

VIII. Grades, Intervention, Tutoring

When the Post-9/11 GI Bill took effect, in 2009, some observers worried that veterans might not succeed at college. But new research shows that where support services for veterans exist, those students do well in the classroom – Libby Sander. "When Support Services Exist, Veterans Fare Well in Class, Report Says." The Chronicle of Higher Education 60.13 (2013).



Three top learning goals:

- 1) Develop an understanding of how tutoring is viewed, works, and can work best for student veterans;
- 2) Identify early intervention and typical reactions to their recommendation;
- 3) Understand some of the veteran reactions or expectations regarding grades for assignments

ABSTRACT: Support in the form of tutoring and early alert referral for academic, behavioral or falling behind risks are typically available, albeit function slightly differently, for student veterans. Grades and expectations can also run the range, depending on side agendas related to the purpose of attending college for the student veteran and even how pass/fail worked in military based education. A few facts and tips related to these can help a faculty member with both retention and student success among his/her student veterans.

BRIEFINGS:

The most fundamental (funding) division in grading under the GI Bill is between C and F – C or better passes, F means the student veteran may repeat the course but still under purview of the GI Bill. Tutoring, whether paid for by the V.A. or part of general student support services, can be a bridge to success and way to overcome the time away from the classroom for the student veteran. Early alert referrals & counseling recommendations: there typically is a system for handling early 'at risk' for general student population. Does early alert work any different for student veterans? Finally grades and their motivating factor: do some student veterans play the numbers game just shooting for a minimum C, or seek graduation with honors, and if both, what are the characteristic differences of the

two drives? What about tutoring/writing center conditions? Will a student veteran succeed or even attend tutoring in a crowded, noisy, long wait time learning center?

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TIPS:

Faculty TIP 1): Tutoring. Promote tutoring as part of the academic ‘success team’. Tutoring in the vets lounge makes a difference. A crowded tutoring or writing or learning center can be overwhelming. If you can get a tutor to volunteer in a student veterans’ lounge or other safe space, you have a better chance.

Faculty TIP 2): Plow ahead.: Under the ideal of ‘train to standard’ of military training there sometimes builds the idea that you just move forward in a class, with the expectations that the trainee will learn hands on or catch up before the final (ultimate) assessment. This can lead to the student bad habit of just nodding away in class and not asking questions or not addressing academic needs until too late. Quizzes and checklists can help, but ultimately the culture shock of how long it really takes to take a course (how many hours of work for each hour in-class) does not sink in easily.

Faculty TIP 3): Study groups are good but no one has time to meet. Study groups are excellent (especially student veteran study groups) but face two problems: 1)everyone’s schedule is very diverse/hard to gather together; 2)typically student veterans are distributed among different sections of a course that are taught different ways, different textbooks, different assessments. One possible suggestion: create an online study group space – either through your college’s LMS (Blackboard, Canvas, etc) or through social media (for example a CLOSED facebook group) – for SVO (or SVO invited) members. These e-study groups can create different discussion groups for different subjects or assignments, etc, and eventually if nurtured, can be a resource for student veterans helping each other with

subject matter with examples and language/lingo that may be clearer to someone else from a military background/mindset.

Faculty TIP 4): Early Alerts can work...but only if the student veteran feels part

of the campus culture. “Grades are the leading cause of student veterans’ failure to complete their degrees; however, poor grades are normally just the symptoms of something else.¹” If an early alert triggers developmental workshops mixed with general population students, it stands less of a chance to work. When academics are ‘on mission’ for a student veteran or active duty/reserves, they will likely try harder to improve work. The same qualities that make them attractive to employees: work the mission at almost any cost, honest and direct assumption of responsibility, make them ideal for follow through on courses. Some will say ‘I just want the C.’ This is true and also myth. Some Student veterans just want to get through classes to the degree or certificate; but the competitive nature of some will have them fighting for an A or B as best as possible. The more tied in to the campus (especially SVO and other veterans), the likelier the early alert will yield results.

8 Sample SCENARIOS* relevant for Grades, Intervention, Tutoring

for instructions on how to use Sample Scenarios, go to HOW TO USE TOOLKIT chapter/module and read: “How to use SCENARIOS: Teachable Moments strategy or as Faculty Development exercises”

SCENARIO 1:	Can I get an incomplete instead of a W or F? Only 1 week of classes left (and last papers or last exams due).
SCENARIO 2:	I just saw my posted grade today. I assumed I would be given an F grade/didn’t understand the difference between a W drop and a F and it’s cost/effect on GI Bill when life got in the way with attending college. I was at a [A, B, passing] grade before things just got out of control. Can you please do a change of grade from drop to F for me?
SCENARIO 3:	It’s not fair I was dropped without warning from class because of issues related to my health leading me to miss classes. Is there anything you can do about re-instating me?
SCENARIO 4:	Other students (in group or general class population) report to you student veteran seemed drunk or high in meeting outside of class
SCENARIO 5:	Other students (in group or general class population) tell you student veteran had in backpack, bag, etc, possible contraband (alcohol, pillboxes, a gun) in meeting outside of class.
SCENARIO 6:	Student veteran that has been disciplined or called out on disruptive behavior sends accusatory or disturbing email (or phone message or office hour visit) after instructor initiated intervention by counseling or college safety.
SCENARIO 7:	Student WHILE in ongoing class wants to raise/dispute a grade from a teacher NOW
SCENARIO 8:	Student WHILE in ongoing class wants to raise/dispute a comment during/from peer review NOW

***Where are the solutions?** There are too many different ways to ‘solve’ each, agreeing and disagreeing, similar and dissenting, so instead you have 1)the scenario 2)suggested steps in Chapter [“HOW to USE Toolkit”](#) to find your own localized solutions. **Forcing people to start discussions - active learning -- rather than reading/skimming what I thought/found worked in MY location/culture is the key to action and owning the problem and approaches.** Only homegrown solutions SOLVE WITH PURPOSE.

¹ University of Kentucky Veteran Resource Center home page. <http://www.uky.edu/Veterans/newstudent.htm>