**Berkeley City College**
**Student Services Program Review**

# Veterans Affairs Program 2013-14 Program Review

## Executive Summary

The California State Approving Agency, the Council for Private Postsecondary and Vocational Education, and the Veterans' Administration approves Berkeley City College a s a degree-granting institution for veterans and to eligible dependents of veterans seeking educational and vocational training under Title 38, United States Code. The Veterans Affairs Program at BCC (BCC VA Office) provides specialized customer service to members of the various branches of military service, veterans, and their eligible dependents. Specifically, the staff serves as advocates for students by providing information about Berkeley City College, financial assistance and assisting with Veteran's Administration certification of their educational benefits. The VA Certifying Officials for Berkeley City College acts as liaison between the college and the regional VA offices to provide information on college procedures, and to resolve problems regarding eligibility and payment of VA benefits.

## Success Stories

1. The number of veteran students served by at BCC VA Office has increased over 68% since the 2009-10 and enrollment continues to grow annually.
2. The retention rate of VA students in fall 2011 at BCC (80.2%) was 8 percentage points higher than the overall rate at BCC (72.5%).
3. The success rate of VA students in fall 2011 at BCC (72.8) was 7 percentage points higher than the overall rate at BCC (65.6%).
4. BCC is working with the Oakland Veteran's Center in an outreach program to assist veteran students to stay in school.
5. In fall 2012, BCC veteran's started a Veteran's Club to assist and organize veteran students on campus. The club is open to all veteran and non-veteran students at all of the Peralta Community College campuses and is still active as of the 2013-14 academic year.
6. Beginning in fall 2012 semester, the VA Certifying Official/Coordinator and VA Counselor are attending annual trainings and conferences to keep them updated to Veteran education benefits and needs.

## Service Strategies

Many veterans have a difficult time adjusting from the military life to the civilian life due to the lack of proper counseling. Veteran students are often older than the average student, many of which have different needs for getting by on a daily basis. To assist our veteran students, the following strategies should be developed and/or continued:

1. Continue to serve VA students in-person as well as online by enhancing, updating and upgrading BCC Veterans Affairs Website
2. In fall 2012, veteran students formed a BCC Veterans club open to all veteran and non-veteran students in the Peralta Community College District. The club meets twice a month and will continue to be expanded.
3. Provide Veteran students with counseling and services to assist transition back into the community and civilian life.
4. Create a network with other veteran services organizations, such as Vocational Rehabilitation and the Oakland Veteran's Center.

5. Establish Veteran's Resource Center (VRC) where veteran students including their dependents can engage with other veterans, learn about their education and other benefits, receiving tutoring, work more closely with the VA Certifying Official/Coordinator and VA Counselor.

**Program Needs**

- Financial Need – specifically designated funding.
- Personnel Needs – 1 FTE Veteran Certifying Official, 1 FTE Veteran Counselor, and .5 psychological counselor
- Facility/Equipment Needs - A designated VA Center.
- Technology Needs - Automated SARS calling service and three standard computers plus one printer

**I.      Background Information**

A.  Describe the Veteran Program

1. The Unit

   The Veterans Affairs program is located on the second floor of the college. The office is open Mondays and Thursdays from 11:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. and Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.  The Program serves the Veterans and their eligible dependents with their educational benefits.  We assist with all chapters and branches of the military.  Due to the increase of veteran students in fall 2012, the Student Services Specialist has expanded VA services from a .5 to a .75 FTE position.  This position serves as the Veteran's Coordinator and Certifying Official.  There is also a .50 FTE, an increase from .25 in 2009-10, VA Counselor who also provides professional counseling and assists students with their Educational Planning.

2. History

   Berkeley City College was formerly Vista Community College, founded in April 1974 as the fourth of the Peralta Community College District's community colleges.  In June 2006, Vista Community College's name was changed to Berkeley City College and has consistently grown in full-time equivalent students (FTES) holding a proud title of the second largest college in the Peralta District.  With a growing diverse student population comes also a dually growing diverse counseling department.  In the summer of 2008, the District implemented the PeopleSoft database system, in order to stay up on current trends for collecting student data and providing students with a friendly streamline to access their records and registration online.

3. Purposes and Needs Assessed

   Personnel Needs:
   - Due to the increase of veteran students, the Student Services Specialist has reallocated the services from .5 to.75 position at the expense of services to other students, including general counseling.  The personnel requirement has proven the need to increase to a 1.0 position by the end of fiscal year 2014.
   - Increased counseling staff with at least one other counselor trained for veteran services needs

- Psychological Services Counselor  responsive to the needs of students with psychological disabilities
- Training for current Veteran Certifying Official and Veteran Counselor.

Equipment Needs (for the Veteran's Resource Center):
- One file cabinet to store all VA files in one location
- Conference Table with eight (8) chairs
- Three study areas with computers, one printer to share with the computers.
- Two standard computers (one for the VA Counselor office and one for the VRC reception area).  A printer for the VA Counselor office.
- White Board
- Couch and two side chairs for waiting area
- Two work desks (one for the VA counselor office and one for the VRC reception area).

Technology/Software Needs:
- Electronic imaging software to increase communication through inter-departmental communication
- SARS self sign-in for drop in counseling for veteran students will begin in spring 2014 semester.

4. Current Components

Currently, at BCC, there is one .75 FTE classified staff person and .50 FTE counseling faculty supporting Veterans and their dependents receiving benefits via BCC.

B. Describe unique aspects of the program

BCC is committed to the Veterans in assisting them with achieving their educational goal, maintain program requirements and keeping them informed of changes and updates. Confidential and competent one-on-one academic and personal counseling are available to all enrolled and prospective veteran/dependent students provided by an experienced, multicultural and multilingual counseling staff.

This program has no designated funding to support services.  Veteran's services are currently supported under the general fund.  Other areas of student services have been affected by the increase of veteran student services due to a lack of funding available.  The need to increase staffing in both classified and faculty in veteran affairs has taken away from other areas that require resources to provide services.

C. Describe your current resources

There is currently one .75 certifying official and one .5 counselor to assist veterans with their benefits.  On campus we provide all forms necessary for veterans/dependents. We also have a VA Website that has a wealth of information and accessible forms online for Veterans. There is currently one veteran work study student who works 20 hours per week for both general and veteran counseling assistance.

D. Provide your program goals and show how they are measured

**Goal 1.** To enhance in person and online veteran services, the website will continue to be upgraded to meet the needs of the increased veteran student population.

Measurement: Completion of the upgrades and ensuring updates at least twice per semester.

**Goal 2.** Establish a Veteran's Resource Center in spring 2014 semester.

Measurement: Completion of a Veteran student resource center with computers, learning resource equipment, tutoring, conference table and chairs, community resource information and adequate staffing by veteran students.

**Goal 3.** Work with veteran services agencies throughout the Bay Area to assist our returning veterans with local resources for assistance.

Measurement: Community involvement.

II. **Student Demographics of Those Using Your Services (by numbers) -** Who do you serve?

| SPECIAL POPULATIONS | 2008-09 | 2009-10 | 2010-11 | 2011-12 | 2012-13 | 2013-14* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Veterans Total** | **25** | **47** | **52** | **74** | **120** | **142** |

*Fall 2013 numbers only

III. **Student Performance and Feedback**

Active veteran's success and retention rates at Berkeley City College

| Term | Head-count | Census Enrollment | Total Graded | Retained | % Retention | Success | % Success |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Fall 2009 | 19 | 46 | 44 | 36 | 78.3% | 26 | 59.1% |
| Fall 2010 | 43 | 117 | 110 | 89 | 76.1% | 80 | 72.7% |
| Fall 2011 | 75 | 182 | 173 | 146 | 80.2% | 126 | 72.8% |

Persistence rate is defined as the percentage of students enrolled in at least one class at the college at fall census of the cohort year who were then enrolled in at least one class on the following opening day in District.

| College | Fall 09 | Fall 10 | Persistence Rate | Fall 10 | Fall 11 | Persistence Rate | Fall 11 | Fall 12 | Persistence Rate |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Alameda | 42 | 29 | 69.0% | 66 | 41 | 62.1% | 77 | 43 | 55.8% |
| Laney | 58 | 35 | 60.3% | 78 | 47 | 60.3% | 116 | 70 | 60.3% |
| Merritt | 9 | 5 | 55.6% | 19 | 10 | 52.6% | 19 | 13 | 68.4% |
| **BCC** | **19** | **17** | **89.5%** | **43** | **34** | **79.1%** | **76** | **39** | **51.3%** |

All active Veteran Awards (AA = Associate in Arts degree, AS = Associate in Science degree, CA = Certificate of Achievement, CC = Certificate of Completion, and CP = Certificate of Proficiency

| College | AA | AS | CA | CC | CP | Transfer to 4-year College | Total |
|---------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|--------------------------|-------|
| Berkeley | 6 | 1 | | | | 13 | 20 |
| Alameda | 12 | 1 | | 2 | 2 | | 17 |
| Laney | 9 | 5 | 2 | 12 | 1 | | 29 |
| Merritt | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | | | 6 |
| **Total** | **30** | **7** | **3** | **15** | **3** | | **58** |

BCC Veteran services will continue to enhance the program through student learning outcome (SLO) and services area outcome (SAO), using SLO/SAO assessment findings to provide feedback to this services.

IV. **Program Effectiveness**

A. Interdepartmental/Program/Campus Collaboration

1. How does the unit (and committees in which unit participates) support other administrative, student services and academic units in the college?

   Currently, the VA Program works collaboratively with various other student services departments. The students in the VA Program are also part of EOPS, DSPS and PACE Programs. The veterans' affairs program supports a variety of administrative, student services and academic units in the college. The certifying officials are liaisons with the student services and administrative units, attending regular monthly meetings. VA Workshops/Conferences occur various times during the year that is not always available in our area; but we are pro-active in obtaining the literature from those workshops/conferences in order to say up-to-date.

1. Quantity of program/department/service delivered (student utilization of services and student engagement)
   How many veteran students do you serve (unduplicated)?

| | Chapter | | | | | Academic Term Totals |
|---|---------|-----|-----|------------|------|----------------------|
| | 30/33 | 31 | 35 | 1606/1607 | VRAP | |
| 2008-09 | 25 | 1 | 8 | 2 | n/a | **36** |
| 2009-10 | 30 | 1 | 14 | 2 | n/a | **47** |
| 2010-11 | 39 | 1 | 10 | 2 | n/a | **52** |
| 2011-12 | 59 | 1 | 13 | 1 | n/a | **74** |
| 2012-13 | 73 | 2 | 20 | 7 | 18 | **120** |
| 2013-14* | 83 | 1 | 20 | 9 | 29 | **142** |
| **Chapter Totals** | **216** | **6** | **62** | **12** | **5** | |
| **LEGEND:** | Chapter 30/33 = Veteran (all branches)<br>Chapter 31 = Vocational Rehabilitation Veteran<br>Chapter 35 = Veteran Dependent<br>Chapter 1606/1607 = Active Duty/Veteran Reserves<br>VRAP = Veteran Retraining Assistance Program (initiated 7/1/12) | | | | | |

*Fall 2013 semester only*

The veterans' affairs department serves approximately 2% of the entire population of BCC. There were 6,305 students enrolled at BCC in fall semester of 2012.

2. How many appointments/contacts with students do you have on any given day?

The highest volumes of contacts usually occur during the peak periods during the year. The VA counselor could be scheduled to meet with six to eight students for appointments daily. Appointments are typically 30 to 60 minutes sessions, depending on the needs of the students. During peak registration periods, it is not uncommon for a counselor to meet with four to six students an hour for a 10-15 minute drop-in appointment. During this brief drop-in appointment, students are encouraged to schedule a follow up appointment to develop their Student Educational Pans and review their VA file. The Veteran's Affairs Coordinator/Certifying Official meets with veteran students on a daily basis.

## V.    Service Area Outcomes

The veterans' affairs department has developed student learning outcomes that reflect the goals of the department and Berkeley City College's institutional goals.

VA program's SLO is published online at http://www.berkeleycitycollege.edu/wp/student_service_programs/files/2011/08/Veterans-Program-SLO-2010-11.pdf

## VI.   ACTION PLAN: Using the results of the data collected and discussed in this program review, identify:

A. The future needs of the program/service area.

- Financial Need – a specifically designated funding:  The immediate needs of the program revolve around insufficient resources and the consequent lack of funding for faculty, staff and program activities.  The lack of funding available for this program is the main reason it is a part-time function of other full-time staff.  Ideally, we would like to see a veteran center on campus that can support the veterans/dependents with all VA resources available for them.  In order to provide equitable access to BCC veteran students, specially designated funds are urgently needed.  There are no categorical or specific funds for veteran students and with the end of the war we anticipate enrollment to significantly increase.  Our resources from the general fund are diminishing. This is a continuing issue for our Veteran Affairs program.

- Personnel Needs – 1 FTE Veteran Certifying Official, and 1 FTE Veteran Counselor, and .5 FTE psychological counselor:  Should this program receive funding, both access to the program and increased success of more veteran students at BCC could be achieved.  For example, an increase in faculty and/or staff could allow the program to monitor and intervene in support of students' persistence and retention more intensively.

- Facility/Equipment Needs:  A designated area on campus where Veterans/dependents can go and obtain all necessary information pertaining to their educational benefits as well as other benefits.  Centralized filing system for easy access to our veteran's files for both coordinators and counselors.  A Veteran's Resource Center is in the planning process and should be open spring 2014 at the BCC south campus.

- Technology Needs: Automated SARS calling service and three standard computers for the Veteran's Resource Center.

B. The following are action plans which are needed to be initiated to provide increased support to student success:

- Training for coordinators and counselors related to new veteran programs, including Post/911 and VRAP.

- Intervention Programs: Intervention programs need to be intensified to increase the monitoring and support of veteran students. We also need to retain the services of a psychological counselor not only for the veteran population, but for all students of BCC. Currently, our veterans who are in the PSSD program rely on that counselor for support or are referred out to the city/county mental health services.

- Veteran Application Process: Streamline the application process by providing tools to enroll in VONAPP online through the Berkeley City College website. Some veteran student's who have recently been discharged from the service, need assistance to apply for their benefits. BCC is hoping to provide clear instructions and online assistance for these students to apply for their benefits.

- BCC Veteran's Webpage: Continue to update and enhance the Veteran's Affairs webpage on the BCC website to ensure a "user-friendly" environment.

- BCC Veteran's Club: Continue to develop and strengthen the Veteran's Club at the college to assist both our veterans and their dependents in the local community. The Veteran's Club sponsors many activities bringing attention to the needs of our returning veterans, such as college transfer workshops, community resources and support groups for veterans and their families, as well as bringing attention to the significance of our National holidays, including Veteran's Day and Memorial Day.

C. The future goals and methods of assessment of the program/service area, including student learning outcomes service area outcomes

- Expand outreach strategies to the veterans and their dependents to make them aware of the educational benefits available to them.

- The program will continue to assess the quality and delivery methods of its services as it implements programs and activities in fulfilling its mission of enrolling, graduating and transferring an increasing number of veteran/dependent students, student learning outcomes assessments and student satisfaction levels.

- Veterans or their dependents may never reach the classroom without encouragement from coordinators/counselors.

- Veteran students may prematurely leave the classroom without VA coordinator/ counseling support.

- Students may never identify their academic goals without VA counseling support and expertise.

- At-risk Veteran students or dependents may not receive referrals to community resources that would allow them to remain in school.

D. The strategies and actions to be taken by the program/service area over the next six years to strengthen the program and meet the strategic goals of the program and the college

- Offer VA Workshops/Orientations at the beginning of each semester. VA coordinator and VA Counselor will provide a workshop for new veteran students planning to enroll at the BCC two weeks prior to each semester. Workshop will provide information on how to receive their veteran benefits, how they are applied each semester and requirements of participating and continuing in the program. Follow up appointments will be provided to each student four to six weeks after the semester begins to ensure that the students are on track and address any difficulties they may be facing.

- Ensure that each continuing VA student has an appointment with the VA counselor each semester to keep them on track of their student education plans. The addition of the Veteran's Resource Center will assist keeping veterans on track.

- Encourage participation in the BCC Veteran's Club and Associated Student Body.

- Arrange a workshop with the BCC Transfer and Career center for VA students to receive personal assistance in selecting transfer schools and/or receiving information on their career choice.

E. The support needed by the program/service area in order to address issues resulting from the self-study.

- BCC is projected to experience continued growth, and as the veteran student population increases, and more students attend community college as a pathway to a four-year college or university, the program will most likely need to expand its current staffing and services.

F. Describe any impact experienced by your department due to a reduction of resources.

- The Veteran Services program has never had specific resources dedicated to the department. Funding is allocated from general fund.

- Due to the downsizing of deployed military personnel, an increased headcount is expected over the next five years.

- Resources will be required to keep up with the increased demand.

G. In the current environment of reduced resources, how does your department plan to continue adequate services for veterans?

- Due to veteran services being reallocated within other units, a negative impact has been generated, for both the college and students. Areas experiencing negative impact include: general counseling, divisional budget planning and expenditure monitoring

- Services will continue as is until new funding can be obtained.

H. Recommendations for the college to maintain the Veteran's Affairs department's quality of service.

- To maintain current quality of services, a dedicated location with computer access for veterans would assist them to apply for their benefits, obtain information on all services available to them and encourage them to seek help when needed.

- Resources will be required to keep up with the increase demand. With so many troops coming home, an increased headcount is expected over the next few years, as veterans have up to 10 years to use their Post /911 education benefits.

- Another program, VRAP, was initiated in July 2012. This is a one year retraining program for veterans between the ages of 35 and 60, and is geared towards training program at community colleges. The fall 2012 semester at BCC is the first semester veterans have been awarded these funds and VRAP constitutes 7% of the current veteran population at BCC. The VRAP program ends in April 2014, but many participants in the program are planning to continuing their educational efforts either at BCC or continuing to a four-year college or university.