

Field Journal Three

Date: March 20, 2025

Location: Conference Room, UTSA CMAS, John Peace Library (JPL) 1.12

University of Texas at San Antonio

Observer: Mark Anthony Brennan

Meeting Time: 1310 - 1424

General Observations

I attended the Veteran Services Coordination Meeting in the CMAS conference room today. The meeting primarily focused on the operations and responsibilities of the veteran office, emphasizing security measures, triage, and the dissemination of accurate information. The discussion underscored the importance of professional communication, active listening, and ensuring students are referred to appropriate resources. Additionally, the team reviewed available programs, resources, and upcoming events designed to support veterans and military-affiliated students.

Meeting Highlights & Observations

Security and Triage in the Veteran Office

- Will, CMAS Supervisor, stressed the importance of security measures, particularly Safe Harbor, as a protocol for protecting sensitive equipment and ensuring the safety of students and staff.
- Student Worker Supervisor discussed the need to triage student requests, particularly when students ask to speak with counselors who are not appropriate contacts. Proper referrals were emphasized to ensure students received accurate guidance.
- There was a discussion about the distinction between general inquiries and those requiring specialized assistance. It was noted that smaller schools often assign specific staff members to handle appointment emails separately from general education reports.

Role of Counselors and Remote Services

- Tony, a VA support services representative, outlined the responsibilities of counselors in providing both healthcare and support services remotely and ensuring students receive the necessary assistance.
- Maintaining records was crucial for understanding students' needs and improving referral processes.
- Collaboration with VA and CRP (Community Resource Program) counselors was highlighted as essential in supporting students at various stages of their academic journey.
- Media literacy regarding disability and public needs was identified as an area requiring careful communication and understanding.

Programs and Resources for Students

- Matt (VSOC Counselor) listed multiple resources available, including scholarships and partnerships with organizations like United Way.
- Tony, the VA Support Services Representative, mentioned receiving emails regarding job fairs, career fairs, and insurance inquiries, which could be helpful to students.
- Open communication and availability for students with mental and physical health concerns were emphasized as critical aspects of student support.

Active Listening and Professional Communication

- The Student Worker Supervisor emphasized the importance of active listening and ensuring that student workers and staff avoid diagnosing or advising on issues beyond their expertise.
- It was encouraged to identify students' needs through careful conversations to ensure they receive appropriate support.
- The veteran office was described as a hub for problem-solving and resource allocation, reinforcing its role as a key support center.

Events and Workshops for Veterans

- Will, CMAS Supervisor, detailed events such as monthly gatherings, resource fairs, and workshops to inform and assist veterans.
- The role of community partners in organizing and supporting these events was highlighted as crucial.
- Will, CMAS Supervisor, noted that these events provide information and foster a sense of camaraderie among veteran students.

Student Engagement and Resource Utilization

- The Student Worker Supervisor emphasized the importance of engaging students in workshops on professional development, financial literacy, resume building, and LinkedIn optimization.
- Making students aware of the resources available was a key point, with the "Get Started" book being identified as a valuable resource for new students.

Challenges and Solutions in Veteran Support

- The Student Worker Supervisor acknowledged the challenges of navigating military policies and ensuring students receive correct and up-to-date information.
- The discussion reinforced the necessity of not making recommendations without understanding the full scope of a student's situation.
- The Student Worker Supervisor advocated for ongoing professional development and training to enhance staff and student worker preparedness in handling complex inquiries.

Importance of Accurate Information

- Avoiding misinformation was a recurring theme, with the Student Worker Supervisor reiterating the significance of carefully considering responses to student inquiries, particularly concerning military policies.
- Student Worker Supervisor underscored the importance of thorough research and fact-checking before offering guidance.

Role of Community Partners

- Student Worker Supervisor discussed the involvement of community partners in providing additional support to veterans and their families.
- Partnerships were essential for expanding resources and creating meaningful opportunities for students.

Addressing Student Concerns and Needs

- Student Worker Supervisor highlighted the need for a student-centered approach, ensuring that concerns are addressed professionally and empathetically.
- The veteran office was reaffirmed as a space where students could seek assistance for various financial, academic, and mental health concerns.

Observer Comments

- The meeting reinforced the critical role CMAS plays in supporting veteran students, emphasizing the necessity of security, structured triage, and accurate referrals.
- The discussion on misinformation was particularly notable, highlighting the potential impact of incorrect guidance on students navigating military benefits and academic resources.
- Active listening and professional communication were emphasized throughout, suggesting that training in these areas is a priority for staff and student workers.
- The importance of community partnerships stood out as a key takeaway, indicating a collaborative approach to veteran support that extends beyond the university.
- The meeting was structured and informative, emphasizing the CMAS team's commitment to ensuring veteran students receive high-quality, reliable support.

End of Field Notes