**The Military in Management Education: Key Lessons and Learning Practices for Veteran and Yellow Ribbon Focused Management Programs**

**Abstract**

The past decade has seen a rapid increase in graduate and management programs focusing on Yellow Ribbon (i.e., veteran degree programs) as moving beyond just fulfillment of GI bill requirements toward a strategic avenue of program enhancement. Among the leveraging and use of this program includes research that shows that military veterans, largely because of their training and exposure to forms of VUCA leadership, can deal with greater complexity and the demands for agility. This is despite some research that would argue that due to greater socialization into more rigid hierarchies, veterans may be less tolerant to chaos in leadership and uncertainty. In this session, we will outline a set of best practices including from the perspective of military veterans; those who have taught to this audience; as well as those in academic administration to better address this audience needs in graduate and management programs.

**Introduction**

The past decade has seen a rise and increased focus on how to integrate military veterans via yellow ribbon programs into management education and management degree programs(VA education, 2011). Part of these dynamics may be attributed to having more consistent and varying degrees of leadership training needed to deal with complex and volatile situations that are befitting of the newer economy. These dynamics include the need to shift into uncertain volatile situations such as those ascribed to Industry 4.0 where firms face a dramatic shortening of their product life-cycles as exacerbated by the fallout from the pandemic (Monahan, 2003). At the same time, there is a need to address how firms can maintain continuity and consistency. One group which has experience in this area are veterans. Leveraging the concept as introduced in the Navy (Heritage et al.2018), veterans live a VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and ambiguous) life while working in the services. With the Business world in turmoil with new technologies such as AI and blockchain changing the landscape, we will need more employees with skills in VUCA such as the veterans. Colleges have recently seen a surge of veterans in their programs, such as management and analytics courses, which may add to program and management course learning and especially given veterans’ understanding of shift and change that moves beyond defined hierarchical roles in organizations toward varying degrees of organizational and situational complexity. In this session, we provide an overview of what Yellow Ribbon Programs are; what common misconceptions of military exist; and most importantly what are best practices needed.

**Theoretical/Conceptual Background**

As a short synopsis, “The Yellow Ribbon GI Education Enhancement Program” (Yellow Ribbon Program) is a provision of the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008. This program allows institutions of higher learning (degree granting institutions) in the United States to voluntarily enter into an agreement with VA to fund tuition expenses that exceed the highest public in-state undergraduate tuition rate. The institution can contribute up to 50% of those expenses and VA will match the same amount as the institution. As part of this program, veterans entitled to the maximum benefit rate of 100%, as determined by the service requirements, or their designated transferees may receive Yellow Ribbon benefits from Pacific and the VA. Active-duty service members and their spouses are not eligible for this program.

The general eligibility requirements for the Yellow Ribbon Program include:

* You served an aggregate period of 36 months in active duty after Sept. 10, 2001
* You were honorably discharged from active duty for a service-connected disability and you served 30 continuous days after Sept. 10, 2001
* You are a dependent eligible for Transfer of Entitlement under the Post-9/11 GI Bill® based on the service eligibility criteria listed above”

Common Misconceptions about Military who are funneled from these programs include the following: (https://veteranseducationproject.org/)

* All brawn no brain. *“53 percent of troops list educational benefits as one of their motivations for serving.”*
* Always waiting for orders
* Lack of technology skills.
* All veterans have mental health issues.
* Not a homogenous organization.
* The military recruits from the poorest communities.

With the above in mind, sample best practices, as covered by and which we extend include the following: (vetproject)

* Knowing when to thank and integrate military service and experiences in the management classroom.
* Understanding that obedience and authority, which are often assumed in military experience, are not always acceptable measures of experience nor are they transferable veteran views.
* Identifying that veterans may have specific work-life contingencies that look different from existing working professional adults in management classroom context
* Understanding the complexity of military experiences may involve different levels of emotionality and stress related experience that require alternative tools for learning in management classroom; similarly, explore ways that this experience can be a source for innovation.

We will also explore additional resources in this session that are consistent with supporting student veterans in higher education including where and how to amplify resources; how to streamline services; where and how to develop and support faculty to fully understand the veteran experience; and finally what additional transitional courses and forms of mentoring are needed.

**Audience and Format for Our Session:**

* **Audience -** Mostly graduate (in some cases undergraduate) management faculty or administrators who have at least 10% or more students with military representation; our session is also intended for those who have interest in teaching this population and/or have programs that will in the future tap this population
* **Format** - Online panel session
* **Time** - 60 minutes broken down as follows
  + Introductions : 5 min
  + Background of the Yellow Ribbon and Common Misconceptions: 10 minutes
  + Best Practices that Work: 15 minutes
  + Break-out Rooms: 20 minutes (for this component we will provide an exercise of five to six case scenarios and how the faculty and administrators might address common issues of support and bias with military; we will also focus on methods and forms of support that will tap in the VUCA dynamics of the military)
* **Wrap up and Questions:** 10 minutes

**MOBTC Submission and Theme Statement**

This is the first time that this work has been submitted to a conference. Following this year’s theme of “Bridges”, our work looks at addressing an underleveraged and often misperceived population in the classroom, military veterans and how their own individual experiences can add to management classrooms.

**References**

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