

## ***Called to Serve: A Handbook on Student Veterans and Higher Education***

by Florence A. Hamrick, Corey B. Rumann, & Associates (Eds.)

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American history has been shaped by conflicts and wars, and as they subside, veterans must begin the daunting task of reintegrating into lives left on hold. Efforts such as free land, pensions, and educational benefits have been afforded to veterans to aid in the transition. Over the past half century, educational benefits have profoundly impacted higher education, while offsetting the potentially crippling unemployment of veterans. With each major reentry, American higher education has been forced to adapt to serve a new population, presenting unique challenges to the campus ecosystem.

*Called to Serve* is a well-crafted foundation text for campuses at any point in the process, but it offers a wealth of knowledge for those in the initial planning stages. The text begins with a contextual framework from the editors setting the stage for chapters. The wide array of authors brings a variety of disciplines and rich backgrounds, including military service. Though no natural subdivisions are offered, the chapters essentially translate as historical context and foundation (Chapters 1-3), current needs and complexities (Chapters 4-7), and structuring services and the campus (Chapters 8-11).

The initial three chapters offer a historical context for understanding the military's impact on American higher education. The far-reaching impact on items such as land grant structures, research, training, campus construction, and intercollegiate athletics paint a clear picture of effective structures that have endured. Related federal legislation and decisions are introduced and frame the content of Chapter 2, which offers a more in-depth understanding of the G.I. bill programs and the underlying politics. Clarification on the various bills is presented in a concise format, easily digested by a novice. Chapter 3 focuses on understanding the cycles of transitions soldiers may face during the cycles of deployment and returns. Student development theory on transition is referenced, and recommended practices are offered as campuses consider how to assist students who may be in flux.

Chapter 4 begins the next section with current data on enrollment patterns and applications of engagement data to understand student veteran trends. Chapter 5 explores the complexities of identity. This chapter examines the many diverse

characteristics veterans may bring to higher education and the associated services that may be required to support them. The authors indirectly address the historical reality that veterans have previously been white males, and now campuses must conceptualize, through the broadest lens possible, diversity of race, gender, and sexuality. Chapter 6 focuses on aspects surrounding mental and physical disabilities and creating an inclusive campus community. The section concludes with the chapter on enrollment trends impacting degree completion. Special attention is placed on the transfer process and its impact on completion. Useful strategies are offered in response to the issue.

The final group of chapters (8-11) begins with a framework for structuring veteran services offices. Suggestions on establishing mission, administrative structure, services, and assessments are offered. Though some suggestions may be out of reach for institutions based on financial resources, they can be utilized in building the case for support. The chapter concludes with direction on needs assessment and evaluation criteria to utilize in building a program. This may be of considerable value for campuses starting at the beginning. Chapter 9, though brief, speaks to learning theories and integrating veterans into the classroom and learning structures of today's campus. In addition to a theoretical framework, examples of best practices are providing for orientation, creating a learning community structure, and developing assessment techniques for understanding the campus status.

Self-advocacy and engaging veterans in their success are the focus of Chapter 10. Engagement strategies through student organizations, examples of advocacy methods, and strategies for advising and support for non-military life are provided. Chapter 11 may be the most valuable for those unsure of a starting point. The focus on engaging and rallying institutional leadership to bring student veteran issues to the forefront is central. Useful strategies are offered on examining campus structures, policies, and future directions. Understanding the campus climate and how to navigate change are also discussed. Each of the final chapters offers a resources section in addition to the references. The resources provide greater direction and more information for the reader. The text concludes with a case study examining institutional change within the organization. The case allows readers to apply techniques from the text and reflect on how they can best move forward in changing their campus cultures. The text concludes with a conclusion from the editors, a glossary of important terms, and charts on military ranks.

The text is well-crafted to be a valuable resource to most campus administrators. Most notably absent is the vantage point for those who may work in the 2-year, for-profit, or proprietary setting. The information will still be applicable, but those audiences may have to adapt some techniques. Assessment is referenced consistently across chapters, but in-depth information on strategy may be required by some readers. Additionally, interests on grant writing and fundraising for veterans efforts are not directly addressed. Fortunately, the resources and references offered provide directions to additional information. Vignettes from students describing their transitions masterfully weave through the chapters.

The various authors provide a framework, structure, and future direction for establishing campus services for veterans. The text could be used as a key reference for campuses unsure of the next steps to take in serving men and women who have served the United States of America.

Throughout out the text, it becomes evident that this is not the first time mass numbers of veterans have entered higher education, yet efforts to change the campus ethos seem short lived. Hopefully, change generated through current research will lead to systemic, prolonged change.