

Military Connections at CCV

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What is a Military Connected Student?

CCV had 270 Military Connected Students for Spring Semester 2011 and numbers are expected to rise

By Chara Vincelette

CCV's Resource Advisor for Veterans

With so many students taking advantage of the various military education benefits, it can be hard to differentiate between just who is who and what benefits are available. In many colleges and universities nationwide, the term "Veteran" has been used as the term for all service members using education benefits. This has become misleading in recent times because the criteria to have veteran status vary depending on type of benefit and type of offered support service. What qualifies for veteran status for medical benefits doesn't necessarily match up with educational benefits. In education, not all service members are veterans. Tuition Assistance is not a veteran education benefit. Likewise, dependents are not veterans.

It is especially confusing and frustrating to the service member or their dependents. Many students don't bother trying to seek support services for which they

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We Asked, You Answered!

The results are in from CCV's second MCS Survey

By Chara L. Vincelette

CCV's Resource Advisor for Veterans

Improving upon the Summer 2010 survey, CCV recently asked the Spring 2011 Military Connected Students (MCS) population to help us help them. From now on, this will be a regular inquiry following every semester at CCV. Only with your input can we improve our services to meet your needs.

Some fast facts:

Almost half of our MCS were not aware that there is an advisor dedicated to their particular needs at their CCV Academic Center.

Almost half of our MCS were not aware that CCV has an advisor dedicated to assist with referrals supporting academics, veteran issue awareness, development, employment, finances, family issues, or behavioral/mental health issues.

Almost 90% of our MCS may be interested in a student group if it was veteran-specific.

The unemployment rate from various inquiries during both Yellow Ribbon events and the recent MCS survey at CCV matched at approximately 33%.

50% of MCS had interest in a CCV-led Career Readiness Certificate Program if it were Veteran-specific.

The greatest number of MCS from Spring Semester 2011 spent 4 semesters with CCV. However, the number of semesters varied between 1 and 9.

About half of the respondents of CCV's MCS population during the Spring 2011 semester were separated or retired veterans, while 25% were traditional veterans by definition or still serving on active duty. Almost 9% of the respondents were military dependents.

may be eligible, mistakenly thinking that if they don't fit the "Veteran" criteria for one benefit, they won't be eligible for others. As one student recently told me, "I already have to jump through hoops with the VA to get my health benefits because they don't consider me a veteran, I don't want to have to do it with school, too." Another student (a traditional National Guard Soldier) told me of an experience he'd had at a previous college: "They had a Veteran's advisor there but because I wasn't a quote-unquote VETERAN, she wouldn't meet with me." To address these types of errors, CCV and other campuses across the nation are shifting from the term "Veteran" to "Military Connected Student" when talking about this population.

So What's the Difference?

In legal-ese, veteran status is applied ONLY if one of the following three criterions is met:

- 1) One has at least **180** days of regular active duty service and was honorably discharged or released
- 2) One has served at least **90** days of active duty service in a combat zone, at least one day of which was during wartime per date designation, and was honorably discharged or released. Note: Basic Training does not count.
- 3) One served in wartime and was awarded a Purple Heart or service-connected disability, or died, regardless of whether the minimum length of active duty service per date designation was completed

To make things just a little more confusing, the amount of certain educational benefits under the Post 9/11 GI Bill (the most widely used veteran education benefit) vary dependent upon the amount of time served in a combat zone.

However, a "**Military Connected Student,**" or **MCS**, for the purposes of providing academic and/or support services at CCV include the following:

- Definitive Veterans as described above
- Current Service members (Active, Reserve, and Guard)
- Retired/Discharged Active, Reservist, and Guard members
- Dependents (spouses/children) of Active, Reserve, or Guard members

What Services Are Available for MCS?

First of all, you have access to ME! As the article on this semester's survey results describes, there are a large number of students who were not aware that CCV has a Resource Advisor for Veterans. And although the term "Veteran" is used in my title, I am not only here for the traditional veteran but for all military connected students at CCV. Thanks to a generous donation from the McClure Foundation, who recognize the great need to support our veterans returning to their homes, school, and employment, I started working with CCV on a part-time basis in February not only to assist with advising MCS, but to act as a hub of direction to other support services, both inside and outside of our college. While my office is located in St. Albans, I support all faculty, staff, and MCS students at the 12 Academic Centers of CCV (as well as online). Due to another generous donation as of 1 July, I will be full-time out of the St. Albans and Morrisville Centers.

We all need help from time to time. Whether it's with home, work, school, or even just to vent your questions – I am here for you, no matter where you are. If I don't have an answer, I promise that I will find one and direct you to it. Consider me the in-person version of "Military One Source" for the CCV Community.

You also have unlimited access to one of the nation's rarest gems when it comes to your military education benefits: Maryellen Lowe. Maryellen, affectionately called 'Mel', is not only the Assistant Registrar for CCV, but also your VA Benefits Certifying Official. More info about Maryellen is provided on page 4.

As a Military Connected Student, you also have the eyes and ears of a Veteran's Advisor at each of CCV's Academic Centers. Again – while the title is "Veteran", they assist all Military Connected Students (MCS). For the current listing of Veterans' Advisors, please consult the contact list on page 5. Veterans' Advisors assist MCS with admission, academic advising, registration, and financial aid – anything that will assist you with your educational success.

About the Future for MCS

CCV has a variety of initiatives in the planning stages to meet your needs as a Military Connected Student - some are listed on page 3. If you have any additional suggestions for improvement, please contact me. ~CLV.

Did You Know?

CCV has 12 Academic Centers and an online component. The following Academic Centers have the highest number of registered MCS Students for Summer 2011:

#1: Winooski with 61 MCS students

#2: St. Albans with 34 MCS Students

#3: Rutland with 28 MCS Students

SOME OF THE UPCOMING INITIATIVES FOR MCS

COMBAT TO CLASSROOM SEMINAR I (SAME SECTION OFFERED IN TWO DIFFERENT LOCATIONS):

ST. ALBANS ACADEMIC CENTER:

FRIDAY SEPT 16TH, 5:00PM - 9:00PM AND

SATURDAY OCT 1ST, 9:00AM - 5:00PM. BY INVITATION ONLY.

MONTPELIER ACADEMIC CENTER:

FRIDAY SEPT 23RD, 5:00PM - 9:00PM AND

SATURDAY OCT 8TH, 9:00AM - 5:00PM. BY INVITATION ONLY.

This is a 1 credit seminar designed to assist Service Members in transitioning to the college classroom environment from the military setting. Discussion and participation will focus on expectations, communication, writing, survival/success tips, and computer literacy. Instructors are Elizabeth King and Chara L. Vincelette. By invitation only but please contact the Resource Advisor if you have interest.

FACULTY AND STAFF TRAINING: WORKING WITH VETERANS AND OTHER MILITARY CONNECTED STUDENTS

DATE, TIME, AND LOCATION TBD [TO BE DETERMINED]

Key faculty and staff will be invited to this all day workshop which will cover the unique needs and experiences of Military Connected Students. Topics will be wide-ranging to cover not only the classroom, but the student as a whole, and will include a panel discussion headed by our MCS population and faculty/staff veterans.

WEBSITE DEVELOPMENT: MILITARY CONNECTED STUDENTS

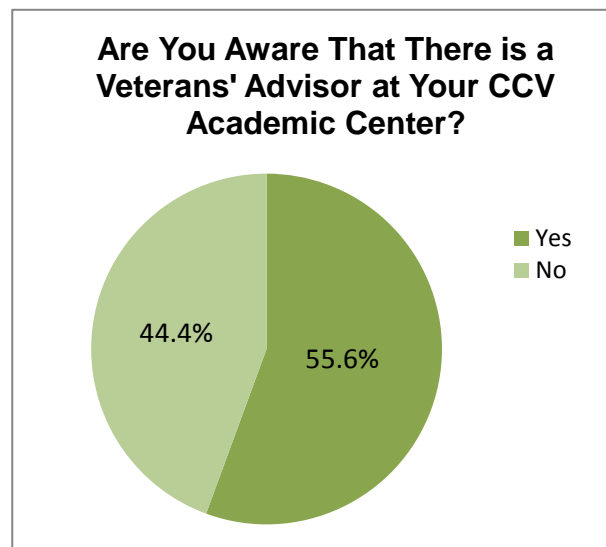
ONGOING

You've asked for it and we're answering. Your Resource Advisor is working with CCV faculty and staff to develop an online portal designed to answer many of your frequently asked questions.

From faculty/staff tips and tools to MCS education benefits, employment links, and family outreach – and hopefully even to a student online forum and community blog, this will be a place of connection.

Suggestions For Improvement

A disheartening thing that we learned from the survey was that almost half of our military connected student population was unaware that they had a Veteran's Advisor at their local Academic Center. CCV is working hard to get the word out there and to provide the best training possible but, as a student, the best thing you can do if you have issues with regard to your education or your benefits is to make contact with the advisor at your center who may or may not be the same as your academic advisor. If you don't feel you're getting through or you have issues that need to be addressed outside the college, please contact the Resource and Outreach Advisor for Veterans.



Another mention goes to Maryellen Lowe, who was mentioned in several individual comments. You are right – she works hard to ensure each and every one of you is given the support you deserve! More about Maryellen in our “Meet and Greet” section.

While almost 100% of the respondents were happy with their CCV experience, 57% have transferred to another college. We wish you the best of luck but we want it to be known that at CCV, our end state is your academic success – even if it means you transfer. And while we hope that means a transfer to a Baccalaureate program since you don't have that option at CCV, we are here for YOU. There are many hoops to navigate with regard to transfers. Maryellen, Chara Lee, and the Veterans' Advisors nearest you are happy to talk with you about how to make a transfer work for you regarding military benefits.

A special thank you is due to those who took the time to answer our 5-10 minute survey. Your responses will go a long way toward improving all services for our MCS population. This will be an ongoing effort. ~CLV

PLEASED TO MEET AND GREET YOU!

INTRODUCING CCV'S VA CERTIFYING OFFICIAL: MARYELLEN LOWE

A VERMONT STATE COLLEGE LEGACY SOON TO RETIRE

A deeply felt but sad introduction to be given: Maryellen Lowe, the Assistant Registrar and VA Certifying Official for Community College of Vermont will be retiring in December of this year. We talked with Maryellen recently about her role within the college and her sincere desire and drive to help our students. An English and History double major graduate of Trinity College with an Associate's Degree in Humanities from CCV, Maryellen started her journey working for the Vermont State Colleges (VSC) in 1978, and has been with CCV for 30 years.

WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR GREATEST LOVE WHILE WORKING FOR CCV?

"Working with vets", says the 9-year VA Certifying Official. Lowe is a "military brat," whose father, a veteran of both the Army Air Corps and Air Force, served for over 30 years – something that means a great deal to Maryellen. By helping our veterans and other military connected students of today she feels great pride in being able to honor her father and his service. "I was to follow in his footsteps," she said. "That didn't happen...it couldn't – it wasn't anything I could control...it was beyond frustrating and madness, but I am here every day to support in whatever way I can in order to ensure our service members and their families are taken care of. They are like my own."

Everyone who attends CCV and receives Veteran-status military benefits has spoken at least once with Maryellen. Most students speak with her several times – even if their issues go beyond the line of military education benefits. Maryellen (or "Mel" as she is affectionately called) has been the ear for military connected students at CCV for almost 10 years. It's no wonder other colleges call her for assistance. It was no surprise in our recent survey to read individual student comments such as "Mel is the best," "Maryellen must have her hands full – I hope you're supporting her," or even a comment over the phone, "the only one I ever knew was there was Maryellen – she's the only one I dealt with and the only one I ever want to work with," in regard to his education benefits. I recently received a compliment on her behalf from a local college who admitted that when you don't know what to do as a certifying official in Vermont, "you call Mel." And while I'm working on designing rubber bracelets for 'What Would Mel Do?' the bottom line is that Maryellen Lowe has touched each one of us greatly and we are deeply saddened to see her go.

MARYELLEN AFTER RETIREMENT

Mel loves travel, reading, and music, and when asked what she plans to do with her time of retirement, she dubiously stated, "Hello – so many books, so little time!" She will also spend some much needed time with her father who she has honored the last 30 years by her own vocation. Since Maryellen was a jock in school in years gone by, she admits regret at not learning music. During her retirement this is something she looks forward to doing (and something from which the Resource Advisor won't let her escape now that she's admitted to it). She has aspirations of further learning; "we should ALWAYS be open to learning," she said. In addition, Maryellen is interested in a Peace Corps assignment to Latin America. As she once said about her students at CCV, she applies to her view of people in general: "I love to have the opportunity to help others help themselves. There is no greater thing." Mel – you will be greatly missed by all. –CLV

Student Veterans' Resource and Outreach Advisor (all Academic Centers and Online):

Chara L. Vincelette, 802-527-4116, chara.vincelette@ccv.edu

Listing of Local Veterans' Advisors (Current as of 21 JUN 11):

Bennington: Janet Groom, 447-2361, janet.groom@ccv.edu

Brattleboro: Karen Clark, 254-6370, karen.clark@ccv.edu

Middlebury: Jenney Izzo, 388--3032, jenney.izzo@ccv.edu

Montpelier: Elizabeth King, 828-4060, elizabeth.king@ccv.edu

Morrisville: Chara L. Vincelette, 888-4258, chara.vincelette@ccv.edu

Newport: Kimberly Nolan, 334-3387, kimberly.nolan@ccv.edu

Rutland: Ginger Gellman, 786-6996, ginger.gellman@ccv.edu

Springfield: Debra Grant, 885-8360, debra.grant@ccv.edu

Saint Albans: Chara L. Vincelette, 527-4116, chara.vincelette@ccv.edu

Saint Johnsbury, Kaija Percy, 748-6673, kaija.percy@ccv.edu

Upper Valley, Lesli O'Dowd, 295-8822, lesli.odowd@ccv.edu

Winooski: Jen Garrett-Ostermiller, 654-0505, jennifer.garrett-ostermiller@ccv.edu