Serving Those Who Served: Reaching Out to Our Post-9/11 Veteran Population

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Introduction
With the end of combat operations in Iraq in 2011 and the current scale-back of military presence in Afghanistan, our communities will see a large number of veterans returning from duty. There are many problems veterans can face in their transition from military to civilian life. One of those problems can be wading through the vast amount of resources available to them. Whether your institution is public or academic in nature, there are many ways to help veterans with their transition.

Military personnel receive a lower wage than those working in comparable positions. For 2013, a private in the military is paid $18,192 a year. Members of the military with families can be under the poverty line while they are in the military. Once their service is complete, many veterans find it difficult to market their military experience to the civilian world which can lead to unemployment or underemployment.

U.S. Veteran Population

Veteran 7%
Civilian 93%

Important issues veterans can face coming home:

Poverty
Homelessness
Suicide

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Poverty
Veterans suicide rates have increased since 9/11. In 2001, the Department of Veterans Affairs estimated that 6,915 veterans committed suicide in that year. For 2010, the estimated number was 8,030.

Suicide

Estimated Veteran Suicides by year

Approximately 22 veterans commit suicide every day.

Isolation
Once veterans leave the military, they often find themselves feeling isolated when they are no longer surrounded by others who have shared the same experiences. This can be especially true with Post-9/11 veterans.

Homelessness
The total homeless population consists of a disproportionate amount of veterans. Veterans are 7% of the total U.S. population, but 20% of homeless adult males are veterans.

7% of Americans are Veterans

20% of Homeless Adult Males are Veterans

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Less than one half of one percent of Americans have been on Active Duty since 9/11.

UIUC library involvement with veterans
In 2012, a UIUC library employee partnered with the Dean of Veteran Student Support Services and created a library exhibit showcasing UIUC’s rich history of serving veterans. This exhibit ran for the entire month of November in a high traffic area of the main library. The exhibit’s success generated the idea of making the exhibit an annual event. The Veterans Exhibit Committee hopes the continued exhibit will raise the visibility of the on-campus veterans population in the past and present.

Veterans resources LibGuide
Most military veterans are eligible for a wide array of benefits. One of the problems veterans typically face is discovering and accessing all of the benefits that are available to them. To help counter this problem, the members of the Veterans Exhibit Committee have created and continually update a LibGuide focusing on veterans’ resources. Even though the LibGuide is on the University’s website, the content of the LibGuide is targeted to all veterans, not just those attending the university.

Ideas for your institution
• Establish a library employee as a contact point for veterans.
• Create a LibGuide or similar veterans resource page.
• Create a display showcasing your local area’s history of military service.
• Contact your local VA hospital’s patient education coordinator to obtain informational material for your library.
• Find out what veteran groups are in your area. Do you have a VA hospital? A veterans student organization at a local college?
• Ask local veterans organizations if they need specific library related services.
• Share your outreach and programming successes with other institutions.

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