

## **SLIDE 1: TITLE**

Good Afternoon

As part of this panel on using survey data to respond to challenging times, I'd like to share some of my findings related to the challenges of serving first year UC students who are veterans or are on active or reserve duty

## **Slide 2: STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

- More veterans are expected to enter higher education in the next few years
- Veterans often find the transition to civilian life to be difficult
- Veterans may have psychological or physical disabilities with social and academic consequences
- Veterans' GI Bill benefits are dependent on enrollment so their stake in academic success and persistence may be higher than other students

## **SLIDE 3: Identifying Veteran and Active Duty Students**

In the past, we have had difficulty distinguishing actual veterans from those who received veterans' benefits. Improvements to the UC undergraduate application allow us to identify not only veterans but also those who are currently on active duty or in the reserves.

## **SLIDE 4: First Year Veterans or Active Duty at UC**

These changes to the application make it difficult to compare students who enrolled prior to Fall 2007. This presentation will focus on first year students from the 2007 cohort.

I'll be referring to these veterans or active duty students as "military" students in the interest of brevity.

- 324 of 162,259 possible respondents are military students
- 163 respondents to UCUES 2008
- 150 Transfers among respondents (92%)
- 133 California Community College Transfers (81% of respondents)

## **SLIDE 5: Methodology**

- Compare First Year Military (Veterans or Active Duty) California Community College Transfers (n=133) to
  - Non-Military First Year California Community College Transfers (n = 5000)
  - First Year Freshmen (n=15,209) OR Juniors who entered as Freshmen (n=10,800)

I will also incorporate some of the data from the open-ended questions

## **SLIDE 6: Transfer vs Freshmen Entrants**

Demographics based on the composition of the community college transfer pool

- Older
- More first generation college
- More women

Attitudes and behaviors based on research including previous UCUES studies

- Academically serious, socially disengaged from campus life
- More work and family obligations, less campus involvement
- Higher overall satisfaction
- “Transfer shock” – temporary dip in transfer students’ GPA in the first or second semester at 4 year school (Laanan, 2001)

Can we apply what we know about UC transfers to the veterans?

## **SLIDE 7: Demographics**

Looking at Demographics for respondents

Military students are more white than the comparison groups, and by extension, more have English as their First Language. They are even older than other transfer students.

Not surprisingly, only 20% of the Military students were women compared to more than half in the comparison groups.

They have similar incoming GPA from their Community Colleges

More are first-generation college than even the non-military transfer students.

So demographically, the military students are not that similar to other UC transfers.

## **SLIDE 8: TIME ALLOCATION**

This table represents the average hours per week spent on work, academic and recreational activities

First year transfer students with military backgrounds spend more time studying than other transfers and freshmen.

Like their fellow transfer students, they work more than freshmen but are working less on campus, less related to their academic interests than freshmen

Military students spend much less time socializing, and on recreational Internet use

Similar to transfer students, they spend more time with family and commuting, less time on campus and recreational activities than freshmen

## **SLIDE 9: Campus Climate**

Students were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with this series of statements.

Military students are similar to their transfer counterparts as well as freshmen on most climate indicators except in the way they perceive tolerance for political differences. The percentage of military students who agreed that they felt free to express their political beliefs was nearly 10 percentage points below the comparison groups. Similarly, fewer of them agreed that students were respected regardless of political beliefs on their campuses

## **SLIDE 10: Political Orientation**

Looking at students' self-reported political orientation,

The military students have a stronger centrist orientation as well as a larger % conservative orientation.

We have several open-ended questions and one military transfer commented

"[I have come to understand] that university systems are highly intolerant of conservative values and have begun to keep those opinions to myself as they are usually met with blind ignorance and dismissal rather than by a [desire for] meaningful debate or discussion."

Conversely, another military student who identified as "Liberal" responded to the same prompt:

"I have come to realize that there are just as many people who agree with me as people who disagree with me."

**So the campus climate is perceived differently depending on the political orientation of the individual.**

## **SLIDE 11: Academic Engagement**

On measures of academic disengagement, military transfers came to class unprepared and skipped class less often than those in the comparison groups. GI Bill benefits are based on enrollment and students' cannot afford to drop or be dropped from class because of non-attendance.

Military transfers demonstrated higher academic motivation

through more frequently raising their performance to meet a faculty members standards, revising their papers extensively, contributing to class discussions, choosing challenging courses, doing more work than was required.

They also more frequently made class presentations, although that is more a measure of course requirements rather than motivation.

In terms of working with faculty, military transfers more frequently worked with faculty on activities other than coursework, interacted with them during lectures and office hours and had a class in which a faculty member knew their name.

## **SLIDE 12: Research Opportunities & Educational Enrichments**

Participation in enrichment activities (outside of that associated with coursework) is dependent partly on students' relationship with the faculty and partly on knowledge and interest. A first year transfer student has not necessarily had the opportunity to develop these relationships or knowledge.

Military transfers report less research activity as a part of coursework than the comparison groups but show more participation than other transfers in independent study, faculty research for course credit, faculty research for pay, and working on a creative project with faculty as a volunteer. However, all these participation rates are lower than the juniors who have spent two years at UC.

Compared to native students at their level, Military transfers report a lower rate of participation in UC associated activities like internships with faculty and UC education abroad activities. EAP applications are due the Fall term prior to participation and transfers would not yet eligible as they were still in CC.

As reported in our open-ended comments, a military transfer student described this challenge:

“Offer a specific list with deadlines of dates for available programs for new transfer students. In UCLEADS for example, the deadline had passed to apply before I had even been accepted.”

Military transfers do report higher levels of participation than other transfers in other internships and education abroad activities. Presumably, these experiences were arranged independent of enrollment in UC.

These results demonstrate military transfers' higher level of motivation and engagement than other transfer students in the unique aspects of the research university.

### **SLIDE 13: Satisfaction**

Generally, through UCUES, we have found that students are least satisfied with their GPA and access to small classes

Military transfers are the group least satisfied with their GPA; We will explore more about GPA issues in the section on Transfer Shock.

Transfers are considerably less satisfied with their social experience at UC but Military transfers are even less satisfied than other transfers with their UC social and academic experience. They are also less satisfied than other transfers on the quality of instruction, access to faculty and faculty advising, variety of courses in the major, quality of upper-division courses,

Military transfers are more satisfied than the comparison groups on value of the education for the price, peer advising, opportunity to get into major of their choice, enrichment programs, and opportunities for research. The latter finding is a bit curious considering their lower rate of participation in some of these activities.

### **SLIDE 14: Transfer Shock**

Both groups experienced transfer shock or "the temporary dip in transfer students GPA in the first or second semester at 4 year school". We cannot say how temporary this dip is until we have more semesters of GPA data.

T-test for repeated measures

Results of the paired t-test indicate that the difference between the transfer college GPA and UC GPA in Spring 2008 is significant at  $p = .000$  level for both military transfers and transfers.

Conducted independent T-test on the difference between transfer GPA and UC GPA in Spring 2008

The difference between the two groups' GPA dip was significant at  $p = .054$

## **SLIDE 15: Summary**

## **SLIDE 16: Responding to the Challenge of Increased Enrollment of Students with Military Background**

Existing transfer services may not meet the needs of military transfers because they come from much different demographic groups, opinions, and have added pressure of meeting standards for GI Bill benefits

- Closer monitoring of grades and course completion may be necessary for ensuring that students do not lose their GI Bill benefits, which could, in turn, affect their persistence
- More attention to ensure that demographic and political differences do not create social isolation on campus

Sense of belonging

“This campus does NOT serve its transfer community efficiently. Within the community of underrepresented students on campus, I’m further marginalized as a poor, disabled veteran, transfer student.”