

Service to Success: Equitable Accessible Education for Female Veterans
with Caregiving Responsibilities

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Responsibilities

Introduction

This proposal uses an intersectional framework approach to address female veterans' challenges in navigating caregiving responsibilities, employment, and educational access. The framework explores how gender, veterans' status, and other socioeconomic factors, including socially systemic in-person education, can intersect, creating barriers to equitable education, employment leverage, and social support that female veterans must navigate and overcome.

Representation

The intersectionality of our Sisters of Arms has many socio-economic layers of identity (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991). Intersectionality allows for understanding how various aspects of a person's identity, such as race, gender, class, sexual orientation, and other social categories, interact and create overlapping systems of advantage or disadvantage. Gender and veteran status are the first two intersections of positionality on the map of intersectionality, but often, female veterans navigate the complexities of identity like the roles of mother, spouse, patient, friend, and employee, facing both privileges in the form of military service and educational benefits, and barriers to access due to other intersecting factors such as the systemic bias of in-person education for veterans with caregiving responsibility, childcare limitations, and lack of flexible scheduling. (Duarte, 2017; Rattray et al., 2023). These layers include Demographic Factors, Socioeconomic & Educational Background, Belief & Identity Systems, Social & Support Structures, and Health & Well-being. This proposal focuses on providing educational and social support for servicewomen who are care providers and views the intersectionality of veteran education as part of the transition into civilian life, which incorporates family, community, work, and social balances. (Sayer et al., 2011; Resnik et al., 2012; Borah & Fina, 2021; Rattray et al.,

2023). Understanding these intersecting identities provides essential context for examining female veterans' statistical disparities in education, employment, and social support, influenced by factors such as population representation and unemployment disparity.

The current national female veterans population is 1,664,514, which is 10% of the total national veterans population. According to IAVA & Yancy (2023), 70% of the female veteran population functions as caregivers, and childcare is the number two unmet need according to Community Homelessness Assessment, Local Education and Networking Groups (CHALENG). In California, women warriors comprise 9% of the state's total veteran population of 122,633 (U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, 2023). In the Central Valley, the weighted average of 9.92% gives us 147,534 female veterans; here in Fresno County alone, there are 2,814 female veterans (Syracuse University & United States Census Bureau, 2023). As of 2017, many veterans qualify for educational benefits under the Forever GI Bill and the Post 9-11 GI Bill (U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, 2024). As of 2023, approximately 671,000 women veterans, representing 32.4% of all women veterans, receive disability compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) (Stripes, 2024). Recognizing the demographics and the benefits available is essential in reaching out to female veterans who may qualify for educational assistance.

Reach

These service-connected warriors may qualify for Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) if their service-connected disability is related to prevention of employment within 12 years of being honorably discharged, who are eligible for Post-9/11 GI Bil, and who may benefit from vocational goals, education, and employment (U.S.Department of

Veteran, n.d.)

The Reach portion of this program can partner with the following online Veterans Organizations to create a web of outreach and recruitment in hopes of creating referral networks and resource sharing:

1. Center for Women Veterans (CWV) | Focuses on advocating for and coordinating the VA's services for women veterans, including outreach efforts tailored to their needs (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, n.d.) (va.gov).
2. Foundation for Women Warriors (FFWW) | Provides a range of programs that help female veterans with personal, career, and economic growth (Foundation for Women Warriors, n.d.) (foundationforwomenwarriors.org).
3. Women Veterans Interactive Foundation (WVIF) | Aims to offer tailored support to women veterans, including providing networking, mentorship, and health services (Women Veterans Interactive, n.d.) (womenveteransinteractive.org).
4. Disabled American Veterans (DAV) | Advocates for the rights of women veterans, particularly in areas related to health care and benefits (Disabled American Veterans, n.d.) (dav.org).
5. Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) | Focuses on ensuring that women veterans receive the same level of service, advocacy, and recognition as male veterans (Veterans of Foreign Wars, n.d.) (vfw.org).

California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet) | Offers a variety of services and resources for veterans in California, including benefits, health care, and other support services

(California Department of Veterans Affairs, n.d.) (calvet.ca.gov).

1. Fresno County Veterans Services Office | Assists with claims, benefits, and other services for veterans residing in Fresno County (Fresno County, n.d.) (co.fresno.ca.us).
2. Fresno VA Medical Center | Provides health care services to all veterans, including specialized care for women veterans (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, n.d.) (va.gov).
3. Employment Development Department (EDD) | Offers job search resources, unemployment benefits, and other services for veterans (California Employment Development Department, n.d.) (edd.ca.gov).
4. TAPS (Transition Assistance Program for Service Members) | Supports active service members transitioning to civilian life by offering resources, guidance, and counseling to help veterans navigate the challenges of reintegration (TAPS, n.d.) (taps.org).

In many ways, the military demographic populations correlate with minor differences. The most pervasive discrepancy is that more men versus women enlist, and a higher percentage of African Americans enlist. (U.S. Department of Defense, 2022) According to Dallacchio, 2021, the dominant culture in our society is the “cisgender, white, middle-class, Christian male of Anglo-Saxon decent,” and this is true of the U.S. Military as well. This program hopes to promote educational access via educational benefits to our multifaceted women warriors, who face compounded challenges of intersectionality and positionality and still persevere.

Our proposal is twofold: First, to prioritize childcare via The Campus Children's Infant/Toddler Center, the Campus Children's Preschool Center, and the Joyce M. Huggins Early Education Center (Fresno State Programs for Children, n.d.). We would work in partnership with

other supporting agencies to provide subsidies;

1. Supportive Services, Inc. – Provides child care subsidies through an Alternative Payment Program, assisting eligible families in accessing child care services funded by state and federal grants (Supportive Services, Inc., n.d.) (ssifresno.org).
2. Fresno County Department of Social Services (DSS) – Offers programs and partnerships to assist adults, children, and families with health, safety, and self-sufficiency, including child welfare, adult protective services, and financial assistance programs (County of Fresno, n.d.) (fresnocountyca.gov).

The second way we could support our meritorious women veterans is by expanding online educational programs for all levels. When a woman cannot attend university in person, even with childcare services, taking advantage of educational benefits will need to happen online at her kitchen table. To overcome these barriers, we must fully explore the repercussions of not implementing successful strategies.

Repercussions

Based on data from the September 2024 report, *The Employment Situation of Veterans*, we find that, on average, female veterans have a 33.79% higher unemployment rate compared to female nonveterans, male veterans, and male nonveterans (Syracuse University et al., 2024).

Female veterans face the highest unemployment rate among these groups, with the most significant disparity compared to male veterans by 72% higher, and of those dedicated female veterans who did find employment, 40%, compared to 19% of their male counterparts, required over a year to secure the position after exiting the service. (Maury et al., 2020; Syracuse

University et al., 2024). Though the intersectionality of challenge between men and women veterans obtaining gainful employment exists for both, 15% more women veterans find the transition into the civilian job more complex than their male colleagues-in-arms at a ratio of 7:1 (Maury et al., 2020). The lack of educational access due to childcare barriers contributes to these disparities as an ever-evolving workforce skilled and qualified to work with the infrastructure of the AI revolution and the in-demand automated economy is needed.

Resolutions

This program will offer to bridge the employment disparity with equitable education by meeting some of the compounded challenges that female veterans face in accessing their educational benefits to later leverage educational equity in pursuit of competitive employment (Harmon et al., 2003; Tamborini et al., 2015; Rattray et al., 2019). Female veterans are 1.3 times more likely than male veterans to obtain higher educational degrees, according to Buck (2014). The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (2015) found that women veterans who receive higher education tend to secure stable employment and higher incomes than less educated veterans. Without this program to provide childcare, transportation, and a broader scope of accessible online programs, the disparities between female veterans and male veterans and nonveteran men and women will continue to grow and continue to affect future generations. It is essential to consider how educational institutions and industry trends can build a more inclusive and supportive environment for female veterans transitioning into competitive employment and creating long-term solutions.

Reciprocity

According to Industry Reports by IBISWorld (2024), focused on the Educational Services Industries of Colleges & Universities, quality and technology will be two key indicators of potential revenue gains between 2024 and 2029. Over the next two years, departmental mergers and the elimination of nontenured, part-time instructors in favor of Instructors with the skill and qualities to operate in the online environment and meet the demand of an increasingly automated economy will take place, in effect flipping the current negative revenue of CSU, Fresno listed at -\$15,948,834.48 M (California State University, 2024) This is important firstly because the workload will increase temporarily for senior skilled facilitators, secondly because the part-time staff that finds themselves unemployed will seek to gain higher credentials to ensure their future success, and lastly because by filling the enrollment quota with an underserved population that desires the educational placement, but lacks accessibility increases the universities return on investment and allows for an equilibrium. The specific ways these two factors are program-related are the expanded online academic programs that come at a lower cost for universities and the market urgency for an educated workforce that can design and develop within the growing AI infrastructure and maintain it. (IBIS World, 2024) Meeting these issues creates a more flexible program that meets the demands of the segment demographic.

Research

In June 2024, the CSU Fresno student body was approximately 25,497 students, and 3% of the enrollment was military veterans, at 275 students, which is less than 1% of the veteran population in the county of Fresno (Fresno State, 2024; D'Aniello Institute for Veterans and Military Families, n.d.). Female Veterans account for 9% of all California veterans, which will

grow to 15% by 2034 (California Department of Veterans Affairs [CalVet], 2023). The female veterans' population will increase by 18% by 2040 nationally (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2022; U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, n.d.). Female veterans with higher enrollment and completion rates than their male counterparts are 1.3 times more likely to obtain higher educational degrees, thus making recruiting female veterans lucrative to the university and GSP of California (Buck, 2014; U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2015; Morril & Somers, 2020). McAllen, Downs, & Ascani (2013) predicted an online completion rate of 64% for veterans of all ages both genders, including prior military experience and transfer credits. The hope is that over the next 4 years, with the expansion of online educational programs, more successful data will be available tracking enrollment rates, graduation rates, and employment outcomes, discerning female veteran caregivers at a higher success rate.

Conclusion

The program recommends immediate policy change and/or creation to authorize in-person female veterans childcare enrollment and transportation services that allow for utilization of educational benefits towards equitable education, and secondly, for a more immediate expansion in online accessible programs recommended for the industry to occur over the next four years. More immediate access means a sooner equilibrium in revenue gains not only for the university and the GSP but also for the long-term employment of female veterans as they will grow to be significant contributors to the Californian population. The program would seek out the assistance of the Office of Institutional Effectiveness to draft metrics to track the progress of enrollment rates, graduation rates, and employment outcomes, as well as demographics that include caregiving responsibilities (Office of Institutional Effectiveness, n.d.).

As planning, policy, and program changes occur, communication with supporting services should also be in the works, and partnership and outreach should happen before the following CSU application deadlines. The need to regain profitable revenue minus expenses, the need for contemporary AI skills, and the need for expertise to gain or restore employment will drive the initial implementation and sustain itself until the next big turn in technology occurs. The expansion of programs will generate funding, partnerships, and advocacy to improve further the ability of female veterans to access equitable, accessible online education through their veterans' educational benefits and thus leverage that education for higher paying positions in the automated economy of this new world. Female Veterans would benefit from this program and contribute more inclusively to society empowering all veterans, regardless of gender, to thrive academically and professionally.

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