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# Miramar College Veteran's Affairs Survey Report

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Fall 2008

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## INTRODUCTION

The Veteran's Affairs Office at Miramar College provides counseling and guidance to veterans and assists them in the selection of educational programs which qualify for veteran's benefits. SDCCD and the Miramar College Veteran's Affairs Office strive to continually improve their services to students. In keeping with this standard, in Fall 2008, the Office of Research and Planning developed and administered an online survey to gauge student satisfaction with services received. Findings detail respondents' use of services, identify services that were helpful to respondents, examine student satisfaction with services received, and summarize suggestions for future services and improvement of current services. Charts of results are provided in Appendix A and verbatim responses are grouped by theme and provided in Appendix B.

## METHODOLOGY

In Fall 2008, a survey instrument was designed to examine the use of Veteran's Affairs services, helpfulness of services, satisfaction with services received, and suggestions for future improvement of services. The survey instrument contained 2 sets of multiple-choice questions with 9 items in each, 13 questions with a Likert-type rating scale and 5 open-ended questions. The survey was administered to veteran students enrolled at City College, Mesa College, and Miramar College at the beginning of the Fall 2008 term. The survey was administered via email with a link to the online survey. Data were collected for approximately three weeks and one reminder email was sent to students. Of the 2,501 students invited, 357 students completed the survey (a response rate of 14%). Of the total respondents, 133 students (37%) reported they had received services at City College, 138 students (39%) had received services at Mesa College, 80 students (22%) had received services at Miramar College, and 6 students (2%) did not respond. This report highlights the findings of those respondents who received services at Miramar College only.

## HIGHLIGHT OF THE FINDINGS

### *Student Demographics*

The majority of respondents who received veteran's services at Miramar College were full-time students (59%).

Of the respondents who received veteran's services at Miramar College, 72% were male and 28% were female. Males were overrepresented and females were underrepresented compared to college-wide proportions (50% each) measured at census in Fall 2008. However, the male to female ratio was more consistent with students who had been on active military duty at Miramar College (76% male and 24% female).

The largest group of respondents was the 25 - 29 age group (46%), followed by those respondents between the ages of 30 - 34 (24%), 18 - 24 (16%), 50 or older (6%), 40 - 49 (5%), and 35 - 39 (2%). The age groups of students responding to the survey were for the most part unrepresentative of the Miramar College veteran student population whose largest age group was students 18 - 24 years old (54%), followed by those students between the ages of 25 - 29 (19%), 30 - 34 (9%), 40 - 49 (7%), 35 - 39 (6%), and 50 or older (4%).

Among respondents who reported their ethnicity, White students comprised the largest percentage of respondents (63%), followed by Filipino students (11%), Latino students (9%), African American students (8%), Asian or Pacific Islander students (5%), those students categorized as 'other ethnicities' (3%), and American Indian students (1%). All ethnic groups were fairly representative of the Miramar College military population (+/- 2%) with the exception of White students who were overrepresented by 22%, and Asian/Pacific Islander and Latino students who were underrepresented by 15% and 6% respectively.

### *Services Obtained by Students*

Respondents used the Veteran's Affairs services the most to activate benefits or for tuition assistance (85%). Three-fourths of all respondents (75%) found this service helpful.

Almost half of the respondents used the Veteran's Affairs Office for general information or for information about the application process or their eligibility status. Forty-eight percent of respondents used the Veteran's Affairs Office for

information about the application process or their eligibility status and a similar proportion of respondents found these services helpful (50%). Forty-seven percent of respondents used the office for general information and a smaller proportion of respondents found these services helpful (38%).

One-quarter of respondents used the Veteran's Affairs Office for help to withdraw or change classes (25%), the same number of respondents used it for funding questions (25%), and 23% used it for academic progress. A smaller proportion found these services helpful (21%, 17%, and 14%, respectively).

Few respondents used the Veteran's Affairs Office for referrals to other services or for appeals (4% each). Nevertheless, a somewhat larger percentage of students found these services helpful (8% and 7% respectively).

### *Student Satisfaction with Services*

Respondents were asked to respond to a list of positively-worded statements about satisfaction with Veteran's Affairs services according to a 5-point Likert scale. The majority of respondents indicated they agreed or somewhat agreed with each of the statements. However, this does not provide a clear picture, given that on a 5-point scale, somewhat agree is the mid-point. In this scale agree and strongly agree indicate clear satisfaction with services, somewhat agree indicates moderate satisfaction with services, and disagree and strongly disagree indicate dissatisfaction with services. Thus, the percentage of respondents who were clearly satisfied with services ranged from 72% to 83% across all items, the percentage of those who were somewhat satisfied with services ranged from 4% to 15% across all items, and the percentage of respondents who were dissatisfied with services ranged from 11% to 16% across all items.

Respondents were most satisfied that staff members took the time to answer all of their questions (83%).

Eight in ten respondents also felt they had received services in a timely manner, that they had received the correct information, that staff members were available to meet one-on-one, and that they would feel comfortable returning to the Veteran's Affairs Office for help (80% each).

Although the percentage range of dissatisfaction was relatively small (11% - 16%), respondents were most dissatisfied with the reception they received at the front desk. Sixteen percent of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that

the front counter staff were welcoming.

Overall, over three-fourths of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with services or would recommend the department's services to others (78% and 80%, respectively). About 8% of respondents somewhat agreed that they were satisfied with services and 6% somewhat agreed that they would recommend the department's services to others. Fourteen percent of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that they were satisfied with services and the same percentage of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that they would recommend the department's services to others.

### *Student Suggestions for Services*

Eleven respondents provided suggestions through written comments for other services they would like to have available to them. A prevalent concern was for the level of service provided by the office staff. Students desired a courteous and respectful staff with more authority to assist them with their educational goals. Respondents also desired additional career guidance, more comprehensive benefits and scholarship information, and improved information systems to deliver that information in a more timely manner.

When asked to recommend changes to improve the services in the Veteran's Affairs Office, respondents provided suggestions that focused on improving the efficiency of the office. Respondents who were not happy with the services provided sought extended office hours and a dedicated counseling department to provide transfer assistance. Students also recommended moving to a larger office space and giving staff members the authority to authorize schedules.

Respondents were given the opportunity to provide any additional comments related to the Veteran's Affairs Office staff and the services provided. Nearly three-fourths of the comments about the staff and services were positive, with nine respondents noting great satisfaction. Three comments regarding staff and services were negative. One student felt that staff members conveyed an attitude that the student should feel lucky to be receiving benefits, while the remaining comments simply questioned the policies of the office. The respondents were unhappy that the policies did not recognize truncated forms of names and did not cover Fire Academy classes.

## APPENDIX A. CHARTS

1. Which college did you receive Veteran's services from?

City College	0	0%
Mesa College	0	0%
Miramar College	80	100%
Total	80	100%

2. What is your enrollment status?

Full-time student	46	59%
Part-time student	32	41%
Total	78	100%

3. What is your gender?

Male	55	72%
Female	21	28%
Total	76	100%

4. Which age group are you?

18-24	13	16%
25-29	37	46%
30-34	19	24%
35-39	2	2%
40-49	4	5%
50 or more	5	6%
Total	80	100%

5. Which is your ethnicity?

African American	6	8%
American Indian	1	1%
Asian/Pacific Islander	4	5%
Filipino	9	11%
Latino	7	9%
White	50	63%
Other	2	3%
Total	79	100%

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### SERVICES PROVIDED

6. Which service(s) did you seek at the Veteran's Affairs Office? (check all that apply)

Academic Progress		17	23%
Activating Benefits/Tuition Assistance		64	85%
Appeals		3	4%
Application Process/Eligibility Status		36	48%
Funding Questions		19	25%
General Information		35	47%
Referral to Other Services		3	4%
Withdrawal/Change of Classes		19	25%
Other (please explain)		2	3%

7. Which services provided by the Veteran's Affairs Office did you find the most helpful? (check all that apply)

Academic Progress		10	14%
Activating Benefits/Tuition Assistance		54	75%
Appeals		5	7%
Application Process/Eligibility Status		36	50%
Funding Questions		12	17%
General Information		27	38%
Referral to Other Services		6	8%
Withdrawal/Change of Classes		15	21%
Other (please explain)		3	4%

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### SATISFACTION WITH SERVICES

9. Please rate your level of agreement with each of the statements.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The front counter staff are welcoming.	40 56%	13 18%	7 10%	6 8%	6 8%
The front counter staff are courteous.	41 57%	12 17%	9 12%	4 6%	6 8%
I receive services in a timely manner.	44 61%	14 19%	4 6%	3 4%	7 10%
The staff who met with you one-on-one are knowledgeable.	46 64%	11 15%	7 10%	1 1%	7 10%
I receive correct information.	45 64%	11 16%	6 9%	1 1%	7 10%
Staff members are available to meet one-on-one when need to.	40 56%	17 24%	5 7%	1 1%	8 11%
Staff members seem to care about my needs.	40 56%	13 18%	9 12%	2 3%	8 11%
Staff members take the time to answer all of my questions.	44 61%	16 22%	3 4%	1 1%	8 11%
The office hours are convenient for me.	35 49%	16 23%	11 15%	3 4%	6 8%
I feel comfortable returning to the Veteran's Affairs Office for help.	45 63%	12 17%	4 6%	2 3%	8 11%
I am confident that this department can deliver the Veteran services I need.	43 60%	13 18%	7 10%	1 1%	8 11%
Overall, I am satisfied with services received.	44 61%	12 17%	6 8%	2 3%	8 11%
I would recommend the services that this department provides to other qualified students.	43 61%	13 19%	4 6%	2 3%	8 11%

## APPENDIX B. OPEN ENDED RESPONSES

All comments are verbatim and have not been edited except to protect the identity of a specific person or place. For most questions, comments are grouped by theme and themes are ordered by quantity of comments.

Q6) Which service(s) did you seek at the Veteran's Affairs Office?

- Using my GI Bill
- Voc Rehab

Q7) Which services provided by the Veteran's Affairs Office did you find the most helpful?

- all
- GI Bill Processing and latest info
- None really

Q8) What other services for Veterans would you like to have available at your college?

### *Courteous/knowledgeable/respectful Staff*

- A Veterans counselor who knows exactly how the process works. Therefore, they can be more helpful to the Veteran. Or at least giving the people in the VA office authority to approve schedules. People that really care! More flexibility in this Veterans Education Program. \*\*\*\* at Miramar College is good and getting better, but she needs a better assistance. The previous V.A. Rep was retired military, and she had her act together!
- disability concerns for prior service.
- V.A. needs to be able to if veterans come to them with complaints about these College V.A. Reps they can intervene. \*\*\*\* College V.A. Supervisor needs TO BE FIRED. Unprofessional, Nasty (Veteran Hating it seems at times) attitude.

### *Benefits/Scholarship information*

- An orientation/informational session about the new GI Bill ( conversion from Chapter 30) etc...
- Scholarship information

### *Improved information systems*

- More detailed information about where exactly to find and apply for veterans-only benefits such as scholarships, grants, and low interest loans would be extremely helpful.
- More information and faster turn over.

### *Transition assistance/counseling*

- Career transition guidance
- Job Placement Services and Financial Assistance/Planning

### *Other*

- discounts on books, and parking passes.
- No other specific services. However, I would like to see the Miramar College Fire Academy covered by the G.I. Bill. It is a partnership between the college and the City of San Diego, but the academy is a full time course accredited through the college. After much searching, I have been unable to find out why it is not covered by the G.I. Bill.

Q10) What changes could we make to improve the services in our Veteran's Affairs Office?

*Improve Customer Service*

- Giving the people in the VA office the authority to authorize schedules.
- Have a transfer to University separate from the Community colleges transfer department. The Transfer Department is rude, unorganized, and unreliable. They seem to not have any interest in assisting students transferring to a university.
- Miramar College. Get \*\*\*\* a assistant that's had some sort of military interaction/s or send her to acting school so when we go there for help, she can do a better job acting like she cares. This all being driven by something they throw at you quick and fast when Veteran is mentioned, hey I work for the College, not the V.A!
- The V.A. needs to have the ability to intervene, if they receive word that things such as this are taking place.
- Veterans should not have to make multiple trips to counseling and VA office just to start benefits each semester. Way too much waiting in line and getting the "run around".

*Happy w/ services*

- at the moment it is ran very smoothly.
- I can't really think of anything.
- keep up the outstanding job

*Improve office hours*

- Extended office hours a few days a week.
- Later hours on Friday.
- Later hours on Fridays.

*Improve ease of access to information*

- More information.
- New GI Bill orientation. Lots of new benefits still not clearly defined by the bill.

*Other*

- I would like more information on what is required. I feel that I didn't learn about somethings that were required until I was faced with that problem. Therefore, it would be great if students were given a short brief on how things worked and specifics on what they needed to do.
- miramar is much better than \*\*\*\*
- Slightly larger offices, the offices were a little cramped.

Q11) Are there any other comments that you would like to provide related to this Office and the services provided?

*Pleased with services/staff*

- \*\*\*\*'s always been a great help. She's helped me on more than one occasion. She's always willing to go above and beyond to ensure that my stuff is taken care of.
- \*\*\*\* is doing a remarkable service to the Veterans community who are trying to move forward in obtaining higher education.
- I just transferred to \*\*\*\* and the process here is painful in comparison. I wish the University would take some tips from Miramar College on how to work with veterans.
- Keep up the good work.
- The Miramar office offered top notch service and made accessing services easy.
- The staff in this office is wonderful, always happy to help and more than willing to research any obscure details that are beyond the normal scope of questions. I have recommended this office to students who were unsatisfied with their experience elsewhere.
- The VA office at Miramar college does an excellent job. Keep it up!
- they are doing a great job
- They are very helpful, and made my numerous and complicated problems easy to solve.

### *Dissatisfied by service/staff*

- The last time I visited this office, the staff seemed to have the attitude that the benefits I earned were some sort of privilege that I was lucky to have.
- the VA office delayed in the processing of my benefits because the name that they had "jenny" did not match the name that I was registered under "Jennifer" really??

### *Other*

- in continuation from my previous comment, I would like to know why the Miramar College Fire Academy is not covered by the GI Bill...especially since the \*\*\*\* Fire Academy, and Miramar Police Academy are fully covered. This is a question which the office staff should be able to answer thoroughly and accurately.