

Veterans Services

2019 Program Review

MJC Program Review 2019

Modesto Junior College's Program Review process is divided into 3 sections:

- Program Analysis (SWOT Analysis)
- Goal Setting and Activities
- Resource Request

Program Analysis

Internal Strengths

1. What strengths does the analysis of student data reveal?

Based on a survey of over 500 student veterans and dependents, 70% of surveyed students reported being satisfied with support services and 69% of students reported that MJC faculty and staff understand the needs of student veterans. Data provided by the Department of Institutional Effectiveness reports that from Fall 2015 to Fall 2018, the current retention rate is 90.65%. Notably, veteran student enrollment has increased by 24% as of Fall 2018.

The aforementioned data reveals the strength of MJC Veteran Services. This department has developed a comprehensive program that meets the holistic needs of student veterans and their dependents. Students are provided with a wide variety of services, which includes (but is not limited to): priority registration, access to VA Educational Benefits, work study opportunities, academic and personal counseling, mental health support, access to scholarships, peer mentor support, tutoring, DSPS services, professional development workshops and referrals to on/off campus resources such as the VA Mobile Clinic, and consistent presentations from community partners. Due to the support of the California Community College Chancellors office, we have been able to offer book vouchers to offset the high costs of textbooks, food vouchers to address food insecurities, and cap and gown vouchers for graduates.

2. Are there specific aspects of the program that are exemplary or could serve as a model?

Several initiatives within MJC Veterans Services can serve as a model and noted as exemplary. The first aspect is the collaboration between Veterans Services and Disability

Services. In order to destigmatize the concept of disabilities and broaden awareness of available services, MJC student veterans who are eligible for DSPS can receive academic accommodations in the veteran services office after meeting with the DSPS/Veterans Counselor.

In order to align with MJC's Guided Pathway initiative, MJC Veteran Services has developed the Performance Intervention Program. This new program identifies at-risk student veterans (2.0 or below GPA, excessive withdrawals, academic probation/dismissal etc.) and provides specific, intrusive interventions (counseling, peer mentor support, mandatory workshops, tutoring, referral to community resources etc.). The goal of this program is to increase the students GPA, improve retention and completion rates, and provide a way for veterans and dependents to maintain VA academic eligibility standards for use of educational benefits. These efforts also ensure student veterans do not lose access to their VA Educational Benefits.

MJC Veterans Services also serves as a VA Work Study site and employs 5-8 veterans and/or dependents each semester. This program provides real world work experience for participants, facilitates peer-to-peer interaction with students, and maintains high academic standards for VA Work Study students. The average cumulative GPA for the VA Work Study student workers employed through MJC Veterans Services is 3.016 as of Fall 2019.

3. What do others see as the program's strengths?

MJC Veterans Services has taken an innovative approach to broaden the awareness of student veteran culture. In addition to creating an informational brochure (English and Spanish) and updating the programs website and monthly newsletter, the MJC Veterans Staff has developed a unique training program. The Red, White, and Blue Veteran Ally Training is designed to provide faculty and staff with training related to veteran services offered at MJC, veteran experiences in the classroom, veteran terminology, military and post-service culture, and veteran issues in higher education. Our department has established a wide network of classified staff, faculty, and administrators that proudly understand and support student veterans.

Furthermore, through the efforts of dedicated MJC Veterans Services staff, our department has developed and strengthened community partnerships. In order to increase student enrollment, build community relationships, and broaden awareness of MJC Veterans Services, staff has offers numerous presentations, participates regularly in community events, and joins community groups that actively serve and advocate for veterans throughout our community. MJC Veterans Services has joined the Stanislaus County Veterans Advisory Commission, the Veterans Employment Committee, and collaborated with Stanislaus Countys legislative/Congressional representatives.

4. How well are students meeting program learning outcomes, skills, or competencies; and how are they relevant to careers in your discipline or industries for which you help prepare students?

Throughout the 2018-2019 school year, MJC Veteran Services surveyed over 500 students to measure the departments service learning outcomes. Based on student responses, 70% of students reported that they are able to identify and understand their educational benefits earned through military service. We learned that 68% to 70% of students understand degree requirements and that 70% of students understand terminology available community services.

Internal Weaknesses

5. What gaps are observed by reviewing the student data?

In review of student data provided by the MJC Department of Institutional Effectiveness, it has been noted that veteran student enrollment from Fall 2015 to Spring 2018 has increased 24%. It has been determined that there is a gap in our Hispanic veteran student population (4.1% increase) compared to campus wide Hispanic enrollment at 51.86%.

Furthermore, in regards to completion; only 37 students earned a total of 50 awards in the academic year (summer 2018, fall 2019 and spring 2019).

6. What disproportionate gaps need to be addressed?

In review of data provided by the Department of Institutional Effectiveness, student veterans continue to be identified as a disproportionately impacted group. The data implies that the completion and transfer rate for student veterans is currently 26.7%. Furthermore, the current persistence rate is 73.3% and we have learned that the average GPA for our veteran population is 2.9.

Data also implies that out of 635 eligible veteran students, only 326 students were enrolled at census. MJC Veterans Services considers this gap in enrollment as an area of concern and will focus efforts to strengthen outreach and in-reach to increase veteran/dependent enrollment.

7. What are areas in which the program could improve? (curriculum, scheduling, modality, other?)

Although the department provides a variety of workshops and opportunities for student engagement such as the Veterans Club, orientations, female veteran empowerment luncheon, etc., we have noted a lack of participation and involvement from student veterans. Our department will continue to make efforts to strengthen student veteran involvement and increase participation in activities that we offer throughout the year. In regards to campus-wide integration, our department will continue to make efforts to increase the amount of instructional faculty who attend the Red, White and Blue Veteran Ally Training. Additionally, there are plans to begin offering Red, White, and Blue Veteran Ally Training to the community in order to ease the transition of veterans into the workforce and our local community.

Furthermore, student veterans and dependents have suggested that veteran counseling should be available during the summer sessions.

8. Where are there gaps in the program on how students are meeting learning outcomes, skills, or competencies?

The majority of surveyed students are meeting the learning outcomes. However, our department will continue to increase the number of students that understand VA Educational Benefits and their implications.

External Opportunities

9. Where are potential opportunities for expansion, improvement, or new program development?

New legislation passed in the Spring of 2017 to approve a \$5 million one-time and a \$5 million on-going funding allocation for the 114 California Community Colleges Veteran Resource Centers. Modesto Junior College was fortunate to receive a portion of the funding to help sustain the Peer Mentor position, provide veteran tutoring, provide book and food vouchers, cover the cost of caps and gowns for graduates, obtain necessary equipment, and cover the costs of required professional development trainings.

MJC Veterans Services has worked diligently to steward these limited resources and plan to enhance our current program by actively recruiting new student veterans and dependents. Our office will continue to broaden the awareness of veteran services on campus and strengthen efforts to provide interventions to student veterans considered at risk. Through collaborative efforts, MJC Veterans staff will continue to advocate for students and connect with community partners to address homelessness, mental health, food insecurities, and unemployment.

Within the next year MJC Veterans Services will formalize the Performance Intervention Program to directly align with Guided Pathways (Clarify the Path, Enter the Path, Stay on the Path, Ensure Learning). The P.I.P. will strategically connect at-risk student veterans to intrusive interventions (i.e.: educational planning and counseling/guidance, mandated workshops, tutoring, peer mentor meetings, necessary referral services).

10. What are some industry or disciplinary trends that could enhance the program?

The veteran community in Stanislaus County is supported by strong organizations that advocate for veterans needs and opportunities. We have identified vital local partners to enhance the services we offer to MJC student veterans and their dependents. Community partners have sponsored our student pantry in the VRC, provided external scholarships and opportunities exclusively available to MJC veteran students, and connected students to supportive services such as mental health counseling, peer support groups, housing resources/referrals and connection to the VA healthcare system. These community relationships have also resulted in congressional recognition for veteran graduates, veteran job fairs, and peer-to-peer accountability partnerships across generations of service members. Veterans Services staff also serve on community boards to advocate for student veteran needs. Establishing trusting relationships throughout the veteran community has proven to be effective in student recruitment, broadening awareness of

services available on campus, meeting student needs, and helping direct the way in which we engage with our students and community.

External Threats

11. How are changing resources, technology, employer, or transfer requirements affecting the program's ability to serve students?

Because of our colleges proximity to the Bay Area, housing and rental prices continue to rise, which poses a challenge to our students on a fixed income.

While MJC was fortunate to receive the state funding allocated to promote CCC Veterans Resource Centers, this funding is limited and not recurring. This one-time funding has been immensely helpful in providing resources like dedicated tutoring, book and food vouchers, and a peer mentor position.

12. What are some current industry or disciplinary trends that could have a negative impact on the program?

This external threat is not unique to Modesto Junior College, but still has a negative impact on our students. The lack of credit issued for prior learning in service or evaluation of JSTs prevents our veteran students from being able to use much of the coursework completed in the military toward their academic goals at MJC (or any CCC).

13. What other obstacles does the program face?

We observe higher BAH (housing allowance) rates in other areas that draw students away from MJC. Several students have left MJC on good terms, but cite the higher rates of housing allowance pay in the Bay Area as their reason for leaving.

Goal Setting and Activities

Goals

Program Goal	Mission Alignment	Area of Focus
1. Increase the number of staff, faculty, and administrators that attend/participate in the Red, White and Blue Veterans Ally Training from a baseline of 200 to 400.	Values	Professional Development
2. Improve student veteran completion and transfer rates from a baseline of 11.3% to 20%	Workforce Needs	Student Support
3. Increase opportunities for student veteran recognition, engagement, and participation during on-campus activities/workshops.	Workforce Needs	Student Support

Activities

Activities	In Support of Goal #	Outcome or Deliverable
1. Offer in-person and asynchronous Red, White, and Blue Veteran Ally Trainings a minimum of 1x a month.	Goal #1	Veteran Services staff will offer consistent trainings in order to enhance awareness of student veteran culture and build a supportive network of staff, faculty and administrators that commit to supporting student veterans.
2. Ensure all student veterans have an education plan, meet with the MJC Veterans Services staff (counselor, veteran services technician, Program Specialist, and Peer Mentor), 1x a semester in order to improve success, transfer, and completion rates.	Goal #2	In order to align with Guided Pathways and improve student veteran success, MJC Veterans Services staff will ensure that all incoming and returning veterans have completed CORE Steps and meet with the Veterans Counselor 1x a semester.
3. Veterans Services Staff will identify and track at-risk and/or low performing veteran students who are using educational benefits and register students for the Performance Intervention Program.	Goal #2	Formalize the Performance Intervention Program (create a brochure, accurately track interventions and outcomes, update website).
Veterans Staff will participate in annual Professional Development opportunities in order to ensure best practices and VA training requirements	Goal #1	MJC Veterans Services will maintain compliance with VA policies and regulations that govern the certification process. This includes attending the CCC Veterans Summit and the WAVES Conference.
Veteran Services will develop a program calendar of events that includes opportunities for student recognition and connection to community support services.	Goal #3	MJC Veterans Services will host an MJC Veterans Services End of the Year Celebration, select a Veteran of the Year, and award a Challenge Coin one time a semester. MJC Veterans Services will also produce a calendar of events with workshops hosted by the department and by community partners relevant to student veteran needs (mental health, transitional issues, employment, housing etc.).

Resource Requests

Category	Request	Activity #	Estimated Cost
Prof. Devel.	Veteran Affairs requires on-going professional development for all School Certifying Officials. Due to limited funding, our department is requesting resources to attend the annual Western Association of Veterans Education Services (WAVES) Conference.	4	11000
Equipment	Surveyed students have unanimously voiced their concern about the aging computers in the VRC. Computers are slow, incompatible with new technology, and inefficient. Our department is requesting 8 new computers in the VRC.	2	15000
Technology	The School Certifying Official is responsible for data collection and reporting to the Department of Veteran Affairs. In order to improve the accuracy and efficiency of program data collection and reporting, our department is requesting the purchase of Student Access software.	4	1449
Personnel	Due to limited resources, the veterans counselor/coordinator is not able to provide services (counseling, guidance, program operation) during the summer. This has been noted as a significant barrier to new and returning students. The department is requesting funds to support PTOL for a dedicated veterans counselor during the summer sessions.	3	14028
Facilities	Student veterans who are eligible for DSPS can receive services in the Veterans Services office, which is located within the Campus Life main office in the Student Center. Our department is requesting an ADA Compliant front door so that students with mobility concerns can easily access the office.	2	10000