

Serving Veterans in Professional Science Master's Programs

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California is home to 2.3 million military veterans, nearly 10% of the nation's 23.4 million. Serving veterans is a high priority for the California State University (CSU). The system has developed a national model for delivering high quality programs and services to military veterans.

In the past, most veterans-serving programs focused on helping former service members complete an Associate or Bachelor's Degree. Few programs were available that provided graduate education, and fewer still offered graduate professional education to veterans who held a bachelor's degree or had completed some graduate education. Approximately 20% of California's recent military veterans fall into that category.

Key Steps in Successfully Delivering PSM Programs for Veterans and Active Duty Military Personnel

Development of a Partnership with the Military Community: Military bases have an infrastructure for delivering educational programs that provide a solid foundation for a strong partnership with a university.



State Agency Approval of Programs: In order for military personnel to use their VA education benefits to enroll in a degree or certificate program, the program must first be approved by

the State Approving Agency designated by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Conducting a Demand Survey: CSU began its initiative with a survey of demand, which demonstrated high levels of interest in graduate programs in business and management, computer sciences, and information technologies and considerable interest in emergency services and in environmental sciences programs.

Online Delivery: Program access for active duty military and for many former military service members typically requires fully online delivery, at least for initial courses in a Certificate Program. It is not necessary, however, that an entire program be totally online.

Streamlined Application, Admission, Enrollment, and Financing Procedures: Obtaining transcripts and letters of reference can be challenging for service members, who are distant from a campus, perhaps even overseas. Admission, enrollment, and fee payment procedures must be readily accessible, with one-stop access to graduate program student services.

Transferability/Transportability of Credit: A particularly significant need on the part of veterans and active duty military is transferability and transportability of credit. They need to be able to complete courses overseas or while on a military base in the U.S. and to be able to transfer their course credit to other colleges and universities.

Graduate Policies and Procedures: Addressing the needs of veterans requires flexibility in institutional policies and procedures in areas such as application procedures and transfer of credits that must be addressed in the early phases of planning.

Funding in the Post-9/11 GI Bill Makes Graduate Education Affordable: On August 1, 2009, the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act began providing more than two-million veterans with significant funding for education at the graduate as well as undergraduate level.

Institutional Commitment and Leadership: The CSU Chancellor and Presidents, and certainly Stephen Weber, President of San Diego State University, have created campus environments friendly to veterans with support from senior CSU leadership and management. This top-level institutional commitment is critical to success of PSM and related initiatives serving this population of highly talented and dedicated citizens.