

PROPOSAL
FOLSOM LAKE COLLEGE VETERANS RESOURCE CENTER –
START-UP COSTS FOR SERVICES TO VETERANS

Since the implementation of the Post 9/11 GI Bill in 2009 and the increasing number of veterans who are and will be returning to the U.S. after active duty (particularly with the proposed Army drawdown), there is a growing consensus that helping our student veterans will benefit not only the college, but the surrounding communities and the country. In fact, California has the largest number of returning servicemen and women than any other state in the country. A specific plan to address that at Folsom Lake College was the creation of a Veterans Resource Center in 2012, which is located on the main campus in Folsom. There are approximately 200 (2014 accounting) veterans and dependents using their VA educational benefits at FLC, with almost 90 living in El Dorado County attending school in Folsom. The Folsom lake College Placerville campus has approximately 89 vets and dependents using their benefits with an additional 15+/- percent more attending both campuses saving their benefits for advanced degrees.

It can be difficult for veterans transitioning out of the military to locate information on, understand, and obtain the resources and benefits they are entitled to, particularly their educational benefits. In addition, many of these combat veterans have difficulty adjusting to civilian life, especially adjusting to college. Our Veterans Resource Center (VRC) not only provides a college support services for veterans and their dependents, but also serves as a focal point for a variety of resources. The VRC helps incoming Veteran students transition from soldiers to scholars. In addition, students and prospective students are assisted with accessing their VA education benefits as well as direct students to both campus and community resources that would help them succeed in their educational goals. The VRC is staffed with current veteran students (VA Work Study program) and has space for students to complete online application, do their homework, and relax and socialize with other veteran students.

We were able to open FLC's VRC with a small community donation, used mainly for furniture, in late 2012. We still require assistance with funds for supplies, staffing and services that can be offered. The programs we are currently planning are as follows:

Veterans Resource Center staffing:

Provide for part-time support staff (a veteran), 24 hours per week at approximately \$14/hour) to create and track appointments for counseling professionals, promote veterans activities and sessions, disseminate information about veteran's benefits and programs. This is integral to the success of this proposal, as the college currently does not have full-time staffing in the Veterans Resource Center.

Another piece of the staffing would be to hire a VA work study that would spend part of their time at the El Dorado Center (in the Student Services area) – to provide intake support for incoming veterans and dependents.

One desired outcome is to set in place assessments outlined in our Student Learning Objectives which involve surveys and focus groups, and have staffing for tracking of our veterans, i.e., persistence, retention and success rates.

Classroom Supplies:

Purchase and deploy to qualified veterans classroom supplies intended especially for those dealing with brain trauma injuries and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). These supplies may include mini voice recorders or other equipment to assist with memory and related issues. One example is the Livescribe Smart Pen – a pen that has a 2-8 GB hard drive and tape recorder. Students can sync up hand written notes with the lecture. www.livescribe.com

Currently, veteran students in need of accommodations in the classroom and with testing are directed to the college's Disabled Students and Program Services office (DSPS). Collaboration with the DSPS office would be integral to this project. This would be available to students at both the FLC and EDC sites.

Emergency Loan Program:

Assist newly-discharged veterans acquire classroom supplies and textbooks prior to receipt of their VA checks. This funding would be a "bridge" only and would be repaid once the student started receiving their VA educational benefits.

Career Guidance:

Coordinate career activities through the FLC Career Center for our veterans, through either group or individual sessions, which would be dedicated to exploring career aptitudes, job search which would include private sector as well as federal resume help, structured interview preparation (used in Federal job interviews) and providing career advice to veterans seeking to re-enter the work force. If enough need presented itself, sessions could be held at both FLC and EDC. Adjunct counselor/Career Center - \$48.27 per hour rate.

Transition Issues of Veterans:

Provide direct connections with professional psychologists experienced in veterans' issues and provide facilities on the college campuses to hold individual and group sessions. The sessions would be dedicated for veterans to allow them a forum to discuss any of the challenges they may be experiencing as they transition from active duty to civilian/daily life, including those specific to college attendance and success.

One target group would be women, who experience unique issues such as physical challenges, psychological challenges, reproductive issues, making the military a career, and reintegration into the civilian workforce. In fact, it has been evidenced that there are gender specific system barriers to care for women such as VA health facilities slow to become woman-friendly, comprehensive primary care and specialty care for women not available in many facilities, privacy issues, fragmentation of care, etc.

All of these programs and services would be valuable and impactful for veterans as they transition out of the military and into higher education.