



**Internal Program Review  
Self-Study Report**

**Program Name**

Veteran Resources

**Credentials Offered**

N/A

**Self-Study Completed by:**

Tammy Steckler

**Date Completed:**

2015

## **A. Introduction**

Veteran Resources works in conjunction with the Veteran's Administration to administer G.I. Bill educational benefits to students. It also fosters the Veteran's Club, a Veteran Advisory Council, and a Mentor Program.

## **B. Alignment with Mission, Strategic Goals and Core Themes**

Helena College University of Montana, a comprehensive two-year college, provides access to and support of lifelong educational opportunities to our diverse community.

Veteran Resources is proud to serve those who have served and their family members, and we strive to support veterans transitioning to higher education, assisting them with the benefit processes, navigating the Veteran's Administration, and offering workshops and a mentor program in support of their unique status on this campus. Veteran Resources provides the basic responsibilities of an education institution to inform the VA of the enrollment status of Chapters 30, 31, 33, 35, 1606, and 1607.

### *Partner for Student Success:*

Veteran Resources maintains partnerships with community agencies such as Veteran Vocational Rehabilitation, U.S. Senator for Montana Jon Tester's Office, and Joining Community Forces to provide education and information to the college's veterans as well as the community to increase support for Montana veterans and their families. The Montana Office of Public Instruction assists Helena College veterans and dependents with eligibility regarding benefit status.

Helena College Veteran Resources invited the Veteran Service Coordinator at Carroll College to meet with veteran students (March 2015) to discuss academic/career goals and transfer processes, resulting in two students transferring to Carroll College. In addition, Veteran Vocational Rehabilitation students often begin their education at Helena College and subsequently transfer to Carroll College.

### *Attain Excellence:*

The veteran population has continued to outperform all other students in retention and graduation rates since we began obtaining data in 2009.

An argument can be made that the work that Veteran Resources does in conjunction with the Veteran's Administration directly impacts the veteran student's financial status. This, in turn, positively affects their ability to attain excellence. In addition, utilizing Starfish, an early alert retention system, assists the students with recommendations for their success.

### *Support the Community:*

Helena College Veteran's Advisory Council meets on average two times per semester to keep updated and informed on issues dealing with veterans. Its members are as follows:

Ken Gemlich, MT OPI, Director of Veteran Education

Bruce Knutson, Veteran Liaison, Senator Jon Tester's Office

Brandi Keely, Carroll College Veteran Services Coordinator, Co-Chair L & C Joining Community Forces

Josh Adelblue, MT OPI, Veteran Education Program, Manager

David Wirtz, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor



Donovan Lucibello, former Helena College student and current Carroll College student  
Ryan Luchau, VA Healthcare System  
Randy Fuhrmann, LCPC  
T.J. Eyer, MT OPI Career, Technical and Adult Education  
Tammy Steckler, Helena College Veteran Resources

In addition to the partnerships mentioned above, Veteran Resources has a relationship with Willis Cruse House, a transitional facility for homeless veteran men, and visits with them about how to obtain veteran educational benefits as well as college admission processes.

Free, nameless, and paperless counseling services at Helena College serve all veterans in addition to their family members.

**C. Alignment with Community Needs**

N/A

**D. Student Participation and Success**

A Veteran Mentor Program was implemented in the Fall of 2012, providing incoming veterans and dependents of veterans with assistance transitioning to college. Positive feedback indicates true camaraderie has developed between some mentor/ee partners; negatively, contact was minimal in some instances due to a variety of personal reasons.

Presentations and workshops have been implemented for veterans including Stress Management, Body Oriented Skills for Stress, Anxiety, & PTSD, and Personal Boundaries. Feedback has been positive, however, the number of attendees is sometimes less than desired.

**E. Student Learning Outcomes and/or Program Outcomes**

The goals for veterans receiving benefits have been related to academic performance (term and cumulative GPA), persistence from semester to semester, and completion rates. These data points are then compared to the overall college population in an effort to determine the effects of program offerings.

As stated above, the veteran population has continued to outperform all other students in retention and graduation rates since 2009. Regarding cumulative GPA's, the veteran population's statistics have outpaced all other students in 6 out of 10 semesters.

A specific goal for 2014-15 was to improve the cumulative GPA from 2.84 to 3.05 from AY14 to AY15. By utilizing Starfish, veterans who receive benefits increased even more than desired, achieving a cumulative GPA of 3.11, which hasn't been done since 2010.

**F. Curriculum and Instruction (Academic Programs Only)**

N/A

**G. Faculty/Staff Profile**

Tamara Steckler has served as the college's veteran's Certifying Official since 2004, and what began as a part-time duty with 35 veterans, has increased over ten years to 130 veterans receiving G.I. Bill



educational benefits. She has a B.A. from Carroll College and has attended various veteran related trainings including Mental Health First Aid USA and PTSD/Substance Use Disorder.

**H. Fiscal and Physical Resources**

The fiscal resources allocated to Veteran Resources are sufficient. The budget is augmented by annual reporting fees paid to Helena College by the Veteran’s Administration and are intended to support the work of the college’s Office of Veteran’s Affairs and the Certifying Official. The annual amount received is based on the number of the students certified.

The physical space is adequate, however, as it is not an enclosed office, providing confidentiality for sensitive information is difficult.

**I. Recommendations and Preliminary Implementation Plan**

In the upcoming years, Veteran Resources will look to assess the efficacy of the Veteran Mentor Program. To accomplish this, a survey to assess the advantages of the program must be implemented in hopes of determining what improvements may be needed. It may necessitate placing stringent requirements on the mentors for the relationships to be enriched. Also, recent studies indicate peer mentoring may not be as effective as desired. Efforts will be made to determine whether or not mentorships are the best way to serve Helena College veterans.

As stated above, although the physical space for Veteran Resources is certainly adequate, we will request an enclosed office area if available space is found.

**J. Program Review Data Summary**

N/A

**K. Appendix (Additional data or exhibits)**

Please see Veteran’s Report 2010-1015 data attached.