S. Department of Labor, and the VA to coordinate with TAP on the provision of counseling services to veterans.
- **Status:** Hearing held by the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs on June 13, 2012.

Executive Order

Establishing Principles of Excellence for Educational Institutions Serving Service Members, Veterans, Spouses, and Other Family Members (issued April 27, 2012)

This order contains the following key directives:

- Departments of Defense, Veterans Affairs, and Education will establish Principles of Excellence for institutions enrolling student veterans eligible for education benefits. This is intended to reduce fraudulent marketing and recruiting practices targeting veterans.
- The VA should seek a trademark for the name “GI Bill” in order to prevent its use in aggressive or fraudulent marketing campaigns by groups unaffiliated with the VA.
- Colleges will provide student veterans with a “Know Before You Owe” document intended to create transparency in education costs and to make sure veterans are aware of and understand potential student debt obligations.