Military Service Members and Veterans in Higher Education
Panelists

• Patrick Massaro – Military & Veteran Student Services Coordinator
• Sharon House – Director of Accommodative Services
• Tom Matthews – Vet Center Outreach Specialist (Watertown, NY)
• Trish Pielnik – Psychiatrist/Clinical Director (Counseling Center)
Military & Veteran Student Services

- Patrick Massaro
- Sisson 128
- (315) 267-3398
- Office Hours:
  - Wednesday 1:00pm-4:30pm
  - Thursday & Friday 8:30am-4:30pm
Federal Educational Benefits

• Post 9/11 GI Bill (Chapter 33)
• Montgomery GI Bill (Chapter 30)
• Montgomery GI Bill Selected Reserve
• Reserve Educational Assistance (REAP)
• Survivors & Dependents Assistance (DEA)
• Veterans Educational Assistance Program (VEAP)
• Veterans Retraining Assistance Program (VRAP)
• Vocational Rehabilitation
NY State Educational Benefits

- Veterans Tuition Award
- Military Service Recognition Scholarship
- Regents Awards
SUNY Potsdam Veteran Population (Spring 2013)

- 9,765 Veterans in St. Lawrence County
- 111 students utilizing Educational Benefits
  - 66 Post 9/11 GI Bill
  - 17 Survivors and Dependents Assistance
  - 11 Tuition Assistance
  - 8 Montgomery GI Selected Reserve
  - 4 Vocational Rehabilitation
  - 4 Montgomery GI Bill
  - 1 Reserve Educational Assistance
Veteran Population (Cont’d)

- Dependents of Veterans = 55
- Veteran Students = 37
- Active Duty Students = 11
- Reservists = 8
Issues Veterans Experience

• Difficulty understanding what educational, vocational, and medical benefits are available.
  – Lack of proper transition and separation courses
• Reluctant to ask for help
  – Stubborn and/or fear of showing weakness
• Change of routine causes uncertainty
  – Transition from a regimented military lifestyle
• Loss of sense of purpose/identity
Issues Veterans Experience

• They can feel alienated or unable to relate with fellow students.
Common Misconceptions

• All veterans have seen combat
• Student Veterans struggle to graduate
  – NBC News article (88% Drop out rate)
  – SVA Rebuttal (68% completion rate)
  – 5 Dismissed, (3 – Dep, 2 – Vet)
• All veterans have been deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan
• All veterans have some form of PTSD
• Student veterans will always respect authority
  – Bad experiences in the military
Why is this important?

- Student veteran population will continue to grow due to budget cuts
SUNY Potsdam = Military Friendly

- Veteran Coordinator position
- Campus programming designed to ease transition from military to civilian
  - Resume Building Workshops
  - Time Management & Study Skill seminars
  - Military/Veteran/Dependent FYSS (Fall 2013)
Key Takeaway

• Every veteran will bring different experiences and life lessons. Keep lines of communication open.
Accommodative Services

• Sharon House
• 111 Sisson Hall
• (315) 267-3267
• Office Hours: 8:00am-4:00pm
Accommodative Services

Services Offered

• Note takers
• Text readers/E-text
• Classroom relocation
• Enlarged materials
• Alternative testing arrangements
  – Extended time and or distraction-reduced environment
  – Exam readers/scribes
  – Word processor with spell check
• Loan of some equipment
Vet Center

- Thomas Matthews
- 210 Court St #20, Watertown, NY 13601
- (315) 782-5479
- Watertown: Monday-Friday (8:00am to 4:30pm)
- Canton: Every other Wed. (9:30am to 3:00pm)
- Potsdam: Every Tues. (9:30am to 3:00pm)
Vet Center Mission

• Vet Centers serve Veterans and their families by providing a continuum of quality care that adds value for Veterans, families, and communities. Care includes professional readjustment counseling, community education, outreach to special populations, the brokering of services with community agencies, and provides a key access link between the Veteran and other services in the United States Department of Veterans Affairs.
Vet Center on campus

• Outreach specialist on each SUNY Campus twice a month.

• Cost for Services: Services are free of charge to all eligible Veterans and their families.
Vet Center Groups

- PTSD Traumatic Growth Group
- Marriage and Family
- Couples Communication Enhancement
- Civilian Basic Training Group
- Therapy Support Group
- "Together We Heal"
- Bereavement Group
- Meditation Group
Counseling Center

• 131 Van Housen Hall
• (315) 267-2330
• Office Hours: 8:30am-4:30pm
• Wellness Advocates:
  – (315) 261-8942 or 261-8873
Common Warning Signs of Student Distress

**Academic Problems:**

- Career and Course Indecision
- Excessive Procrastination
- Uncharacteristically Poor Preparation or Performance
- Repeated Requests for Extensions or Special Considerations
- Disruptive Classroom Behavior
- Excessive Absence/Tardiness
- Avoiding or Dominating Discussions
- References to Suicide or Homicide in Verbal Statements or Writing
Common Warning Signs of Student Distress

Interpersonal Problems:

• Asking Instructor for Help with Personal Problems
• Dependency on Advisor
• Hanging Around Office
• Disruptive Behavior
• Inability to Get Along with Others
• Complaints from Other Student
• Student Isolating Self from Others
Common Warning Signs of Student Distress

Behavioral Problems:

• Change in Personal Hygiene
• Dramatic Weight Gain or Loss
• Frequently Falling Asleep in Class
• Irritability
• Unruly Behavior
• Impaired Speech
• Disjointed Thoughts
• Tearfulness
• Intense Emotion
• Inappropriate Responses
• Difficulty Concentrating
• Physically Harming Self
What Faculty Can Do

If you have noticed any of these warning signs, you are faced with the decision of whether or not to intervene. Although your faculty appointment is demanding, your interest in your student’s well-being can make an important difference to a person in distress.

If You Decide to Intervene:

• Talk to the student privately to help minimize embarrassment and defensiveness.

• Listen carefully to the student, and respond to both the content and the emotions of the situation.

• Discuss your observations and perceptions of the situation directly and honestly with the student.

• Express your concern in a non-judgmental way. Respect the student’s value system, even if you do not agree with it.

• Help the student identify options for action and explore the possible consequences.

• Be frank with the student about the limits on your ability to help him or her.

• If the student appears to be in imminent danger of hurting self or others, consult the Counseling Center or University Police immediately. Do not promise to keep threats to self or others secret.
How to Make A Counseling Center Referral

Emergency Referrals During UCC Business Hours:
• If the emergency occurs during business hours (Mon. –Fri. 8:30 am – 4:30 pm), call the Counseling Center at 267-2330 and ask to speak to a counselor.
• Provide the counselor with a description of the situation which has led to your concern.
• The counselor will advise you of appropriate actions to take to most effectively help the student. Same day intake appointments are always available for emergency situations.

Emergency Referrals Outside of CCC Business Hours:
• If the emergency occurs outside of UCC business hours, call the University Police 267-2222 and ask to talk to a counselor on call.

Non-Emergency Referrals:
• Encourage the student to contact CCC directly to schedule an initial intake appointment by calling 267-2330.
• Offer to let the student call from your office if you believe they need extra support and encouragement.
• It might be helpful to share with the student that CCC is staffed by licensed mental health counselors and a psychiatrist and that there is no fee for services.
• Encourage the student to go to our website to learn more about what to expect at their first appointment.
Thank you for your time. Are there any questions?
Additional Resources

• St. Lawrence County Veterans Service Department (Canton, NY)
  – Mike Boprey
  – (315) 386-4754

• New York State Veteran Counselor (Ogdensburg, NY)
  – Tom Robinson
  – (315) 393-0580