

# ***The Veterans' Outreach Center***

**AS Office of Assessment  
Structure & Program Advisory Committee**



The AS Assessment Process  
2012 B2012 Benchmark Initiatives



The AS Veterans' Outreach Center is one of seven offices under the umbrella of Associated Students Resource and Outreach Programs. The office works with military veterans and their allies to address Issues of post-service life, and to guide to veteran opportunities for those who seek to know more about them.

The Veterans' Outreach Center presented to SPAC on January 13, 2012. Their current mission statement is as follows:

*The Veterans' Outreach Center (VOC) helps Outreach and Center individuals with information, educational opportunities, employment, counseling, and disabilities. The VOC also benefits an information advocate for veterans, as well as a united community effort and support.*

## **Programs/Services Provided**

The VOC provides many diverse opportunities for veterans and those interested in veterans' issues to engage in on- and off-campus community building. Notable examples of public programming include Patriot Week, a week-long programming marathon devoted to reminding the Western population about the service and sacrifice that our armed forces make to the country they serve. In May 2011, this programming series ranged from an Oyster Dome day-hike to workshops for friends and loved ones of veterans recently deployed or being deployed.

During the fall of this academic year, the VOC has participated in its annual Veterans' Day Ceremony, co-sponsored a successful Halloween Costume Ball with its neighbors in the Disability Outreach Center, and offered an event on homelessness in the veteran community.

# Strategic Recommendations

## 1. Recommend the following as a revised VOC mission statement:

The Veterans The Veterans' Center (VOC) is dedicated to providing confidential non-judgmental and source student veterans and their families. The VOC provides information, social support networks, safe network, resources, events, referrals. In addition, VOC is an advocate for veterans on campus and for strives to create a united community support and understanding.

## 2. Advise an increase in website resource availability for the VOC.

Much more could be done to utilize technology to communicate with those who want to use our office or who need resources. If enhanced resources are made available through the VOC office webpage, the office can become an even more valuable resource on campus.

## 3. Endorse the VOC's implementation of a beginning- of-the-year baseline needs inventory for the Western veteran community, as well as a mid-year assessment.

Like the majority of programming offices, the VOC is prone to regular coordinator turnover. This inherent lack of continuity coupled with the short term in which coordinators serve necessitate direct feedback concerning student needs. The creation of these assessment tools would involve working with the WWU Veteran's Services Office to get approval for their usage.

## 4. Strongly encourage future VOC Coordinators to plan at least one dialogue event each year that provides the opportunity for student Veterans to share their experiences.

Evaluations for the Soldier's Stories and Soldiers After War panel events have shown that these forums were very effective at aiding the campus community to better understand and appreciate the experiences of student veterans. This growth of understanding contributes to the development of a more supportive campus environment.

Additionally, this year (2011-2012), a series of informal dinners have been coordinated by the VOC and promoted throughout the veteran community. These informal dinners have been met with a positive response and have helped to accomplish the mission of the VOC. It is recommended that the office continue this practice by coordinating bi-weekly, informal social gatherings or dinners with veterans on campus. These are not intended to be time

consuming or resource intensive events, but instead should be more informally planned and financed by participants.

**5. Recommend that the time between Assessment Rotation I and Assessment Rotation II be treated as a trial period wherein Patriot Week is an encouraged event from the office.**

During the VOC's turn in Assessment Rotation II (occurring from 2015 to 2016), SPAC and office personnel should consider mandating Patriot Week as a required event. This change will largely depend on campus attendance and participation.

**6. Recommend the continued planning of accessible co-sponsored events.**

The Fall 2011 Costume Ball, coordinated with the Disability Outreach Center, served as a way to provide a positive social event and introduce a large number of students to the office at the beginning of the year. Collaborative events similar though not limited to this event are a constructive way of expanding an office's audience.

**7. Encourage the strengthening of a VOC presence in University offices where it is needed.**

The office should work to increase the visibility of the VOC coordinator in Western's Veteran's Affairs Office. The current VOC coordinator has encouraged successive position holders to spend a quarter of their office hours in the Veteran's Affairs Office, coordinated with Wendy Gegenhuber.

Based on a 2009 survey, Veteran students expressed an interest in having Academic Advising, Financial Aid, and Career Services Center services more tailored to Veterans. It's recommended that the VOC coordinator explore ways to collaborate with those offices to create programs and services.

**8. Promote intentional efforts to be more actively inclusive of female veterans.**

The VOC should explore the interest of aiding in creation of an official AS club that focuses on the specific needs and interests of female veterans, as well as keeping this demographic in mind while planning future programming.