

Presenter:

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Title:

Military Veterans as a category for Diversity and Inclusion at Institutions of Higher Learning in the State of Nevada

Background:

Diversity and inclusion are important factors throughout our society. Nowhere is it of more importance than in our academic institutions where we bring groups of individuals together of all colors, races, ethnic backgrounds, genders, sexual orientations, and much more. This serves the purpose of educating our future generations on more than just what is in the books but on the issues, disparities, and demographics currently represented in our society. The more diverse and inclusive our campuses, the more informed and educated our students are and the better future leaders they will be.

While there is great value in the existing diversity criteria, the diversity of experience is often overlooked. A student who has grown up in the same city and state their entire life will have a different perspective than a student who has lived all over the United States and even multiple countries overseas. A student who comes from generations of highly educated professionals will certainly differ from a student who is a first-generation college student. Each brings a unique wealth of experiences and perspective that can serve to strengthen those with whom they interact.

In addition to the above, Diversity and Inclusion criteria are important as they influence recruitment efforts and funding of an institution to target specific demographics that are underrepresented. We want to ensure that our military veterans are being included in those criteria due to the wealth of their lived experiences.

Impact:

Why Military Veterans on Campus?

- Military Veterans have the highest average GPA at the national level. According to NVEST data by the student veterans of America. Student veterans average 3.34 vs traditional students 2.94
- Military veterans in our state of Nevada have higher graduation rates. At UNLV specifically and at the undergraduate level, veterans have a degree completion rate almost double that of their non-veteran counterparts.
- Veterans bring federal funding in the form of GI Bill benefits to the institutions they attend as well as impact on the local economy with federal funding dollars for housing and living costs being spent locally in our state of Nevada.

What veterans bring to the diversity and inclusion sphere?

According to data compiled by the Post-Secondary National Policy Institute, Student Veterans of America, and the Department of Veterans Affairs:

- Average age of student veterans starting post-secondary education was 25 years old
- 62% of student veterans are first generation college students
- 47% of student veterans are married and have at least one child
- 17% were black
- 16% Hispanic
- 6% multiracial

Examples:

Many professional schools have diversity and inclusion criteria that are recommended by national overseeing bodies. In medicine, the American Association of Medical Colleges (AAMC) created recommendations for member medical schools to follow in terms of diversity and inclusion. I am proud to say that the UNLV School of Medicine has applied all those categories and added others that bring value and also represent our community, including, “Military Veterans” and “First Generation College Students”. This serves to enhance the body of physicians that we are educating to serve our great state of Nevada. Applying these additional categories more broadly could enhance our entire workforce in all fields and areas of study.

Recommendations:

To introduce a policy that would unify diversity categories throughout all NSHE institutions and if possible all non-NSHE institutions in the State of Nevada to include “Military Veterans” as a diversity category.

Summary:

- Student Veterans are an important addition to our college campuses
- The Student Veteran demographics include many of the diversity and inclusion criteria we currently have as well as add more.
- We have no unified “Military Veterans” diversity category in our Institutions of higher learning in the State of Nevada.
- Military Veterans will enhance our diversity on campus as well as enhance academic statistics and graduation rates.

Concluding remarks:

In addition to enhancing the diversity of our current populations on campuses throughout the state of Nevada, this would also enhance and complement prior policies supported by this committee e.g. AB 429 which extended benefits to veterans pursuing a course of graduate education in areas of critical shortage in the state of Nevada.

References:

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