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Helping Military and Veteran Students Transition to Academic Life: The Role of the Academic Library

Mary Elizabeth Downing-Turner
Fort Hays State University, medowning@fhsu.edu

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Helping Military and Veteran Students Transition to Academic Life: The Role of the Academic Library

Presented by M. Elizabeth Downing-Turner, MLIS
Forsyth Library - Fort Hays State University
Hays, KS

Georgia International Conference on Information Literacy
March 26, 2021



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Goals for the Presentation

- We will cover:
 - Facts about military & veteran students
 - How FHSU supports student success for military & veteran students
 - What role Forsyth Library plays in these initiatives
 - Future goals for the library
 - Tips for others who want to be more involved



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Demographics ¹

- In 2018 there were 669,922 students enrolled using GI Bill benefits
- 62% are first generation students
- 52% are undergraduates
- Most are male
- Most are married with children
- Majority are between the ages of 24-40

¹ U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs



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What challenges do Military & Veteran Students face?

- Their demographic profile lumps them in with several other groups and so their military and veteran status can get lost.
- Unpredictability of military life (separation dates, deployments, etc.) makes interacting with a rigid academic calendar difficult.
- Military and veterans' benefits are notoriously difficult to navigate.
- University supports can be just as difficult to navigate for first-time students.
- The University culture is very different from military culture.
- Unfamiliarity with military life and the “Cult of the Soldier” can cause faculty and students to treat military and veteran students differently than others.
- Military and veteran students may have service-related disabilities.
- Military and veteran students often report feeling isolated from other students because of their experiences.

In 2014, fewer than 40% of schools surveyed provided specific transition assistance for military and veteran students (Schiavone & Gentry).



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How does FHSU support Military & Veteran Students?

- FHSU is a “Military Friendly” school
- FHSU utilizes the Department of Education’s “8 Keys to Veteran’s Success”
- Dedicated Military & Veteran transfer center
- Military Focus Committee – Provost Level
- Student Veterans Association (SVA)

Military & Veteran Students make up about 6% of FHSU’s student population.



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What role does Forsyth Library play in supporting Military & Veteran Students at FHSU?

- Librarian on the Military Focus Committee
- Created a dedicated Military & Veterans Student study room
- Created a Military & Veterans Libguide
- Partnering with the Military & Transfer Center on student orientations



Take a picture of this QR code to access the Military & Veterans Resource Libguide



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What effect do these efforts have?

- Librarian on the Military Focus Committee serves as library liaison to Military & Veteran Students.
- Dedicated study space and dedicated orientations support the “Military Friendly” designation as well as the DoE’s 8 Keys.
- Library orientation for Military & Veteran Students is in-line with best practices for transfer students.
- Dedicated resource guides help students feel seen and included.

**Student success is
our ultimate goal!**



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What's next for Forsyth Library?

- New Student Success Center will provide opportunities for librarians to hold “office hours” at the transfer center
- Becoming more involved in the transfer process and providing modules for their expanded online orientations
- Continually assessing the collections to expand holdings that support the transition to student life
- Working with faculty to develop “Green Zone” training which will help interested faculty learn about military & veteran student needs



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What can you do at your institution?

- Find out if there is a committee that focuses on military & veteran students and see if you can get a librarian on that committee.
- Get in touch with who handles transfers and see if there are options to include military-specific orientations.
- Find out who on campus handles military benefits. Introduce yourself and ask how you can connect.
- Get in touch with your student veteran's association. Attend meetings and make yourself known as a resource.
- Consider developing resource guides for your military student population.
- Take a look at your collections and see if you're providing more than just books on PTSD.



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Questions and Discussion



M. Elizabeth Downing-Turner, MLIS
Assistant Professor, Digital Curation Librarian
Military Focus Committee Member
Forsyth Library – Fort Hays State University
medowning@fhsu.edu

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Thank you!



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