

2024-2025 Student Services Program Review - Veteran Resource Center Latest Version

Self-study template for Student Services Program Review process. Review period: 2021-2022, 2022-2023, 2023-2024.

Student Service Program Review Overview & Timeline

Student Service Program Review Purpose

Section 1: Service Area Overview

A. Service Area Mission and Alignment : Version by **Amador, Lui** on **12/16/2024 17:18**

1. Briefly describe how your mission and purpose aligns with the Cerritos College mission and Students First Framework (<https://www.cerritos.edu/students-first-framework/default.htm>).

The VRC supports the college's efforts to provide equity-minded pathways to students' educational goals. These efforts include:

- Support and promote student success
- Celebrate diversity in people, philosophies, cultures, beliefs, programs and learning
- Promote respect and trust in all people regardless of background, including students, community members and employees
- Foster integrity
- Develop nurturing and supportive partnerships with our educational, business and industry communities

The primary goal within the Students First Framework is to graduate fifty percent of our students within five years or less by spring 2029. The Veterans Resource Center (VRC) provides comprehensive services and resources to meet the unique needs of our student veterans and other military-connected students. Services such the certification of their military-connected educational benefits, academic planning and peer tutoring support students' educational and long-term goals. The VRC staff strive to maintain awareness of social/cultural trends as well as federal and local laws and policies that may inform the specific needs and priorities of all military-connected students. Finally, the VRC team maintains ongoing relationships and collaborative engagement with key stakeholders both on and off campus. The VRC team is committed to supporting our students through a strengths-based approach, in an effort to reduce or eliminate barriers, which will which allow students to achieve their academic goals in a timely manner.

B. Service Area Description : Version by **Amador, Lui** on **12/16/2024 17:18**

Service	Description
New Student Orientation	Review and explain VRC services, and benefits certification for new students
Academic Counseling	Create academic educational plans (required for VA benefits), unit increases, advisement on classes and career goals
VA Educational Benefits Certification	Certify benefits through the VA via their online Enrollment Manager system. This also includes billing the VA for the tuition, etc.
Student Accessibility Services (SAS) program referrals and onboarding	Connect students with SAS information, and program eligibility and onboarding via our SAS counselor.
Internal Services Workshops (FinAid, Falcon's Nest, CalWorks, EOPS, etc.)	Provide information on internal campus services for student success, and program introduction.
External Services Workshops (VR&E, VA, Veteran Peer Access Network, Housing, etc.)	Provide external veteran support services to students.
Tutoring (Math and English)	Assisting students with Math/English program course work
Job Placement (Career Command Center)	Expanding work-study program on campus; projected to roll out in Fall 2024
Transfer Support and Campus Tours	Provide opportunities for students to explore transfer options (tours, application workshops, etc.)
Academic Supplies and Support	Calculator and textbook loaner program; school supply giveaway in the fall and spring semesters
Outreach and Engagement Programming	Provide information to our community on programs and services we offer; provide support services through creating a sense of community and comradery amongst our student population. This helps to foster a culture of success.

B. Service Area Description Continued : Version by **Amador, Lui** on **12/16/2024 17:18**

2. Describe efforts to promote the availability of your services to current and prospective users.

a. Describe the key methods used to assist users in getting information about your service areas programs and service offerings (e.g., publicity, outreach, recruitment, etc.).

Currently, the students we serve are self-identified, meaning they come to our center to register and provide us with the appropriate documentation. We have recently been working with Admissions and Records to reach all students who identify as military-connected (veterans, active, or dependent students) on their admission applications. Since we have been able to pull that data, we have sent targeted emails to these groups advertising our services and encouraging students to come into our center.

College outreach: We continue participating in college events to reach current Cerritos College students who might know what we offer at the VRC. A common misconception many student veterans have is that if they are not planning on utilizing their GI Bill, they do not need to come into the VRC; however, we provide services regardless of benefit status. We regularly participate in info tables, ASCC events, and activities and do regular presentations at division meetings for faculty to share information about the VRC and what we provide. Welcome Day

(Fall/Spring) and Veterans Week (Nov.); VetNet Ally Training (participating partners)

High school-targeted events: We have recently begun tabling at campus events specifically targeted to incoming high school students and their parents to reach dependents or other military-connected students. We have been working on increasing our dependent population, which has helped showcase the VRC to incoming students who might be dependents.

Community/Base Outreach: Our participation in the College fair at Camp Pendleton in the Fall of 2023 was a significant milestone. It gave us a unique opportunity to connect with service members close to separation and consider education their next step. This successful event has motivated us to plan for more such impactful events on base in our local area, including a return to Pendleton in the Fall of 2024.

3. Does your service area overlap or duplicate any programs or service function with other Student Services or college units?

a. How and why do these services/programs duplicate one another?

b. How do they complement each other?

Counseling and tutoring are a duplicate of student services. However, the VRC counselor and SAS counselor provide education plans for VA benefits and academic worksheets for VRE students.

Tutoring is provided by the success center and tutors work in the VRC to provide tutoring in Math and English.

Counseling services complement each other by maintaining and creating ed plans for Veterans and military-connected students.

Tutoring complements each other by ensuring the gateway classes of Math and English are successfully passed to ensure successful completion of degree and transfer.

4. Discuss key, collaborative relationships with academic programs and other student service areas. How do these partnerships:

a. Advance achievement, learning, or completion.

b. Support the service area's mission, goals, and Service Area Outcomes (SAOs).

c. Enhance the quality of services and programs provided.

d. Create greater operational efficiencies for the service area.

e. Identify how your partnerships can or have mitigated equity gaps.

The VRC collaborates with a variety of different departments, divisions and areas across campus. Some of our regular partnerships include Financial Aid, Admissions, Success Center, Falcon's Nest, Career Center, and General Counseling. The VRC also works closely with various division areas on outreach and so that they can help inform students of our programs and services. We are currently working with Academic Affairs, Admissions and Records and other contributing departments to establish a more comprehensive process for credit for prior learning (CPL) and the MAP initiative coordinated by the Chancellor's Office; We are also coordinating with the President's Office, Human Resources and various participating departments on the Career Command Center pilot program.

Through these partnerships, the VRC is able to effectively enhance the quality of serves offered to students, create greater operational efficiencies, as well as mitigate equity gaps, which in turn strengthens our students to be more resilient, persist from term to term and successfully complete their academic goals.

C. Service Area Organizational Resources : Version by Amador, Lui on 12/16/2024 17:19

1. Please describe your service area's organizational and personnel structure. Discuss:

a. Reporting relationships.

b. Distribution of responsibilities/authority.

c. Use of management or work teams.

d. Lines of communication (e.g., area meetings structure/frequency, staff-to-staff and staff-to-manager communication, etc.).

The VRC staff is comprised of the following individuals and roles:

- Lui Amador – Division Dean and department manager
- Felipe Salazar – Academic Counselor
- Katie Mishler – Program Facilitator
- Jaritzzy Herrera-Macias – School Certifying Official

Each staff and faculty member reports directly to the Dean of Student Equity and Success.

Each staff member has specific responsibilities that are unique to their position, based on the mission of the department and the needs of the students:

Felipe Salazar

- Provides academic counseling (ed plans, assures courses are in accordance with their educational goals).

Jaritzzy Herrera-Macias

- Processes the certification requests of students to access and utilize their military and veterans' educational benefits.

Katie Mishler

- Coordinates programs and services that support the access, engagement, retention, and completion of students. Offers programs and services that meet the unique needs of military connected students. Also serves as a backup school certifying official.

Lui Amador

- serves as the department manager and supervisor. Also serves as a backup school certifying official.

The department conducts bi-weekly staff meetings to address issues and concerns, as well as to provide updates on their respective areas. The division dean/department manager also meets bi-weekly with each member of the department to review projects and assignments as well as to offer any needed guidance or support.

2. How does your current staff profile facilitate or impede the service area's ability to fulfill its primary mission and functions?

a. If applicable, what strategies has the area adopted to address staffing-related impediments?

The staff profile was developed to support the mission of the department in serving the specific needs of student veterans and other military-connected students. The composition of the staff has evolved over the years, influenced significantly with the institution of the Post 9/11 GI Bill in 2009. The majority of student veteran utilize this benefit, which involves specific criteria and requirements for eligibility. Both the school certifying official, and the academic counselor played critical roles for the successful implementation of services needed for students to access this benefit.

In 2021, the Program Facilitator position was developed to address prevailing gaps in essential services that support the engagement, retention and overall success of students.

3. Describe any challenges the service area has encountered with respect to the recruitment and retention of qualified staff. What are the implications of these challenges?

The largest challenge of recruiting and retaining department staff has been the specificity of the roles each staff member has. Each staff position requires specific skillsets that are unique to serving the military-connected student population, which can and has made the recruitment and hiring of qualified individuals difficult. Furthermore, continued training and development is needed to ensure that each staff member is up to date on federal, state and campus policies that impact the veteran and military-connected student population.

4. How does the service area facilitate appropriate career development and progression for staff?

a. Describe the service area's professional development resources, activities, and/or opportunities.

b. How does this engagement directly reflect on the direction of your service area.

a. The department participates in two annual conferences to ensure staff are up to date on laws, policies and current trends that impact the students served:

- Region VIII Meetings

- The Western Association of Veteran Education Specialists (WAVES) training conference for all schools certifying officials under the umbrella of the Muskogee Regional Processing Office for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).
- The National Association of Veterans' Program Administrators (NAVPA) promotes professional competency and efficiency through an association of members and others associated with and involved in veterans, servicemembers and dependents educational programs.
- The department has also held annual retreats to review the mission, goals, projects and tasks for a given academic year. Staff members have also participated in division-wide, area-wide, and campus-wide in-service trainings and retreats.
- Work-study and Short-term hourly (STH) "Huddles" and in-service trainings

b. Engagement in the various professional development opportunities outlined previously enable staff to reflect on and address issues pertaining to department effectiveness, and relevance to the needs of the students they serve. Furthermore, the department has utilized these opportunities to better align its activities and initiatives with campus goals and priorities.

5. Please describe the succession planning for your service area.

a. What steps are in place?

b. How does the service area plan to make changes to services (realignment, reorganization, or other strategies) to ensure continuous improvement in the face of staff turnover, retirement, and attrition?

A few steps have been put in place to try and be proactive in terms of succession planning that include the development of standard operating procedures (SOPs) for the essential processes of the department. In addition, processes are regularly discussed in both individual 1-on-1's and department meetings as an initial cross-training of duties. Both the Division Dean and Program Facilitator have been trained to serve as school certifying officials, and the current SCO is actively involved in the planning and coordination of department events. However, more development and attention are needed to ensure an effective succession plan. This should include a review and if needed, revisions of the department's SOPs, as well as additional trainings on the various programs and services offered by the department.

a. As stated, SOPs and other documentation have been initiated to ensure ongoing understanding of department processes and services. The SCO is also working closely with the Program Facilitator and the Division Dean to keep them up to date on the certification process as well as any new policies or laws regarding military-connected benefits.

b. Additional cross-training and hands-on experience is being implemented, particularly in regard to the certification of VA educational benefits. As back up school certifying officials, both the Dean and Program Facilitator will be assigned a small percentage of the Fall certification workload to ensure that they maintain a working understanding of the certification process. Some other on-campus counselors have cross-trained in the VRC who could assist in the potential absence of the academic counselor. Currently, the Program Facilitator is funded by categorical funding from the Chancellor's Office. This position needs to be institutionalized by district funding.

6. What assessment methods and measures (either formal or informal) does the service area use to determine staff well-being, satisfaction, and motivation?

a. How does the department use the findings from these assessment efforts to improve the work environment?

As stated previously, the staff participate regularly in 1-on-1 meetings with the Dean as well as in department meetings, where they discuss concerns, issues and challenges to the effective function of their roles. They also explore opportunities for improving processes in an effort to sustain a positive work environment. The department has previously faced interpersonal challenges between staff which has heightened awareness of the need to ensure that fairness, open communication and conflict management are prioritized throughout the department. The Dean has also implemented an annual department retreat which includes opportunities for reflection and personal feedback.

The department staff have shared that there is a need to develop processes that improve both our efficiency and ability to be more proactive rather than reactive in the face of potential challenges. Staff stress levels certainly increase during high traffic times and when staff are required to consistently respond to in-the-moment, student issues. Similarly, the department does not have a structured process for assessing staff morale and well-being.

7. What significant projects, tasks, workgroups, and committee work are the staff of your service area engaged in?

a. How does this participation reflect on your service area's plans and integration with the college.

- VRC focuses on enhancing support services for veteran students. This includes improving transition program for those entering college, developing workshops on topics like career planning or mental health awareness, and establishing partnerships with local organizations to provide additional resources for our students and the veteran community.
- Daily tasks for staff include providing one-on-one counseling and support to our students, helping them navigate the GI Bill and other VA benefits, assisting with academic planning and course selection, and connecting them with on-campus and off-campus resources such as counseling services, disability support, and financial aid.
- VRC staff collaborate on developing programs to address the unique need of veteran and military connected students, planning events to raise awareness about veterans' issues.
- Being involved in committees allows VRC staff to advocate for our students and ensure that their voices are heard at Cerritos College.
- By engaging VRC staff will demonstrate our dedication to supporting the academic and personal success of veteran and military connected students and their integration into the college community.

Section 2: Service Area Trends

A. Service Area User Demographics : Version by Amador, Lui on 12/16/2024 17:24

1. Whom do you serve?

a. Describe your primary and secondary user groups that the service area attracts and serves.

b. Describe the demographics and representativeness of the populations served (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, age range, foster youth, formally incarcerated, and first-generation status).

Our primary focus is on serving veteran and military-affiliated students, including active-duty service members, veterans, reservists, and dependents. These individuals have unique experiences, needs, and challenges related to their military service, transition to civilian life, and pursuit of higher education.

- Our primary user group consists of veteran and military-affiliated students who are seeking support and resources to succeed academically and personally. They may require assistance with accessing VA benefits, navigating the college application and enrollment process, understanding their educational benefits, finding community and camaraderie on campus, and addressing any barriers to their academic success.

Our secondary user groups may include:

- College staff and faculty: We collaborate with academic counselors, faculty members, and other college personnel to ensure that veteran students receive comprehensive support and accommodations to help them succeed in their academic pursuits.
- Community organizations and veteran service providers: We partner with local veterans' organizations, government agencies, and non-profit organizations to expand the range of resources and services available to our veteran student population.
- First-generation veterans: Many of our veteran students may be the first in their families to pursue higher education, and we provide additional support and resources to help them navigate the college experience successfully.
- Veterans with disabilities: We work closely with our college's disability support services to ensure that veterans with disabilities have access to the accommodations and support they need to thrive academically.
- Women veterans: We recognize the growing presence of women in the military and the unique challenges they may face as they transition to civilian life and pursue higher education. We provide tailored support and resources to address their specific needs.

2. How do the demographics of your users compare with the college as a whole?

a. Are the trends within your program in alignment with the broader, collegewide trends?

Ethnicity 23-24 YR	VRC	CC All Students
Hispanic	72%	62%
Asian	3%	12%
White	7%	10%
Black	9%	7%

Overall, ethnicity of the VRC mimics the college as a whole.

Age Range 23-24 YR	VRC	CC All Students
19 or younger	0%	34%
20-24	16%	24%
25-34	61%	18%
35-49	16%	12%
50+	7%	12%

Due to Military service and minimum contracts, the data accurately reflects the largest age percentage between 25-34.

Gender 23-24 YR	VRC	CC All Students
Male	77%	40%
Female	19%	58%
Unknown	4%	2%

According to the D.O.D, 82.5% of men are active duty, while woman made up 17.5 %. The VRC reflects those percentages having 77% male, and 19% for woman.

Cerritos College 23-24 YR	Success Rate	Retention Rate
Cerritos College - All Students	62%	73%
Veterans student group	74%	88%

VRC success rates and retention rates are higher than the college as a whole.

B. Service Area Service Trends : Version by **Amador, Lui** on **12/16/2024 19:26**

1. Describe the usage trend for your service area in the last three years.

- a. Has it remained steady, increased, or decreased?**
- b. Are there different patterns of usage for different demographic groups (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, age range, foster youth formally incarcerated, and first-generation status)?**
- c. Draw clear connections between your data trends and attempts to identify and mitigate equity gaps.**
- d. Describe any factors that contributed to any change.**

Counseling has remained steady as a required service for certification. However, Covid has transitioned a majority of the appointments in a zoom/online modality.

Veterans Service Officer has seen an increase due to interest in Veterans wanting to increase their VA disability rating or applying to VRE to continue using VA benefits.

Mental Health services has seen an increase because we now have a partnership with US Vets to have a dedicated space and hours in the VRC.

Kitchen/Snack area has seen an increase of students wanting/needing snacks before and after class.

Return of campus services due to Covid have seen unexpected challenges for enrollment. Summer enrollment is down due to the number of available on campus classes.

Veterans need at least 1 class on campus to maximize their BAH.

- 2. Describe your pattern of service. Include:**
 - a. Standard hours of operations.**
 - b. Alternative modes (e.g., online, hybrid, etc.).**
 - c. Schedules of delivery (e.g., early morning, evening services, etc.).**
 - d. How your services meet the needs of the users.**

The VRC is open five days a week, Monday-Friday. We are open Monday/Tuesday/Thursday from 8 am- 5 pm, Wednesdays from 8 am- 6 pm, and Fridays from 8 am-4:30 pm. We assist students in person, over the phone, and via email with questions and general inquiries. We also have continued to offer virtual counseling sessions for students who cannot meet with a counselor on campus. Our extended hours/evening services are not well utilized, as most in-person and phone visits end around three or 3:30 pm.

For benefit, schedule, and enrollment questions, in-person assistance seems more popular as our students prefer in-person assistance. However, virtual counseling remains popular. We have also started offering counselor drop-in hours twice a week to better assist students with quick questions (unit increases, pre-requisite clearances, quick questions, etc.).

3. What are the differences in service usage based on modality? If you do not offer varying modalities, explain why not.

a. How does this help inform future practices?

In-person tends to be our most utilized modality, especially between the hours of 8 am- 3 pm. Based on our foot traffic and service patterns, I think it would be beneficial to remove the extended hour, especially on Wednesdays. Fridays also tend to be our slowest day of the week, with an average only a few students visiting our center for services. It would be more advantageous to utilize Fridays for professional updates and training (internal and VA related) and provide virtual services and assistance for students.

Section 3: Service Area Performance and Effectiveness

A. Service Area Outcomes Assessment Process : Version by **Amador, Lui** on **12/16/2024 19:26**

1. What methods are used to assess your service area outcomes (SAOs)? If these are not in place, what do you plan to do in the future to collect this evidence?

The department gathers and assesses data from both Institutional Effectiveness Research Planning and Grants (IERPG) (i.e. campus data dashboards), Enrollment Manager (VA platform for certifying benefits), Peoplesoft Student Groups, and in-house student surveys. The department will compare our student persistence s (SAO #1) and completion (SAO #2) rates from last 3 years to determine if we are effectively increasing our rates of success. In our analysis, we will work to identify any trends or prevailing challenges that negatively impact retention or completion. Any findings will be discussed as a department so that we can determine potential interventions that would address these barriers. The department needs to work more closely with IERPG to ensure that data is accurate and up to date each year.

2. How are user needs assessed and considered in the development and delivery of programs and services?

a. What methods does the service area use to remain current with respect to understanding user needs, interests, and experiences?

b. What are the sources of information your service area uses to understand current needs?

c. How have the needs changed over time?

We take user feedback verbally after events and, most recently, via the app when students check-in. Every time students check in via the Cerritos College app, they are asked to rate the service they received. At present, we have a 5-star rating. Besides just rating, students can comment on the service as well. We use this as a checkpoint to ensure the customer service we provide meets our students' needs. Based on student feedback regarding the assessment feature, the department will explore alternative ways to determine the effectiveness of our programs and services.

We are also open to incorporating more digital check-ins for center events/activities, for which students can then provide virtual feedback.

3. How does the service area track program/service usage patterns and determine users' satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the service area's performance? If these are not in place, what do you plan to do in the future to collect this data?

Starting in the spring semester, we transitioned completely to online/virtual check-in through the Cerritos College App. This allows us to track usage patterns and data and has a review-based process directly embedded in the program. Through this platform, students are asked to rate the services received in the VRC. Starting in fall 2024 we have transitioned to virtual check-in through the App for center programing and events.

4. To what extent does the service area obtain and use comparative/benchmark data to stay current with peers and/or competitors that deliver similar programs and services (both those that are on and off campus)?

This is something that we have not explored yet; currently, we maintain good relationships with the other community colleges within our region and often share best practices and ideas. The department does not see our positions as being competitors but instead as working together to best serve our students' needs, for example, if another college offers a program that we do not have. If this is something we want to examine moving forward, we can discuss as a team how to best proceed.

5. How does the service area monitor compliance with the laws/other regulatory requirements that apply to the service areas program and service responsibilities?

Documentation and Record-Keeping: We make sure to maintain clear and thorough documentation to show we're complying with all applicable laws. This includes keeping detailed records of our interactions with veteran students, tracking VA benefit certifications, and ensuring all required forms are filled out accurately and on time. Plus, our team follows the training requirements for VA work study and stays up to date with essential training on Title IX, FERPA, and HIPAA. This helps ensure everyone is well-informed about compliance and best practices.

These efforts not only help us meet regulatory standards but also foster a culture of accountability and transparency in our service area.

B. Service Area Outcomes Assessment : Version by Amador, Lui on 12/16/2024 19:26

1. What does the data say about the success of your service area with respect to the achievement of your service area outcomes? Identify and describe the data sources.

Our SAO's are focused primarily on awareness of understanding by students of the various processes (e.g. certification of benefits) or services (e.g. counseling appointments, certification of military benefits, programs, and events). In general, students have demonstrated a high level of understanding and awareness of these processes and services.

2. What areas for improvement are suggested by the data?

The data reveals that the department should explore new methods of communicating critical information to students as traditional email is proving to be ineffective. The department is exploring other practices and methods for delivering critical information such as EAB text messaging, phone calling campaigns and even videos that inform and instruct students of our processes.

3. How is assessment data used to inform organizational decisions, management practices, and program/service delivery strategies?

The assessment of our data informs us of the types of services and how we provide them to our students. This includes optimal days and times that services are offered as well as frequency. Debrief discussions are regularly conducted after services are delivered to determine if any modifications or major changes are needed.

4. How has the assessment of the service area outcomes contributed to your service area's improvements?

The data provides guidance on how we can be more responsive to the needs of our student population. The key focus of our SAOs is to ensure that students are aware of our services and resources and how to access them. Our SAO assessment revealed that a high percentage of our students know what we offer and how we can support their academic goals. As a result, we have continued to outreach to our students through in-person offerings, emails, promotion on our website, and through EAB texting. We continue to monitor not only the SAO assessment but other forms of student feedback (e.g. student app survey) to improve our effort to provide relevant and needed services to our students.

5. How does the service area make needed data and information available to area stakeholders?

The department has shared its data regularly with stakeholders. More analysis and discussion are needed to determine who the data should be shared with and how this will benefit the students we serve.

Section 4: Previous Three-Year Service Area Program Plan Reflection

A. Service Area Three-Year Reflection : Version by Amador, Lui on 12/16/2024 19:26

1. What are the primary strengths of the service area?

a. How have these changed over time?

b. What innovative programs/services/practices has the department instituted that puts it out in front with respect to "best practices" in the field?

The current program facilitator started in the VRC in the summer of 2022 and, since then, has worked on rebuilding the sense of community in the center and on-campus regarding military-connected students. With the addition of this new full-time position, the VRC has been able to have a targeted focus on community outreach efforts and specific student programming for student veterans and dependents. The current full-time academic counselor and newly added certifying official have worked together to best support our students by working together as a cohesive team. All full-time staff have worked hard to help students curate a space where veterans and other military-connected students feel comfortable and welcome—this is one of our significant strengths over the past year.

Some more recent innovative programs include bringing back the Military Ball celebration, off-campus service providers (VSO, VPAN, Mental Health, CalVet, VRE, and more), on-campus support services (Fin. Aid and Falcon's Nest relationships and in-center support hours), and partnering with congressional offices and elected officials. In the fall of 2024, the VRC will launch the Career Command Center, funded by Congresswoman Michelle Steele. The Command Center will offer employment for student veterans on the Cerritos College campus to gain valuable paid work experience in their preferred field of study.

2. Please comment on the progress toward achieving your previous service area goals and SAOs. Discuss what has/is/will happen and the status of each goal and SAO.

The department's annual goals include:

Ensure that students meet with our academic counselor and develop a comprehensive education plan

Continue to Improve Fall to Fall momentum point by 10% for Fall 2023 and Fall 2024 for all special populations served by the Division of Student Equity and Success.

The department is at a 90% success rate with providing counseling appointments and CSEPs for our students. The second goal is still in progress with outcomes pending due to a lack of updated data from IERPG. The department continues to achieve its intended service area outcomes each year.

3. Please provide a financial overview of the service area.

a. How are resources allocated to support the mission, goals, and outcomes of the service area?

b. How are budget allocation/reallocation decisions made in your service area?

c. What factors influence the use of service area resources?

a. The majority of the department's annual funding is allocated to the salaries of the department staff. The staff directly provide the various services and resources to our students. Other significant costs include contracted services, supplies, and marketing. Are essential to achieving the department's mission and goals.

b. The budget is developed each by the Division Dean under consultation and feedback from the department staff.

c. Resource funding is informed by the identified needs of the students. The department staff develop services and resources based on the goals and objectives of the department.

4. Describe resource changes the service area has encountered over the past three years and future anticipated changes.

a. Explain what circumstances prompted these changes.

b. How these changes have/will affect the service area operations and services.

c. How the service area plans to address these changes.

a. The post-pandemic transition back to in-person services continues to inform the evolution of how we support and serve our students. Students continue to request a combination of in-person and online services which have resulted in a more customized array of services.

The increased demand for online services, post-pandemic, has promoted the department to transition to more virtual, online processes. Students can now schedule all appointments online via EAB or through our website. Similarly, the certification process for military-connected benefits has transitioned to a fully online process. This includes electronic submission of all required paperwork.

Another significant addition to our program has been the creation and hiring of a program facilitator to coordinate our recruitment, engagement and student retention efforts. Finally, we have also started to offer drop-in appointments for academic counseling to increase timely student access to our services.

b. Appointments for counseling and certification assistance continues to be offered both in-person as well as online. The department is also developing recorded informational videos so that students can access critical information online.

c. The department will continue to monitor and assess patterns and trends to inform the most effective delivery system for providing services.

5. How effectively do the service area's current facilities, space, and equipment support area operations?

a. To what extent must these organizational resources change to keep pace with the future needs and expectations of the service area users?

b. What strategies have been adopted or will be adopted to institute these changes?

Currently the VRC space can support individual offices for the Veterans Counselor, Certifying official, and Program Facilitator.

The VRC maintains current partnerships with U.S. Vets, CAL-VET, L.A. COUNTY (VS0), SAS counselor and any organization that will support Veterans and Military-connected students.

Currently 1 modified office space and modified scheduling can support these programs/services in the VRC

1. Renewed contracts and MOU'S are in place to make sure continued services are maintained in the VRC.

2. Area managers will continue to support counselors/personnel from different areas (ex. Counseling, SAS, Financial Aid).

6. How has technology been integrated into the programs, services, and operating functions of the service area?

a. In what ways have technological applications been used to promote innovation, responsiveness, and continuous improvement in the service area?

b. How has the service area kept pace with the development of hardware, software, maintenance, and training support?

c. What are the service area's projected technology needs for the future?

d. What strategies have been adopted or will be adopted to address these needs?

a. Front desk Tablet to track attendance and usage in the VRC

Communication via message center in PPSOFT and EAB

b. The VRC follows IT recommendations for updates, upgrades, or replacement plans of new Monitors/Computers.

c. Printing services, more computers for growth, laptop loans, and additional scientific calculators

d. Apply for grants and equity funds to support the tech needs in the VRC.

Advertise usage of SAS computer lab services/ computer assistance

7. What major challenges face the service area?

a. What needs to occur, primarily within existing resources, to successfully make improvements in these areas?

The biggest challenge for the department is increasing enrollment of our overall student population. The student veteran population has been in a steady decline both at the college and nationally since 2018. Additional outreach and recruitment targeting new prospective students is needed to combat this issue. This will require more intentional participation in outreach events, networking with community partners and strategizing how to leverage peer to peer outreach, as veterans often rely on one another for advice and guidance.

8. Where would you like your service area to be three years from now? Dream big while considering any upcoming changes (e.g., new buildings, growth, changes in the services, etc.). Consider the following in your response:

a. Describe the colleagues and partners inside and outside the institution with whom you would like to work in the ideal future.

b. What specific innovations, best practices, or other accomplishments would you share with a visiting out-of-state colleague?

c. What long-term impact would you like your service area to have on the College and the community?

d. What strengths, opportunities, or new directions now exist on which you can capitalize in three years' time?

In three years, the VRC team envisions significant progress in supporting our veteran students and the broader community:

- One of our most significant efforts is our participation in the system-wide Mapping Articulated Pathways (MAP) initiative which works to maximize credit for prior learning (CPL) for working adults, apprentices, and veterans and students in the California Community College system and beyond. The VRC is collaborating with Academic Affairs and Admission and Records to standardize the articulation and processing of credit for prior learning for our students in an effort to save them time and money in the pursuit of their academic goals.
- Housing Support: We would like to establish stronger connections to housing assistance resources or even develop our own dedicated veteran housing off-campus. This initiative would directly address housing insecurity and provide our veterans with stable living conditions while they pursue their education.
- Enhanced Transition Services: The team aims to create a more comprehensive exit briefing process that includes campus tours and collaboration with local schools. This would help veterans navigate the application process as they transition to four-year institutions, making their journey smoother and more informed.

- **Dedicated Support Resources:** We would love to have a VSOC counselor sharing office space with us multiple times a month. This arrangement would enhance our support network and ensure that our veterans have consistent access to the guidance they need.
- The VRC has also secured federal funding to develop a campus employment program for student veterans. The Career Command Center is a 2-year initiative that was supported by former Congresswoman, Michelle Steel which will allow student veterans to work in various departments across campus. Typically, student veterans are limited to working in the VRC as stipulated by the parameters of their Post 9/11 GI Bill benefits. The Career Command Center will expand work opportunities so that veterans can gain other employment experience such as working in their academic discipline or area of interest.

Overall, the VRC team sees our service area becoming a hub of support and innovation for veteran students, equipped to address their unique challenges and empower them for success.

Section 5: Service Area Three-Year Action Plan

A. Service Area Goals, SAOs, Objectives, Action Plans, and Resource Requests

Section 6: Service Area Program Review Process Reflection

A. Service Area Program Review Process Reflection : Version by Amador, Lui on 12/16/2024 19:25

1. In what capacity were your service area staff, and/or users involved in the program review process?

All department staff were actively involved in the completion of this program review. Each staff member was assigned questions within the review to develop initial responses. The staff met 5 times throughout summer and fall to review and discuss our collective responses to each question. Revisions were made whenever additional feedback or edits were provided on a response. Each staff member also reviewed the complete document prior to our final submission of the review.

2. How did you ensure all members of your service area were involved in the outcome assessment discussions, evaluation of area data, and contributed to the area goals, SAO, objectives, and action plan discussions and development?

Each department staff member was assigned program review questions that they were responsible for answering. During our work group meetings, each member led the discussion for their assigned questions and solicited feedback and any potential edits for their written responses. As such, Each member was also required to provide feedback for the other questions being reviewed. The members would then complete any necessary revisions to their assigned questions. Finally, each member also reviewed the full program review document before final submission.