**Berkeley City College
Student Services Program Review**

**Veterans Affairs Program 2009-10 Program Review**

**Executive Summary**

**Introduction**

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 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 story:** the number of students receiving Veteran services increased by 61% over a 4-year period from 56 2006-07 to 90 in 2009-10.

**Service Strategies:**

1. Enhance, update and upgrade BCC Veterans Affairs Website
2. Initiate a BCC Veterans club and organize events at least twice a semester.
3. **Background Information**
4. Describe:
5. The Unit

The Veterans Affairs program is located on the second floor of the college. The office is open Monday through Friday 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. There are two staff personnel who serve as the certifying officials; they both dedicate .25 FTE of their workload for this program. There is also a .25 FTE VA Counselor who also provides professional counseling and assist students with their Educational Planning.
6. Its 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.

1. Purposes and Needs Assessed

Personnel Needs:

* + Increased counseling staff or have all counselors trained to assist our veteran population
* Psychological Services Counselor responsive to the needs of students with psychological disabilities

 Equipment Needs:

* 3 computer monitors (2 per counselor and 4 per staff) to better serve students when reviewing their registration, transcripts and certifying online.
* One laptop for VA student worker to use in VA office along with certifying official to assist with verifying VA student enrollment and various office tasks.
* One file cabinet to store all VA files in one location
* Ergonomic furniture/chairs

Technology/Software Needs:

* Electronic imaging software to increase communication through inter-departmental communication
* SARS, automated calling service for reminding students of their appointment and also self sign-in for drop in counseling
1. Current Components

Currently, at BCC, there are .5 FTE classified staff and .20 FTE counseling supporting Veterans and their dependents receiving benefits via BCC.

1. Describe unique aspects of the program
* BCC is committed to the Veterans affairs program with 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 available to all enrolled and prospective veteran/dependent students provided by an experienced, multicultural and multilingual counseling staff.
1. Describe your current resources

There are currently two certifying officials and one 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.
2. Provide your program goals and show how they are measured

**Goal 1.** Update and upgrade BCC Veteran Affairs Website regularly.

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

**Goal 2.** Initiate Veterans Student Club at BCC and conduct meetings and events at least twice per semester.

 Measurement: Club meeting minutes and/or event records.

**II. Student Demographics of Those Using Your Services (by numbers)**

1. Who do you serve?

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **2006-07** | **2007-08** | **2008-09** |
| **SPECIAL POPULATIONS** |  |  |  |
| VETERANS | 56 | 55 | 76 |
| **TOTAL** | **56** | **55** | **76** |

1. **Student Performance and Feedback**

BCC Veteran services will work with the college administrator and staff to develop student learning outcome and services area outcome to provide feedback to this services.

**IV. Program Effectiveness**

1. Interdepartmental/Program/Campus Collaboration
2. 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 the PACE Program.

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.

Currently, the veterans’ affairs program is in the process of reconstructing our website to better serve the increasing veteran/dependent population.

1. Quantity of program/department/service delivered (student utilization of services and student engagement)

We do not currently know the overall effectiveness of our Veteran’s Affairs Program.
2.
3. How many veteran students do you serve (unduplicated)?

 

The veterans’ affairs department serves less than 1% of the entire population of BCC. There were 6,212 students enrolled at BCC in fall semester of 2008 and enrollment in Spring 2009 reached 6,500.

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

On any given day, it can vary from 0 to 10. The highest volumes of contacts usually occur during the peak periods during the year. The VA counselor could be scheduled to meet with five to six students for appointments. 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.

**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.

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

1. The future needs of the program/service area.
* The urgent 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.
* 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.
* Intervention programs are need to be intensified to increase the monitoring and support of veteran students. We also need to gain back a psychological services counselor not only for the veteran population, but for all students of BCC. Currently, our veterans who are in the DSPS program rely on that counselor for support or are referred out to the city/county mental health services.
* Streamline the application process by providing tools to enroll in VONAPP online on the Berkeley City College website.
* Update and enhance the Veteran’s Affairs page on the BCC website to ensure a “user-friendly” environment.
* Establish a Veteran’s Affair’s Club at the college to assist both our veterans and their dependents in the local community.
	+ Train more general counselors in VA benefits and how they can assist these students
1. The following are action plans which are needed to be initiated to provide increased support to student success:
* 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.
* Psychological counseling services
* Increased counseling staff
* Ergonomic furniture/chairs)
* Automated SARS calling service
* 3 computer monitors (2 per counselor and 4 per staff) to better serve students when reviewing their registration, transcripts and certifying online.
* One laptop for VA student worker to use in VA office along with certifying official to assist with verifying VA student enrollment and various office tasks.
* Centralize the filing system for easy access to our veteran’s files for both coordinators and counselors.
* Train all counselors in how to work with veterans and assist with their education plans.
Fully train the additional .25 coordinator in veteran’s benefits to assist both veterans and their dependents.
1. 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 the number of veteran/dependent students, student learning out comes 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
1. 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 every semester.

1. 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.