

Best Practices for Supporting Military Students in the Online Classroom

TCC 2019 Worldwide Online Conference:
Sustainable Learning, Accessible Technologies, & Diverse Contexts

Session #19013, Thursday, April 18, 2018

Claire DeCristofaro, MD, College of Health, Human Services, and Science, Ashford University

Cole McFarren, MA, Manager, Center for Excellence in Teaching & Learning, Ashford University

Online Education & the Military Student

The online education format:

- The online format allows students to continue their studies seamlessly as they change duty station locations worldwide
- Since flexibility is a key consideration for military students, distance education (particularly online courses) provides the flexibility needed by non-traditional adult learners and is helpful for academic success and degree completion

Teaching and learning may be enhanced by:

- Familiarizing ourselves as faculty with military culture
- Adapting the online education experience for military students – this does not dilute academic rigor, but accommodations can help support success
- Applying adult learning principles to discipline-specific content (Smucny & Glover, 2013).

Military Educational Benefits: Tuition Assistance (TA)

- **All-volunteer military since 1973**
- **Educational benefits are a major incentive to serve.**

“GI Bill” history:

- **Serviceman’s Readjustment Act of 1944**
- **Post-9/11 GI Bill (Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008)**
- **Active Duty Montgomery GI Bill**
- **Reserve and Guard Montgomery GI Bill**
- **Vocational Rehabilitation and Education**

For survivors of service members who die in the line of duty or dependents of totally disabled veterans:

- **Dependents' Education Assistance (DEA)**
- **Fry Scholarship**

Military Friendly Institutions

Obama White House and the “8 Keys to Success” (Baker, 2013):

1. Create a culture of trust and connectedness across the campus community to promote well-being and success for veterans.
2. Ensure consistent and sustained support from campus leadership.
3. Implement an early alert system to ensure all veterans receive academic, career, and financial advice before challenges become overwhelming.
4. Coordinate and centralize campus efforts for all veterans, together with the creation of a designated space (even if limited in size).
5. Collaborate with local communities and organizations, including government agencies, to align and coordinate various services for veterans.
6. Utilize a uniform set of data tools to collect and track information on veterans, including demographics, retention and degree completion.
7. Provide comprehensive professional development for faculty and staff on issues and challenges unique to veterans.
8. Develop systems that ensure sustainability of effective practices for veterans.

Demographics & Institutional Initiatives

Cole McFarren, MA

Manager, Center for Excellence in Teaching & Learning (CETL)

Data Definition – what is a “military affiliated” student?



DATA DEFINITION

Ashford University's military definition is inclusive. Our military student population is defined as:

- Active Duty Service Members
- Members of the National Guard
- Reservists
- Spouses
- Dependents
- Department of Defense Employees
- Department of Veteran Affairs Employees

Our Military Student Population

Total Population

Military Students Week Ending 10/16/18

Undergraduate Students Week Ending 10/16/18



● Non-Military 23,413 ● Military 9,499

Graduate Students Week Ending 10/16/18

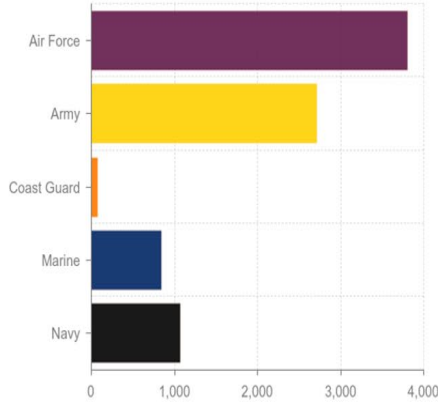


● Non-Military 4,682 ● Military 995

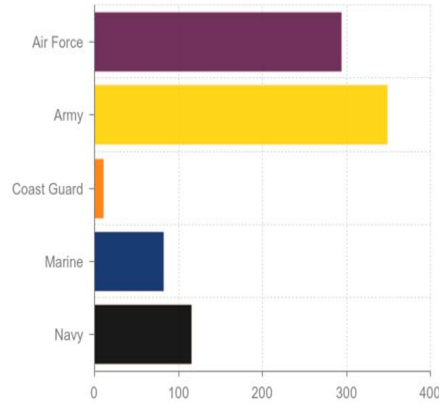
Total Population By Branch of Service

Military Students Week Ending 10/16/18

Undergraduate Students Week Ending 10/16/18



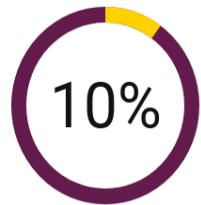
Graduate Students Week Ending 10/16/18



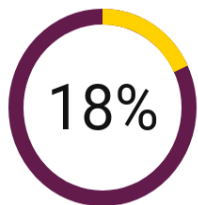
Undergraduate & Graduate Military Students by College

Undergraduate Students By College

Military Students Week Ending 10/16/18



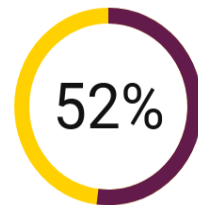
College of Education



College of Health, Human Services, Sciences



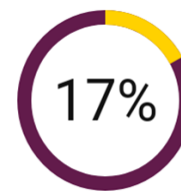
College of Liberal Arts



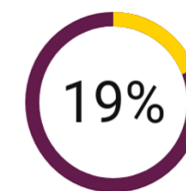
Forbes School of Business & Technology

Graduate Students by College

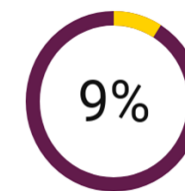
Military Students Week Ending 10/16/18



College of Education



College of Health, Human Services, Sciences



College of Liberal Arts



Forbes School of Business & Technology

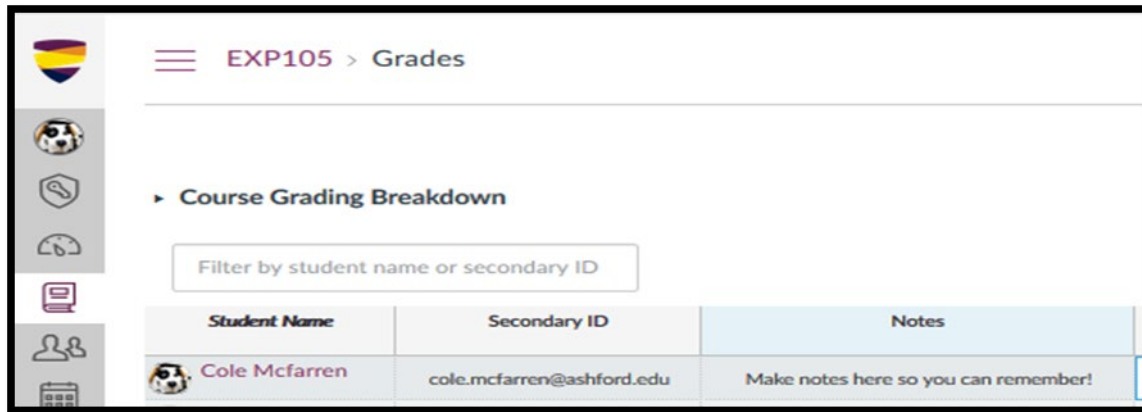
MVSTF Faculty Subcommittee

- **Formed in August 2018 to act in conjunction with Military and Veteran Student Task Force with a focus on the faculty role**
- **Faculty representatives from each college as well as military-facing staff:**
 - **Claire DeCristofaro - CHSS**
 - **Sandra Rebeor - CHSS**
 - **Mark Pantaleo - CoLA**
 - **Molly Molnar - DoGE**
 - **Paula Zobisch - FSoBT**
 - **Sara Calvert – Military Student Success & Equity Specialist**
 - **Sharon Carstensen – Military Academic Advisor**
 - **Madariaga Ludwig – Academic Advisor**
 - **Heather Albin – Manager, Military & Veteran Services Strategy**
 - **Cole McFarren – Manager, Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning**

Early Ideas & Upcoming University Faculty Resources (1 of 2)

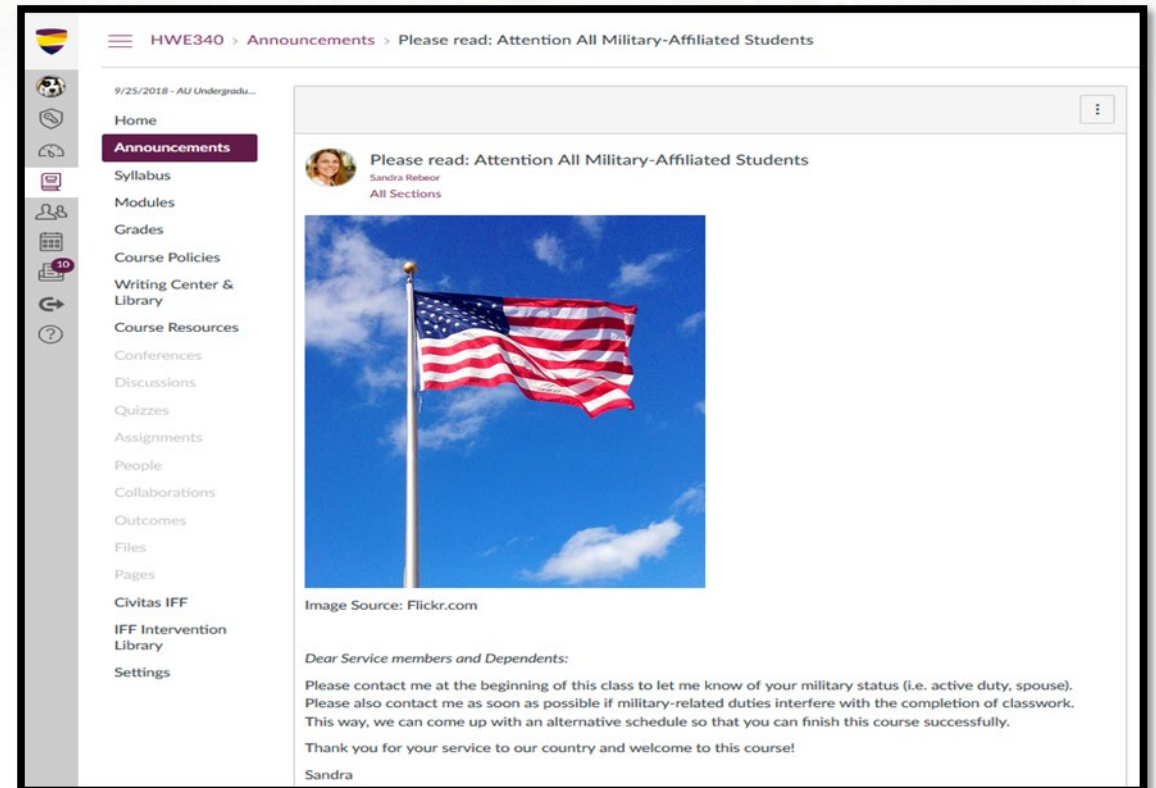
1. How do we recognize military students?

2. How do we keep track?



The screenshot shows a Blackboard course page for EXP105. The page title is 'EXP105 > Grades'. Below the title is a section for 'Course Grading Breakdown' with a search filter 'Filter by student name or secondary ID'. A table lists student names and their secondary IDs, with a note for Cole Mcfarren.

Student Name	Secondary ID	Notes
Cole Mcfarren	cole.mcfarren@ashford.edu	Make notes here so you can remember!



The screenshot shows a Blackboard course page for HWE340. The page title is 'HWE340 > Announcements > Please read: Attention All Military-Affiliated Students'. The announcement is dated 9/25/2018 and is from Sandra Rebeor, All Sections. It features an image of the American flag and a message to military-affiliated students.

9/25/2018 - AU Undergradu...

Home
Announcements
Syllabus
Modules
Grades
Course Policies
Writing Center & Library
Course Resources
Conferences
Discussions
Quizzes
Assignments
People
Collaborations
Outcomes
Files
Pages
Civitas IFF
IFF Intervention Library
Settings

Please read: Attention All Military-Affiliated Students
Sandra Rebeor
All Sections




Image Source: Flickr.com

Dear Service members and Dependents:
Please contact me at the beginning of this class to let me know of your military status (i.e. active duty, spouse). Please also contact me as soon as possible if military-related duties interfere with the completion of classwork. This way, we can come up with an alternative schedule so that you can finish this course successfully.
Thank you for your service to our country and welcome to this course!
Sandra

Early Ideas & Upcoming University Faculty Resources (2 of 2)

COMING SOON:

1) Military Status Verification Process

2) Updated CETL SharePoint page with

- Representatives and contact info
- Policies and Procedures Manual
- Recent TLC presentations
- Applicable CETL Sessions
- Announcement template
- Process for confirmation of status

The screenshot displays the Ashford University Military SharePoint page. The page features a purple header with the Ashford University logo and navigation links for 'Military', 'CETL Home', and 'Faculty Development'. A search bar is located in the top right corner. The main content area is divided into several sections:

- Documents:** A list of documents including 'Ashford Military Points of Contact', 'Military Policies & Procedures Manual', 'Faculty GI Bill Benefits FAQ 12-14-17', 'Military Monday', '12a - VA 101 Resource Guide 05 25 2016', 'Military Student Notification to Instructor', 'Military Veteran Student Taskforce Charter Feb 2016', and 'Faculty Forum- Military Students'.
- Resources for Faculty:** A list of resources including 'Military Module', 'Behind the Numbers: Ashford University's Military Population', 'Incomplete Grade Request Form', 'Meet the Military Student Veteran Taskforce', 'Recognizing Veterans Day 2016', and 'Faculty Focus: Military Focus'.
- Resources for Students:** A list of resources including 'Best for Vets College Review', 'CHAMPS Peer Mentoring', 'Student Veterans Organization', 'Ashford Military Community Newsletter', 'Ashford Facts: Ashford And Our Vets', and 'Ashford Military Online Resource Center'.
- External Resources & News:** A list of external resources including 'PsychArmor Institute', 'Cigna Introduces 24/7/365 National Support Line for Veterans, Families, Caregivers', and 'US Department of Veteran Affairs Education & Training'.
- Military Speaker Series:** A list of speaker series including 'Military Speaker Series: Elevate your Military Cultural Competence: A Speaker's Panel', 'Military Speaker Series Speaker Panel Follow Up', 'Military Speaker Series: Understanding Military Culture: Why Student Veterans Do Not Ask for Help', and 'Military Speaker Series: Jenny DuFresne- Sink or Swim: Life of a Woman in the Military'.

The page also includes a sidebar with navigation options such as 'Faculty Development', 'Military Home', 'Documents', 'Resources for Faculty', 'Ashford Military Students', 'Recent', 'Military Speaker Series', 'External Resources', 'Pages', and 'Site Contents'. The bottom of the page shows a status bar indicating 'Transferring data from static.sharepointonline.com...'.

Towards Best Practices in Teaching & Learning

Claire DeCristofaro, MD

Assistant Professor

College of Health, Human Services, & Science

Consider that approximately one in four students at Ashford are military affiliated

Military Affiliated Student Types

Who are these students? There is or has been a direct connection to the military lifestyle.

Classroom impact: military-affiliated students add value to the classroom – global experience, leadership skills, discipline, focus, and ability to work under pressure.

Examples of types of affiliations:

- Family member
- Veteran
- Active Duty
- Reservist
- Professional/work experience – e.g., contractor with the Department of Defense
- The international student that served in their home country's military.

Military-to-Academic Transitioning (1 of 2)

- **Schlossberg's theory of marginality and mattering describes how feelings of "mattering" are important to student success**
- **"Mattering" helps a student feel more connected to others as well as to the institution**
- **Transitioning for a military student represents a change:**
 - **During service, there is a clear purpose and meaning in their unit and mission – the impact of job performance is clear**
 - **In academic life, the student veteran may feel marginalized**
- **This marginalization may be exacerbated by lack of knowledge regarding the postsecondary education system**
- **There is a need to increase support during this transitioning phase (Schlossberg, 1989)**
- **Military-affiliated students may not self-disclose early in the class, but may do so later. You may query the advisor via Civitas if you have questions.**

Military-to-Academic Transitioning (2 of 2)

A change in culture – “culture shock”

Military culture:

- **Working as a unit rather than individualism (“team centric”)**
- **Focus on mission success – obedience & adherence to team goals**
- **Regimentation and rigid timelines**
- **Continuous learning, training, & improving with leadership oversight**

Academic culture:

- **Critical thinking – asking questions & challenging the status quo**
- **“Individual centric” – emphasis on developing the individual mind**
- **Much learning takes place outside the classroom**
- **Less defined structure (Cass, 2014).**

The Student Veteran (1 of 2)

- **Teaching active-duty, veteran, and other military-affiliated students using distance education formats may present both challenges and opportunities for instructors.**

Veterans are non-traditional students:

- **older**
- **real-world work experience**
- **experience and specialization in a particular field (“MOS” code – Military Occupational Specialty code)**

Attributes for academic success:

- **motivation for career advancement**
- **maturity, responsibility, & accountability gained through military service (Dillard & Yu, 2016)**

The Student Veteran (2 of 2)

Issues that may be barriers to academic success:

- Veterans may underestimate rigors of academic life
- Combat-related, visible and invisible disabilities
 - post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injury (TBI), sexual trauma
 - Sensory or motor impairment
- Family and work concerns
- May be the first in their family to attend college
- Culture shock associated with military-to-academic transitions may cause isolation and confusion (Tinoco, 2014/2015).

Personal Faculty Reflections for Teaching Preparation (1 of 2)

- 1) When you hear the word veteran or military service member, what images, thoughts, sensations, emotions, etc., come to mind?**
- 2) When you see someone in uniform what is your personal reaction or experience?**
- 3) What comes to mind when the reference is to a female veteran?**
- 4) What's your attitude or belief toward the military? Why do you think people elect to join the armed services, guard or reserves?**
- 5) What opinions do you hold of war or those who have served in a combat area? Do these opinions become projected indirectly or directly on the veteran or a person known to be serving in the military? Do you confuse the war with the warrior, and those who have served in combat?**
- 6) What worries or concerns might you have over someone who has served in combat being in your classroom?**

Personal Faculty Reflections for Teaching Preparation (2 of 2)

- 7) How comfortable are you with people who have physical challenges and those who may demonstrate behavioral health issues from experiencing war trauma?**
- 8) How might your opinions or reactions represent biases toward someone who has an invisible wound such as depression, anxiety, PTSD, anger, startle response, severe sleep problems due to nightmares, or mild to moderate traumatic brain injury?**
- 9) What steps can you take to become more familiar and knowledgeable about these?**
- 10) Do you know how to contact the student's advisor?**
- 11) What are the military/veterans resources at your university? (Department of Veterans Affairs, 2009).**

Welcoming In

Schlossberg's theory of marginality and mattering describes how feelings of mattering are important to student success because mattering helps them to feel more connected to others and the institution

Identifying and welcoming the military-affiliated student:

- Despite commonalities, each veteran is unique (background, capabilities)
- Look for self-identification on Introductions Discussion Forum
- Include welcoming language in Announcements that recognizes their service and the possibility of special circumstances (e.g., temporary duty assignment)
 - Example: "Veterans and active duty military personnel with special circumstances are welcome and encouraged to communicate these to the instructor, in advance if possible."
- Remember veterans and military-affiliated students are both sexes (Maryland Veterans Resilience Initiative, 2014).

Quality Classroom Practices (1 of 3)

- **Don't express personal opinions about military service or recent wars/conflicts (may be perceived as derogatory towards their service)**
- **If a course deals with military policies/actions, recognize that veterans/military may not be willing to discuss their military experiences; do not ask directly about combat actions (classmates may be curious – discourage these queries)**
- **Recognize that if you have not personally seen combat, been in the military, or been part of a military family, don't pretend you know what it's like**
- **If classmates show lack of respect for instructors or fellow students this may be unacceptable to the veteran/military student; help them manage frustration**
- **Despite military training that emphasizes teamwork, academic collaborations may be frustrating; help them recognize the value of this newer type of collaboration**
- **Make appropriate referrals for those coping with service-related stressors**
- **Support those needing accommodations and work to reduce stigma associated with help-seeking (Maryland Veterans Resilience Initiative, 2014).**

Quality Classroom Practices (2 of 3)

What about missing class & missing deadlines?

- **Active duty military may receive a “temporary duty assignment” (TDA) taking them away from their regular station. May be called "temporary duty travel" (TDT), "temporary additional duty" (TAD) in the Navy and Marine Corps (or TDI for "temporary duty under instruction"), or "temporary duty" (TDY) in the Army and Air Force**
- **Students in a Reserve or National Guard unit or active duty may be called up for service and deployment at any time**
- **If you have students in this situation, refer them to your campus veterans’ advisor to minimize any negative financial, benefit, or academic credit consequences that could result from being called to active service**
- **Appointments with the Veterans Health Administration (VA) must be kept to retain healthcare and other benefits**
- **These issues also affect those who are family members of active-duty/reservist military (Maryland Veterans Resilience Initiative, 2014).**

Quality Classroom Practices (3 of 3)

Androgogical approach to teaching:

- Stress the adult learner's self-direction, motivation, experience, and practical application of knowledge
- Thus, students need to find course material relevant to their own lives, personal experience, and career plans

Online instruction, course design, and teaching behaviors:

- Provide a structured format, clear and specific goals, with class activities mapped to those goals (this aligns with military culture and experience)
- Policies regarding missed assignments and absenteeism need to be clear, including expectations for times when military duties may keep students away from the online classroom – especially if there are internet “blackouts”
- Invite students to let them know about potential issues and obstacles at the term start, and then ask students for updates throughout the class
- Provide consistent, encouraging, and constructive feedback (Smucny & Glover, 2013).



Thank you!

Comments?

Questions?

Claire DeCristofaro, MD

claire.decristofaro@ashford.edu

Cole McFarren, MA

cole.mcfarren@ashford.edu

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