VETERANS ★ ON ★ CAMPUS

Identify and Refer Students in Mental Distress

Overview

70% of student veterans drop out of college prior to graduation

40% of veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan are estimated to have PTSD, depression, or traumatic brain injury

An estimated 500,000 veterans are expected to matriculate over the next 10 years

Veterans on Campus is a 30-minute, online, interactive training program that uses virtual role-play to help faculty and staff learn more about the needs and experiences of student veterans.

Unlike other sensitivity and military cultural competency training programs, Veterans on Campus uses intelligent avatars and virtual environments to enhance the learning experience. Through these avatars, faculty and staff engage in simulated conversations with three virtual student veterans, helping each one resolve a challenge they are facing as a result of reintegration.

These include: referring a service member who is being redeployed, managing a challenging class discussion about conflicts overseas, and approaching and referring a veteran who is having difficulty concentrating during tests.

Conversation Simulations

Kognito's Human Interaction Game Engine allows users to assume the role of realistic, emotionally intelligent avatars and interact with student veterans in a virtual environment. An essential component this game engine is the creation of conversation simulations, which allow faculty and staff to practice speaking with realistic student veterans experiencing common challenges. As a result, faculty and staff will feel better prepared handling similar situations in real life.

Institutional Benefits

Veterans on campus provides a cost-effective solution that benefits academic institutions in several ways:

- Improve veteran retention and academic performance
- Increase visibility and awareness of veteran initiatives and services
- Early intervention of students with psychological distress
- Reduce stigma that could make veterans uncomfortable on campus

Learning Objectives

After completing the training, faculty and staff will be better equipped to do the following:

- Understand the common challenges facing student veterans transitioning to campus life
- Learn the various on-campus referral points for veteran services
- Understand the value that student veterans bring to the university and college setting
- Learn to manage a classroom discussion around an issue sensitive to veterans
- Practice approaching and speaking with a student veteran struggling in class
- Learn common indicators of PTSD and Traumatic Brain Injury

Customization And Special Features

Veterans on Campus ncludes a number of components and other tools that can assist in marketing the program to stakeholders and learners:

Built-in Assessment

Veterans on Campus is equipped with a built-in pre-, post- and follow-up survey that collects feedback from your faculty and staff about their experience with the course. Client institutions will receive periodic summaries of these survey results throughout the license term.

Tracking

The course records the name and email address of each user as well as their progress throughout the course. This "Completion Report" is updated in real-time, and available to download for administrative purposes by the client institution.

Materials for On-Campus Promotion

Veterans on Campus includes materials to assist in on-campus promotion of the course:

• Suggested language for an email to learners
• Customizable flyer
• PowerPoint presentation with guidelines
• An animated and narrated trailer about the program
• A list of suggested marketing strategies
• Implementation Consultant

Integration of Campus-Specific Information

Client institutions receive a customizable "Local Resources" web page allowing them to inform faculty and staff of local and on-campus resources specifically for veterans. Faculty and staff will be able to access/print this page while taking the course.

24/7 Accessiblity via the Web

Users can access *Veterans on Campus through any* computer with internet access. The course saves the user's progress along the way, allowing them to complete it in multiple sittings.

Walkthrough Of The Learning Experience

1. The Student Veteran Experience

Two student-veteran avatars welcome users to the course and briefly discuss their reasons for
enlisting, their experiences in the military, and various challenges they faced transitioning to life as a civilian and student. They explain how much it means to them when faculty and staff understand their unique situations, including what value they bring to the classroom and what issues they face that other students might not.

2. Referrals

Users assume the role of a staff member and are approached by a student veteran with a question about the effect her redeployment will have on her enrollment status and GI Bill benefits. The question requires a referral, which users navigate by controlling everything the staff member says to the student. The student is an animated character who re¬sponds to users' decisions with realistic speech and body language. Some statements and questions make her more comfortable, while others make her her more defensive or frustrated.

Throughout this conversation, users receive en¬couragement and constructive criticism to reinforce best practices. In addition, the student's body language and verbal responses are strong indicators to users about the effective¬ness of their actions.

After referring this student to the appropriate office, users receive a list of specific student-veteran referral points:

- **Veteran Services Office or Veteran Liaison** – ideal referral for all veteran-related issues (for campuses that have such services)

- **School Certifying Official** – for questions about GI Bill educational benefits

- **Disability Services Office** – for academic accommodations (e.g., for service-related issues)

- **Counseling Center** – for treatment of emotional distress, such as PTSD or depression

- **Local VA** – for treatment of physical or emotional issues

- **Student Veteran Club** – to meet other student veterans

3. Sensitive Conversations

Next, users assume the role of a faculty member who is trying to lead his class in a sensitive discussion about military involvement overseas. Students are making negative comments about the military, and, through the faculty avatar, users must navigate this discussion without alienating any veterans who may be in class. Users control this conversation by choosing what specific tactics and dialogue options to apply. In the process, they must apply the following skills:

- Being aware of situations and conversations that might be sensitive to a veteran or service member

- Welcoming student veterans to discuss their experiences without putting them on the spot or making them uncomfortable

- Asking open-ended questions so veterans can decide how much or how little to share

- Reframing inflammatory statements in a more objective tone

1. Psychological Distress

Lastly, users assume the role of a faculty member who is concerned about a student veteran having difficulty concentrating during exams. In this conversation, users must reach out to this veteran to discuss what's been happening. As the conversation unfolds, users discover that this veteran has been struggling emotionally since returning home, and that he believes his memory and concentration issues may be the result of traumatic brain injury. Users have the opportunity to talk with the student about his military experiences and eventually need to refer him to a campus office for help. During the activity, users are exposed to common signs of psychological distress that veterans may exhibit, and practice applying the following skills:

- Mentioning specific, observable behaviors

- Avoiding generalizing, negatively labeling the behavior, or giving unsolicited advice

- Discussing the veteran's service without making him or her defensive

- Normalizing the process of getting help

1. Conclusion

Upon completing the course, users receive parting advice from the student veteran avatars and then receive a certificate of completion. They then have access to a printable summary of best practices and are asked to complete the online survey. They are encouraged to access a list of local veteran support services for their campus and community.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have any questions, please contact us at

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