

# Serving Those Who Served

Working with Military Connected Students  
in Higher Education

Michelle Bates, M.Ed.  
The Pennsylvania State University, World Campus  
and  
Robert Heckrote, M.Ed., US Army (Ret.)  
Bloomsburg University




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## Meet the Presenters

- Michelle Bates** is an educator with twenty years experience teaching in both secondary and adult education programs, including corrections education classes at a county correctional facility. She is skilled in reflective listening which as a tool readily used in her current position as an Enrollment Services Specialist in the Financial Aid Office at Penn State's World Campus. Michelle is the office's military student point of contact and serves on the World Campus Military Team and the Military and Veteran Support Services Committee of the Commission for Adult learners. She is a regular presenter for World Campus virtual recruitment events, past member/presenter at the College Council of Military Educators (CCME), as well as the Pennsylvania Association for Adult Continuing Education (PAACE). Michelle has three children who have served in the United States Army and is a strong military student advocate. Michelle and her husband live in Lock Haven, PA.




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- Bob Heckrote** holds Bachelor's degrees in Psychology and Sociology and a Master's degree in Counseling / College Student Affairs from Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania. He is a retired Infantry combat veteran of the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts with 12 years in the Pa. Army National Guard at the rank of Staff Sergeant. Bob supervised and maintained the Office of Military and Veterans Resources at Bloomsburg University from May 2013 to May 2015 as a Graduate Assistant, and is currently an Academic Advisor for Military and Undeclared Students while still running the military office at Bloomsburg. He is responsible in part for the creation and implementation of the military office at Bloomsburg and the creation and implementation of many programs and resources for military students such as a military specific co-curricular learning experience. He is an advisory board member for National Association of Student Personnel Administrators: Veterans Knowledge Committee (NASPA VKC) and the VKC Supra et Ultra Award Liaison. Bob lives in Hughesville, Pa. with his wife, daughter, and son.




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## Objectives

- Examine what it means to be more than “veteran friendly”
- Overview support services that span the timeline from prospect to graduation day
- Identify common issues military connected students face
- Discuss best practices from personal experience
  - Building relationships across work units as a key to success for our students
  - Focus on the issues that matter to military connected students
  - Collaboration on projects to address concerns
  - Use of technology




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## Why Your IHL Wants Military Members

- The bad news—Military members are not traditional students
- The good news—Military members are not traditional students
- Who are our “student veterans” and why do some students not like that terminology?
  - Military Connected Students/Military Members/Student Veterans
    - Veteran, active duty, reserve, national guard
    - Dependent using parent benefits
    - Spouse with transferred benefits or other eligibility




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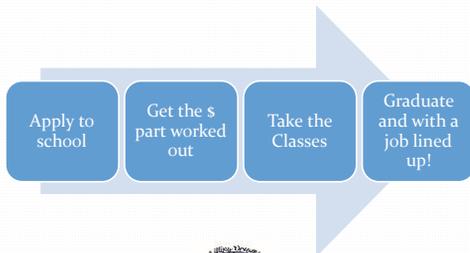
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## Student Timeline




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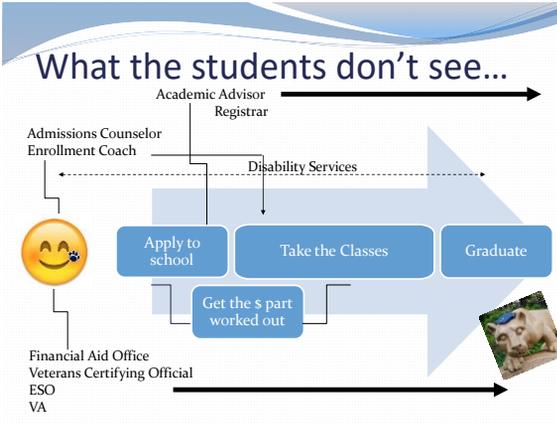
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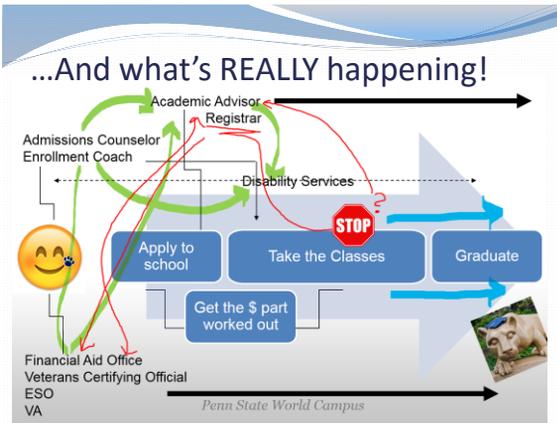
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## It all starts with Admissions

- Ask the right questions → get the right data
- World Campus has a Military Team approach
  - Begins with admissions counselor and/or enrollment coach
  - Financial aid liaison
  - Military advising team
- Act as internal liaison for student by recommending resources
  - From the RFI to the 1<sup>st</sup> month of class, and sometimes beyond




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## Common issues in Financial Aid

- Awareness of vast types of aid resources
  - FAFSA and other challenges
- Early Alert—paying attention to key words
  - Job reduction/loss
  - Change in household size
  - Death of spouse/parent
  - Transfer student
- Roadblocks
  - High number of credits/appeal/delays
- Streamline the process—often working with more than one office

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## Advising Military Students

- “Let me talk to an adult”
- “I feel like I’m the only on who \_\_\_\_\_”
- World Campus approach
  - Military Advising Team
  - Academic planning from the start
  - At risk students
  - Life choices and emerging issues
- Make connections across the campus before the crisis




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## What else should you know?

- Academic Institutional Culture—One size does not fit all
  - All Veterans / Military members should not be stereotyped into one group
  - Veterans often respond better to other Veterans
  - Institutions should consider using Peer to Peer mentoring / Advising
  - Advisors should be very up front with Veterans since they are not the typical freshman student, but rather adults.

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## Residential Point of View

- Does your campus need a designated military lounge?
- Easier to build relationships faster and stronger (in my humble opinion)
- “I’m not an online learner”




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## Questions?

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Thank you for attending!




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