

Summaries of 2015 ACPA Mental Health Related Presentations

Military Outreach: Strategies for Serving our Veterans

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Georgia Perimeter College's Military Outreach Center offers a holistic approach to addressing the academic, financial, social and emotional needs of its military/veteran students and their families. This presentation highlights the current situation and trends surrounding military service members, military life in general, and the challenges that transitioning military face when exiting the service and reentering civilian/college life, thus demonstrating the necessity for schools to have a Veterans or Military Outreach Center on campus.

The material presented is based largely on the observation, experiences and outcomes of military-related/veteran students attending classes at Georgia Perimeter College. GPC has one of the largest populations of military students in the State of Georgia and the nation, and has been named a Military/Veteran Friendly School by numerous national outlets for the last five years in a row. This, coupled with the years of military and higher education experience of the presenter, provides a basis for the effectiveness of the schools programs and policies in identifying and effectively meeting the needs of its student veterans.

There are certain limitations in the fledgling field of student veteran services, namely, accurate reporting of retention and graduation rates of veterans. This presentation recognizes ways this is being identified and aggressively resolved at GPC, partly through grant-funded programs directed to its veterans. Additionally, the presenter will explain how colleges and universities often have a wide variance of needs, challenges and concerns surrounding their own veteran populations, and so need to understand that they are not limited to the content of this presentation. Rather, this is an opportunity to learn more about this unique population and then receive some tools, ideas and strategies for creating, developing or expanding their own school's military outreach program.

Finally, many of the concerns, or risks, related to the student veteran population surround the fact that many of them are entering college for the first time, or after a long break from an educational setting. This creates a great deal of anxiety in many veterans, intensifying the challenge of being in college and further highlighting their need for understanding and assistance. The most severe risk is suicide itself. PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) is very real and often takes its veteran victims into dark places where they see no way out. Again, early and routine intervention through strategic military outreach programs have proven to help many veterans and their families, not only academically, but in saving their very lives.

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