



# Improving the Experience of Student Veterans: A Student-Led Initiative



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## Purpose

To respond to the student-identified concerns of Student Veterans enrolled in Linfield-Good Samaritan's School of Nursing undergraduate nursing program.

## Background

Student Veterans (SV) represent a growing community among nursing students as the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan draw down. These students bring unique experiences and views to the educational milieu offering opportunities and challenges to the schools they attend. The literature shows that SVs often struggle with their civilian identity, lack an understanding of university culture, and face financial challenges. Due to the demands of military life, SVs have frequently experienced responsibilities and interpersonal dynamics their civilian colleagues have not. Further, female SVs are over-represented in postsecondary education, 85% of SVs are between the ages of 24 and 40, 62% are first-generation students, 47% have children, and 47.3% are married.

## Methods

In Spring 2019, Linfield College's Good Samaritan School of Nursing sought to address the needs of SV's. To ensure their needs would be met, interviews were conducted with enrolled SVs.

Linfield's SVs' concerns were consistent with the literature; students reported feeling challenged by the transition, sought structure, and missed the camaraderie of the military.

SVs felt they needed help with the processes of GI Bill formalities, time to acclimate to the culture of nursing school, and guidance to develop strategies for balancing school, families, and work.

Student Veterans decided among themselves. Recognizing the challenge of funding restraints, the SV community prioritized their concerns accordingly and sought to seek solutions at no cost to the college.

Their primary concerns were the need for peer support, clear direction related to GI Bill benefits, guidance regarding the academic schedule, and a greater understanding of their experience as SVs from the faculty and their student colleagues. Veteran students partnered with their peers, faculty, and staff to implement their prioritized interventions.

## Outcomes

A link was implemented (at no cost) onto the Linfield College School of Nursing website for interested Veteran nursing students to apply for a PEER resource during the duration of their educational career at Linfield.

Multicultural Programs Home

- Programming and Support
- Multicultural Student Center
- Veterans Support**
- Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Council
- Diversity at Linfield
- McMinnville Campus Multicultural Programs

Linfield College / School of Nursing / Student Life / Multicultural Programs / Veterans Support

### Veterans Support

The Linfield-Good Samaritan School of Nursing supports students who are military veterans. We believe that by supporting military veterans and their families, we are creating an inclusive learning environment where students can not only feel supported but can be successful as future nurses.

It is also important to educate our future nurse leaders about providing the best care for military veterans in medical and community settings.

Linfield College is a Pledging Nursing School for [Joining Forces](#).

#### Support for Veteran Students

Linfield College Portland campus offers several services that are available to all students but can be particularly helpful for veteran students.

**Learning Support** - The goal of LSS-Portland is to assist students who need help developing and refining the necessary skills for successful completion of the nursing curricula. In addition to offering academic assistance, LSS serves the needs of students with disabilities. We are committed to providing equal and integrated access for individuals with disabilities.

**Counseling Services** - Psychological counseling is available to students of Linfield College - Portland Campus through a contract with Psychological Service Center.

**Financial Aid** - The financial aid office determines student financial need and eligibility and offers financial aid through a variety of programs.

**How do I Use My VA Benefits at Linfield College-Good Samaritan School of Nursing?**

- Notify the certifying official at the campus that you would like to use your VA benefits
- Provide certificate of eligibility to the certifying official
- For more information visit: <https://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/>

Interim Certifying Official for Portland Campus:  
Norina Coffelt at 503-883-2322 or at [ncoffel@linfield.edu](mailto:ncoffel@linfield.edu)

**VA Benefits & Programs at Linfield** - Contact the [Veteran Assistance Team](#) for questions regarding military and veteran benefits.

If you would like to be connected with a fellow student nursing veteran as a *peer resource*, please contact Michael Hogan, class of May 2020, at [mhogan@linfield.edu](mailto:mhogan@linfield.edu) or complete the form below.

I would like to be contacted by a fellow nursing veteran as a peer resource

Yes  
 No

For further inquiries, please contact Hilda Escalera Gonzalez-Assistant Director of Multicultural Programs & Student Leadership at [hescal@linfield.edu](mailto:hescal@linfield.edu) or (503) 413-7273.

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## Outcomes

In response to the illuminated concerns, the Veterans Club was revitalized with a new president, vice president, and increased membership, including SVs and non-veteran students.

Veterans Club participation and activities have increased over the past three semesters; enrollment doubled to more than 20 participants.

A hyperlink was included on the Linfield Veteran Support webpage allowing interested SVs an opportunity to connect to a Veteran peer resource. SVs felt this approach addressed and supported the notion that SVs feel more comfortable when interacting with someone who has had similar experiences.

## Future Directions

SVs hope their work will strengthen future grant applications. The current Veterans Club leadership anticipate providing direction and resources to strengthen the clubs ongoing success through expanding student participation, outreach to the Veteran community, and partnering with SVs at area campuses. students and present the experiences and concerns of SVs to faculty in the spring of 2020.

## Select References

Gibbs, C. E., Lee, C. J., & Ghanbari, H. (2019). Promoting Faculty Education on Needs and Resources for Military-Active and Veteran Students. *Journal of Nursing Education*, 58(6), 347-353. doi:10.3928/01484834-20190521-05

Gregg, B. T., Howell, D. M., & Shordike, A. (2016). Experiences of Veterans Transitioning to Postsecondary Education. *The American journal of occupational therapy : official publication of the American Occupational Therapy Association*, 70(6), 7006250010p1-7006250010p8. doi:10.5014/ajot.2016.021030

## Acknowledgements

This journey would not have been possible without the help and assistance from Dr. Miles Davis (President; Linfield College), Kimberly Jones (Dean; Portland Nursing), Dr. Paul Smith (Faculty; Portland Nursing), Dr. Morgan Torris-Hedlund (Faculty; Portland Nursing), and the students that contributed their time to provide insight.