Program/Unit Name: Veterans Resource Center (VRC)

Brief Description
The Veterans Resource Center (VRC) is a centralized campus resource that provides services for veterans and military-connected population on campus. The student population includes Veterans, Active Duty Personnel, Reservists, Guardsmen, and Dependents. The services are focused primarily on providing guidance and processing for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) education benefits and other military funding sources, which are: CH. 33 Post 911/Forever GI Bill, CH. 31 Vocational Rehabilitation, CH. 30, Montgomery GI Bill, CH. 35 Dependents Education Assistance, Tuition Assistance, and My Career Advancement Account scholarship fund for dependents (MYCAA). The VRC assists students with navigating the VA, active military, and Leeward CC rules and procedures for certifying classes, campus resources, and other VA support.

Although there has been a decline in the overall student enrollment, the college has steadily maintained between 10%-12% of the student population identified as veterans and military-connected students. The VRC is also a campus resource that provides an environment for our military-connected community a space to communicate and have discussions about classes/instructional support. Within this space, the VRC provides individual kiosks and open tables for studying, as well as PC laptops for use in the center. There is a Lending Library (once grant purchased and now currently donations by fellow peers) to borrow textbooks for class use. There is also an additional area for coffee, fridge, and microwave use. In addition to the comforts of the environment, there are support personnel within the VRC to service students.

The main personnel employed by Leeward CC and currently the person managing the coordination of activities and events, as well as the opening and closing of the center, is the Military & Veterans Counselor. The Military & Veterans Counselor, is given this additional responsibility on top of the primary duties of counseling and advising students. The counselor belongs to the Counseling Unit and is deployed to the VRC in assisting with program services specifically for the veterans population.

Within the VRC are also housed the VSOC Counselor (Vet Success on Campus Program) and the VITAL Psychologist (Veterans Integration to Academic Leadership Program), both employed by the Department of Veterans Affairs. They are shared resources with other UH system colleges and spend half their time at Leeward CC servicing our veterans population.

Lastly, the VRC also includes services by Peer Facilitators, student employees who are using VA education benefits who are students of Leeward CC or other UH system colleges. They
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participate in the VA Work Study Program, employed and paid by VA, to assist in servicing the needs of the VRC. Primarily, their main responsibility is to triage incoming students questions. In addition to this, they are peer support assisting with the use of UH system technology apps, to identify a few frequently used such as: My Success, STAR GPS Registration, and Laulima. The Peer Facilitators also assist in overseeing any additional VRC needs and support with the Military & Veterans Counselor.

The possible intended outcomes:

- Receive clear guidance on information about VA education benefits regarding Leeward CC application and certification processing to receive VA and other military funding.
- Provide information on additional military-connected community resources to support other holistic needs for veteran students, such as mental health and social network.
- Participate in veterans-focused retention best practices to retain current and returning students towards student success and graduation.

Analysis of Program/Unit Data

The only measurable data in the center, as derived from the Automated Recording System (Google Form sign-in) in the VRC, the collected information demonstrates:

- In 2018-2019, the VRC has serviced 5,675 students. By population breakdown in reflecting the students serviced:
  - 74% are veterans and active duty personnel (includes Reservists & Guardsmen)
  - 20% are dependents
  - 6% are other students (in support for the Counseling Unit)
- Of the students requiring the service of walk-in and individual counseling services, the Military & Veterans Counselor counsels 92% of the serviced students.
- The number of veteran students visiting the VRC using the additional services (i.e. lending library borrowing, printing, studying, PC laptop use, etc…) is 36% of the incoming students.
- In 2018-2019, the VRC has been able to service 1,418 interested prospective students. This is about ¼ of the students serviced at the VRC.
- In reference to the community partnership with VA, the number of students serviced in-person receiving services provided by the VA VSOC Counselor were 50 students. Also, the number of students receiving in-person mental health counseling provided by the VA VITAL Psychologist were 139 students.
- The average number of students using the VRC services on a monthly basis is 350 students per month. This demonstrates an average of 18 students each business day.
- The VRC services about 70% of the military-connected students being certified and using VA education benefits.

Measurable data from within the campus, compiled from the UH system Academic Logic tool and received from the OPPA office (as received via former Dean of Student Services, Curtis Wasburn in January 2019), reflects the enrollment of the veterans population as:
2019 ARPD  
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<th>Fall 2016</th>
<th>Spr 2017</th>
<th>Fall 2017</th>
<th>Spr 2018</th>
<th>Fall 2018</th>
<th>Spr 2019</th>
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<td>963</td>
<td>919</td>
<td>842</td>
<td>751</td>
<td>700*</td>
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[Note: The count is a combination of Leeward CC students, both home school at Leeward CC and other non-home school and enrolled in at least 1 Leeward CC class. For Fall 2019, data received through UH system Academic Logic.]

This reflects a sustained, about 10% - 12% of enrolled veterans and military-connected students in the college.

The other measurable data within the campus, as derived from the Counseling Unit survey system in representation for the counseling services by the Military & Veterans Counselor, demonstrates a 99% overall above average satisfaction rate.

**Analysis of Major Functions/Services**

**Demand: Is there a demand for your program and its services?**

In reviewing the small amount of data collected, it clearly reflects a demand for the VRC to provide continued services on campus. As a 12% student body reflected in the veterans population, this is a large number of students encompassing the Leeward CC community. The VRC has been able to service over 70% of the entire veterans population, which includes the prospective interested student. In overseeing the VRC it is helpful to have the Military & Veterans Counselor housed in the center, as the counselor services walk-ins & individual counseling appointments specifically for the veterans population. It clearly shows the need for counseling services, not just for advising and also for VA education benefit concerns. The center is an active campus resource that handles on average about 18 students per each business day. The VRC also handles 70% of all students requiring VA certification to meet tuition and other educational military funding. On a daily basis and in meeting the VA benefit requirements, the VRC is consistently visited and used by the students. More than this, the number of prospective students who come to the center for information to start the application process and consider enrollment into the college is high. This helps to support overall college enrollment numbers, as well as being the point-of-reference for student support and retention of our population.

**Efficiency: Are your resources being used effectively?**

Based on the activity in servicing students by having an average of 18 students to service per business day, it is efficient to have an additional campus resource to service the large embodied number of our college population. Not only this, the high-touch service in the VRC adds to the active servicing of the incoming students. The current personnel in the center are easily
accessible in servicing our veteran students, not only in academic counseling, but also in mental health needs. With the VITAL Program as the mental health expert on-campus, having this easily available resource on campus assists with retention support services for our students. Also being a central point for our veterans and military-connected students, this alleviates the struggle to search for answers regarding VA guidance and concerns. Our assembled personnel in the VRC, demonstrates the “one stop” resource that has the specialized expertise provided directly in the center and is a best practice for veterans academic success. Another best practice that the VRC has been able to implement is to have a space on campus for veterans to commune and provide an environment to share VA concerns, peer support regarding courses, and comradery.

Effectiveness: Is your program adequately satisfying that demand?

Although there is no evaluation survey at this time to collect data in determining efficiency and then to compare effectiveness, this is an area that needs more development. The plan is to work on creating a survey or other tool to assist with determining effectiveness. So in regards to effectiveness in activity and use of the VRC, implementing the best practices to support academic success for veterans will help retention of the population. The active nature of the center demonstrates a useful campus resource.

Strengths and Weakness based on Analysis

Strengths - A consistent strength of the VRC is the service provided by the Military & Veterans Counselor. Not only is this position made a “permanent” Veterans Counselor supported position for the college, it reflects an above average satisfaction rate and consistent representation for the VRC.

Other observable strengths to mention are peer-to-peer assistance, particularly by the Peer Facilitators who are students. Having student employees assist incoming students helps provide high-touch on the application and registration process for both the VA and Leeward CC procedures. Having the additional peers, helps in managing the high volume of client intake.

Lastly, in support of the best practices for both specific campus environment and tailored expertise, the VRC is able to successfully be the focal-centralized place for specialized VA education guidance and processing.

Weaknesses - The VRC has not formally identified Student Assessment Outcomes, as the center was created with best practices in mind for the veterans population. Regarding evaluation, the only data collected regarding an evaluation of services is the Counseling Unit survey, this does not reflect the entirety of the VRC services. Currently, the VRC has no survey tool to evaluate the services provided at the center. It may be helpful to find out if the VRC should be added to the CCSSE, the school-wide evaluation questionnaire. Such services that need evaluating are: accurate and clear distribution of information, assessment of VRC personnel (both student employee and partnered VA personnel services), etc… The VRC is
lacking the client perspective of evaluation to better service and determine quality performance of the center.

Since the conception of the VRC, it was assumed that the center belongs to the Student Services Division. However, it is not certain where they fall within the Organizational Chart of Leeward CC. There is no clarity on who truly oversees the VRC. It would seem appropriate to belong within the realm of the Student Services Division; however, this is yet to be clarified by the higher administration.

Another weakness for the VRC is the lack of privacy space/room for the Military & Veterans Counselor, VSOC Counselor, and the VITAL Psychologist. Currently, the Military & Veterans Counselor and the VSOC Counselor housed in the VRC are divided within partitions (funded by Dept. of VA) that help to provide privacy during counseling sessions. As for the VITAL Psychologist, with help from the Interim Dean of Student Services, she is deployed to the Portable area and is occupying a private office for mental health counseling with our veterans. This seems to be a temporary situation until we can solidify an office that will belong to the VITAL Psychologist. To fulfill HIPAA & FERPA regulations, it demonstrates the importance of needing a more private space for the personnel in the VRC.

Lastly, events and activities to promote community and veterans presence for the college, as well as overseeing daily tasks of the VRC are handled by the Military & Veterans Counselor. However, this minimizes the faculty responsibilities of the counselor. The VRC is lacking additional support personnel to handle VRC coordination and overseeing of office management.

**Action Plan**

At this time, there is no tool being used to evaluate the VRC and its services. The VRC will work on the areas below to achieve quality service and efficiency.

1) **Identify Student Assessment Outcomes (SAO)** - Identifying SAOs for the VRC will assist in measuring how the center provides services to meet student needs and support retention of the veterans population on-campus.

2) **Create a VRC Survey** - The survey will target New, Current, and Returning students, including faculty & staff, as we have contact information to receive feedback. Additional results of the survey may also provide a better gauge of how the VRC impacts the Leeward CC community. The services that would need evaluating are:
   - customer service & greeting of incoming clients;
   - knowledge & information shared about VA education benefits and other military funds;
   - evaluate overall environment, PC laptop & desktop equipment, and the Lending Library; and
   - partnered service evaluations for the VSOC & VITAL Programs.

3) **Create an additional suggestion tool in the VRC, specifically prospective clients** - During initial impression in the VRC, allow incoming clients a way to suggest additional customer service needs, information & knowledge received, and environment feedback. Consider implementing a procedure or/and create an additional tool for feedback.
4) **Determine where VRC falls within Organizational Chart of Leeward CC** - As the Military & Veterans Counselor is the only Leeward CC personnel employed and overseeing the VRC who falls in the Counseling Unit, work with the Interim Dean of Student Services to identify or consider working through the process in determining where the VRC will belong in the Leeward CC structure.

5) **Provide confidentiality and privacy during counseling** - The Military & Veterans Counselor will work with the Interim Dean of Student Services or suggested personnel on-campus to assist with providing privacy walls/materials or relocating to an area that can provide such confidentiality for counseling, as well as be in compliance with HIPAA and FERPA.

**Resource Implications**

At this time, the primary priority for the VRC includes:

**Veterans Resource Center Office Manager** - Currently the Military & Veterans Counselor (also known on campus as “VA Counselor”) is managing this job as well as faculty counseling duties. This position is highly needed to provide office coordination and to relieve the Military & Veterans Counselor so that she can focus on her primary counseling, advising, and faculty member duties. In seeking a position, a clerical office type or an APT Band A/B position who may be able to provide coverage. In regards to responsibilities, having an Office Manager will provide:

- Manage and supervise Peer Facilitators (student employees), as well as being the Site Supervisor responsible for the VA Work Study Program. The responsibilities entail: Application, hiring, and contract management of the hired student employees; Submission and approval to Human Resources/Chancellor; Manage submission of timesheets for students; and Train students and oversee employee issues.
- Assist with coordinating projects, activities, and events for the veterans population.
- Manage a VRC Survey for evaluation purposes.
- Manage the VRC computer/technology equipment (PC laptops, desktops, & printers) and submit work order requests to the Help Desk.
- Oversee Lending Library textbook and equipment inventory, request and return use of textbooks and equipment.
- Oversee the VRC environment, including equipment and materials in the VRC, such as chairs, tables, kiosks, shelving, etc…
- Provide any additional support to the Military & Veterans Counselor, VSOC Counselor, & VITAL Psychologist.
- Handle clerical duties, such as: incoming phone calls, triaging incoming clients, request work orders, and upkeep copies of necessary documents for VA & Leeward CC purposes (VSEI form, VA Program Change Form, etc...).

**Cross-training of Another Counselor** - To assist with providing specialized service in using VA and other military funding benefits, it may be helpful to cross-train another counselor in the Counseling Unit. Such instances in which this may help are when the Military & Veterans Counselor is on leave or there may be a change of personnel.
responsibilities. This additional training of duty is highly needed to provide appropriate coverage of services to the veteran and military-connected population.