

2020 Annual Program Review

Program Name: Veterans' Resource Center

Program Review Author: Kevin Benitez

I. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION: In one or two paragraphs, provide a description of the primary goals of your program or service area. Attach an appendix to describe your program or service area in more detail, if needed.

Note: If no changes have occurred, feel free to copy and paste from your last review. If it exists, feel free to copy the brief description of your program from the college catalog: <http://www.smc.edu/CollegeCatalog/Pages/default.aspx>

We are committed to easing the transition process and providing opportunities for success to our Veterans and their families. Our Veterans Resource Center (VRC) directly provides support services and acts as a bridge to external services and resources for student Veterans, active military personnel, and their dependents. SMC's Veterans Resource Center provides assistance in matters pertaining to a student's transition from the military to college. The Veterans Resource Center offers a variety of support services to military veterans and their families. The VRC offers a place where student veterans and their families can feel comfortable, decompress, and take a break from the campus hustle and bustle. A free textbook-lending library, study pods, tutoring room, a computer lab, serenity room, and a lounge are some of the amenities offered in the VRC. Through the Veterans Resource Center, veterans can find or make arrangements for academic, career, and transfer counseling, as well as financial aid, tutoring, and other services that aim to help students achieve their education goals. Veterans and their families are welcome to use the VRC during their time at Santa Monica College.

II. PROGRESS SINCE LAST REVIEW (LAST YEAR'S OBJECTIVES)

Identify the original objectives from your last review, as well as any objectives that emerged during the year (if applicable). For each objective, determine status and explanation for status.

Objective	Status (Check one)	Status Explanation
Establish a female veterans group	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Completed <input type="checkbox"/> In Progress <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Completed	One of the counselors in the VRC (Krysten Gonzalez) led a group of female veterans. They met 3 times during the semester and had a meet and greet where we provided lunch, a vision board and mani-pedi day.
Peer Mentoring Program	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Completed <input type="checkbox"/> In Progress <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Completed	We successfully establish a peer mentoring program. New students who wanted a peer mentor were assigned a peer mentor who would help them navigate SMC as they transitioned out of the military into college.
Team Building Exercise	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Completed <input type="checkbox"/> In Progress <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Completed	The entire VRC staff attended a team building event last year. This was necessary because the team had been struggling with no leadership and the operation of the VRC was in disarray.
VRC move to a new location on campus	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Completed <input type="checkbox"/> In Progress <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Completed	The VRC successfully moved to its new location during the spring semester. Due to COVID-19 we have not had any students visit us we are now located on the "Invictus" level of the Cayton Center.

III. ACHIEVEMENTS

(Optional) List any notable achievements your program accomplished in the last year.

1. Through the hard work of the entire VRC team, SMC was named in the top 10 of military friendly schools in the country. We are #6 in the nation under the Large Community College Category. Our goal is to be #1 within the next couple of years.
2. We had 88 student veteran transfer and/or graduate this past summer amidst the pandemic.
3. First Community College to partner with Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health.

IV. CURRENT PLANNING AND RESOURCE NEEDS

Part 1: Narrative

Broadly discuss issues or needs impacting program effectiveness for which institutional support or resources will be needed for the next academic/fiscal year.

1. Digitizing student files. Covid-19 has shed light on the archaic way of how we handle student files. Other colleges have already shifted to using a digital record keeping platforms. We need drastically need to shift to more modern ways of maintaining student files without the need to physically come to campus.
2. Check in system or platform. We ideally would like a self-check in system similar to Q-less but more appropriate for the VRC. Prior to Covid-19 students were required to “sign-in” to the VRC on a sheet a paper and list what they were using the VRC for. Then the student workers would take that information and put it into the system. This method is simply duplicating the work. We would ideally want a software where the students themselves can sign in electronically on a tablet and submit their information which is then recorded so that we collect accurate data.
3. Streamlining communications between the admissions office, bursars, and auxiliary. There are simply too many departments involved with student veteran fees. We need the ability to control fees for the students as these fees are typically paid for by the Dept. Of Veterans Affairs (VA), yet none of the other departments are familiar with the VA or how the GI bill works.

Part 2: List of Resources Needed

Itemize the specific resources you will need to improve the effectiveness of your program, including resources and support you will need to accomplish your objectives for next year.

While this information will be reviewed and considered in institutional planning, the information does not supplant the need to request support or resources through established channels and processes.

Resource Category	Resource Description/Item	Rationale for Resource Need (Including Link to Objective)
Human Resources	No resources needed at this moment	Click or tap here to enter text.
Facilities (<i>info inputted here will be given to DPAC Facilitates Comm.</i>)	We would like signage that will allow student veterans to find our location much easier.	As of right now there is a small sign by the entrance. The campus map does not reflect the location of the VRC accurately.

Equipment, Technology, Supplies <i>(tech inputted here will be given to Technology Planning Committee)</i>	No resources needed at this moment	Click or tap here to enter text.
Professional Development	Veteran Specific Counselor Training	I believe that the counselors in the VRC could use more training on veteran specific counseling.

V. CHALLENGES RELATED TO SPRING 2020 COVID-19 CRISIS AND RESPONSE:

List significant challenges your program faced in Spring 2020 due to COVID-19. Please also include your responses and solutions to this crisis.

1. Similarly to everyone on campus, we were forced to adapt quickly to the ever changing needs of the students. Our biggest challenge was the processing of VA paperwork. This proved to be a hard transition because all the student files were on campus and we needed access to them in order to process the paperwork. We did however, figure out a band aid to get us through the summer and with Mrs. Brenda Benson advocating for us we were able to return to campus on a limited bases to make sure everything was in order. As mentioned above 1 of our goals is to digitize the files so that we can work 100% remotely without a hitch.
2. Student veterans rely on their GI bill to pay for housing, books and food. Given the transition to remote modalities we found ourselves scrambling to find resources for those students that had to drop out of their classes as they only get paid while they are attending school. Legislation was passed and we are now able to give students EW's to allow them to drop and not have to pay the money back to the VA.
3. Another obstacle was submitting documentation for processing to our Certifying Officials. The certifying officials found themselves overwhelmed with emails and were losing track of the documents the counselors were submitting. We ultimately decided to use Microsoft Teams to submit paperwork which seems to be a significant improvement over our previous methods of submitting documentation.

VI. THE NEXT SECTION IS FOR CTE PROGRAMS ONLY

PARTNERSHIPS:

Part 1: Industry advisory meeting dates and attendance for 2019-2020.

Date of Meeting	# of SMC Attendees	# of Non-SMC Attendees
Click or tap to enter a date.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
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Part 2: Employer partnerships/collaborations for 2019-2020. Identify the most salient partnerships or collaborations.

Employer Name	Type of partnership or Collaboration	Optional: Additional information about partnership or collaboration
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisory attendance • Internship site • Donations • Job placement • Other 	

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CONGRATULATIONS – that’s it! Please save your document with your program’s name and forward it to your area Vice President for review.

The following section will be completed by your program’s area VP

Vice Presidents:

First, please let us know who you are by checking your name:

- Christopher Bonvenuto, Vice President, Business and Administration
- Don Girard, Senior Director, Government Relations & Institutional Communications
- Sherri Lee-Lewis, Vice President, Human Resources
- Jennifer Merlic, Vice President, Academic Affairs
- Teresita Rodriguez, Vice President, Enrollment Development
- Michael Tuitasi, Vice President, Student Affairs

Next, please check this box to indicate that you have reviewed the program’s annual report Provide any feedback and comments for the program here:

Click or tap here to enter text; the box will expand when you enter text.

Finally, please **save the document** and email it to both Stephanie Amerian (amerian_stephanie@smc.edu) and Erica LeBlanc (leblanc_eric@smc.edu). If you have any questions, please contact us!

Thank you for your input!