



PROGRAM REVIEW REPORT

VETERANS' RESOURCE CENTER
CENTER OF EXCELLENCE
FOR VETERAN STUDENT SUCCESS

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VRC PROGRAM REVIEW

CENTER OF EXCELLENCE FOR VETERAN STUDENT SUCCESS

2005-2011

SECTION 1 BACKGROUND/ HISTORY

It is difficult to determine exactly when the Veterans' Resource Center (VRC) became a program. The VRC has never had a district budget location, and only recently (2009/2010) has the VRC procured additional grant funding sources, hired additional staff, and been allotted space to accommodate over 580 veterans on campus. Despite the ambiguity of when the VRC was officially designated as a "program", it has served the needs of veterans at Santa Monica College. Veterans have been coming to school under the G.I. Bill since World War II, and the College has a history of being supportive of veterans as evidenced by the Clock Tower which was built as a memorial to veterans who served in World War II. We have been serving student veterans in an ever increasing capacity growing from approximately 125 students receiving benefits in the Fall of 2004 to 580 students receiving benefits in the Fall 2011. In order to receive G.I. Bill funds while attending college, students must be taking courses that are required for them to reach their stated educational goal. Prior to 2004, processing of the paperwork required of the Veterans Administration (V.A.) required a clerk in admissions and an academic counselor.

In 2004, in an effort to streamline the process for students, the Dean of Counseling combined the clerical and counseling aspects of the process in one office under one counselor. Prior to this time 80% of the duties of an Admissions and Records clerk and a good portion of a counselor's assignment were used to counsel and process students for the G.I. Bill. By combining the two

functions one counselor was assigned fulltime to work with veterans. This saved the veterans the frustration of transferring paperwork from one person to another and dealing with any miscommunication that might arise between two offices located across campus from each other. Additionally, this format enabled the counselor and the Dean to see the challenges veteran students face when returning to school after military service and the College was able to begin addressing the needs of this student population.

In Spring 2005, Santa Monica College offered its first “Boots to Books” class. Based on a model created at Cerritos College, the idea of “Boots to Books” is to help the veteran transition from military life to academia. Santa Monica College was already offering Counseling 20, *Student Success Seminar*, which was created to assist students as they transitioned to college life and give them the skills necessary to become a better student. In order to make this a “Boots to Books” class, we offered a section for veterans in which examples were based on military experience and students were encouraged to investigate the ways in which their civilian life was different from their life in the military and the changes they would encounter as they became students.

Since 2005 the College has been working closely with the West Los Angeles Veterans Administration Hospital and its programs. Traumatic Brain Injuries and Post Traumatic Stress are the two most common injuries we see in students returning from Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF, Afghanistan) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). We have been referring students to the Post Traumatic Stress Outpatient Services Team (Post Program) since 2005.

Our Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) specialist and our Disabled Students Program (DSPS) have been huge supporters of our veterans. The TBI specialist co-authored a paper on veterans returning with Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBI) and the need for colleges to recognize this injury. She was also able to offer a one unit class on the VA campus for veterans in the Poly Trauma Program. This class gave the students a brief overview of what would be expected in college and, equally important,

gave our Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) specialist a chance to assess their needs. Our ABI specialist works closely with the V.A.'s Vocational Rehabilitation program to assist students with traumatic brain injuries in finding ways to adapt to their injuries so they can be successful students. She has also helped students who transferred from SMC to other schools by acting as an advocate for the student and discussing the student's need for services with representatives from the new school. Our ABI specialist and our grant manager coordinated a meeting with the department of public health which highlighted veterans' services and the ABI Coordinator coordinates a stakeholders meeting which included representatives from other colleges in the greater Los Angeles area as well as representatives from various Veterans Administration Program. Through this last meeting we were able to meet the new director of the Women's Clinic at the West Los Angeles Veterans' Administration Hospital. She has proven to be another valuable resource and very responsive to our referrals

As stated above, veteran student enrollment has increased substantially since 2004. The single largest reason for this increase in students is thought to be the implementation of the Post 9/11 ("New") G.I. Bill. Under this bill, the veteran student receives a monthly stipend that is based on the cost of living for the zip-code in which the school s/he is attending is located. The stipend for a fulltime student at Santa Monica College is just over \$2100.00. This is almost double what students were receiving under the old G.I. Bill. Add to this the great reputation this College has for transferring student to prestigious colleges and universities, the current state of our economy, and our proximity to the West Los Angeles Veterans Administration Hospital and it is no wonder our enrollment has grown by leaps and bounds!

In 2010 the College allowed the Veterans' "Program" to move into some of the offices in a suite of offices in LA 135, while the other 2.5 offices in the suite remained empty in an anticipatory hire of new janitorial managers. With this new space, we began calling the "program" the Veterans'

Resource Center and were able to initiate plans to create a safe place on campus where our veterans would feel welcome and safe. At the same time we moved into our new space, the Vice-President of Student Affairs agreed to fund a 20 hour per week support staff position. This staff member is invaluable doing scheduling and filing and performing receptionist duties, placing orders, keeping track of appointments and assisting with V.A. paperwork. For almost 3 years prior to the Fall 2010, the Administrative Assistant to the Dean of Counseling had taken on the duties of Certifying Official, adding to her already full-time job the certification of veterans' enrollments to the Veterans Administration. The Dean's Administrative Assistant continued this invaluable work after the office moved.

In the summer of 2010, Santa Monica College received a High Tech Center Grant from the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office. Under this grant we received two computers and software that can be used by students with brain injuries to improve their comprehension of course material. By having these programs in the Veterans' Resource Center, veterans can study in the center where they are surrounded by other veteran students where they feel more comfortable.

In the fall of 2010, we were one of fifteen colleges in the U.S. and one of five in the State to receive a Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) Centers for Excellence for Veteran Student Success (CEVSS) grant. The grant is for a total of \$399,613.00 over three years. With this grant we will be able to formalize the Veterans' Resource Center and expand the direct service offerings available, coordinating their delivery with other campus entities and to bring in new services that will include faculty and peer tutoring and mentoring, and a computer mediated study center. Major goals of the grant are to increase access, retention and completion rates, and educate the campus community about our veteran students' needs. With the additional hiring of a part time grant manager and full time student services specialist/ certifying official these goals are now ever more achievable.

In addition to the two grants mentioned above, SMC has been very fortunate to enter into an agreement with U.S. Vets whereby they provide a psychologist to meet with our veterans and their families if requested. This service has proven quite popular as it allows veterans to see someone here, in the center, where they are comfortable and there is little stigma attached. Many student veterans do not care to deal with the Veterans Administration Hospital because it is inconvenient, there appears to be a stigma attached, and they are afraid their care might be found in official records from the VA and keep them from being eligible for jobs in certain fields.

Despite the historical context and rapid development of the VRC as a program, the need for the services provided within it increasingly grow with each passing semester. While the VRC is fortunate to have received the federal funding, community support, and staff to assist in the higher volume of veteran enrollments, it too must continue to adapt and change to meet the goals and objectives its staff has implemented to provide the best service to the veterans at Santa Monica College.

SECTION 2

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION/ GOALS/ OBJECTIVES

MISSION:

The mission of the Veterans' Resource Center is to assist the veteran in transitioning to civilian and college life so that they can be successful in obtaining their educational goals.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:

The Veterans' Resource Center provides an array of direct and indirect services for veteran students and their families. Direct services include individual and family therapy, academic counseling, verification and certification of veteran benefits through the Veterans Administration (VA), mentoring, assistive technology training, a computer lab, and referrals to community resources

such as residential programs for homeless veterans, substance abuse programs and groups, airline ticket emergency assistance, as well as serving as a liaison for veteran service organizations such as the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), and the American Legion.

Indirect services include training staff and faculty as well as community members about the unique issues that veterans face when transitioning from the military to post-secondary education, outreach to local veteran service organizations, and working directly with the VA to put on events for veterans such as surf camp.

CURRENT STAFF AND SCHEDULES:

1 part-time grant project manager, 20 hours per week (grant funded)

1 full-time counselor/faculty leader 32 hours per week (funded by Counseling/ location 27)

1 fulltime student services specialist/Certifying Official (classified position) 40 hours per week (grant funded)

1 part-time counselor, 9 hours per week (starting September 2011) (funded by Counseling/ location 27)

1 part-time counselor, 15 hours per week (starting September 2010) (funded by Counseling/ location 27)

1 part- time clerical support 20 hours per week for 11 months (funded by Counseling/ location 27)

The Veterans' Resource Center is currently operated on Monday through Thursday from 9:00AM to 3:00PM. Walk-in appointments are typically available at the beginning of the semester due to high volume of students seeking assistance, and by the third week of the semester appointments are scheduled. Regardless if it is lunch the VRC remains open the entire allotted time

so that veterans can use the computer labs, study, eat lunch, or just hang out with their veteran peers.

GOALS and OBJECTIVES:

The primary goal of the Veterans' Resource Center is to provide an array of direct and indirect services for veterans in a "one stop" format to assist them in reaching their full academic potential while attending Santa Monica College. This over-arching goal includes improving academic success but also creating an instructional environment conducive to academic success. In order to accomplish this goal, the following objectives have been identified:

SLO #1:

After meeting with the VRC staff, the veteran will have the knowledge to successfully apply for and receive the appropriate veterans' educational benefits, as measured by those veterans who have applied for benefits for Fall and Spring semesters/ those who receive benefits for Fall and Spring semesters.

SLO #2:

By the end of the veterans' first semester of enrollment, measured during the (Fall and Spring semesters) student veterans that elected to utilize VA benefits will have a clear academic goal after meeting with a veterans' academic counselor as measured by completion of an education plan.

Grant Objective #1:

By September 2013 retention rates of student veterans at SMC will increase to 80% over a 2009 baseline of 68%. Retention will be measured by the number of students who successfully complete attempted coursework with a grade of "C" or better, as defined by the FIPSE grant proposal.

Grant Objective #2:

Fall to Fall persistence rates will increase to 75% over a 2009 baseline of 63% as measured by the students that have maintained a course load for the academic year.

Grant Objective #3:

By June 2013, increase the number of students that are transfer directed (those students that have completed at least 12 units to include both Math and English requirements) to 55% from a 2010 baseline of 49.2%.

Grant Objective #4:

By June 2013, 150 faculty and staff will participate in professional development activities addressing the needs of student veterans.

Grant Objective #5

By June 2013, 80% of participants in professional development activities will report taking active steps to improve the teaching and learning environment for veterans.

Grant Objective #6

By June 2013 75% of student veterans enrolled each year will report satisfaction with the teaching and learning environment at SMC.

Grant Objective #7:

By June 2013, 60% of student veterans will self-report participation in student activities outside of the veteran resource center.

The goals and objectives for the VRC are very specific so that the VRC can obtain quantifiable data to determine program efficacy. This increase in data collection in the VRC and the purposive style in which the goals and objectives for the VRC were written provide accurate and “real time” data to comply with Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILO’s), as well as our own Student Learning Outcomes (SLO’s), and annual reporting for Funding for Post-Secondary Education (FIPSE),

Centers of Excellence for Veteran Student Success (CEVSS). This could not have been accomplished without the cooperation of Management Information Systems (MIS), Institutional Research (IR), and our external evaluator, through which the VRC has been able to compile numerous data sets. One example of the importance of data collection is that the VRC staff has been able to educate nearly 100 staff and faculty at Santa Monica College about veteran specific challenges through the Vet Net Ally forum. This addresses SLO#1, and SLO#11 in which the VRC has a direct role in the professional development of the college community.

In addition to educating the campus community about unique veteran challenges, the VRC has weekly strategic meetings to discuss the challenges in the VRC. Perhaps the most looming and ominous problem is the termination of FIPSE funding on September 30th, 2013 which coincides directly with SLO#6, and #9 where the VRC actively is seeking out short term and long term program sustainability options. Should the FIPSE funding lapse without additional funding procurement, the VRC stands to lose a part time manager and student services specialist/ certifying official. That would mean that other staff and faculty would have to assist with over 580 veteran enrollments, on top of handling the fiscal and administrative duties currently performed by the part time manager. In an effort to prevent such an occasion from arising, the VRC staff has met with the Dean of Counseling and Retention, Brenda Benson, and the Director of Grants/ Title V Math Cooperative, Laurie McQuay-Penninger and researched additional funding opportunities. As a direct result the VRC will be applying for a TRIO grant in Spring 2012.

SECTION 3
Sharing the College's Mission and Vision through the Provision of
Services through the VRC to Student Veterans

President of Santa Monica College, Dr. Chui L. Tsang states on the SMC website that, “We are committed to providing support services designed to help you achieve success, make career choices, and develop your academic skills.” The Veterans’ Resource Center is poised to support this vision for the student veterans at SMC, moreover, acknowledging that returning veterans have unique needs when they leave military and transition to post-secondary education, the VRC stands as a front line resource and aid to promote success, increase academic skills, and assist the 580 veterans attending Santa Monica College with career choices and opportunities.

In order to understand the unique challenges the veteran student faces it is important to recognize the operation of the U.S. military over the past decade. The U.S. military has deployed over 1.8 million personnel to Iraq and Afghanistan (Litz & Schlenger, 2009). Due to a shortage of military personnel the combat tours that some have to endure are longer than in other wars and the chance of being redeployed is relatively high (Tanielian & Jaycox, 2008). Of the 1.8 million that have served in Iraq and Afghanistan thus far, 37% have been deployed more than once (Litz & Schlenger, 2009). The Iraq and Afghanistan wars are unconventional because it is difficult for the enemy to be differentiated from the civilians, and many of the enemy combatants use very lethal and unusual technology, such as improvised explosive devices (Sammons & Batten, 2008).

The “Global War on Terrorism” began on October 1, 2001 and six years later the percentage of veterans experiencing psychological impairments three to four months after returning from a war-combat deployment was: Soldiers 38%, Marines 31%, and the National Guard reported 49% (Department of Defense [DoD] Task Force on Mental Health, 2007). Among Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) veterans there is much more attention

placed upon Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and PTSD than in the past wars (Unomoto & Williams, 2009).

Veterans may need help upon returning from a deployment in order to attain the best quality of life. An essential need is mental health services, especially with an average of 18 veterans committing suicide each day. It is estimated that 240,000 OIF and OEF veterans experienced symptoms of PTSD, depression, anxiety, and substance abuse problems upon their return from a deployment (Curry, Erbes, & Leskela, 2009; Hoge et al., 2007). Many veterans are hesitant to access VA mental healthcare for fear of a psychiatric diagnosis preventing them from obtaining federal employment. As such the VRC has partnered with U.S. VETS to provide free counseling for veterans and their families here at the school. This prevents a transportation barrier (since the veteran is already at school), and allows a veteran to feel safe within the confines of the VRC and their veteran peers. By addressing mental health needs, students have the capability of performing at a higher academic capacity than if no treatment were administered.

Another serious issue affecting veterans is traumatic brain injury (TBI), which has affected about 300,000 of OIF and OEF veterans (Benge, Pastorek, & Thornton, 2009). This includes mild cases to extreme cases due to the contact of an explosion near the veteran's head (Benge et al., 2009; Hayward, 2008). Traumatic impact to the head resulting in TBI can have many long-term effects to a veteran's life such as loss of the cognitive, affective, and physical well-being months to years after the date of injury (Benge et al., 2009). As such the VRC has created an assistive technology lab with two computers that have both been furnished with assistive technology such as Kurzweil 3000, Dragon Naturally Speaking Software, as well as smart pens to assist veterans with cognitive deficiencies, and difficulty with recall. The VRC working in coordination with DSPS, provides trainings for veterans that have expressed a desire to utilize the assistive technology, and upon completion a smart pen is given to the student to use for the entire semester free of charge.

SECTION 4

Additional Program Changes and Improvements Since 2005

The VRC moved from a single office in the Counseling complex over to the Liberal Arts building in 2009. The part of the new office suite(LA 135) we were assigned provided the room necessary to create a computer lab with 4 computers, an assistive technology lab with 2 computers, a textbook library, and a break room for students to eat, study, and just relax. The new office suite also made it possible for a full time faculty leader, certifying official, 2 part time academic counselors, 1 office assistant, and one part time manager to be housed in the suite, truly encompassing a one stop shop feel, and in keeping with former Governor Schwarzenegger's mandate to create veteran resource centers on college campuses.

The VRC has been proactive in providing trainings for staff and faculty to educate them about the unique needs of veterans. These trainings have occurred within the campus and in the community. In Spring 2011 Santa Monica College partnered with the Department of Mental Health to sponsor an all day symposium at the Broad Theater where a veteran panel consisting of SMC students shared the challenges they experienced after returning from a war zone. DMH has already expressed a desire to partner with SMC and the VRC in next year's symposium. Faculty flex days have also been a key forum through which the VRC has educated staff and faculty about the unique issues that veterans face through veteran panels and PowerPoint presentations. Responses from faculty and staff about the trainings have been very favorable and can be found in Section 5.

Campus Collaboration

In addition to the many changes to the VRC, collaboration has become a key component for veteran success. The VRC has worked closely with Disabled Student Programs and Services (DSPS)

to address PTSD and TBI injuries as well as other injuries that would hinder student academic success. Sandy Burnett from DSPS along with the VRC, has been instrumental in creating a working relationship with the VA's polytrauma team as well as hosting veteran forums designed to increase communication amongst community colleges and local VA's. She has also taught courses at the VA, through DSPS to reduce transportation barriers that some disabled veterans have.

Strengthening the communication between other departments on campus has been an objective that the VRC has focused on to streamline veteran benefits, and ensure fiscal responsibility. One such example would be with Auxiliary Services who receives the payments from the VA for student tuition and fees, and is responsible for disbursing the money to the Bursars office. In prior audits it was discovered that monies paid to the Bursar's Office needed to be refunded back to the VA because the student received the Board of Governor's (BOG) waiver, which precedes any VA payment, thus creating a VA overpayment. As such, the certifying official runs weekly audits of students and is in direct communication with the Bursar's Office as well as Auxiliary Services to ensure that the school does not receive debt letters from the VA for overpayments, but also to make sure that the Bursar's Office is receiving the correct monetary amount from Auxiliary Services. This has required many strategic meetings, but in turn has created a more efficient and streamlined approach to the financial component of veteran benefits at SMC.

Tracking veteran progress at SMC has become a priority for the VRC, and working in close collaboration with MIS, and IT, systems have been put into place through ISIS to track persistence, retention, transfer readiness, demographics, GI Bill benefits, as well as GPA and VRC activities. With the trend to move to evidence based programs, SMC now stands poised through the collaboration with MIS and IT, to be able to accurately report the efficacy of the program to current and potential funding sources to include the Department of Education.

The VRC has also worked closely with the library to create a system whereby students can check out books in the VRC textbook library, laptops, as well as assistive technology such as smartpens and notebooks without ever having to go to the library. Software has been installed in the VRC to be able to check out the aforementioned items, as all items are catalogued in the library database. This allows the VRC to maintain its property, but also gives the VRC the capability to track the usage of checked out items. This system will allow us to understand needs of the student veterans, as well as any additional items that may need to be purchased to increase academic performance.

Curriculum has been established through the Counseling 20 class to assist veterans in the transition from the military to academia. A special section just for veterans was added to address the unique challenges that a veteran may face when going to college for the first time. In addition to specialized curriculum, in 2010 the VRC began implementing a new student orientation in collaboration with the Counseling department for VIP Welcome Day. This has become a critical event for incoming students to receive information about the campus, veteran benefits, meet staff, take tours of the campus and VRC, talk with current student veterans, and participate in a resource fair comprised of veteran service organizations such as the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), and Veterans Administration (VA).

The Student Veterans Association (SVA) has also worked jointly with the VRC to increase the numbers of members in the club, as well as collaborating to sponsor events for students. For the 2010-2011 academic year, the SVA worked closely with the VRC to procure funding through Associated Students to fund a fishing trip to Catalina. The event was well received by the veterans, and was a catalyst for increased veteran participation in the club as well as the VRC. The SVA also has worked jointly with the VRC to create special ceremonies on campus for Veterans' Day as well as Memorial Day. Future plans include co-sponsoring student activities on campus with other clubs to promote the veteran reintegration process.

Community Collaboration

The VRC has taken an active role in reaching out to the community for assistance. With a veteran population of 580, and national estimates of PTSD prevalence being close to 1 in 4, this means that nearly 145 student veterans at Santa Monica College are affected by PTSD. It is assumed that the actual prevalence of PTSD on campus is much higher, as the national estimate criteria only encompasses those that screen positive for PTSD. The VRC understands that many veterans do not access mental health care, and may hide or underreport PTSD symptomology when leaving the military for fear that it will prevent them from leaving the military expediently upon discharge due to psychological services that must be rendered to the service member prior to discharge. There is also the stigma of being labeled with a mental illness; this directly affecting employment opportunities popular with the veteran community such as law enforcement, firefighting, reenlistment in the military, and Department of Defense jobs. Through a partnership with U.S.VETS and their “Outside the Wire” program a licensed psychologist with substantial experience in treating PTSD in combat veterans spends two days a week conducting free counseling for veterans at the VRC so that students can access mental health care in a convenient and confidential setting. Counseling extends to both the service member and their family and future plans include having therapeutic groups on campus.

The VRC has also reached out to the local VA, to coordinate services and activities for veterans on campus. As a result, the VA hosted a surf camp in collaboration with the VRC and the Jimmy Miller Surf Rider Foundation for disabled veterans at SMC on August 19th, 2011. This is the first time that the VA has co-sponsored such an event with the VRC and it was an exciting opportunity for veterans to enjoy a day at the beach free of charge.

The VRC has had a campus advisory board for the past three years. In Spring 2012 the advisory board will be expanded to include community members. The advisory board assists the VRC with

program development and fosters community relationships which will hopefully result in additional funding for the VRC. The VRC has no district budget location, and as such relies on minimal funding from a federal FIPSE grant, foundation monies, and private contributions to be able to provide the services currently afforded to veterans at the VRC. .

Santa Monica College has actively been pursuing future funding. One such grant will be a TRIO grant that SMC will apply for in Spring 2012. This could expand the current range of services for veterans at SMC by providing individualized and specialized guidance, as well as serving a financial role that can augment current funding from FIPSE. The VRC was very fortunate to be 1 of 15 colleges that received FIPSE funding, and we hope to continue a legacy of being recognized as a school that truly is vet friendly, while also being able to convey a need for additional funding to improve and maintain existing services.

Technology Changes

In 2009 the VRC moved to LA 135 allowing for a small computer lab with four desktop computers. In addition to the computer lab, in the summer of 2010 with support from SMC's Disabled Student Services, the VRC received a grant from the Chancellor's office to create an assistive technology lab. As such 2 computers were outfitted with scanners, noise canceling headphones, speakers, ADA mouse, as well as Dragon Naturally Speaking software (that allows one to speak into a microphone and control the computer as well as create Word documents and eliminates the need for a keyboard), and Kurzweil 3000 (reads text that is scanned to the computer back to the student). In addition to the computers, the VRC acquired an ADA desk, and restructured the assistive technology lab to make it more accessible. Due to the signature wounds of war in Iraq and Afghanistan being traumatic brain injury (TBI) and post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), the VRC purchased 6 smart pens which assist students by audio taping lectures simultaneously with the notes that they are taking. If for instance a veteran misses a part of lecture,

they simply tap on the portion of the notes where they missed part of the lecture and the audio recording skips to that portion of the lecture and plays it back at the time the notes were missed. Recordings can also download to computers so that the students can go back and complete more accurate notes. Understanding that technological needs can take time to be purchased through the VA for students, the VRC serves as an intermediary so that there is no lapse in the ability to use assistive technology. Three laptops were also purchased for use by any student veteran to assist them in taking notes, completing assignments, online courses, as well as being able to communicate via email to the VA, instructors, and the VRC.

Section 5

GI Bill Benefits by Chapter Designation

Perhaps one of the most confusing areas of GI Bill processing is understanding which entitlements a veteran qualifies for, and the appropriate reporting and certifying procedure that the VA requires to make payments to the veteran and school. Ambiguous standards and changing protocols make it difficult to maintain VA regulations as they pertain to each specific designation of educational entitlement. After a State Approving Agency (SAA) audit during Summer 2007, there were key areas that were noted that the VRC could improve upon, and after that clarification the VRC was able to make the necessary changes to bring the VRC into compliance. Since the audit the VRC has worked with their VA Compliance Survey Specialist (AKA “auditor”), as well as attended several trainings about benefit certification to ensure that the VRC continues to function optimally and in full compliance with VA regulations. To better understand the complexity of VA benefits and VRC responsibility, the following section will outline the various different entitlements that a veteran may qualify for through the Veterans Benefit Administration.

Chapter 30/ 1606 Montgomery GI Bill

The Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB) is available for those who enlist in the U.S. Armed Forces. MGIB encompasses both the Montgomery GI Bill-Active Duty (Chapter 30) and The Montgomery GI Bill-Selected Reserve (Chapter 1606). Under Chapter 30, Active Duty members enroll and pay \$100 per month for 12 months; and are then entitled to receive a monthly education benefit once they have completed a minimum service obligation. Under Chapter 1606, a reservist must be actively drilling and have a 6-year obligation in the Selected Reserve to be eligible. MGIB does not cover tuition or books, thus it is the students responsibility to ensure that he/she pays all of the necessary fees towards school once financial aid has been processed. This typically means that a veteran will pay out of pocket for expenses related to registration, health, and other fees. The monthly stipend is generally around \$1200.00 per month if the student is enrolled full time. The MGIB has nearly all but been phased out by the new Chapter 33 Post 9/11 GI Bill, as new and current benefits for veterans cover more costs and provide a substantial monthly housing allowance making education more attainable without having to seek out other forms of income or financial aid.

Veterans enrolled in this benefit must create an education plan with an academic counselor, select a major, and ensure all classes meet VA requirements for payment. In addition, the certifying official verifies enrollment and audits veterans weekly for adds and drops in classes so that the VA has an up to date assessment of each veteran utilizing benefits. This is done with the WAVES system, using VA ONCE, an online reporting program for certifying officials and the Veterans Benefit Administration.

Chapter 33 Post 9/11 GI Bill

The Post 9-11 GI Bill will pay eligible individuals' full tuition & fees directly to the school for all public school in-state students. Veterans do not have to pay in to the VA for this benefit. For those

attending private or foreign schools tuition & fees are capped at \$17,500 per academic year. For those attending a more expensive private school or a public school as a non-resident out-of-state student, a program exists which may help to reimburse the difference. This program is called the “Yellow Ribbon Program”. A monthly housing allowance (MHA) based on the Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) for an E-5 with dependents at the location of the school (in Santa Monica it is approximately \$2200.00 per month). For those enrolled solely in distance learning the housing allowance payable is equal to ½ the national average BAH for an E-5 with dependents (\$673.50 for the 2011 academic year). For those attending foreign schools (schools without a main campus in the U.S.) the BAH rate is fixed at \$1,347.00 for the 2011 academic year. (*Active duty students & their spouses cannot receive the MHA*). An annual books & supplies stipend of \$1,000 is paid proportionately based on enrollment. A one-time rural benefit payment for eligible individuals is also available to augment travel expenses. This benefit provides up to 36 months of education benefits, generally benefits are payable for 15 years following your release from active duty, this in contrast to the Chapter 30 MGIB that must be used within 10 years of discharge from the military. An additional change is that the veteran may elect to give his/her benefits to their spouse or children.

Current legislation modified the Chapter 33 GI Bill as of August 1st, 2011. Prior to the changes to the bill, veterans were paid for the breaks between semesters, and out of state tuition was paid in full. New changes ratified those benefits where veterans are no longer paid for breaks between semesters, and those students who cannot prove that they have established residency in the state of California for one year and a day prior to the first day of a term, will not have tuition expenses covered by Chapter 33. In addition the unit load required to receive the full monthly stipend (MHA) has changed, thus making it imperative that student veterans be enrolled full time in order to collect full benefits. If a student is only able to register half time, he/she is only paid an MHA of half time. Since many veterans use their MHA for rent and bills this adds financial barriers to

academic success. The changes have caused a significant amount of stress for veterans as many come to live in California after their service and elect to go to SMC to transfer to schools like UCLA, and USC. Because they do not meet the residency requirements they must come up with nearly \$3000.00 for tuition. MHA is still paid to the veteran, but tuition is not covered. In order to assist the veterans who are in financial need, the VRC reached out to the American Legion Post 283 in the Pacific Palisades, to create a \$5000.00 emergency fund through the Foundation, whereby veterans that get behind on bills or have some form of financial hardship, can use these monies without having to ever pay them back.

Veterans enrolled in this benefit must create an education plan with an academic counselor, select a major, and ensure all classes meet VA requirements for payment. In addition, the certifying official verifies enrollment and audits veterans weekly for adds and drops in classes so that the VA has an up to date assessment of each veteran utilizing benefits. This is done with the WAVES system, an online reporting program for certifying officials and the Veterans Benefit Administration. The majority of students attending SMC under VA educational entitlements utilize this benefit.

Chapter 31 Vocational Rehabilitation

Vocational Rehabilitation is a program that is designed to work specifically with veterans that have a service connected disability of 10% or higher as determined by the Veterans Benefit Administration (VBA). Vocational rehabilitation students have their full tuition paid, as well as books, limited supplies and, in some cases, assistive technology the veteran may need to increase employability. Veterans attending the Vocational Rehabilitation program work with a VA counselor, as well as the SMC academic counselor, and certifying official to ensure that the veteran is taking classes that are part of their rehabilitation plan. Before being approved for the program, the student meets with a SMC counselor to set up an education plan. This plan is then taken to the Vocational

Rehabilitation Counselor and the student may be sent to SMC to take their classes. If the student does attend SMC, the VRC is responsible for submitting enrolment verification to the vocational rehabilitation counselor so that the school can receive payment for tuition and fees. Chapter 31 students represent the second largest veteran demographic on the SMC campus. With the increase in prevalence of PTSD and TBI, vocational training and counseling have become a popular choice for many veterans because it provides a more comprehensive and thorough evaluation of the student(s), and it puts more emphasis on what is required for the veteran to become academically and vocationally successful. Recent legislation that took effect on August 1st, 2011 stipulates that veterans using CH.31 benefits can elect to receive CH.33 MHA. This increases the fulltime payments for MHA from \$574.00 to nearly \$2200.00 per month. It is expected that this change will incentivize veterans to elect to use CH.31 entitlement over CH.33 entitlement. This shift creates more paperwork and student to counselor time for the VRC staff, and is one issue that has been addressed in development meetings for the VRC, but it is inevitable that the need for academic counselors will increase.

California Dependents of Veterans College Fee Waiver

Dependents of service members that have a disability rating by the VA of 0% or higher qualify for a California Dependent Fee Waiver which pays for the tuition of the dependent for an approved 4 year program. This program is run by CalVets, and after the application is filed, notices of eligibility are mailed to the home of residence and then taken to the Bursar's office. Quite often this demographic has questions about the benefits and utilizes the VRC to assist them in answering their questions as well as providing them with resources and referrals necessary to obtain the state benefit such as how to get the veterans discharge paperwork (DD214), as well as questions about the VA, and the SMC campus. After consulting with VRC staff, these veteran dependents may find out they are eligible for additional benefits from the V.A.

Chapter 35 Dependents Educational Assistance Program

To be eligible for Chapter 35 benefits, you must be a spouse, son, or daughter (including stepchild or adopted child), of a veteran who is permanently and totally disabled as the result of, or dies of, a service-connected disability. The disability must arise out of or be aggravated by active duty. Veterans with a permanent and total service-connected disability who die from any cause, or any service member who is missing in action or is captured in line of duty and is currently being held by a hostile force would also qualify. In addition, any service member who is currently being forcibly detained or interned in line of duty by a foreign government or power would make the spouse or child eligible as well. This benefit is the least used benefit by veterans at Santa Monica College. A notice of eligibility is obtained by the spouse or dependent through the Veterans Benefit Administration, at which point the dependent or spouse must pick an accredited school and major, after which an education plan is created with a counselor. At that point enrollment verification is completed and sent to the VBA by the certifying official so that the school can collect monies for tuition and fees.

Self Declared Veterans

There are also veterans on campus that do not qualify for benefits, either due to the nature of their discharge or lapse of entitlement benefits or who do not choose to use their benefits while attending SMC. While these veterans do not use the services of the certifying official, they may still come in for assistance with academic counseling, peer to peer interaction, assistive technology, the computer lab, referrals, and psychological counseling. The declaration of veteran status is determined when the student completes the SMC application and identifies as a veteran. This declaration is differentiated between those veterans who are receiving benefits in ISIS. While many veterans do not elect to disclose their veteran status, the VRC is able to get an accurate number of veterans on campus by comparing those that self declare, and those that are actually receiving

benefits. Regardless of benefit status, all veterans are welcome in the VRC. The following chart outlines the number of veterans served during Fall 2010 by G.I. Bill entitlement.

Fall 2010 Enrollment	
Chapter 33 (NEW GIBLL) includes some dependents	399
Chapter 30 & 1607 & 1606	83
Chapter 35	28
Vocational Rehabilitation (Chapter 31)	20
Not Receiving benefits/ Self Declared	60
TOTAL SERVED	580

Role of the Certifying Official

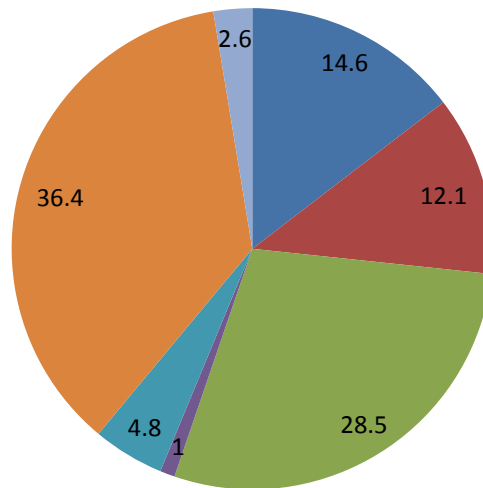
With all the complexities of the various chapter entitlements for veterans, it requires that the staff of the VRC, especially the academic counselors and certifying official stay current with recent legislation. Prior to Summer 2007 one person was responsible for the academic counseling as well as the certification of veterans benefits. While it was necessary to enlist the help of the Dean of Counseling's assistant (who already had a full time position), to process certification paperwork, it quickly became apparent that more help was needed, however there was no district funding to assist. With the induction of the FIPSE grant the VRC was able to hire a full time certifying official. By doing so a critical piece of the VRC's responsibilities to the VA was hugely improved upon! This full time position allowed the VRC to be able to work jointly with the VA, and MIS to establish auditing procedures, checks and balances between Auxiliary Services, the Bursar's Office, and the VRC while allowing other staff in the VRC to focus on other areas such as academic counseling, community involvement, and enhancing services for the veterans on campus. The role of the certifying official is complex, and weekly audits must be done to adjust payments from the VA for dropped and added classes. Particularly close attention must be paid to any added classes that a student might pick up, as they must also be a part of the students education plan, if not the student could be held liable by the VA to repay the cost of the class. Subsequently, if a class is dropped, and

the VRC does not find out about it, the student may also be held liable for payment. By integrating the existing technology of ISIS to better track veteran activity, the VRC and the certifying official have developed a system by which current and accurate information about veteran enrollment status can be obtained in a timely manner, with little assistance from others.

Section 6
Demographics/ Results

Ethnicity
Fall 2010

- Black
- Asian/ Pacific Islander
- Hispanic
- Native American
- One or More Races
- White
- Unreported

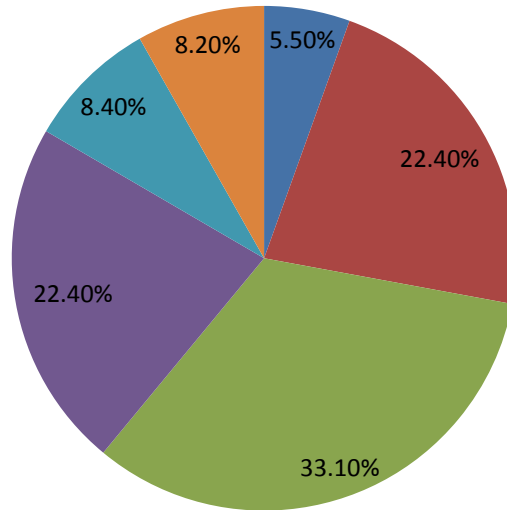


Number of Veterans 580

Asian/Pacific Islander	12.1%
Hispanic	28.5%
Black	14.6%
Native American/Native Alaskan	1.0%
One or more races	4.8%
White	36.4%
Unreported	2.6%

Age

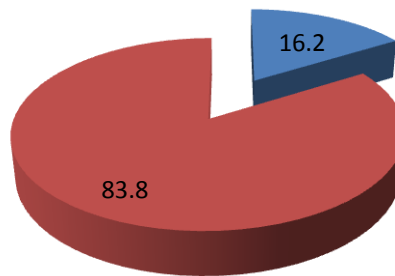
■ 19 and under ■ 20-24 ■ 25-29 ■ 30-39 ■ 40-49 ■ 50+



19 and under:	5.5%
20-24	22.4%
25-29	33.1%
30-39	22.4%
40-49	8.4%
50 and older	8.2%

Gender

■ Female ■ Male



Female	16.2%
Male	83.8%

FIPSE Grant Performance Measures

Objective	Baseline (2009-2010)	(2010-2011)
Persistence	63%	69%
Students that are transfer directed	49.2%	49%
Retention	68%	67%
50 workshop participants per year	NA	43
Workshop participants report taking steps to improve teaching	NA	95%
Student Vets report teaching satisfaction	NA	72%
Participate in student activities outside the VRC	NA	17%
Students with a GPA of 3.0 or higher	NA	35%

While there is little historical data for several of the objectives for the FIPSE grant, the VRC was able to establish solid baselines from which to move forward with the current formative evaluations, and finally the summative evaluation in 2013 when current FIPSE funding ends. The VRC was finally staffed with a part time manager and student services specialist/ certifying official in February of 2011; as such most baseline numbers that were used in the grant application are very close to the actual measured statistics for 2010-2011 fiscal annual report. This most likely has to do with the amount of time the VRC has been operating at full capacity. It is expected that over time, all areas of the objective measurements will increase with additional and existing VRC services. The information utilized in the FIPSE annual report was gathered from MIS, IR, as well as survey results from the FIPSE external evaluator. The following is a description of the external evaluator followed by his findings from a web and paper based survey that was sent to every student veteran email

address in ISIS, as well as those veterans visiting the VRC in person. Results of faculty and staff reactions to the in-service trainings are also include in the following tables.

The grant project external evaluator is Nathan R. Durdella, Ph.D. Dr. Durdella is an assistant professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at California State University, Northridge. He previously served as project manager, grant research at Santa Monica College and as the director of the research and planning at Cerritos

Important Result Findings

Over 100 veterans participated in the survey for evaluation of the VRC as well as the campus to include staff, faculty and overall environment. Of those respondents 100% of them were combat veterans. This marks a dramatic shift in combat veteran presence on campus. Not only does this raise concerns about the ability to address mental health needs, but also for faculty to understand unique issues facing these veterans in their transition. The VRC is addressing the need to educate the campus by conducting staff and faculty trainings. Results from the trainings indicate that 95% of the participants have a better understanding of veterans and PTSD, while nearly 90% of participants reported being very satisfied by the workshop. Some of the comments noted on the responses included: “As a result of his workshop, I will be more aware of and sensitive to (his) behaviors and causes”; “For one thing, I'll remember how sleep-deprived returning veterans may be and how difficult it may be for them to focus in class”, “I think that I'll be more observant and ready (if appropriate) to suggest resources for veterans returning to education.” These comments suggest that there is a lack of awareness about veteran specific issues and further warrants continued staff and faculty development.

The veteran responses on the survey were of particular interest to the VRC as well. It was interesting to note that while a majority of veterans reported turning assignments in on time (89.9%), as well as arriving to class prepared (87.0%) and attending class daily (95.3%), very little

contact was made with others in the classroom. Few veterans had developed any form or relations with classmates (23.6%), while even fewer had sought out assistance from their Professor during office hours (22%). It appears that veterans are engaged in coursework, but not social development with their academic peers. Only 16.8% of respondents reported participating in activities such as student clubs or activities outside the VRC. Veterans also reported that the majority of students at SMC did not understand them (87.4%), and that overall about half (59.3%) of the veterans felt like the campus was friendly towards veterans. This is of particular concern as alienation, introversion and seclusion are hallmark signs of depression, and depression typically presents itself with PTSD symptomology. As such education, awareness, and knowledge of referral sources for mental health will undoubtedly become a role that the VRC becomes more proactive in as more combat veterans enroll at SMC.

The following tables are responses to the faculty questionnaire that was completed after the veteran training, as well as veteran responses to the external evaluator's survey.

FACULTY RESPONSE TO WORKSHOPS

Table 1. Percentage of Respondents at Workshops Who Reported Agreement or Satisfaction on the Following Items by Workshop, Spring 2011

		Respondents for All Workshops (n=43)	"PTSD" Workshop Respondents (n=23)	"Some More Teachers" Workshop Respondents (n=20)
Percentage of respondents who responded "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" to the following items:				
3	The issues and concepts covered in workshop were clear.	95.3%	91.3%	100.0%
4	The workshop materials were helpful.	94.7%	90.9%	100.0%
5	The workshop outcomes were clear.	90.5%	87.0%	94.7%
6	The workshop included activities that interested me.	92.7%	86.4%	100.0%
7	The pace of the workshop seemed just right.	92.9%	87.0%	100.0%
8	The workshop facilitated a greater awareness of veteran students.	95.3%	91.3%	100.0%
9	I will likely use what I learned in the workshop in my work.	95.3%	91.3%	100.0%
10	I will likely attend another workshop related to veterans.	95.2%	90.9%	100.0%
Percentage of respondents who responded "Satisfied" or "Very Satisfied" to the following items:				
11	Overall, how satisfied are you with this workshop?	89.7%	80.0%	100.0%

Table 2. Responses to Item "How do you plan to use the material from this workshop to improve the teaching and learning environment for student veterans?"

1	As a result of his workshop, I will be more aware of sensitive to his behaviors and causes.
2	awareness--I work in health services on campus
3	Be sensitive to possible presence of veteran students and refer to VRC.
4	Enhanced Empathy
5	excellent for all teachers to hear
6	find out first day who is a veteran
7	For one thing, I'll remember how sleep-deprived returning veterans may be and how difficult it may be for them to focus in class. I think that I'll be more observant and ready--if appropriate--to suggest resources for veterans returning to education.
8	Helps me tell my department what to look out for, who to send people to , etc.
9	Hope tp show (and model) greater sensitivity to students who are veterans.
10	I am going to contact Linda Sinclair to see in what ways my departmenbt can help.
11	I am hoping my awareness will help me recognize the problem and try to help
12	I better understand the effects of
13	I would like to see more information such as this shared with students who have not served. They could learn so much and should.
14	Increased my awareness of vets issues and problems. I will be more sensitive and helpful to them.
15	John was a very strong speaker and I am glad that he shared his expierience to help others be more awareof the issue that veteran students have and how to help them. I therouly enjoyed this presentation and am more aware of what to do and what not to do r
16	Make them know they are appreciated and work with them.
17	more ways to collaborate
18	Need some more time to think about this one.
19	Providing opportunities for more real estate/donations etc.
20	Thank you! Our veteran students are amazinb and we appreciate everything that you have done for this country!
21	Will report to my department about issues raised--GREAT PANEL!
22	Will visit VRC to learn more about its resources--promot tutoring services, etc in VRC.

Table 3. Veteran Responses to the Survey

		All Respondents, Pretest, Spring 2011 (n=109)
Percentage of respondents who responded "Often" or "Very Often" to the following items:		
1	Submitting class assignments on time	89.9%
2	Arriving to class prepared	87.0%
3	Attending class	95.3%
4	Seeking academic help from instructors or a tutor	32.1%
5	Helping classmates understand class material better	40.2%
6	Visiting faculty during office hours	22.2%
7	Identifying with the attitudes of classmates	33.0%
8	Asking questions in class	56.9%
9	Participating in class discussions	66.1%
10	Participating in group assignments or projects	61.3%
11	Presenting a paper or project in class	44.9%
12	Developing relationships with students outside of class	23.6%
13	Volunteering in the community for a class assignment	6.6%
14	Participating in student organizations, clubs, or sports	16.8%

Table 4. Percentage of Respondents at Workshops Who Reported Agreement on the Following Items by Workshop, Spring 2011

		All Respondents, Pretest, Spring 2011 (n=109)
Percentage of respondents who responded "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" to the following items:		
15	My employment does not interfere with my studies.	48.6%
16	I have good study habits.	40.4%
17	I normally feel motivated to study.	45.9%
18	I expect to complete my program of study.	86.9%
19	I have the academic skills to succeed in college.	80.7%
20	My academic abilities are stronger than most students.	51.4%
21	My writing skills are adequate for college-level work.	66.1%
22	My math skills are adequate for college-level work.	46.8%
23	My technology skills are adequate for college-level work.	67.6%
24	I feel like I am accepted for who I am when on campus.	64.8%
25	I feel connected to what is going on in college.	37.7%
26	The students are friendly.	56.1%
27	The campus staff is helpful to students.	71.6%
28	The faculty respect student diversity.	82.2%
29	The campus is a safe place to learn.	88.9%
30	The students in my classes understand veterans' issues.	12.6%
31	The campus is friendly to veterans.	59.3%
32	My instructors are sensitive to veteran student experiences.	48.1%
33	The college has sufficient support services for veterans.	56.1%
34	The college has sufficient campus activities for veterans.	47.5%
35	Overall, veterans' issues are important at this college.	51.4%

Table 5. Percentage of Respondents at Workshops Who Reported Importance or Satisfaction on the Following Items by Workshop, Spring 2011

		All Respondents, Pretest, Spring 2011 (n=109)
Percentage of respondents who responded "Very Important" or "Extremely Important" to the following items:		
36	Building relationships with my instructors	55.1%
37	Developing relationships with my classmates	38.8%
38	Succeeding in my classes	97.2%
39	Completing my course of study quickly	85.0%
Percentage of respondents who responded "Satisfied" or "Very Satisfied" to the following items:		
40	Usefulness of information from veterans counselors	74.3%
41	Ability of veterans staff to respond to my overall needs	70.2%
42	Overall social experience in college	54.7%
43	Overall academic environment in college	71.0%

Table 6. Distribution of CEVSS Program Participants by Gender, Spring 2011

	Frequency	Percent
Male	99	91.7
Female	9	8.3
Total	108	100.0

Note: 1 missing case

Table 7. Distribution of CEVSS Program Participants by Age, Spring 2011

	Frequency	Percent
17 or younger	0	0
18-19	1	0.9
20-24	18	16.7
25-29	44	40.7
30-39	27	25.0
40-49	10	9.3
50 or older	8	7.4
Total	108	100.0

Note: 1 missing case

Table 8. Distribution of CEVSS Program Participants by Race/Ethnicity, Spring 2011

	Frequency	Percent
African American or Black	10	9.2
Asian American or Pacific Islander	14	12.8
Caucasian	42	38.5
Hispanic or Latino	33	30.3
Native American	3	2.8
Other	7	6.4
Total	109	100.0

Table 9. Distribution of CEVSS Program Participants by Employment Status, Spring 2011

	Frequency	Percent
Employed full-time (40 or more hours per week)	14	15.2
Employed part-time (up to 39 hours per week)	16	17.4
Not employed, but looking for work	32	34.8
Not employed and not looking for work	13	14.1
Disabled	8	8.7
Other	9	9.8
Total	92	100.0

Note: 17 missing cases

Table 10. Distribution of CEVSS Program Participants by Semesters at SMC, Spring 2011

	Frequency	Percent
1-2	10	20.4
3-4	16	32.7
5 or more	23	46.9
Total	49	100.0

Note: 60 missing cases

Table 11. Distribution of CEVSS Program Participants by FT Student Status, Spring 2011

	Frequency	Percent
Yes (full-time)	48	45.7
No (not full-time)	57	54.3
Total	105	100.0

Note: 4 missing cases

Table 12. Distribution of CEVSS Program Participants by Units Earned Prior to SMC, Spring 2011

	Frequency	Percent
None	39	35.8
Less than 30	43	39.4
More than 30	27	24.8
Total	109	100.0

Table 13. Distribution of CEVSS Program Participants by Educational Goal, Spring 2011

	Frequency	Percent
Associate of Arts degree	6	5.6
Associate of Arts degree and transfer	45	42.1
Transfer without Associate of Arts degree	44	41.1
Earn a vocational certificate	5	4.7
Other	7	6.5
Total	107	100.0

Note: 2 missing cases

Table 14. Distribution of CEVSS Program Participants by Highest Level of Education, Spring 2011

	Frequency	Percent
Less than high school	1	1.0
High school diploma or GED	73	71.6
Vocational or technical certificate	14	13.7
Associate degree	8	7.8
Bachelors degree	5	4.9
Other	1	1.0
Total	102	100.0

Note: 7 missing cases

Table 15. Distribution of CEVSS Program Participants by Overall Physical Health, Spring 2011

	Frequency	Percent
Poor	5	4.6
Fair	18	16.7
Good	34	31.5
Very Good	27	25.0
Excellent	24	22.2
Total	108	100.0

Note: 1 missing case

Table 16. Distribution of CEVSS Program Participants by Diagnosis with PTSD, TBI, MST, or Other Condition, Spring 2011

	Frequency	Percent
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	Frequency	Percent
Yes	38	34.9
No	61	56.0
Unknown	10	9.1
Total	109	100.0

Table 17. Distribution of CEVSS Program Participants by Treatment for PTSD, TBI, MST, or Other Condition, Spring 2011

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	36	33.6
No	67	62.6
Unkown	4	3.7
Total	107	100.0

Note: 2 missing cases

Table 18. Distribution of CEVSS Program Participants by Affect of Diagnosis or Treatment for PTSD, TBI, MST, or Other Condition, Spring 2011

	Frequency	Percent
Yes, my academic studies have been positively affected	4	5.7
Yes, my academic studies have been negatively affected	19	27.1
No, my academic studies have not been affected	38	54.3
I'm not sure if my academic studies have been affected	9	12.9
Total	70	100.0

Note: 39 missing cases

Table 19. Distribution of CEVSS Program Participants by Receipt of Housing Support, Spring 2011

	Frequency	Percent
Yes (received support)	13	12.2
No (did not receive support)	94	87.8
Total	107	100.0

Note: 2 missing cases

Table 20. Distribution of CEVSS Program Participants by Housing Condition, Spring 2011

	Frequency	Percent
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Live in a fixed or permanent house, apartment or dwelling	29	74.3
Live in a motel, hotel, trailer park or camp grounds	3	7.7
Live in an emergency or transitional housing facility	3	7.7
Live in other conditions	4	10.3
Total	39	100.0

Note: 70 missing cases

Table 21. Distribution of CEVSS Program Participants by Affect of Housing Condition, Spring 2011

	Frequency	Percent
Yes, my academic studies have been positively affected	4	8.9
Yes, my academic studies have been negatively affected	7	15.6
No, my academic studies have not been affected	33	73.3
I'm not sure if my academic studies have been affected	1	2.2
Total	45	100.0

Note: 64 missing cases

Table 22. Distribution of CEVSS Program Participants by Retirement Status, Spring 2011

	Frequency	Percent
Yes (retired or discharged)	95	88.0
No (not retired or discharged)	13	12.0
Total	108	100.0

Note: 1 missing case

Table 23. Distribution of CEVSS Program Participants by Military Status, Spring 2011

	Frequency	Percent
Active Duty	1	4.0
Reserve Duty	8	32.0
National Guard	1	4.0
Inactive Ready Reserve	15	60.0
Total	25	100.0

Note: 84 missing cases

Table 24. Distribution of CEVSS Program Participants by Recent Deployment, Spring 2011

	Frequency	Percent
Vietnam	3	3.0
Persian Gulf War	7	7.0
Operation Enduring Freedom	22	22.0
Operation Iraqi Freedom	45	45.0
Other	23	23.0
Total	100	100.0

Note: 9 missing cases

Table 25. Distribution of CEVSS Program Participants by Combat Zone Service, Spring 2011

	Frequency	Percent
Yes (served in a combat zone)	72	67.9
No (did not serve in a combat zone)	34	32.1
Total	106	100.0

Note: 3 missing cases

VRC Activities:

The following is a frequency distribution of all VRC activities (computer lab, academic counseling, certifying official, US VETS, etc) from initial input date into ISIS starting March 2011 to the end of Spring 2011. The activities only account for roughly 3 months of services, since the tracking system was not live until March 2011, any data prior to this distribution is unknown.

VRC Activities	Count
VA Assistive Technology	3
VA Certify Official	45
VA Computer Lab	83
VA Financial Aid	1
VA Outreach	3
VA Peer Support	47
VA Study	144
VA TBI Support	5
VA US VETS counseling	7
VA Vet-to-Vet peer to peer counseling	2

**Section 7
Looking to the Future**

The VRC has experienced many dramatic changes in the past 7 years to better serve the needs of student veterans; however there are still many items that need to be addressed in the near future. Other than the FIPSE grant, and a minimal foundation account, the VRC does not have a district budget location of it's own. Funding for the FIPSE grant manager as well as the full time certifying official come directly from grant funding that will reach term by September 30th, 2013. This means that additional monies must be procured prior to the 2013 deadline to continue to serve the veteran population in the capacity that the VRC currently does. Interest in additional grant funding, or donations/ contributions are possible funding approaches. The VRC will continue outreach to local veteran organizations to build support for the program, and enhance current capabilities, to provide the resources and services necessary to be academically successful. The number of veterans on the

SMC campus continues to skyrocket, and many of the veterans have combat experience. The VRC expects to see more veterans in the upcoming year due to de-escalation of forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as increasing unemployment rates amongst veterans that qualify for GI Bill benefits. Staffing and space must be carefully monitored to meet the needs of a growing population of students at Santa Monica College.

In order to accommodate the services we need to offer, the VRC is desperate for more space. The space allocated in the planned new Student Services building is not nearly adequate. The VRC is scheduled to have two small offices, which is not enough space to accommodate the current staff and the activities we have now for our students let alone the activities we need to add to our offerings. When the new Student Services building opens two of the houses on Pearl Street may be vacated. We hope that one of the houses with the adjoining garage and back yard space might be made available to serve as our Veterans' Resource Center. The house could be used for office and reception space and the yard for various community building events and a place for the veterans to get to know one another and relax. The garage could be used for study space, tutoring, computer lab, high tech lab facilitated groups and, special events. If prior to the opening of the Student Services Building, another space could be found to house the two evening janitorial supervisors currently using offices J, K and part of L in the LA 135 Suite, these 2 ½ offices could be converted to additional tutoring and study space which is badly needed.

As our population expands, so will our need for equipment. With the FIPSE grant we have been able to update most of our equipment. Without a budget, it may not be possible to keep up with technology and other resources as the needs arise once the grant has expired.

We need to develop scholarships for our veterans and the grant manager and faculty leader are working with the Foundation to do this. Fall 2011 saw our first donation from an outside agency which is to be used to create our own emergency fund for the veterans and we are beginning to

receive inquires about possibilities for scholarship donations. The foundation has been very generous, building an account for the VRC to help build our infrastructure.

With the large number of veterans on campus and numbers expected to rise, the VRC has strategically reviewed needs, addressed current issues, and has been fluid in its approach to helping veterans. By continuing to collect data, and listen to the needs of veterans on campus, the VRC is poised to be one of the best VRC's in the state, and possibly a national model. It is acknowledged that there will be significant challenges with funding and staffing in the near future, however the VRC has been, and continues to be resilient and ever ready to assist our nation's veterans when they choose SMC for post-secondary education.

The following appendices are the surveys currently being administered in paper and electronic version for staff/faculty, and veterans at Santa Monica College.



Appendix A

Santa Monica College
Center of Excellence for Veteran Student Success
Professional Development Questionnaire

Instructions: This is a questionnaire about your experiences in the professional development workshop that you just attended. Results from this questionnaire will help us serve you better. The questionnaire should take approximately five minutes to complete. Participation in this questionnaire is voluntary. If you elect to participate, you may skip any question or discontinue participation at any time. The questionnaire is anonymous and will be used for evaluation purposes.

Directions: Please do not write your name or any other personally identifying information on this questionnaire. You may use a pen or pencil to complete the items. To respond to a question, circle or write the answer that best represents your opinion. Thank you in advance for your participation.

Workshop Information

- 1. Workshop Name:
2. Workshop Date:

Workshop Content and Delivery

Table with 5 columns: Question, Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree. Contains 10 rows of statements related to workshop content and delivery.

Overall Satisfaction with the Workshop

- 11. Overall, how satisfied are you with this workshop?
a) Very Dissatisfied b) Dissatisfied c) Satisfied c) Very Satisfied

Plans for Use of Workshop Material

12. How do you plan to use the material from this workshop to improve the teaching and learning environment for student veterans? Please share your plans in the box below.

Empty rectangular box for writing plans for use of workshop material.

Appendix B

Email Invitation (Web-Based Administration) to Students for Veteran College Student Experience Pretest Survey

Dear Student,

We are contacting you to invite you to participate in a survey about your college student experiences prior to or at Santa Monica College. We are interested in improving our services to you and enhancing your student experiences at Santa Monica College. We are contacting you because you have identified as a veteran and/or use services in the Veterans Resource Center at Santa Monica College. To complete the survey, please follow the link:

If you agree to participate in the survey, we want you to know that participation is voluntary and will not impact your grade in any class or your standing either at Santa Monica College or in the Veterans Resource Center at Santa Monica College. If you elect to participate, you may skip any question that you do not want to answer or discontinue the survey at any time. The survey is confidential and will only be used for research purposes. The survey takes approximately 20 minutes to complete.

If you have any questions about the survey, please contact Nathan R. Durdella, Ph.D., External Evaluator, at nathan.durdella@csun.edu.

Sincerely,

Veterans Resource Center Staff
Santa Monica College

PAPER VERSION



**Santa Monica College
Veteran College Student Experience Pretest Survey**

Directions: Please read, sign, and date the **Informed Consent**. You may use a pen or pencil to complete the survey. To respond to a question, *circle* or *write* the answer that best represents your opinion. Thank you.

Informed Consent: This is a survey about your college student experiences prior to or at Santa Monica College. Participation in this survey is voluntary and will not impact your grade in any class or your standing either at Santa Monica College’s Veterans Resource Center or Santa Monica College. If you elect to participate, you may skip any question that you do not want to answer or discontinue the survey at any time. The survey is confidential and will only be used for research purposes. The survey takes approximately 20 minutes to complete. If you have any questions about the survey, please contact Nathan R. Durdella, Ph.D., External Evaluator, at nathan.durdella@csun.edu.

I understand the above statement and agree that my participation in this survey is voluntary.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

STUDENT ID NUMBER: _____

ABOUT YOUR COLLEGE EXPERIENCES

Please indicate how frequently you have engaged in the following activities. *Circle* your response.

	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Somewhat Often	Often	Very Often
1 Submitting class assignments on time	1	2	3	4	5	6
2 Arriving to class prepared	1	2	3	4	5	6
3 Attending class	1	2	3	4	5	6
4 Seeking academic help from instructors or a tutor	1	2	3	4	5	6
5 Helping classmates understand class material better	1	2	3	4	5	6
6 Visiting faculty during office hours	1	2	3	4	5	6
7 Identifying with the attitudes of classmates	1	2	3	4	5	6
8 Asking questions in class	1	2	3	4	5	6
9 Participating in class discussions	1	2	3	4	5	6
10 Participating in group assignments or projects	1	2	3	4	5	6
11 Presenting a paper or project in class	1	2	3	4	5	6
12 Developing relationships with students outside of class	1	2	3	4	5	6
13 Volunteering in the community for a class assignment	1	2	3	4	5	6

14	Participating in student organizations, clubs, or sports	1	2	3	4	5	6
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ABOUT YOUR ATTITUDES

Please indicate the level of your agreement with the following statements. *Circle* your response.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	
15	My employment does not interfere with my studies.	1	2	3	4	5	6
16	I have good study habits.	1	2	3	4	5	6
17	I normally feel motivated to study.	1	2	3	4	5	6
18	I expect to complete my program of study.	1	2	3	4	5	6
19	I have the academic skills to succeed in college.	1	2	3	4	5	6
20	My academic abilities are stronger than most students.	1	2	3	4	5	6
21	My writing skills are adequate for college-level work.	1	2	3	4	5	6
22	My math skills are adequate for college-level work.	1	2	3	4	5	6
23	My technology skills are adequate for college-level work.	1	2	3	4	5	6
24	I feel like I am accepted for who I am when on campus.	1	2	3	4	5	6
25	I feel connected to what is going on in college.	1	2	3	4	5	6
26	The students are friendly.	1	2	3	4	5	6
27	The campus staff is helpful to students.	1	2	3	4	5	6
28	The faculty respect student diversity.	1	2	3	4	5	6
29	The campus is a safe place to learn.	1	2	3	4	5	6
30	The students in my classes understand veterans' issues.	1	2	3	4	5	6
31	The campus is friendly to veterans.	1	2	3	4	5	6
32	My instructors are sensitive to veteran student experiences.	1	2	3	4	5	6
33	The college has sufficient support services for veterans.	1	2	3	4	5	6
34	The college has sufficient campus activities for veterans.	1	2	3	4	5	6
35	Overall, veterans' issues are important at this college.	1	2	3	4	5	6

ABOUT YOUR VALUES

Please indicate your level of importance with the following items. *Circle* your response.

	Not at All Important	Low Important	Slightly Important	Moderately Important	Very Important	Extremely Important	
36	Building relationships with my instructors	1	2	3	4	5	6
37	Developing relationships with my classmates	1	2	3	4	5	6
38	Succeeding in my classes	1	2	3	4	5	6
39	Completing my course of study quickly	1	2	3	4	5	6

ABOUT YOUR SATISFACTION

Please indicate your level of satisfaction with the following experiences. *Circle* your response.

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
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40	Usefulness of information from veterans counselors	1	2	3	4	5	6
41	Ability of veterans staff to respond to my overall needs	1	2	3	4	5	6
42	Overall social experience in college	1	2	3	4	5	6
43	Overall academic environment in college	1	2	3	4	5	6

ABOUT YOU

Please *circle* your response on the following items.

44. What is your gender?

- a. Male
- b. Female

45. What is your age group?

- a. 17 or younger
- b. 18-19
- c. 20-24
- d. 25-29
- e. 30-39
- f. 40-49
- g. 50 or older

46. Which of the following is the race/ethnicity that most closely describes you?

- a. African American or Black
- b. Asian or Pacific Islander
- c. Caucasian
- d. Hispanic or Latino
- e. Native American
- f. Other

47. Which of the following best describes your current employment situation?

- a. Employed full-time (40 or more hours per week)
- b. Employed part-time (up to 39 hours per week)
- c. Not employed, but looking for work
- d. Not employed and not looking for work
- e. Retired
- f. Disabled
- g. Other

48. How many semesters (including the current semester) have you attended Santa Monica College?

- a. 1-2
- b. 3-4
- c. 5 or more

49. Are you currently a full-time student (taking 12 units or more) at Santa Monica College?

- a. Yes
- b. No

50. How many college-level units did you earn prior to attending Santa Monica College?

- a. None
- b. Less than 30
- c. More than 30

51. Which of the following best describes your immediate educational goal?
- Associate of Arts degree
 - Associate of Arts degree and transfer
 - Transfer without Associate of Arts degree
 - Earn a vocational certificate
 - Other
52. What is the highest level of education that you have attained from an accredited institution (e.g., college or university)?
- Less than high school
 - High school diploma or GED
 - Vocational or technical certificate
 - Associate degree
 - Bachelors degree
 - Graduate or professional degree
 - Other

ABOUT YOUR HEALTH

Please *circle* your response on the following items.

53. How would rate your overall physical health?
- Poor
 - Fair
 - Good
 - Very Good
 - Excellent
54. Have you been diagnosed with one of the following: post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injury (TBI), military sexual trauma (MST), or other injury/disability?
- Yes
 - No
 - Unknown
55. Have you been treated for one of the following: post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injury (TBI), military sexual trauma (MST), or other injury/disability?
- Yes
 - No
 - Unknown
56. If you have been diagnosed and/or treated for one of the above condition, has the condition affected your academic studies?
- Yes, my academic studies have been positively affected.
 - Yes, my academic studies have been negatively affected.
 - No, my academic studies have not been affected.
 - I'm not sure if my academic studies have been affected.

ABOUT YOUR HOUSING SITUATION

57. Have you received services for transitional housing or homelessness?
- Yes

- b. No
58. Which of the following best describes your current housing situation?
- a. Live in a fixed or permanent house, apartment or dwelling
 - b. Live in a motel, hotel, trailer park or camp grounds
 - c. Live in an emergency or transitional housing facility
 - d. Live in a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station
 - e. Live in other conditions
59. If your current housing situation is not in a fixed or permanent house, has your housing situation affected your academic studies?
- a. Yes, my academic studies have been positively affected.
 - b. Yes, my academic studies have been negatively affected.
 - c. No, my academic studies have not been affected.
 - d. I'm not sure if my academic studies have been affected.

ABOUT YOUR MILITARY SERVICE

Please *circle* your response on the following items.

60. Are you discharged or retired from the military?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
61. If you are still affiliated with the military, what is your current military status?
- a. Active Duty
 - b. Reserve Duty
 - c. National Guard
 - d. Auxiliary Service
 - e. Inactive Ready Reserve
62. What is your most recent military deployment?
- a. Vietnam
 - b. Persian Gulf War
 - c. Operation Enduring Freedom
 - d. Operation Iraqi Freedom
 - e. Other
63. Have you served in a combat zone?
- a. Yes
 - b. No

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