

DUKE VETERANS Issues and Proposals

HEALTH CARE

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Proposal</b>
Less than 15% of veterans utilize VAMCs for their physical and mental healthcare, despite often being free of charge	Outreach to veterans at Duke to better <i>utilize VA healthcare</i> for basic needs and primary care by providing trainings or events in which student vets register at VAMC Durham and get connected with a primary care clinic and physician
VA loses money paying overlapping fees, including a “health fee,” which the student veteran may be exempted from, if they are registered at the VAMC	<i>Waive health care fee</i> if student presents VA ID card or other proof of enrollment in VAMC at matriculation or registration
Service Medical Records are not recognized at Student Health Office as official. At least <i>one veteran has been hospitalized</i> for receiving conflicting medications.	<i>Streamline service medical records</i> with state and college immunizations requirements.
Disability Management has mistreated numerous disabled student veterans formally diagnosed by the VA with PTSD and TBI, by failing to provide accommodations in a timely and respectful manner possible violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990	<i>Establish an assumption of disability</i> and improve the recognition of and care for sufferers of TBI and PTSD when service member has been properly diagnosed (either via proof of disability compensation or VBA letter)
CAPS service does not have counselors trained to deal specifically with issues related to military and veteran status or with veterans in crisis. <i>Several student veterans have been referred out to community providers</i>	<i>Train CAPS counselors</i> to better understand parameters for care of veteran population, including privacy issues, moral/ethical aspects of mental health care, and bringing other lessons learned from VAMC to Duke ensuring the two learn from one another
Many concerns veterans have are not addressed in clinical settings, due in part to historical precedent and to the overuse of pharmacological tendencies within the VA	<i>Facilitate “rap groups” and other informal social gatherings</i> on or off campus for the purpose of sharing concerns, expectations, and gripes in a non-clinical setting.
Over half of all student veterans will contemplate their own suicide. At least one veterans group on campus was formed as a result of a veteran killing themselves	<i>Organize trainings on suicide prevention</i> catered to the epidemic of soldier and veteran suicide for faculty, staff, and students at Duke and explore potential for training volunteers to serve on the national or regional suicide prevention hotline/s

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### REGISTRATION AND FINANCIAL AID

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Proposal</b>
Few registrars at Duke know how to deal effectively with the varying requirements of the diverse forms of educational benefits provided to veterans (VEAP, VocRehab, GI Bill chapters 30-33, Yellow Ribbon Fund, etc.). <u>One registrar, in an April 2013 meeting, described their job as “miserable,” another, as “a nightmare.”</u>	<b><i>Establish a paid staff position</i></b> to act as intermediary between schools to synthesize registration, financial aid, and student life data relevant to the veteran community <b><i>Consolidate information after each term</i></b> on GI Bill “lessons learned” from Trinity and all grad/pro school registrars and share with Provost and Financial Aid offices.
Student vet population has exploded in short amount of time, leading many registrars to claim they are overloaded with work and ill-equipped to do their job. <u>The certifying official at Duke struggled to meet the needs of 50+ veterans in 2010, and had their workload triple without a matching increase in institutional support</u>	<b><i>Create work/study positions for student veterans</i></b> to provide insight as well as peer support for incoming registrants and more sustainably distribute workload
GI Bill and other benefits cannot be processed until the day of registration that, for incoming students to many schools, is often days before classes start.	<b><i>Create “tentative” soft registration</i></b> for confirmed student vets as soon as course catalogues are published, to allow certification to begin, followed by course confirmation in September
Payments to student for books are delayed many months, denying students the ability to keep up with assigned readings	<b><i>Waive or layaway cost of required textbooks</i></b> for veterans benefits recipients
Payments to student for cost of living are delayed many months, endangering financial stability of student veterans	<b><i>Create microloan funds</i></b> for student veterans with low or zero interest, or fold costs into bursar account
Yellow Ribbon Fund allocations vary from each school and reflects poorly upon the consistency of Duke’s support of veterans	<b><i>Increase overall scholarship pool for student veterans</i></b> and establish a “no fewer than” standard for all schools at Duke

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### INFORMATION SYSTEMS:

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Proposal</b>
With no place to connect with one another, student veterans face an isolated experience at Duke, which inhibits networking and other building blocks for success	<b><i>Establish a permanent space for veterans</i></b> in an abandoned or under-used location, ensuring a safe and private place for mutual decompression after trigger events
Student veterans have no immediate way to ID one another on campus, like racial or gender identifiers, but often face similarly prejudicial experiences	Proactively <b><i>share veteran contact information</i></b> from admissions material with veteran-dedicated faculty or staff that is accountable to veteran community
Despite having a major VA Medical Center across the street, little collaboration done between Duke and the VA reaches the level of the “end-user” student veteran	<b><i>Compile comprehensive database</i></b> of overlapping population, research, and other resources between Duke and the VA to facilitate top-down and bottom-up cooperation
Student veterans are not guided toward veteran mentors on campus of senior students, faculty, or staff who can guide them in the transition from veteran student to successful civilian	<b><i>Establish a list of veteran faculty, alumni, and staff</i></b> willing to create time in their days to meeting with and coaching student veterans for the duration of their enrollment and into their subsequent professional careers

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STUDENT LIFE AND COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Proposal</b>
<p>The Duke community is often an exclusionary and unwelcome environment for vets, evidenced LDOC's insensitive caricature of war in 2012, the absence of an Afghanistan panel on the war memorial, the disregard for the annual tolling of the bells on Armistice Day in 2012, and repeated ignorance of concerns raised by a diverse student veteran body, etc.</p>	<p><b><i>Establish a paid staff position</i></b> dedicated explicitly to veterans at or near Duke, to include students, staff, faculty, alumni, and the VAMC that can act as consultant for branding, messaging, and public relations to put Duke's best face forward with its veteran population in mind</p>
<p>Campout, a centrally significant Duke activity, is exclusionary for veterans who suffer features of combat related PTSD. They are denied the opportunity to build memories and participate fully in this social activity that many others are able to share without impediment.</p>	<p><b><i>Provide medical waivers</i></b> to student veterans who wish to participate in Campout itself without having their mental health compromised by loud noises or massive crowds, <b><i>or hold a separate lottery</i></b> for students with disabilities who wish to be afforded equal access to Duke Basketball games</p>
<p>Duke University has failed to adequately synthesize the concerns of its student veteran body with current events, evidenced by its failing to capitalize on a student veteran organized and executed conference, poorly coordinating student vets for personal time with Gen. Dempsey, etc.</p>	<p><b><i>Establish a paid staff position</i></b> dedicated explicitly to veterans at or near Duke, to include students, staff, faculty, alumni, and the VAMC that can act as a "Duke Expert" for information on events, personnel, news items pertinent to veterans at Duke</p>
<p>Students, who are inherently transient and beholden to their GPAs, make for a poor foundation to organize around and effectively engage with issues that will remain for veterans after student leaders graduate.</p>	<p><b><i>Establish a paid staff position and secure funding for a center for veterans</i></b> on par with the Mary Lou Williams Center for Black Culture and the new Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity</p>
<p>Duke Vets, the overall campus wide group for graduates, undergrads, staff, faculty, and alumni, has oscillated between active participation and support to near dissolution in the face of student transiency and inadequate or wavering institutional support</p>	<p><b><i>Create a dedicated faculty/staff advisor position or committee</i></b> for Duke Vets with 5 year terms that do not match the cycle of student turnover, in order to breathe new life into Duke Vets as a place for connections to occur and ideas to flourish</p>
<p>Student veterans and alumni alike have expressed uniform alarm that the 2003 War Memorial, between the Divinity School and Duke Chapel, is missing a panel for the longest running war in our nations history</p>	<p><b><i>Coordinate an effort to update the War Memorial</i></b> that includes funding from alumni sources to add names of Duke students who have died in service to their country (esp. Iraq &amp; Afghanistan)</p>

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<p>After repeated mistakes and shortcomings of administrative and other systems, veterans often lose trust in the VA and Duke and do not reflect on their experience positively to prospective students or community partners</p>	<p><b><i>Establish a paid staff</i></b> to humanize “the system” that so many only know through recorded messages, snail mail, and rubber stamps by maintaining an on-campus presence</p>
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Working to ensure that future student cohorts have their service connections fully integrated into Duke databases for the purpose of peer support and mentoring incoming students will avoid remaking the same mistakes and missteps. A strong fraternal bond unites veterans of all stripes and sizes, and capitalizing thereupon will create a self-supporting solution to this increasing problem. Veterans recognize the commonality of their concerns and work collectively to explore effective solutions, and can be an institution's most strident supporter. However, perceived disloyalty can cost institutions valued credibility and earn the ire of the veteran community at large. Failing to recognize and adequately support this community deprives the VA and Duke of the collaborative skill of this uniquely trained and talented population.