



Multi-State Collaborative on Military Credit Project Plan for the State of Nebraska

Introduction

Nebraska has a long history of serving veterans. Bellevue University, located south of Omaha in Bellevue, Nebraska, was established in 1965 as Bellevue College, a private, non-profit institution with a primary goal of serving the military personnel at nearby Offutt Air Force Base, also the home at the time of the Strategic Air Command. In the decades since, Bellevue University, University of Nebraska at Omaha, and Central Community College have won national recognition for service to veterans and military personnel.

Nebraska's Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education is a state agency serving as the facilitator for the Multi-State Collaborative on Military Credit (MCMC) initiative. The vision, objectives, and strategies in this document reflect those identified by key stakeholders in Nebraska. Those who have been involved in the initial conversations include the directors of military and veterans services offices on one or more campuses of the University of Nebraska, the Nebraska community colleges, and Nebraska private institutions; a representative of the Nebraska State College System; a representative of the Nebraska Department of Education (Private Postsecondary Career Schools and Veterans Education); and a Nebraska state senator. As the plan and project evolve, others will be added in an advisory capacity.

Mission Statement

To assist Nebraska veterans in their transition back to civilian life by improving the ability of military personnel, veterans, and their families to complete postsecondary credentials through education or licensure in a timely fashion

Vision Statement

- Nebraska postsecondary institutions will recognize the value of the education, training and experience that military students bring to the campus.

- The institutions will establish a process by which this learning can be evaluated for the greatest possible credit.
- State credentialing entities will recognize the value of the education, training and experience of current and former military personnel and develop a mechanism for utilizing the experience in meeting credentialing requirements to the greatest extent possible.
- Nebraska military and veteran students and their families will be aware of the many opportunities available at Nebraska institutions and take advantage of those resources.

Current Position

Strengths

Nebraska currently has several outstanding centers for military and veterans support in a variety of institutional settings.

- Bellevue University has become a major provider of online courses to both military and civilian students. It was recently awarded the ranking by *U.S. News and World Report* of Top 3 Online Programs for Veterans. In 2013 the university opened a new location for its Military Veterans Services Center. Among the services offered are employment assistance, Veterans in Business Forum, peer-to-peer support, referrals to outside agencies, tutoring, housing information, and the Bellevue University Mentor/Protégé (BUMP) program.
- The University of Nebraska at Omaha was named the number one four-year college in the nation for veterans by the *Military Times* in fall 2014. The Office of Military and Veterans Services was opened in 2012 as a one-stop location for GI Bill assistance, transfer credits, and academic support and counseling. The office now includes advising on and processing of all veterans' benefits, active duty and Guard/Reserve tuition assistance, help with any questions about the university, a faculty advisor to the Veteran Student Organization, a member of the VA's Vet Success on Campus program, and training for UNO faculty and staff every semester on the unique learning situations of military and veteran students.
- In fall 2014 Central Community College (CCC) was named the number one two-year college in the nation for veterans for the second year in a row by the *Military Times*. The college and its Veterans and Military Resource Center received a FIPSE grant (Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education) to create a three-year model program for a Center for Excellence for Veteran Student Success. The program was recently completed and received an exceptional evaluation. The college also entered into a pilot program, Veterans Integration To Academic Leadership (V.I.T.A.L.), through the Department of Veterans Affairs.

CCC was one of only three community colleges nationwide selected to participate.

- Other successes include Creighton University's current ranking by *Military Times* in the four-year college category and previous voting of Western Nebraska Community College, the smallest of Nebraska's community colleges, as number one in the country for two-year institutions. The college also supports a Military and Veterans Affairs Office.
- There are knowledgeable personnel both on and off campus who are dedicated to the task of assisting veterans in the transition to civilian life.

Challenges

- Successful programs and practices abound at some of the individual institutions, but are not universally shared. These valuable resources are underutilized.
- There are many institutions that provide only a certifying official and perhaps have a student veterans organization. They do not offer support services and assistance.
- Many faculty, administrators, and credentialing personnel are unaware of the transfer resources available.
- There is no central list of the support offices located on the campuses, hindering communication. There may be excellent work taking place that few are aware of.
- Nebraska military and veterans are enrolling in online, out-of-state institutions that purport to offer more military credit.
- The Coordinating Commission—the state agency facilitating MCMC in Nebraska—cannot set policy, practices, or priorities for either public or private institutions. Success of MCMC in the state will have to rely on voluntary participation.

Objectives

- To inform service members, veterans, and their families about the opportunities and advantages of military experience/credit in education
- To educate faculty and administrators at all institutions about the value of military experience, the transferrable skills associated with the experience, and the intangible skills that contribute to the student's ability to succeed
- To utilize technology to evaluate and award credit
- To improve campus experiences by sharing and implementing best practices
- To educate credentialing entities about the value of military experience and support efforts to increase acceptance of military training in licensure

Strategies

- Identify and compile a list of all of the military and veterans support offices in the state in order to facilitate improved communication.
- Convene a meeting of stakeholders to share best practices and develop a plan to work together on implementation.
- Encourage institutions to utilize the recently adopted TES to clearly document the credit that they will award if it exists within the system and educate faculty on its use.
- Encourage institutions to implement Transferology.
- Investigate existing institutional mechanisms to track military and veteran students' enrollments, retention, completions, etc. and devise a plan for state-wide collection.
- Involve faculty, administrators, and credentialing personnel in face-to-face interactions to improve their knowledge and understanding of resources such as military occupational specialty MOS training and education, Defense Language Institute foreign language coursework and exams, Community College of the Air Force, CLEP, DANTES, and ACE recommendations.
- Develop materials and marketing strategies to attract military students and educate them on the transfer of military credits.
- Support legislation where appropriate to accomplish any of the objectives.

Possible Long-term Objectives

Create a comprehensive guide that maximizes ways for student veterans and military to take interest, engage, and transition to college by articulating prior service training and experience.

Develop a website that evaluates skills then directs students toward programs (statewide) and institutions with those programs (similar to the Veterans Education Transfer Minnesota System).

Timeline

Create a master list of military and veterans support offices	May-June 2015
Convene a day-long meeting to revisit objectives and strategies and identify and prioritize efforts for 2016 and 2017	Fall 2015
Implement a process for data collection and compilation at the state level	Winter 2015

Assessment

Since Nebraska is only just beginning its MCMC efforts, success in the first year will be measured by the completion of the following projects: creation of a master list of military and veterans support offices, convening of a fall meeting, implementation of a process for data collection and compilation at the state level. Future assessment will flow from the work completed in the first year and from subsequent activities.