



Increasing Student Veteran Success in the Post 9/11 Era

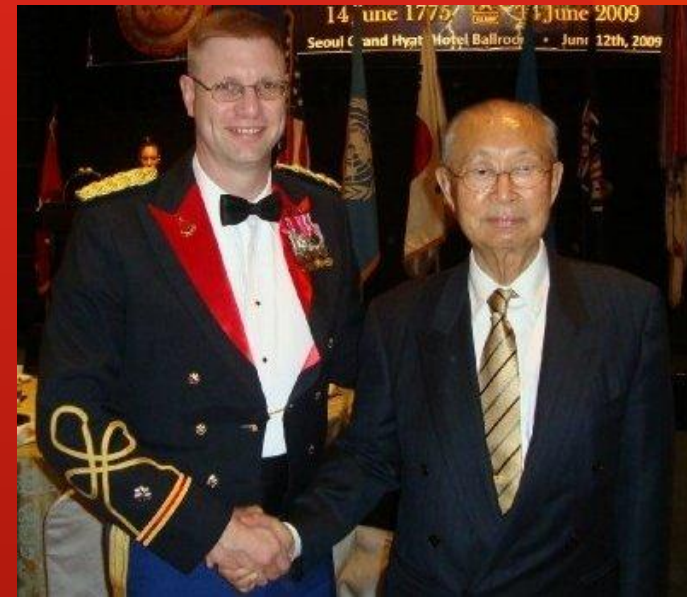
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Who Am I?

- Retired Army Officer – 20 years
- Kuwait – OEF 2002-2003
- Iraq – OIF 2003-2004
- UMass Army ROTC 2005-2008
- 2nd year Doctoral Student UMass-Amherst Educational Policy and Leadership program



Our Agenda

- Introduction
- The Problem
- History of contemporary student veterans
- Student veteran socialization to the military
- Connection/Disconnection to research
- Brainstorming to understand student veterans
- Brief back findings to the larger group
- Brainstorming to identify issues (same groups)
- Group discussion/problem solving
- My Recommendations
- Implications for success
- Conclusion

The Student Veteran Problem...

(Is There Really a Problem?)

- Are student veterans succeeding in the US?
 - More SV enroll than non-veteran peers
 - Less veterans have earned bachelors degrees
- ...Student Veterans may not be getting the support they need on campus in order to succeed
 - This is an unqualified statement being made by many
- Who is this student population?
 - Special or unique sub-population on campus
 - Closely related to Non-Traditional Students

Background Unique Nature of Contemporary Veterans

- No Military Peer for US
 - All-Volunteer vs. Conscript Military
 - Educated vs. undereducated
 - Professional vs. Amateur
 - Trained to defeat Cold War enemies
 - Combat Seasoned



Background Military Socialization

- Initial Entry Training – Boot Camp
- The longer the service, the deeper the socialization
 - Combat increases socialization
- Highly Structured Environment
- Highly Disciplined Environment
- Team-Based work
- Leadership training
- Service-member is the focus of attention in the Military



New Recruit

Career Combat Veteran

Civilian

Veteran Socialization

Background

Defining the Population

This population is poorly defined and inconsistently labeled

1. Prior military socialization required
 - Excludes children and spouses of student veterans who may use GI Bill benefits
2. Presence of potential obstacles to success
 - Support structures and mechanisms become the mitigating factors to obstacles

Less than 30% of the contemporary veteran population are physically or mentally injured (Tanielian & Jaycox, 2008)

Background

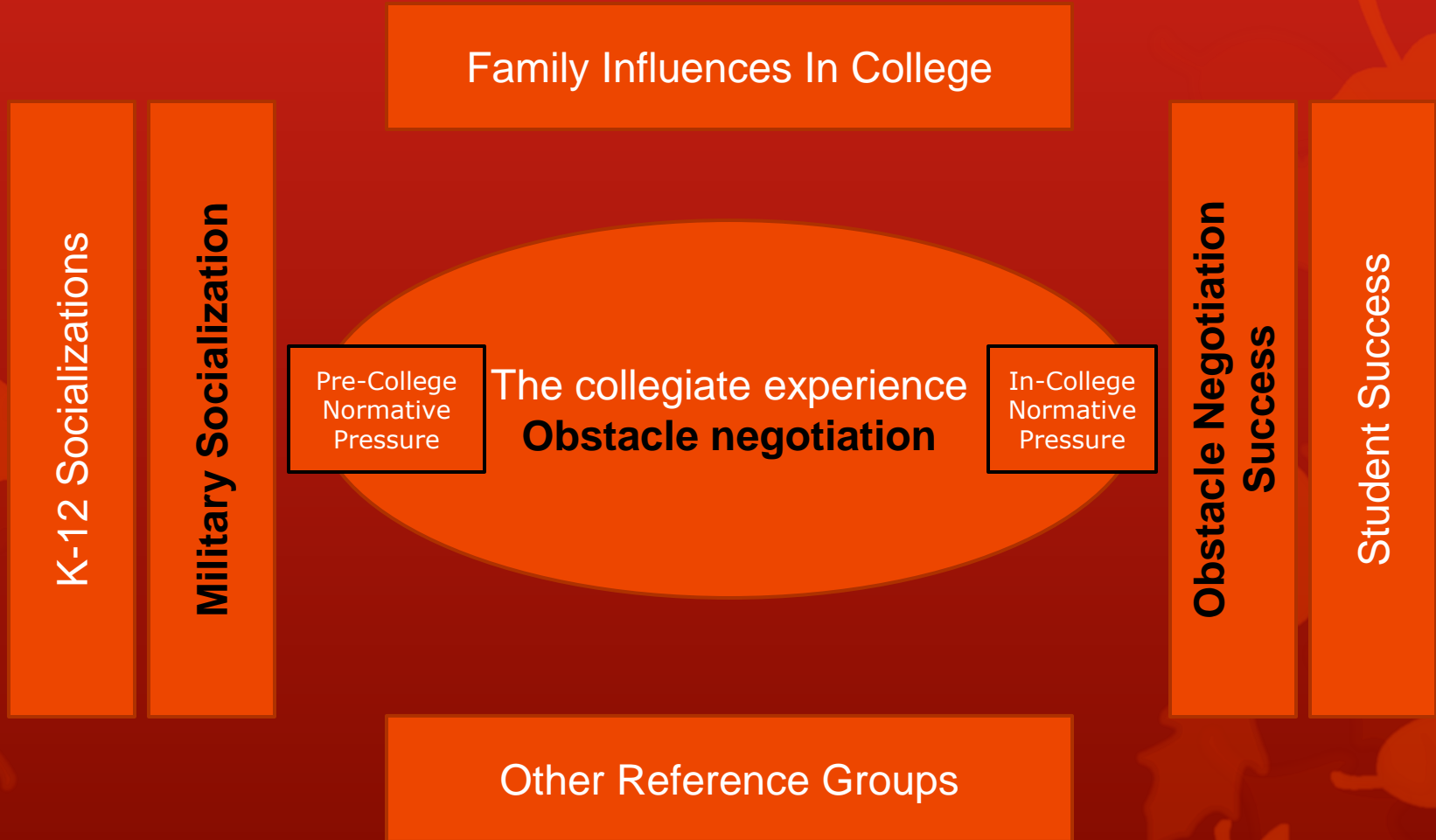
Connecting Student Veteran Research to Existing Research

- Nancy Schlossberg, Counseling Psychologist
 - (DiRamio, Rumann)
- Vincent Tinto's Theories
 - (widely accepted, shown to be questionable)
- Ernie Pascarella & Patrick Terenzini
 - (non-traditional student longitudinal studies)
- John Weidman
 - Conceptual Model of Undergraduate Socialization



**Research into student veterans
is not well connected to
relevant lines of inquiry**

Weidman's Theory-1989 (simplified)



Group Brainstorm – Understanding Your Campus’ Student Veterans

- Break into 4 small groups
 - Community College
 - 4 Year Public
 - 4 year Private
 - Other
- Guiding Question:

“In what ways might a veteran's prior socialization to the military affect them as a student veteran?”

Brief Back -

- Understanding Your Campus' Student Veterans

Group Brainstorm – Student Veteran Challenges on Your Campus

- Stay in your groups

- Guiding Question:

“What obstacles do your student veterans face on campus?”

Group Discussion/Problem Solving

- Guiding Question:

“How can we create services that student veterans may need in order to succeed in college?”

Recommendations Based on Early Research

- Establish a veteran-specific new student orientation
- Establish a veteran transition course
- Establish special bursar policies for student veterans to avoid late bill statements and penalties
- Establish waiver conditions for student veterans with access to VA health care
- Design an information/education session for faculty and staff to become familiar with veteran basics
- Talk to your veterans and ask them if/what they need
- Treat student veterans as individuals (no assumptions)

Try to look at the college experience
from the veteran's perspective

Implications for Success



- More Veteran Friendly Campuses
 - Faculty
 - Student Body
 - Staff
- Student veteran retention should increase
- Student veteran degree attainment should increase
- The word will get out about your campus being truly veteran friendly

Beware veteran-friendly campus rankings and ratings – they may not represent reality!

The relative veteran socialization continuum may also apply to those who do research and offer recommendations – **Critically consider the source** before you implement programs or recommendations!