5-30-2012

Notes for Veterans Talk on Mackinac Island

John M. Dunn
Western Michigan University, john.dunn@wmich.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/dunn

Part of the Higher Education Commons

WMU ScholarWorks Citation
https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/dunn/470

This Speech is brought to you for free and open access by the Office of the President at ScholarWorks at WMU. It has been accepted for inclusion in WMU President John Dunn by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at WMU. For more information, please contact maira.bundza@wmich.edu.
Notes for Veterans Talk on Mackinac Island  
John M. Dunn  
May 30, 2012

• At Western Michigan University, we have the most vets of any of Michigan's public universities--more than 500--and we expect to see that number grow.

• How did we get to this point?
  - WMU Outreach Began early (2007) before the updated GI Bill
  - In-state tuition for vets and families (Verified that veterans and **Dependents of Veterans** are classified as Michigan residents for tuition purposes).
  - 1st semester tuition scholarship--mini GI bill

• Found we needed veterans-oriented services and activities to provide transition support
  - Dedicated advocacy office-"Serving Those Who Served"
  - Veterans specialist in Registrar's office
  - Veterans association--Student Veterans of America
  - Honoring vets at commencement

• External accolades
  - GI Jobs "Military Friendly Schools"--three consecutive years
  - Military Advanced Education "Top Colleges and Universities" for three years
  - Military Times' Edge "Best for Vets Colleges"--two years among top-40 schools in nation. At 33, Highest rated in Michigan
    - Help for vets transitioning from combat
    - Will provide a full-time VA vocational counselor--critical for **younger veterans** who, because they've completed
multiple tours of duty, will need more support than earlier
generations of veterans.
Also, a part-time outreach coordinator to help vets in SW
Michigan use their benefits
Importance of reaching out to vets who are not yet using
benefits. While Michigan ranks 11th in the nation for the number of
residents who are veterans, it falls dead last--behind the other 49 states,
Guam and Puerto Rico--for the number of vets who use their educational and
vocational training benefits.

• Vets on campus
  Expected outcomes
    -Transition challenges--programs to inform faculty and staff of
      challenges vets face
    -Increasing uses of technology--Online classes helping active
      reserves progress toward graduation

  Unexpected outcomes
    -Synergy and welcoming atmosphere has caused older vets to
      find ways to tell their stories. Writing group for older vets to share
      experiences

  • Preserving a resource.
    -Some 1.6 million have served in Iraq or Afghanistan. Many have technical
      and leadership skills we cannot afford to lose. Their return is analogous to the Post
      WWII period when the GI Bill educated nearly 8 million and set us on a path to
      prosperity.
-It's vital that we leverage the technical and leadership skills veterans have acquired. Need to reach out to those who are not taking advantage of the opportunities and the nation's commitment to them.

- Jobs for all graduates continue to be an issue, but I suspect our veterans may be better positioned than many. They are mature, have team building skills and have often earned degrees that leverage their military training in such fields as IT, engineering and management. A good example is our Sgt. Jonathan Jackson, president of WMU's chapter of Student Veterans of America. He was a medical lab tech and deployed to 322nd Medical Company. He's majoring, today, in biomedical sciences and plans to attend medical school.

- We're going to see more and more veterans and it's our responsibility to help them adjust and succeed. The number of veterans enrolling in college is increasing: Approximately 800,000 returned veterans used GI Bill benefits in 2010, up 40% from 2009, according to the VA.

- Timing will be critical. Veterans put their lives and educations on hold to serve. This is their time now. Tough economic times or not--we need to develop and use all the tools necessary to help them succeed and become a vibrant part of our future economy.

- G.I. Jobs, which surveys 7,000 universities annually to compile a "Military Friendly Schools" list, says of the 250,000-400,000 veterans who are now separating from the military annually, 25% will be in college within two years.

Veterans
FACT SHEET
Veteran Statistics:
□ There are approximately 25 million veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces alive today (7.5 % are women).
Some 7.2 million of those veterans are enrolled in the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) system; approximately 5.5 million receive healthcare and 3.4 million receive benefits.

Since October 2001, approximately **1.6 million members of the Armed Forces have served in Iraq or Afghanistan.** As of December 31, 2007, more than 800,000 veterans of these conflicts (50%) were eligible for VA healthcare.

There are about 37 million dependents (spouses and dependent children) of living veterans and survivors of deceased veterans. Together they represent 20% of the U.S. population.

Most veterans living today served during times of war. The Vietnam Era veteran, about 7.9 million, is the largest segment of the veteran population.

There are approximately (as of October 2007) 2,911,900 WWII veterans alive, but they are passing away at a rate of 1,000 per day (approx. total today 2,583,400)

In 2007, the median age of all living veterans was 60 years old, 61 for men and 47 for women.

Median ages by period of service: Gulf War, 37 years old; Vietnam War, 60; Korean War, 76; and WW II 84.

The percentage of the veteran population over 65 is 39.1%.

Sixty percent (60%) of the nation’s veterans live in urban areas and six states account for about 36% of the total vet population. They are California, Florida, Texas, Pennsylvania, New York and Ohio, respectively.

Veteran Population by Race:
- White 80.0%
- Black 10.9%
- Asian/Pacific Islander 1.4%
- Hispanic 5.6%
- American Indian/Alaska Natives 0.8%
- Other 1.3%

Approximately 150,000 of our nation’s veterans are homeless.