

# Obstacles Veterans Face & Recommended Solutions

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Adult Learners Conference

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# Obstacle #1

- Identifying the Military Service Member/Veteran Population is not an easy task.
  - Some won't look the part
  - Some won't self-identify
  - If not identified early on, some will get lost within the system



# Female Veterans-We are NOT the same



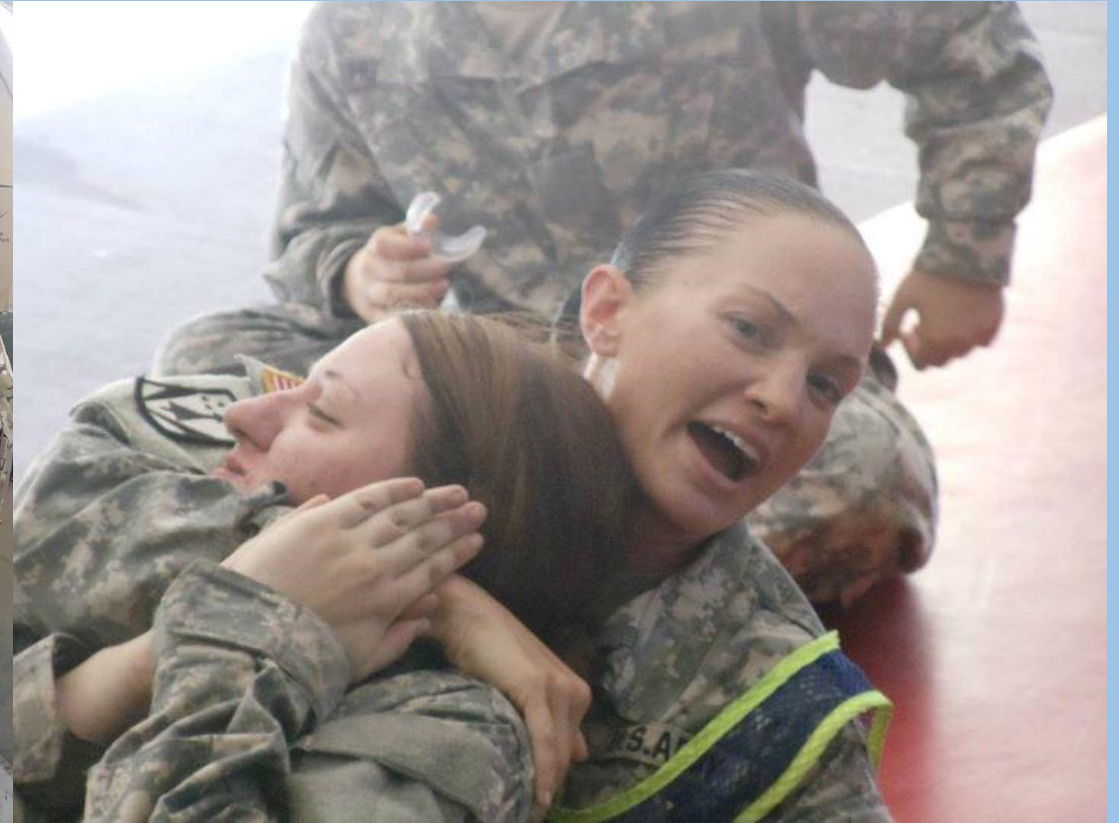
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# We aren't going to look the part.



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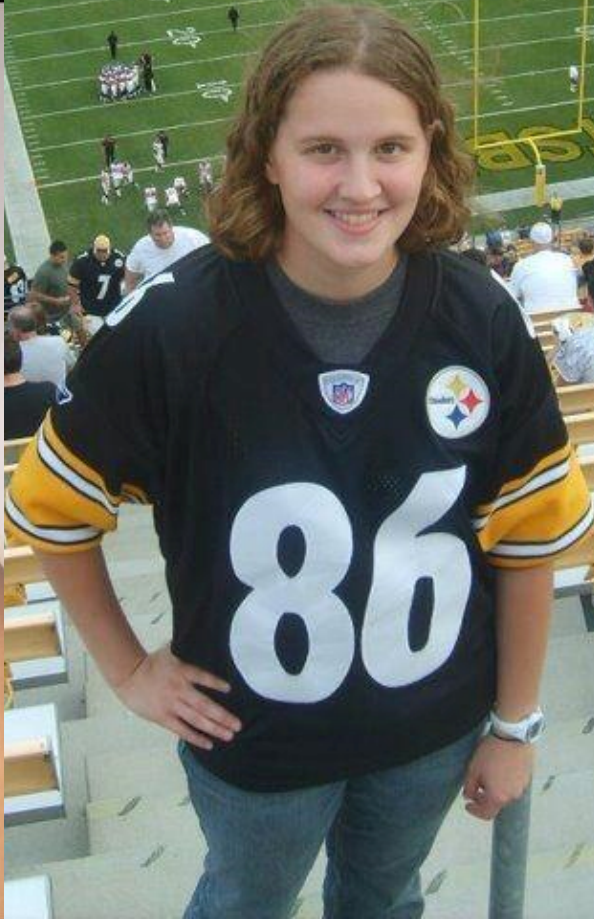
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# But we need for you to see us!



# Can you see us?



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# How about now?



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# Some won't speak up

- Reasons why a veteran wouldn't self-identify
  - Reluctance to talk about ourselves or our accomplishments
  - Experienced something negative during their military service
  - Fear of being perceived as different
    - Often viewed as damaged by potential employers
    - Harmful stigmas surrounding female veterans



# Some will not get identified- Lost in the System



- If a veteran doesn't identify themselves during the application process, not many chances to identify them and their needs
- Many are confused about their benefits and don't know who to ask
- Many may not know they are entitled to benefits
- Miscommunication can occur.



# Solutions to Identifying Veterans



- Work to identify veterans as early on as possible
  - Don't assume!
  - Ask all incoming applicants if they have been in the military rather than just asking the ones that look the part
    - If not, still ask if they are a dependent or spouse of a military service member.
- Provide information at orientation for veterans
  - Financial aid clarification, resources available on campus (counseling, resource center, work study positions, student groups), and community resources (crisis contact numbers)





# Obstacle #2

- Engaging the military population is even more difficult.
  - Some won't want to be bothered
  - A few will want to get involved but nothing is available for them
  - Most will feel isolated on campus
  - All will need help at some point during their college career
    - Financial aid clarification, counseling, aid with a disability, crisis situation



# Solutions to Engaging Student Veterans



- Work to identify and address potential veteran needs
  - Again, don't assume! Survey students. Provide opportunities for these students to speak to the administration (Open Forum or Town Hall meetings)
  - Provide a space for veterans to get together and have resources readily available to them (Communicate often!)
  - Encourage veterans to take on leadership roles on campus or get involved in extracurricular activities
  - Provide volunteer opportunities on campus



# Obstacle #3

- There is no follow up once they are enrolled and taking classes.
  - They may have multiple commitments outside of their coursework (families, job(s), etc)
  - They may feel anxiety or depression.
  - These feelings or a crisis situation may cause the student to drop out.
  - Without intervention or help, the consequences can be deadly.





# Solutions to Maintaining Student Veterans



- Communicate often about available resources
- Audit policies and remove common & unnecessary obstacles
  - Leave policy in place if student gets called to active duty
  - Deferral of payment policy for veterans waiting on benefits to arrive
    - Does that policy cover expenses other than tuition and fees? (Housing for an on campus student, textbooks, etc)





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# Penn State Mont Alto Veterans Mentorship Program

Mrs. Kathy Swope  
Veteran Certifying Official  
Penn State Mont Alto



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## PENN STATE MONT ALTO VETERANS MENTORSHIP PROGRAM



“Penn State Mont Alto is committed to facilitating veteran students’ transition from military service to higher education, fostering a community of veterans on our campus, and supporting them through graduation and into rewarding careers and graduate programs”

Francis K. Achampong, Penn State Mont Alto Chancellor.



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## Penn State Mont Alto Student Veterans Mentorship Program

### Table of Contents

Mission Statement.....	3
Vision Statement.....	3
Minimum Requirements to Serve as a Mentor.....	4
Mentor Training Requirements.....	4
Goals for the Mentor.....	4
Mentor Duties.....	5
Veterans Certifying Official Duties.....	5
Student Veterans Pairing with Mentors.....	6
Mentor Formal Introduction and First Meeting.....	6
Communication During the Semester.....	6
Formal Meetings During the Semester.....	7
Tips for Mentors.....	7
Student Veterans Mentor 5 Keys to Success.....	8
Non-Participating Veteran.....	9
Veterans Group Activity.....	9
Penn State Policies.....	9
Resources.....	10
Appendix A: Needs Assessment Form.....	13



## Penn State Mont Alto Student Veterans Mentorship Program

### Mission Statement

Partner new and current student Veterans with Penn State Mont Alto faculty/staff who can provide leadership, mentorship, guidance, and resources for the Veteran.

### Vision Statement

We strive to provide a continued partnership with Veteran students throughout their academic career at Penn State Mont Alto. Through meaningful interactions and assistance each Veteran will be successful in their academic goals which will foster positive growth.

**WE ARE.....Standing Strong Together!**





## Penn State Mont Alto Student Veterans Mentorship Program

### Minimum Requirements to Serve as a Mentor

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- Be a current Penn State faculty/staff member with a background as a Veteran or interested in assisting our Penn State Mont Alto Veterans.
- Be understanding of the unique needs of the Veteran as a student.
- Be willing to be proactive in communication and support to assigned Veterans.

### Mentor Training Requirements

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Each mentor serving Penn State Student Veterans, must at a minimum complete the follow training.

- Penn State World Campus course, (OL3200) “Serving the Veteran and the Military Student.” Access information can be gained from the Veterans Certifying Official.

### Goals for the Mentor

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- Establish trust.
- Understand the unique challenges faced by the Veteran student.
- Assess the Veteran’s needs or answer questions the Veteran may have.
- Establish a positive mentor/mentee relationship through formal and informal meetings.
- Be an advocate for the Veteran.
- Provide Penn State and community resources to the student.



### Mentor Duties

- Acknowledge requests from the Veterans Certifying Official concerning pairing up of Veterans with you.
- Send a formal introduction email to the student Veteran welcoming them to the mentoring program.
- Complete the student Veteran needs assessment form.
- Prompt the student Veteran to meet on campus at a time which meets the schedules of both the Veteran and mentor.
- Promote an open door policy for the student Veteran throughout the semester for any concerns or questions regarding their Penn State experience.
- Offer neutral advice and counseling for the student concerning their intended career paths and prospects beyond Penn State.
- Provide information on school policies/processes.

### Veterans Certifying Official Duties

- Provide support for mentors and mentees participating in the program.
- Assign first-year and current Veterans to mentors.
- Answer questions concerning student Veterans' needs.
- Serve as a student Veteran advocate.
- Prepare a campus orientation for first-year Veteran students, including meeting their assigned mentor.
- Lead the overall Student Veterans Mentorship Program.
- Provide constant contact with mentors concerning needs or problems which arise.





## Penn State Mont Alto Student Veterans Mentorship Program

- Solicit feedback from mentors and mentees about how well they think the program is functioning and any suggestions they may have for improvement

### Student Veterans Pairing with Mentors

Student Veterans will be assigned to each mentor by the Veterans Certifying Official via email. Upon receiving an email about your new mentee, please acknowledge your willingness to assist this student.

### Mentor Formal Introduction and First Meeting

All faculty/staff mentors should upon acknowledgement of accepting the new student Veteran into their mentorship group, establish contact with the mentee. Emails are a great resource to welcome the Veteran student to your mentorship group. If the student Veteran does not respond in a timely manner, attempt to contact the student via telephone.

Remember the first meeting with the student Veteran is the most vital. The first meeting will establish your future relationship with the mentee. The first meeting can take place either in person on campus or via telephone.

### Communication During the Semester

It is vital to maintain communication with your assigned mentees at least once a month during the semester. Provide encouragement through emails or quick notes.

Ex: I saw an article today about (XYZ) and thought you may be interested because I know you had expressed an interest.

## Penn State Mont Alto Student Veterans Mentorship Program

### Formal Meetings During the Semester

The mentor should meet with each assigned mentee at least once during each semester. This meeting can be an open group invite or a one-on-one visit. Encourage your mentees to attend established meetings.

### Tips for Mentors

- Do not forget how important your contact with our Penn State Student Veterans is.
- The student Veteran will look to you as a valuable resource. If you do not have the exact answer the student is seeking, do not be afraid to seek the answer through colleagues.
- Communicate feedback from the student Veteran to the Veterans Certifying Official, who can help to seek resources or provide you a proper avenue for the situation at hand.
- Utilize the Veterans Center on campus in the Spring House as an opportunity to meet with Veterans. Feel free to stop by anytime and see what Veterans are doing even if you are not their assigned mentor.
- Have a voice on campus with colleagues, encourage Veteran interaction and help to spread news about our Veteran Programs.



## Student Veterans Mentor 5 Keys to Success

- 1. Introductions:** Must be timely and encouraging.
- 2. Formal Meeting or Phone Call:** Vital to gain trust with the mentee, establish goals.
- 3. Encouragement:** Shows your desire to support the mentee.
- 4. Communication:** Continued communication with mentee and Veterans Certifying Official.
- 5. Evaluate End of Semester-Future:** Complete follow-up with mentee.



## Penn State Mont Alto Student Veterans Mentorship Program

### Non-Participating Veteran

The student Veteran maintains the right to not participate in the mentor program. This right should be communicated to the Veterans Certifying Official via email or telephone. The student is removed from the mentor program for the remainder of the semester and will be offered an opportunity to participate the following semester.

### Veterans Group Activity

At the beginning and end of every semester the Penn State Mont Alto Veterans will gather for a group event which includes current Penn State Mont Alto Veterans and Mentors.

### Penn State Policies

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

- AD-11 University Policy on Confidentiality of Student Records
- AD-20 Computer and Network Security
- AD-23 Use of Institutional Data

## Penn State Mont Alto Student Veterans Mentorship Program

### Resources

Name/Title	Organization	Contact Information
Kathy Swope  Veterans Certifying Official	Penn State Mont Alto	209 Conklin Hall, Penn State Mont Alto, 1 Campus Drive, Mont Alto, PA 17237  717-749-6094 <a href="mailto:kqs3@psu.edu">kqs3@psu.edu</a>
Marla Minnich  Student Advocacy Specialist	Penn State Mont Alto	Penn State Mont Alto Academic Support Center 101F General Studies Building  <a href="mailto:mum30@psu.edu">mum30@psu.edu</a> (717) 749-6024
Danielle Werner RN, Health Services  Campus Nurse/Health Services Coordinator	Penn State Mont Alto	Penn State Mont Alto/Health Services 103 Conklin Hall  <a href="mailto:daw51@psu.edu">daw51@psu.edu</a> <a href="http://www.ma.psu.edu/">http://www.ma.psu.edu/</a>
Kendra Sites  Academic Support Center Director  Athletics Academic Liaison  Disability Coordinator	Penn State Mont Alto	Academic Support Center  <a href="mailto:ASC-Helps@psu.edu">ASC-Helps@psu.edu</a>  (717) 749-6046  Schedule a Tutoring Appointment: <a href="https://psu.mywconline.com">https://psu.mywconline.com</a>  102A General Studies Building  (717) 749-6045  <a href="mailto:kmw24@psu.edu">kmw24@psu.edu</a>





## Penn State Mont Alto Student Veterans Mentorship Program

Darlene Pasi, M.S., LPC  Campus Counselor	Penn State Mont Alto	104 Conklin Hall  <a href="mailto:drp16@psu.edu">drp16@psu.edu</a> 717-749-6125
Patty Gochenauer  Career Counselor	Penn State Mont Alto	101D General Studies Building  <a href="mailto:pmgoch@psu.edu">pmgoch@psu.edu</a>  717-749-6104  <a href="http://montalto.psu.edu/career">http://montalto.psu.edu/career</a>
Justin Slep  Director of Veterans Affairs for Franklin County, PA	Franklin County, PA Office of Veterans Affairs	425 Franklin Farm Lane Chambersburg, PA 17201 717-263-4326 Fax – 717-263-1905 <a href="http://www.franklincountypa.gov/Pages/VeteransAffairsOffice.aspx">http://www.franklincountypa.gov/Pages/VeteransAffairsOffice.aspx</a>
Martinsburg (VA) Medical Center	Veterans Affairs (VA)	510 Butler Avenue Martinsburg, WV 25405 304-263-0811   800-817-3807  <a href="http://www.martinsburg.va.gov/">http://www.martinsburg.va.gov/</a>
Hagerstown, MD (VA) Outpatient Clinic	Veterans Affairs (VA)	1101 Opal Court Hagerstown, MD 21740  1- 800-817-3807, ext. 5130 Fax: 301-665-1682 Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Wednesday, 7:30 a.m. -4 p.m., excluding federal holidays
Harrisburg, PA (VA) Vet Center	Veterans Affairs (VA)	1500 N. Second Street Suite 2 Harrisburg, PA 17102  Phone: 717-782-3954 Or 877-927-8387 Fax: 717-782-3791



## Penn State Mont Alto Student Veterans Mentorship Program

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline		1-800-273-8255  <a href="https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/">https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/</a>
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## Appendix A: Needs Assessment Form

### Appendix A: Student Veterans Needs Assessment Form

Student Veteran Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Years Served: \_\_\_\_\_ Branch of Service: \_\_\_\_\_

Current Degree Program: \_\_\_\_\_

Estimated Graduation Year: \_\_\_\_\_

Career Expectations: \_\_\_\_\_

Hobbies: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Meetings:

Date:	Location:

#### Goals:


#### Notes:


## Penn State Mont Alto Student Veterans Mentorship Program



This program is dedicated to all of those who have served us in protecting our country against all threats both foreign and domestic. Through their sacrifice and devotion, we may live free in such a great nation.







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# Veterans with Service Dogs



Kathy Swope  
Veterans Affairs Coordinator  
Penn State Mont Alto



# Know The Law...

- Universities can ask only two questions:
  1. Is the dog a service animal required because of a disability?
  2. What work or task has the dog been trained to perform?

University officials cannot, however, ask to see the task performed or ask about the person's disability.



# Abide by Handler Requirements...

- The dog must be under the control of the handler at all times.
- University officials can request that the dog leave if it is out of control and the veteran handler does not take action to correct it.





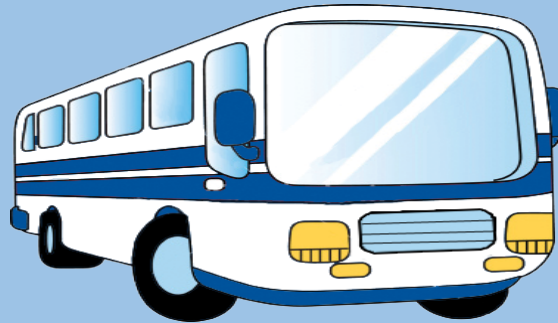
# Plan For a Successful College Experience...

- Scheduling classes with breaks
- Potty time for the service dog
- Classroom seating
- Classroom etiquette
- Down-time
- Be prepared for people to react or interact
- Socializing and extra activities



# Participate in Student Life...

- Military Appreciation Day in Beaver Stadium
- Bus Trips & Activities
- Sports & Sporting Events
- Clubs and Organizations



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# Are Penn State Proud...



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# Questions?

Contact: Mrs. Kathy Swope

Penn State Mont Alto  
209 Conklin Hall,  
1 Campus Drive, Mont Alto, PA 17237

717-749-6094  
kqs3@psu.edu

# Advising / Faculty interactions with Veterans



**Dr. Jorge G. Trevino, DBA,  
SHC (SW), US Navy, Ret  
Lecturer & Academic Advisor - Military Programs**



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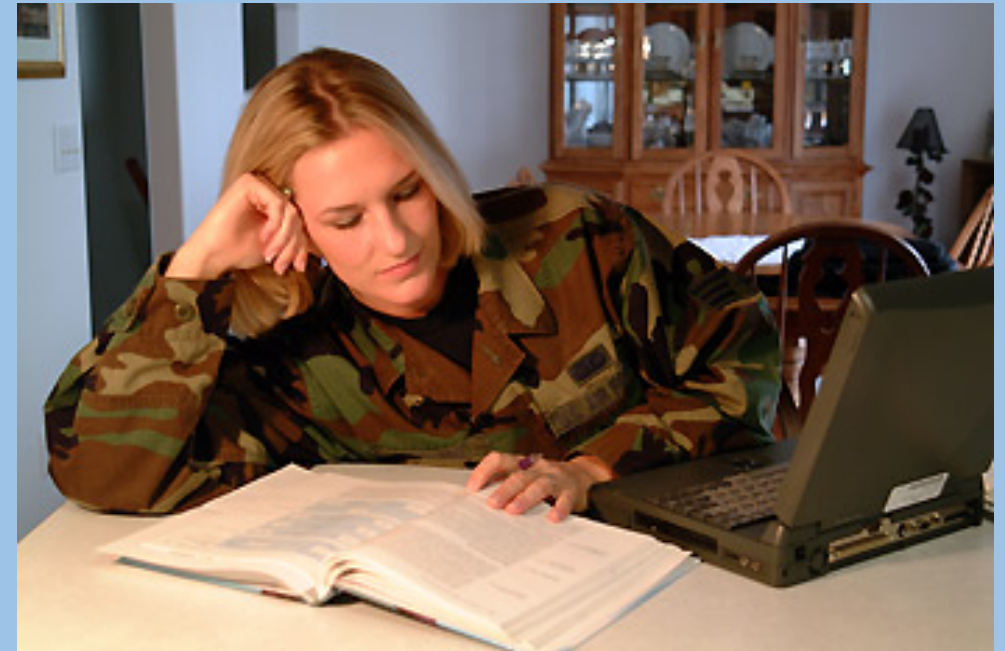
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# Communicating with Veterans or Beyond the Vet Center

- How do we talk to Veterans?
- What should we look for
- We have a Veterans Center, now what?

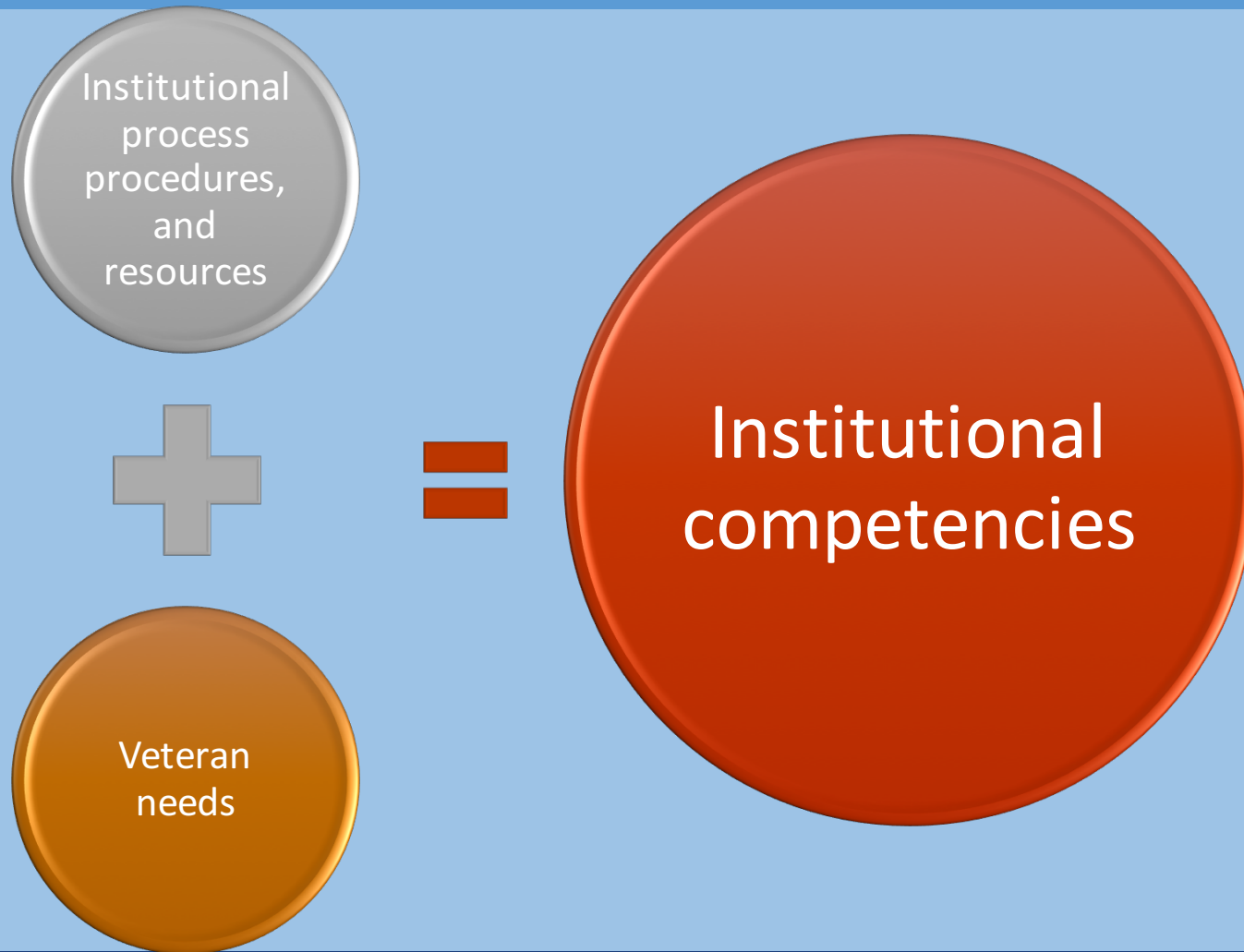


# Institutional Competencies

Knowledge that provides insight into process, procedures, and resources to include student needs while comparing cost and effect.



# Institutional Competencies



# Veteran Culture

- All Veterans / Military members should not be stereotyped into one group
- Veterans respond to other Veterans
- Institutions should consider using Peer to Peer mentoring / Advising
- Advisors should be very up front with Veterans since they are not the typical freshman student, but rather adults. This is why many of them chose on-line programs





# Veteran Culture of Non-disclosure



- All Veterans & Military member do not start their military career as a disabled person. It is acquired during service and is classified differently
- Many do not acknowledge they have a disability “Black Knight Syndrome”
- Many do not know that there are services available “Misconceptions– “...it is not for me”
- Trained to only disclosure on a “Need to know” bases.
- Veteran on-line Student with Disability (VOSD)
- Institutional Awareness: (Triggers / Indicators) is key factor to direct VOSDs to resources. See Handouts





## Veteran Online Students with Disabilities (VOSD)



- VOSD are entering into a new cultural environment
  - Military / Veterans are indoctrinated into the military warfare culture that is centralized
  - The Academic environment is different in that it is not centralized in some cases
  - Additionally, the military student can appear young, but with more life experiences than the average college student
  - Veteran & Military members are not quick to ask for assistance and think they can meet any challenge



# Identifying your Institutional Competencies

## Student Contact

Identify who has contact with student

- “How do I refer a student?”
- “What can I say?”
- “When should I start?”

Map student contact progression

Know the relationships

- Who does what
- Find the expertise



# Beyond the Veterans Center: Some Ideas to think about



- One Stop shop
- Peer to peer mentoring / Vet Student Sponsor
- Student organization set up as a Military Unit (SOP, Chain of Command) that creates a pass down from one class to another

