

VOLUNTEER STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE



Veteran Reconnect Grant Program

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Funding requested:

\$ 89,104


President/Director of Higher Education Institution


Project Director

**VOLUNTEER STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE
VETERANS RECONNECT GRANT NARRATIVE**

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VETERANS RECONNECT GRANT NARRATIVE

Section I – Program Need

I. Is there campus-specific demographic data demonstrating the need for action?

Volunteer State Community College Veteran’s Enrollment and Fall to Fall Persistence

Fall 2011 - Fall 2013

Overall Enrollment

	N
Fall 2011	364
Fall 2012	293
Fall 2013	328
Fall 2014	342

Overall Fall to Fall Persistence

	Total N	Graduated	Returned (excl. grads)	1 Yr Grad Rate	1 Yr Persist	Overall Persistence
Fall 2011	364	58	122	15.9%	33.5%	49.5%
Fall 2012	293	52	107	17.7%	36.5%	54.3%
Fall 2013	328	43	118	13.1%	36.0%	49.1%

A. *How many veteran students are served each academic year?*

As seen in the graph above, Volunteer State serves a significant number of veterans currently, with NO recruiting effort. Numbers for this project are expected to increase with staff time being available to devote to recruiting and retention efforts.

B. How many veterans are residents in service area?

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 58,632 veterans reside in VSCC's 12-county service area. Twenty-two % (12,748) of the total number of veterans who reside in our service area are residents of Sumner County where VSCC's main campus is located, making accessibility convenient to our Veterans Center for those needing services.

C. What are our connections with Veteran's organizations?

VSCC's current Coordinator of Veterans Affairs has established relationships with Hendersonville Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), is working with Student Veterans of America clubs which are located in school systems throughout the state of TN in order to establish a network to enhance the support between veterans groups, coordinates with the Gallatin Career Center to assist veterans with resume writing and job search functions and works with the Sumner County Veterans Service Officer for assistance with veterans with disabilities.

D. What is the trend – increase or decrease over the past 3 years.

Generally, veteran student enrollment has remained static over the past three years, however, College retention has been lower than average for area community colleges. Over the past three years, graduation rates have averaged 16% of veteran students enrolled. Graduation rates have improved this past year with the implementation of several new student support systems that are proving to be effective. The College is striving to improve student graduate rates overall and is continually looking for methods that will have an impact on this goal.

E. Is there a standardized system of tracking veterans and student veteran success data – describe and certify that efforts are in place or underway.

VSCC's Institutional Effectiveness Department extracts data from Ellucian Banner and utilizes SPSS to analyze student data. Subpopulation analysis is conducted for all subpopulations defined in the existing strategic plan. These analyses include general programmatic information

including such things as headcount and FTE, location, major, etc. and also detailed student success analyses including retention, persistence, graduation rates, success and retention rates, and analytics of student intervention initiatives to measure the effect of such initiatives. All student data is aggregated and analyzed within the college I.E. Department and distributed on the College website and through numerous reporting systems. During the project, VSCC will enhance the existing tracking system to retrieve and generate data specifically for veteran students. This enhancement will permit the College to track veterans from initial enrollment through graduation.

II. Proposed Program – briefly describe components

VSCC's project would entail the following activities:

1. Hiring of a clerical staff position would be hired to assist VSCC's Veterans Coordinator who would then be able to establish additional programs and engage in recruiting activities.
2. Training of academic advisors who are veterans on current veteran's issues with quarterly training sessions and updates on veterans' resources
3. Work with Career Placement to establish job search skills, writing resumes, converting military terms to those understood by civilian employers
4. Coordinate with businesses who are interested in hiring veterans to potentially create an agreement to hire qualified veterans or create internship opportunities through VSCC.
5. Develop a Veteran's Center on campus in an accessible location and dedicated to veterans' needs including computer access, veterans' resources, secure and safe location for veterans' requiring special services, and provide a one-stop shop on campus that is dedicated to assisting veterans with college success.
6. Establish a textbook loan library for veterans with donations from other students so low-income veterans can sign them out for the term or until they can afford to purchase or rent books.

7. Establish a tech loan center so veterans can sign out items such as calculators for the students to avoid the cost of purchasing these items for one term.
8. Establish a Veteran's Success Committee that will meet monthly to provide guidance for the project period of the grant and then to continue to meet on a quarterly basis to monitor activities that will ensure veteran success.

III. Are there clear linkages between grant activities and local needs?

In VSCC's 12 County service area, the majority of which consists of rural populations, there are very limited educational resources for veterans. There is no Veteran's Center within 50 miles of VSCC's main campus and VSCC is the only community college within the 12 county region that offers open enrollment and has an established Veterans Affairs Office specifically to serve student veterans at a limited capacity. Linkages are currently established through VSCC's Veterans Affairs Office which provides services that include certification of GI Bill benefits and limited support for veteran student success. During the grant project period the following supportive associations will be created:

- The Secretary III will handle GI Bill and orientation for veteran students
- The current VSCC Veteran's Coordinator will establish training opportunities so that VSCC faculty will have a better understanding of veteran student unique challenges and educational needs
- Develop individualized student career search pathways and skills to enable them to effectively secure employment after program completion.
- Coordinate with local businesses to establish relationships that offer veterans more direct hiring opportunities
- Establish campus Veterans Center so that veteran needs can be met to ensure their educational success

- Establish veterans lending library to help alleviate cost of books for low-income students
- Establish a technology loan center to assist veteran students with access to technology needed for course work and completion
- Formation of Veterans Success Committee who will be responsible for ensuring that veteran students receive appropriate services.

IV. Is proposal aligned with state Drive to 55 goals?

A. Through formation of the Veterans' Success Committee, provision of a dedicated Veterans Center at VSCC, and utilization of established adult support systems, VSCC will increase retention and completion specifically for Veterans. VSCC has established several relationships with employers who are specifically interested in increasing the number of veterans that they hire, and we will continue to increase relationships with employers who have this same goal. Through a marketing plan, VSCC will recruit veterans into programs with high success in job placement so that veterans have advantageous opportunities to secure employment. By recruiting more adult veterans into our higher educational institution and providing individualized support for their success, VSCC is aligned with Drive to 55 goals.

B. VSCC has established articulation agreements with both public and private universities in both TN and KY to ensure smooth transfer and continues to network with universities to increase articulation agreements.

V. Do veteran enrollment trends support this investment?

VSCC is maintaining enrollment without recruitment. Recruitment is lacking because we only have one staff member available to go out to organizations and share information with potential students and local networks that may refer students to Vol State. The single position is also responsible for maintaining all retention and support activities. The grant project would address allowing more time for recruitment and retention activities to help address this need and to

July 2, 2015

increase initial recruitment and eventually retention of veterans beyond their first term. VSCC's geographical service area support an investment in establishing a Veterans' Center and expanding services to support retention and program completion at our campus.

Section 2. Program Plan

I. Is a detailed project timeline and overview provided? (month-by-month)

August 1 – Grant team will meet and review timeline and complete a work plan. Secretary III (assistant) posted by Human Resource department so that position will be filled by end of month; Veteran's Committee formed, Renovation of designated space for Veteran's Center will begin.

September – Secretary III will be trained and assume duties, Veterans Committee will hold first meeting. Renovation of Veteran's Center space will be completed and Center will be furnished, and set up for occupancy. Veteran's Coordinator will meet with employers. Modifications will be made to current I.E. department tracking system to capture veteran specific data.

October – VSCC will hold a "Grand Opening" for Veterans' Center with invitations to community leaders, Veteran organization staff, veteran students, and the College campus and local news media. Veterans Committee will meet and continue to meet monthly. Compiling and aggregating data on veteran student enrollment.

November – Set up a meeting with faculty to discuss veterans' unique issues so that they have more understanding of veteran students in an educational environment.

December – Veterans Center will establish both the textbook and technology lending programs

January – VSCC Veterans Committee will review current project progress and make recommendations for any improvements or changes.

February – Work with Career Placement and local Career Centers to develop job search and preparation skills so that veterans are better positioned to enter the workforce upon program

completion. Veteran Affairs Coordinator and Secretary III will attend Veterans Symposium held in Louisville, KY.

March – Veteran Committee review and implementation of sustainability of project. Compiling and aggregating data on veteran student enrollment and retention.

April – Veterans’ Resource Fair (bring in VFW, American Legion, Veterans’ Service Officers etc.) to exhibit resources available to veterans.

May – Compiling and aggregating data on veterans course completion

June – Assessment of effectiveness of services offered by Veterans’ Center and recommendation of improvements.

July – Preparation of report to THEC. Planning of project improvements for next academic year.

II. Are there measurable objectives for each phase of the project?

The activities of the grant project will be conducted to meet these three measurable objectives which play a role in each phase of the grant project:

1. To increase enrollment by 2.5% in the first year of project*.
2. To increase retention by 2.5% in first year of project.*

Data for these two goals will be collected and analyzed through an established system within VSCC’s Institutional Effectiveness division. Using Banner and Blumen programs, our IERPA department will provide on-going assessment and review of specific data collected in order to enable the Veterans’ Success Committee and Veterans Center staff to modify and improve programs.

**Note: This is a conservative goal because it will require approximately 6 months to fully implement the activities outlined in the grant project. The following year VSCC expects to see a larger percentage of increased enrollment.*

3. To provide training through an open forum for faculty and staff regarding veteran students.

Results will be obtained by surveying participants to measure their perceived increase in knowledge regarding veterans' unique challenges. The surveys will be collected and results aggregated by IERPA staff. These results will be distributed to the Veterans Success Committee for review and recommendation on how to improve the project. Results and ensuing modifications will be included the grant final report.

III. Is a project governance and accountability plan clearly presented?

Governance and accountability will be administered by the formation of a Veterans Success Committee in cooperation with the Coordinator, Veterans Affairs. The committee will be responsible for developing a plan for the success of veterans attending Vol State along with an evaluation plan to track changes to the programs. The committee will be responsible for governing the progress of changes. The committee will be able to report progress to Vol State leadership through the Student Services Vice President. The Veterans' Committee will meet monthly during the project period and then will continue meeting quarterly thereafter.

IV. Will student veterans be served efficiently?

With the addition of a Secretary III assistant, the Coordinator, Veterans Affairs will have the ability to expand the veterans' programs at Vol State. Currently there is very limited ability to serve veterans beyond the level of certifying veterans' classes to the Department of Veterans Affairs and ensuring compliance with certification standards. With the addition of an assistant, the certification process can be administered by the Secretary III and the Coordinator, Veterans Affairs will be able to network with external agencies and other offices to implement programs for the success of veteran students during their time in school and set up networks with local businesses interested in hiring veterans. With the extra assistance and focus generated by the project and

activities performed within the new Veterans Center at VSCC, opportunities for veterans will become more efficient and will enhance veterans' experiences at Vol State.

V. Does the plan offer new, innovative approaches to supporting student veterans?

Creating a Veteran's Center with dedicated staff members to assist is not a new idea, but it is new for the Volunteer State Community College service area. Additionally, VSCC has support programs in place such as Early Alert, Tutor.com and Inside Track which are all newer and more innovative systems that will be used to assist veterans in completion of their programs. (*VSCC certifies that grant funds will not be commingled with payment for existing staff member duties. These funds are dedicated and will be used exclusively for execution of the new duties outlined in the institution's submitted proposal.*)

VI. Are employer relationships established and documented in the proposal?

VSCC's proposed partnership with Lifeway include a commitment from the employer to agree to interview completing VSCC student veterans for available full-time positions within various departments of operation. The employer also has indicated additional commitments of assistance as outlined in the attached letter of support.

VII. Does the plan incorporate the formation of a campus veteran success committee? If the committee is in place, describe and certify these efforts as being underway.

The Veterans Success Committee will be developed during the first month of the grant period. They will be responsible for determining needed improvements to veterans programs at Vol State and then creating implementation and evaluation checklists to guide the Veterans Center staff in creating programs needed for the success of veteran students at Vol State. Members for the Veteran Success Committee will be recruited from campus staff, veteran students, faculty and one or more employer partners.

Section 3. Budget Plan - Attached

Section 4. Sustainability

I. Is there a detailed plan for sustaining the program services and student resources beyond the grant funding period?

If a total goal of 5% recruitment and retention of veteran students is accomplished, this will generate enough revenue to cover the cost of maintaining a Secretary III position if revenues and budgets remain constant or better for the next budget cycle. If not, the establishment of the Veterans Center along with the Coordinator of Veterans Affairs position that is already in place at VSCC, the initial programs will be maintained until a veteran affairs work study can be hired to assist with the programs.

II. Will funded activities offer student veteran benefits beyond the grant period?

Yes, with the establishment of each program listed, veteran students will benefit from the campus center to have a place to study, de-escalate if they are having issues and a place they can have someone to talk to if they are having issues. There are always veterans in need of textbooks or tech items such as a calculator because they can't afford these items at the beginning of classes until their VA check arrives, many times days or weeks after the start of their classes.

Appendix B- Budget

GRANT BUDGET				
Veteran Reconnect Grant VOLUNTEER STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE				
The grant budget line-item amounts below shall be applicable only to expenses incurred during the following				
Applicable Period: BEGIN: August 1, 2015 END : June 30, 2016				
POLICY 03 Object Line-Item Reference	EXPENSE OBJECT LINE-ITEM CATEGORY ¹	GRANT CONTRACT	GRANTEE PARTICIPATION	TOTAL PROJECT
1. 2	Salaries, Benefits & Taxes	\$45,068	\$13,600	\$58 668
4, 15	Professional Fee, Grant & Award ²	0.00	0.00	0.00
5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10	Supplies, Telephone, Postage & Shipping, Occupancy, Equipment Rental & Maintenance, Printing & Publications	\$41,400	\$12,000	\$53,400
11. 12	Travel, Conferences & Meetings	\$2,136	0.00	\$2,136
13	Interest ²	0.00	0.00	0.00
14	Insurance	0.00	0.00	0.00
16	Specific Assistance To Individuals	0.00	0.00	0.00
17	Depreciation ²	0.00	0.00	0.00
18	Other Non-Personnel ²	\$500	\$600	\$1,100
20	Capital Purchase ²	0.00	0.00	0.00
22	Indirect Cost	0.00	0.00	0.00
24	In-Kind Expense	0.00	0.00	0.00
25	GRAND TOTAL	\$89,104.00	\$15,400.00	\$104,504.00

¹ Each expense object line-item shall be defined by the Department of Finance and Administration Policy 03, *Uniform Reporting Requirements and Cost Allocation Plans for Subrecipients of Federal and State Grant Monies, Appendix A*. (posted on the Internet at: www.state.tn.us/finance/act/documents/policy3.pdf).

² Applicable detail follows this page if line-item is funded.

GRANT BUDGET LINE-ITEM DETAIL:

SALARIES AND BENEFITS	AMOUNT
Salaries, Benefits & Taxes Secretary III- VSCC Project Director Salary and Benefits Inkind	\$45,068
TOTAL	\$45,068

Supplies, Telephone, Postage & Shipping, Occupancy, Equipment Rental & Maintenance, Printing & Publications	AMOUNT
Occupancy - check with Will on space value and custodial - Painting, moderate renovation. Furniture for a standard office – \$ 7,000 (includes desk, overhead storage, desk chair, bookcase, file cabinet, and 2 guest chairs) X 2 people + \$14,000, Classroom table with 3 chairs @ \$400 each = \$1,200, Sofa - \$1,000 Lounge Chair - \$600, 12’ run of acoustical wall panels (for offices) - X 2 (for a 12’ x 12’ office in a corner you would need two 12’ run of panels) \$ 3,000, TV for Center - \$500. Telephones: \$3,000; Copier (MFD) Rental: \$3,000, Furniture for new Veteran's Center space: \$23,800; Computer equipment: \$7050, Office Supplies: \$1,000	\$41,400
TOTAL	\$41,400

TRAVEL, CONFERENCES AND MEETINGS	AMOUNT
Training for Secretary; Veteran's Annual Conference (2 attendees to NASPA Conference in Feb. 2016); Travel to Nashville Veterans Conference.	\$2,136
TOTAL	\$2,136

OTHER NON-PERSONNEL	AMOUNT
\$500 for 1000 brochures and design – inkind costs provided by VSCC PR Dept. staff	\$500
TOTAL	\$500



June 27, 2015

Mr. Scott Sloan
Tennessee Higher Education Commission
404 James Robertson Parkway, Suite 1900
Nashville, TN 37243-0830

Re: Veterans Reconnect Project

Dear Mr. Sloan:

LifeWay Christian Resources is a non-profit Christian organization located in the greater Nashville area. We employ 2,000 employees. Due to anticipated growth, annual turnover and expanding numbers of retiring workers, we anticipate hiring employees requiring skills and/or training in Logistics in the next 5 years.

LifeWay Christian Resources supports Volunteer State Community College as a partnering employer in the **Veterans Reconnect** project to develop education and career training strategies in order to increase attainment of degrees, certificates, and other industry-recognized credentials for veterans who have the potential to move into a needed skilled area.

LifeWay Christian Resources is committed to helping Volunteer State Community College increase services to veterans by engaging in the following activities:

- Provide further input to the program design and curriculum
- Help implement program strategies and goals.
- Share relevant data on job openings, job descriptions, and workforce assessments to identify the necessary skills and competencies needed by workers.
- Participate in classroom activities, mock interviews and other job readiness activities
- Serve on the Veterans Success Committee for monthly meetings and / or teleconferences.
- Provide the opportunity for students to gain job skills through an internship program, job co-op or service learning
- Provide opportunities for students who complete the program to interview for job openings at our organization
- Participate as a guest lecturer for a class (online or face-to-face).
- Participate in Career Fairs on the college campus held 1-2 times annually

Sincerely,
Rodney Cathey
General Manager, Distribution Center