

MISSOURI STUDENT VETERANS AND SENSE OF BELONGING ON CAMPUS

In September 2011, Partners in Prevention was awarded the Garrett Lee Smith Suicide Prevention Grant from the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). This federal grant was designated to address suicide prevention at colleges across the state of Missouri, especially among identified at-risk populations, such as student veterans. The Missouri College Student Veteran Assessment was created to learn more about the engagement, help seeking behaviors and experiences of student veterans on Missouri's college and university campuses. Implemented in the fall of 2012 at six Missouri campuses*, the MCSVA has provided valuable insight into some of the experiences our student veterans face during their academic careers. A highlight of the results (n=267) related to student veteran engagement and belonging on campus can be found below.

SENSE OF BELONGING	STUDENT VETERANS (n=267)
I see myself as a part of the campus community	41%
I feel a sense of belonging to the campus community	41%
I wish I was more connected on campus	51%
I am able to relate to my non-Veteran peers inside/outside the classroom	71%
I feel welcomed on campus by faculty and staff	78%
I feel welcomed on campus by students	61%
I've thought about leaving my university in the past year	27%

DISCUSSION

As the table above suggests, student engagement and belonging produces a range of results from our student veterans. It is encouraging that 78% of these students feel welcomed on campus by faculty and 71% report being able to relate to their non-Veteran peers in and out of the classroom. Over half of student veterans feel welcomed by students (61%) on campus, demonstrating the six participating campuses have a welcoming culture for student veterans.

However, only 41% of students see themselves as a part of the campus community and feel a sense of belongingness on campus. Additionally, 51% wish they were more connected and 27% of student-veterans have thought about leaving their university in the past year. These responses provide divergent views from the reported responses concerning sense of connectedness to campus.

SUMMARY

While many of the responses are encouraging, the data still suggests that there is work to be done to

increase engagement and sense of belonging for student veterans. With 51% of respondents wishing they were more connected to campus, there is plenty of room for implementing programs and activities which foster increased connectedness and involvement on our campuses.

In an effort to provide technical assistance to campuses who are working to support student veterans at their institutions, Partners in Prevention recently held a networking meeting from representatives at campuses from across the state. The group met to discuss issues such as the implementation of Veterans Centers and veteran student groups as well as resources to support positive mental health for student veterans on campus. In addition to the on-going networking, Partners in Prevention has also begun sharing resources for supporting student veterans at the website, <http://suicide.missouri.edu>.

Report prepared by Kathleen Anderson, Partners in Prevention Research & Evaluation Staff

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**Six participating campuses were Evangel University, Missouri Southern State University, Northwest Missouri State University, Southeast Missouri State University, University of Missouri, and the University of Missouri-St. Louis.*