

Seeds of Change: Planting the Building Blocks for Success for Veterans on Campus and in Our Community

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Author Note

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Abstract

The purpose of the Jacksonville University Veteran to Bachelor of Science in Nursing Program was to provide dedicated career tracks and support services that equip enrolled veteran nursing students with the necessary knowledge, skills, and coping strategies that enable them to thrive in nursing school, graduate with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree, pass the National Council Licensure Examination, and secure employment. The grant supported strategic support services, including mentoring, tutoring, and a variety of mental health services to promote resiliency and success in the nursing program. The wrap around services acted as seeds of change, providing enhanced support for the veteran as an individual, as a nursing student on campus, and as a member of the greater community.

Keywords: HeartMath, moral injury, veterans, and Accelerated Resolution Therapy (ART)

Introduction

The Veteran to Bachelor of Science in Nursing (VBSN) Program was established at a small liberal arts college in Jacksonville, Florida, in the fall of 2013. The purpose of the VBSN Program was to provide dedicated career tracks and support services that equip enrolled veteran nursing students with the necessary knowledge, skills, and coping strategies that enable them to thrive in nursing school, graduate with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degree, pass the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX), and secure employment. The attainment of a BSN degree helps improve veteran's job marketability. They would be able to work as a civilian registered nurse (RN) and/or as an active duty RN in the Army, Navy, Air Force, or as a Public Health Service Commissioned Officer.

The VBSN Program promoted veteran BSN education via three distinct career ladder tracks: VBSN Track 1, a full-time, on-campus pre-licensure BSN degree program; VBSN Track 2, a part-time RN to BSN cohort program on-campus; and VBSN Track 3, an online RN-BSN program. The VBSN Program enabled the university to provide dedicated support services, including mentoring, tutoring, and a variety of mental health services to promote resiliency and success in the nursing program. The wrap around services acted as *seeds of change*, providing enhanced support for the veteran as an individual, as a nursing student on campus, and as a member of the greater community. It should be noted that although the original target population was veterans, the VBSN Program provided these same support services to active duty military students who were enrolled in the U.S. Navy Medical Enlisted Commissioning Program (MECP) in the school of nursing. Sponsored by a federal grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration, the VBSN Program continued to provide support services through December 31, 2018.

Historical Background

Jacksonville, Florida, was an ideal location to establish the VBSN Program. The city is home to the second largest military installation on the east coast, including Naval Station Mayport, Kings Bay Naval Base, Naval Air Station Jacksonville, Naval Aviation Depot Jacksonville, Camp Blanding Joint Training Center, and Marine Corps Blount Island Command.

The university has a proud track record of being one of the most military-friendly campuses in the United States, with designations as a G.I. Jobs Military Friendly School, *U.S. News & World Report* Best Colleges for Veterans, and Military Advanced Education & Transition Top School for Military/Veteran Education. Military students are valued, not only for their service to our country, but also for their leadership, life experience, and maturity they bring to the educational environment on our campus.

In addition, the university has a successful track record recruiting, retaining, and successfully graduating military nursing students. At the time of the application (2013), the university had graduated more than 201 veteran students across disciplines within the past three academic years (2010-2013).

The VBSN Program Director retired from the military with 30 years of commissioned service, beginning as an active duty ensign in the U.S. Navy Nurse Corps and ending as a colonel with the Florida Army National Guard. Her experience as a psychiatric nurse practitioner, a

nurse educator, and a 30-year career in the military provided her with a perfect combination of expertise, professional experience, and empathy to provide invaluable mentorship and counseling services for the VBSN students.

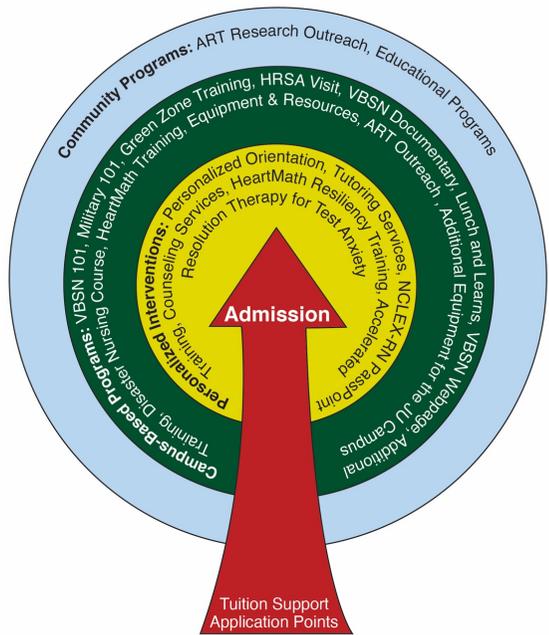
Creating a Foundation

The VBSN Program created an outcomes and advisory board (VBSN Board) to assist in evaluating the program's strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement. The VBSN Board included the Program Director as well as representatives from the university administration, including the college and school of nursing administration, the Veterans Student Coordinator, and representatives from the Academic Support Center, the Student Counseling Center, and the university's Office of Research and Sponsored Programs.

The VBSN Board uncovered some deterrents to the program's success and recommended additional avenues that could improve program implementation. One outcome from the first meeting was expanding the program visibility through participation in an outreach event, *Jacksonville Times-Union* Celebration of Nurses Symposium, an event that marketed to nurses on a regional level. Veteran events and symposiums were attended with representatives from the university VBSN program to promote visibility.

The VBSN Program provided support for veteran and active duty military nursing students at the university through four targeted interventions. First, veterans received support with extra admission points on their applications and selected tracks received tuition discounts so they could afford the expenses of a baccalaureate nursing program. Second, students received tailored support services to help ensure successful program completion and passing the NCLEX so they could secure employment. Third, the VBSN Program advocated for veteran students on campus by supporting an informed, warm, nurturing campus environment. Finally, as a fourth intervention, the VBSN Program provided military-focused educational programming for the campus and the community. These were all considered the *Seeds for Success* at the university.

Figure 1 provides an overview of programs to support military veterans in a BSN program.



Seeds of Change: Planting the Building Blocks for Success for Veterans on Campus and in Our Community

Figure 1. Overview of programs to support military veterans in a BSN program.

First Intervention: Application Points for Veterans and Program Discounts

Application Points for Veterans

Veterans bring leadership skills and perseverance to their university experience and they deserve respect for the sacrifices they have made. The school of nursing decided to award an additional 25 points to veteran applications who qualified and met all admission requirements for the traditional or second-degree pre-licensure nursing program (Track 1). The additional 25 points provided veterans with a competitive edge to gain acceptance into the nursing program. All prior service veteran and active duty military candidates that qualified and met all admission requirements were awarded the extra 25 extra points and it was decided that this policy would remain in place for future veteran applicants.

Needs Assessment

Veterans have diverse military experiences that may or may not include combat experiences. Their needs are best surmised by a sensitively administered face-to-face assessment. The VBSN Program Director met with students enrolled in the campus-based BSN program (Track 1) and in the campus-based RN-BSN program (Track 2). Focus groups were conducted with the Track 1 students to self-identify concerns to strategize interventions. Online RN-BSN veteran nursing students (Track 3) were located across the country and in a few instances, other parts of the world. Therefore, face-to-face meetings were not an option with this program track. Needs assessments were conducted via online surveys for Track 3. The goal of conducting the needs assessments were to identify: 1) transition issues, 2) barriers to success, and 3) any additional support services they needed from the program to help empower them for success. The goal was to tailor the support services offered to help all students adapt to school life, overcome challenges, and thrive in the nursing program. Feedback from the online surveys highlighted the need for more financial support.

Tuition Support

Veterans often come to a university experience with government financial support for their service; however, this is not a uniform amount and many students needed and requested additional financial support to meet all their needs. Requests were made to administration to provide a tuition discount for veteran students interested in the on-campus RN-BSN Cohort Program (Track 2). The request was granted, and veteran students interested in the on-campus RN-BSN Track 2 were eligible for a special tuition discount that was roughly half the cost per credit hour as an on-campus course (the rate for part-time, non-traditional Adult Degree students).

As a direct result of the online veteran needs assessment, requests were made to the online platform managers to provide a tuition discount for Track-3. Approval was received for a 10% discount for online nursing undergraduate and graduate degree tuition programs for all active-duty service members, Reservist, Guardsmen, veterans, spouses, and dependents of disabled or deceased veterans.

Second Intervention: Personalized Interventions for Veterans to Enhance Success in the BSN Program

The VBSN Program Director served as a mentor for all veteran and active duty military students who were enrolled in the pre-licensure BSN program in the school of nursing. The VBSN Program Director also served as an academic advisor for all veteran and active duty military students enrolled in the pre-licensure nursing program. A personalized VBSN Assessment and Career Ladder Plan (VBSN Plan) was created for each student.

Students were connected to support services off-campus and/or community resources for military service members if additional support was necessary. This included, but was not limited to, referrals for further counseling services or treatment, including psychiatric medication, substance use disorders, or other mental health issues. Finally, additional training opportunities were secured to support those working with the veteran population.

Personalized Orientation

The VBSN Program Advisor also was a veteran and medical professional who provided both individual and group orientation sessions for each new prior service veteran entering the campus-based programs (VBSN Track 1 and Track 2). One-on-one meetings were arranged for each new Track 1 student to orient them to the VBSN Program and all available support services through the VBSN Program, the university campus and the surrounding Jacksonville area. Each student was provided a personal tour of the university campus, including the Defenders Den Student Veterans of America study center, the university's veteran dedicated lounge and study center. Additionally, students were also escorted to the university Student Counseling Center where they were introduced to the designated VBSN program counselor who provided an overview of available counseling services, including individual therapy sessions and HeartMath. Each veteran student was escorted to the university Academic Support Center where they met the Director of Academic Engagement, who set up individual consultations with each student to learn how best to meet their academic support needs for tutoring.

Initially, a brochure was created for the VBSN Program for veteran and active duty military students at the university. It was quickly transitioned to an electronic online version to maintain current opportunities. It outlined the VBSN Program, personnel, curriculum, the university's veteran support services, as well as local military and veteran organizations from the surrounding Jacksonville community.

Tutoring Services

The VBSN Program supported free tutoring services for veteran and active duty military students enrolled in the undergraduate nursing program through the university's ASC and JU's Online Writing Center. Students were able to schedule one-on-one tutoring sessions at the ASC or attend group drop-in session with tutors at ASC or in the college of health sciences building. In addition to the individual and group tutoring sessions, the VBSN Program students frequently sought writing support for their papers through university's Online Writing Center. This was especially important for the writing intensive nursing program. In addition to serving

veterans, the Online Writing Center employed a veteran nursing student in the summer of 2016. He was a veteran of the Iraq War, where he served as a combat medic. In addition to the program supported tutoring services, the VBSN Program found that the students also engaged in informal tutoring sessions in the Defenders Den. The VBSN Program Advisor offered individual and group pathophysiology (NUR 454) tutoring for prior service veteran and active duty nursing students in the VBSN Program students between September 2014 and October 2015. Pathophysiology tutoring had never been provided to students prior to this opportunity and was very appreciated.

In the final year of the program, the VBSN team met with the Academic Support Center (ASC) team and school of nursing leadership in order to determine the best way to deliver tutoring services to veteran students enrolled in the undergraduate nursing program, as there was a drop in student use of tutoring services in the previous year. After consulting with the ASC team and nursing leadership, the VBSN team determined that the best solution was to bring the ASC tutors to the nursing building during times where nursing students were not in clinical settings or in class. Students were able drop in and ask questions about their nursing questions or set up individual tutoring sessions at the ASC. The VBSN team advertised these tutoring services on the VBSN webpage, on Blackboard, and on bulletin boards throughout both nursing buildings.

NCLEX-RN PassPoint Training

The VBSN Program added the PassPoint NCLEX-RN Preparatory Software (NCLEX PassPoint) as a resource for veteran and active duty military students. NCLEX PassPoint is a personalized test prep software designed to help students prepare for NCLEX-RN by providing test questions, practice tests, and identifying areas for additional focus. The VBSN Program Coordinator provided NCLEX PassPoint Training to veteran and active duty military students, including pass-code assignment and software training.

Counseling Services

The VBSN Program hired a designated program counselor to provide mental health support services, including counseling and HeartMath, for veteran and active duty military students enrolled in the undergraduate nursing program. In addition to the program counselor, the VBSN Program supported free counseling services through the university Student Counseling Center.

HeartMath Resiliency Training

The VBSN Program supported HeartMath for veteran and active duty military students enrolled in the undergraduate nursing program through the university Student Counseling Center. HeartMath is a biofeedback system designed to help users self-regulate their emotions and behaviors in order to reduce stress, increase resilience, and make more effective choices. This could be helpful for students seeking to reduce anxiety, improve sleep, and enhance performance in school. The VBSN Program selected HeartMath as a support service to help veteran students reduce and improve symptoms of stress in order to support increased success and retention in the nursing program.

The VBSN Program received positive feedback from students who took advantage of this support service, citing the convenience and accessibility. Students were able to check out personal HeartMath devices (Inner Balance Bluetooth for Android or iPhone) to practice at home, or they could use the HeartMath devices in the Student Counseling Center, or they could work from a desktop computer (emWave 2) in the Defenders Den.

Accelerated Resolution Therapy (ART) for Test Anxiety

Successfully passing tests and exams is a requirement to completing a baccalaureate degree in nursing. Military veterans may bring memories and stressors from their varied military experiences that may contribute to test performance anxiety, which may compromise passing exams. There is significant emphasis in nursing schools to pass exams at all levels in preparation for the NCLEX for RNs; students must pass the NCLEX-RN after graduation to attain licensure as a RN. Veteran nursing students' test performance may be enhanced with techniques to modify the potential self-perception expectation of failure. If anxiety is decreased in the preparatory phase of studying for exams and if positive self-regulation decreases the experience of anxiety during an exam, then the expectation is that students will perform at a higher-level during test taking.

ART was derived from Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) developed by Francine Shapiro (2011). EMDR addresses the person's past experiences that contribute to current problems and difficulties, present circumstances that trigger maladaptive responses, and future more adaptive responses. A study using EMDR as a two-session treatment for test anxiety showed significant reduction of the overall measured test anxiety of test anxious college students compared with the control group (Enright, Baldo & Wykes, 2000).

ART is very brief and like EMDR utilizes a natural process of bilateral eye movements similar to the Rapid Eye Movement stage of sleep to decrease anxiety, depression, PTSD, phobias, and relationship issues (Rosenzweig, 2015). ART uses guided visualizations and eye movements to desensitize and process distressing memories that may include poor test performance or fear of failing tests. Improved self-confidence and self-efficacy are accomplished through in-vitro exposure to future feared triggers and future preferred performance practice through visualizations. During this process improvements are elicited in body physiological arousal, emotional reactivity, and beliefs (Hoge, 2015).

The VBSN Program supported ART to treat test anxiety and other student stressors for veteran and active duty military students enrolled in the undergraduate nursing program at the university. The VBSN Program Director and two psychologists in university Student Counseling Center were all trained and certified as ART providers.

Third Intervention: Campus-based Programs to Enhance Understanding and Support for Veterans

The university's faculty and staff are essential leaders in the successful assimilation of military students into the university community. The university developed initiatives designed to build awareness among the greater campus community to the experiences and challenges many military students are facing as civilians. These include:

VBSN 101

The Program Director, Program Advisor, and the designated program counselor collaborated to create VBSN 101, a Veteran-only Orientation Program to help VBSN students transition into campus life and connect to programs developed to target success at the university. This program was offered at the beginning of each semester as new students entered the BSN program. It was adopted by the university administration and transitioned into a series of lunchtime meetings targeting all new students with any military background. The goal of each session was to increase awareness of issues common to veteran students and to identify tools and resources for improved campus-wide veteran student support.

Military 101 – Understanding Students with a Military Affiliation

The military has its own language using acronyms, ranks, branches of the military, and status such as active duty, reserve/Guard, and ROTC that are foreign to many in the faculty and can lead to misunderstandings or unintended disrespect. The VBSN Program organized an ongoing military culture education program called “Military 101 for university faculty and staff.” It provided an overview of basic facts about the organization of the military and the branches and was designed to assist university faculty and staff in better understanding the background and experience of military members who matriculate at the university. This overview provided information organized as follows: Military Students in the Classroom, Military Branches, Military Rank Structure, and Points to Remember. The event was open to all university faculty and staff, but specifically targeted those with limited knowledge of the military. Initially the program was a single session option during the first week of the fall semester targeting all university faculty to increase awareness of military culture and concerns veteran, active duty, and reserve military students might have. University administration took the concepts of Military 101 and placed it onto their website for easy access for all faculty, staff, employees, and students.

Green Zone Training

The university replaced the original, single session Military 101 for faculty into Green Zone Training, a program for faculty and staff who wish to learn more about the military-affiliated student experience. Its goals are to train members of the university community to know more about the issues and concerns faced by military-affiliated students and to identify individuals who are available to assist this population. Through this training, faculty and staff can lend a sympathetic ear and help the student veteran identify and connect with the appropriate resources. Participants who completed the training received a framed certificate to display in their office and have their name listed on university's website as having completed the training. The framed certificate was meant to convey the message to military students that the recipient cared about military service.

VBSN Documentary

The VBSN Program created a documentary to demonstrate the positive impact of the grant on veteran student population and the culture of the entire university. The team premiered the VBSN Program Documentary: *Seeds of Success* at the Veteran Research Presentation. It is available for viewing online (<https://youtu.be/bupsXC-RwRY>).

HeartMath Training, Equipment, and Resources

According to the HeartMath Institute, personal coherence, also known as psychophysiological coherence, refers to the synchronization of individuals physical, mental, and emotional systems. Coherence can be measured by heart-rhythm patterns: the more balanced and smooth the heart-rhythm patterns are, the more in sync, or coherent the individual is. When stress levels recede, energy levels increase. Coherence is a state of optimal clarity, perception, and performance. The HeartMath Institute provides training and tools to achieve coherence and reduce stress. The VBSN Program supported HeartMath training for the two psychologists in the Student Counseling Center and three clinical mental health counseling student interns to be HeartMath providers. In addition to HeartMath interventions at the Student Counseling Center, HeartMath concepts were presented at the school of nursing for new students.

The VBSN Program supported the purchase of a site license to install emWave Pro software on twelve desktop computers in the university's Defenders Den. The additional emWave Pro software enabled the two psychologists in the Student Counseling Center to provide HeartMath to additional veteran and active duty military students in the Defenders Den and sustain the services after the conclusion of the grant.

The VBSN Program purchased 35 Inner Balance Bluetooth Sensor units for veteran and active duty military students' use in the Student Counseling Center. The 35 Inner Balance Bluetooth Sensor, Individual HeartMath units for Android or iOS (iPhone or iPad), will remain in the Student Counseling Center for use by all students. The two psychologists in the Student Counseling Center created and monitor an invoice system for students to check out and return individual units after they complete HeartMath Training. The 35 HeartMath units continue to sustain HeartMath on the university campus.

ART Outreach, Training, and Research

In addition to providing ART interventions for veterans, ART was presented as a therapeutic modality to a graduate psychiatric nurse practitioner class and a class in the mental health counselor graduate program addressing treating military families. Art was also introduced as a resource, especially for test anxiety, during the orientation for new nursing students. In order to make ART easily available, two psychologists from the Student Counseling Center were trained in both the basic and advanced courses of ART to help sustain ART on the university campus.

In addition to supporting ART services on campus, the VBSN Program Director conducted a small pilot study to determine the effectiveness of ART to reduce test anxiety among nursing students with a military background (retired veterans and/or active duty)

who were accepted into the pre-licensure BSN program at the university. The results of the pilot study indicated that ART was effective in reducing anxiety among nursing students with a military background who were accepted into the pre-licensure BSN program at the university. ART provides valuable anxiety reduction and self-efficacy skills that not only help students with test preparation and performance, but may also help them as they leave school, take the NCLEX-RN examination, and enter the workforce as confident, competent, and compassionate nurses.

Hire Faculty and Staff Veterans

Hiring veteran staff and faculty shows support for veterans and adds their expertise in their field to the university. Many faculty and staff are invisible veterans; surveying employees to identify former military or reservists already in the ranks of the university system can be enlightening. Some may choose to remain anonymous in their service and that is their right. It was beneficial at this university to have a military support office that intentionally hired leaders from the military that bridged military awareness, services and expertise to the campus. Both officer and enlisted veteran employees participated in military focused campus events, served as mentors, and supported the Student Veterans of America program.

Additional Campus-based Interventions & Training

The VBSN program facilitated workshops and lunch-and-learn sessions for university faculty and staff that focused on military culture and the transitional needs of veteran students.

A webpage was created for the VBSN program located on the university website to include information and downloadable PDFs describing the free support services available on campus for veteran and active duty students enrolled in the pre-licensure nursing program, including counseling, HeartMath, ART, tutoring services, and NCLEX PassPoint.

The VBSN Program prioritized additional training for those working with veterans in the nursing program. One excellent conference was hosted by Kevin Holloway, PhD, entitled *Serving Student Veterans and Service Members on Campus*, January 29, 2016, in Tallahassee, Florida. The *International Critical Incident Stress Foundation's (ICISF) 13th Congress* May 14-16, 2015, in Baltimore, Maryland, focused on resilience and crisis intervention management; intervention for active duty military and veterans was part of the curriculum. This material was incorporated into the VBSN Program to address resilience and psychological armor during individual advising sessions and to bring strategies to the veteran community on campus. Other programs were offered as website training and that is how ART was discovered and incorporated into support services.

The Program Director developed and offered a 3-credit elective course for Track 2 students entitled, *Disaster Nursing*. Materials and training received at the ICISF Congress enhanced the content delivered. The hands-on experience of the instructor and students providing disaster support enriched the course.

Additional Equipment for the Campus

An assessment was made talking with students and faculty to identify equipment needs that would support veteran students in the various settings where they learned, gathered, and

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studied. The VBSN Program added the NCLEX PassPoint as a resource for veteran and active duty military students. It is a personalized test prep software designed to help students prepare for NCLEX-RN by providing test questions, practice tests, and identifying areas for additional focus. Four whiteboards were provided for veteran student use in the two settings, a clinical skills lab, and the simulation training lab.

The VBSN Program purchased two charging stations and one adapter for veteran and active duty military students' use in the university's Defenders Den. This was identified as a need for both nursing veterans and other veterans for use in the Defenders Den. Two whiteboards were purchased for veteran and active duty military students' use during study sessions at the Defenders Den.

Fourth Intervention: Community Programs to Enhance Veteran Understanding and Support

The VBSN Program made significant efforts to raise awareness of and community support for the program, as well as the veteran and active duty military students, in the Jacksonville community and to find effective, cost-efficient ways to reach the target audience of veterans. The Program Director and Program Advisor promoted the VBSN Program at community outreach events in the Jacksonville community. They made presentations about the VBSN Program at the annual *Florida Times-Union* Celebration of Nurses Symposium, the Job and Resource Fair, for the City of Jacksonville at the Vet Coalition and Military Affairs, and to veteran support organizations including, but not limited to the Wounded Warrior Project, the Veteran Affairs, American Legion, Veterans for Foreign Wars and the Student Veterans of America. In addition, several area medical facilities have promoted veteran opportunities by posting flyers for educational fairs (Orange Park Medical Facility and Mayo Clinic Jacksonville) and Baptist Health System posted a banner advertisement for the VBSN Track 2 program on their employee education website.

ART Research Outreach

The Program Director presented the findings from her ART research study at the Veteran Research Presentation on Thursday, July 12, 2018, and at the *4th Annual 2018 IS-ART Conference*, which was held October 6-7, 2018, at Western New England University in Springfield, Massachusetts. She also presented ART as a therapeutic tool to treat moral injury at the *Moral Injury Summit: Bringing Our Brothers and Sisters Home from Trauma*, which was held June 20-21, 2019, at Cape Fear Community College in Wilmington, North Carolina.

Educational Programs

The VBSN Program hosted a special free speaker event, *Concussion/Mild Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI): A Timely Discussion*, featuring neurologist Timothy D. Lucey, a military veteran and university alum, on March 10, 2016. This event was scheduled to coincide with March National Traumatic Brain Injury Month. This event was promoted to the university faculty, staff, and students as well as to the greater Jacksonville community.

The Program Director was part of a panel, *Race, Ethnicity, Spirituality, and Counseling: Implications for Military and Veterans and their Families*, on May 5, 2016. This panel helped

raise awareness of struggles of our veteran population with emphasis on racism, bias, and interventions from a spiritual and psychological perspective.

The VBSN Program hosted a Veterans Day Program, *K-9s 4 Warriors: Making a Difference*, on November 10, 2016. It educated attendees on an excellent non-profit organization's gift of emotional support dogs to military warriors.

Dr. Cecilia Yocum, the VBSN Program Director, COL Anthony Clark, and Rev. Jeffrey Smith were presenters at a *Moral Injury Symposium* on April 6, 2017, held at the university that addressed moral injury and its impact on the military. The event featured author, Cecilia Yocum, PhD, on the topic of moral injury as it related to military veterans and active-duty personnel. This 2-hour symposium was videotaped and the program with resources and presentation are available online at: www.ju.edu/moralinjury.

The VBSN Program sponsored *Caring for the Wounded Warrior*, a free educational event for university faculty, staff, and students, on November 2, 2017. The lunchtime event featured three guest panelists including Irene Talarico, RN, MSN, CNS, LTC U.S. Army (Retired), Jason Orrock, PhD, LPC, and Dan Furnas, PhD.

The VBSN Program hosted the fall 2017 VBSN Speaker Series Event entitled, *For Patient's Sake, Advocate: Confronting the Drug Epidemic*, on November 14, 2017. This free educational event was open to university faculty, staff and students, and the public. The Keynote Speaker was Jeff Mangrum, the National Accounts Director at Cornerstone Recovery. The guest panelists included: Michael Sorna, MD, Director of the Jacksonville Veterans Administration Mental Health and Substance Abuse Clinics; Raymond Martin Pomm, MD, Vice President of River Region Human Services and Medical Director of Gateway Community Services; Terri Andrews, PhD, Administrator of Baptist Healthcare System Behavioral Health; and Dan Renaud, BS, ICADC, CAP, Executive Director of Florida Recovery Schools. This event was videotaped and the program with resources and presentation are available online at: <https://www.ju.edu/nursing/drug-epidemic-advocate.php>

The VBSN Program hosted a Veteran Research Presentation on July 12, 2018. The Program Director presented the findings from her pilot study on the use of *Accelerated Resolution Therapy for Test Anxiety*. Dr. Kristin Alberts, Director of the Student Counseling Center, presented *Student Counseling Center Veteran Data*. Dr. Whitney George, Department Chair of Clinical Mental Health Counseling Program, presented *Identifying the Mental Health Needs of the University Military and Veteran Student: A Needs Assessment*, with Anne Pinto, Brianna Kane, and Jonathan Baugh.

Conclusion and Final Reflections

People who join the military often hope to earn a college degree with government assistance as a result of their sacrifice and service. Veterans bring leadership skills, strong work ethics, and life experiences to their college education; this benefits the campus culture regardless of their choice of major. Supporting veterans for success means addressing obstacles for college acceptance, assisting the veteran with a very personal constructed plan, creating a military

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friendly campus, and reaching out to the community to assess areas that would benefit from better understanding of veteran university citizens.

In total, the VBSN Program served a total of 190 students beginning in the second year of the five-year program, including 126 veteran students enrolled in the pre-licensure BSN degree program and 64 active duty military students. The initial year of the program did serve veterans. However, the primary focus was to set up the program through hiring staff and identifying a plan of action. The veteran students supported in the first year did not receive the full scope of support; these students were highly valued as the source of information through focus groups and individual sessions that helped identify a path forward for the following years.

Students Served	
Veterans	126
Active Duty Military	64
Total	190

Fourteen students left the program prior to graduation. These numbers reflect various reasons for leaving the nursing program: six students failed out, two students withdrew from the program, four transferred to different nursing programs, one transferred to a non-nursing program, and one was dismissed from the program. In the same four-year time period, the prelicensure undergraduate nursing program reported an attrition of 44 students. The attrition numbers among the veteran and active duty military students were found to be comparable or less than the general nursing student population when only looking at six failures. The low attrition rate was attributed to the positive impact of the additional support services and the peer support system that the veteran and active duty military students brought to the program.

Student Attrition	
Failed	6
Withdraw	2
Transfer to a different nursing program	4
Transfer to a non-nursing program	1
Dismissed	1
Total	14

All veteran nursing students who graduated from the program during the grant were licensed as RNs. The School of Nursing enjoys a consistently high pass rate. On May 15, 2018, the NCLEX pass rate on the first attempt for the previous four quarters was 100%. The VBSN Program students are included in these numbers.

In total, the VBSN Program provided a total 153 hours of counseling services and provided HeartMath to 31 veteran and MCEP students through the Student Counseling Center. The VBSN Program Director provided ART to 15 veteran and MECP students. The program sponsored HeartMath training for six providers on campus and training for five faculty members to be certified ART providers. The VBSN Program provided an estimated 79.75 hours of tutoring services for veteran and MECP students and provided NCLEX PassPoint Training to a total of 37 veteran and MECP students.

Support Services Provided	
Counseling services	153 hours
ART	15 students served
HeartMath	31 students served
Tutoring services	79.75 hours
NCLEX PassPoint Training	37 students served
HeartMath Providers	6 providers trained
ART Providers	5 providers trained

These dedicated support services acted as seeds of change, providing enhanced support for the veteran and active duty military students as an individual, as a nursing student on campus, and as a member of the greater community. These provided additional skills and coping strategies to enable them to thrive in the challenging nursing school environment, graduate with a degree of Bachelor of Science in Nursing, pass the National Council Licensure Examination, and secure employment.

Elements of the VBSN Program are transferrable and could be integrated into other undergraduate nursing programs to create their own *Seeds for Success*. First, veterans need to know that the university welcomes and values students who have served or are serving in the military. This may include purposely prioritizing hiring staff and faculty who are also veterans so they can serve as mentors and resources to students. Intentionally offering a program to all faculty and staff to familiarize them with the military culture spoke volumes to veteran students and facilitated comfort for faculty interacting with appropriate language for military members. Creating a separate space for veteran students so they can congregate with others who have lived the military experience shows support. Those who have served in the military have served in military bases or military posts and essentially have been set apart from the civilian community. A retreat that is solely for veterans, such as the Defender's Den, became a gathering place for student activities and meetings of the Student Veterans of America organization. Creating veteran specific support services in financial aid, admissions, and student counseling also shows prioritization of the unique needs of veterans. Reaching out to the community to provide education about the lived experiences of veterans or programs for veterans in the community (such as battle injuries and K-9s 4 Warriors) recruits financial and emotional support.

In summary, areas to consider in order to develop a successful veteran supportive campus culture include minimizing admission challenges, enhancing personal veteran support services, creating campus-wide understanding of military culture, and providing educational programs for the surrounding community. Recognizing the value of veterans is demonstrated through awarding application points and reduced tuition. Enhancing support to individual veteran nursing students means investing in programs such as HeartMath, ART, and NCLEX PassPoint, as well as providing accessible tutoring services. Enhancing campus support includes implementing a military education program for all campus faculty and staff, such as Green Zone Training. Reaching out to the community where veteran nursing students interact and live through targeted educational programs is the final priority.

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- Hoge, C.W. (2015). *Accelerated Resolution Therapy (ART): Clinical considerations, cautions, and informed consent for military mental health clinicians*. Bethesda, Maryland: Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (WRNMMC) Office of the Army Surgeon General (OTSG) (Cleared for public release February 12, 2015). Retrieved from: https://acceleratedresolutiontherapy.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/ART-vs-EMDR_by-Hoge.pdf

Articles

Rosenzweig, L. (2015). *Accelerated Resolution Therapy Training Manual. Rapid Recovery from Trauma and Other Mental Health Problems*. Orlando, Florida.

Shapiro, F. (2011). EMDR and the adaptive information processing model: Integrative treatment and case conceptualization. *Clinical Social Work Journal*, 39, 191-200. doi: 0.1007/s10615-010-0300-7

Additional Resources

Moral Injury

Associated Press. (February 5, 2017). Spiritual Therapy Eyed as a Possible Treatment for PTSD. *Washington Times*. <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2017/feb/5/spiritual-therapy-eyed-as-possible-treatment-for-p/>

Gibbons-Neff, Thomas. (March 5, 2015). Opinion: Why distinguishing a moral injury from PTSD is important. Special to the *Washington Post*. <https://www.stripes.com/opinion/why-distinguishing-a-moral-injury-from-ptsd-is-important-1.333520>

Lundell, D. (2016). How faith communities can help veterans and their families readjust. Adapted from speakingoffaith.org, The Soul of War.

Taub, A. (May 25, 2015). Moral injury: The quiet epidemic of soldiers haunted by what they did during wartime. Vox Media. <https://www.vox.com/2015/5/7/8553043/soldiers-moral-injury>

The 2-hour Moral Injury Symposium held on April 6, 2017. Resources and the presentation are available online at: www.ju.edu/moralinjury.

HeartMath

HeartMath Institute. <https://www.heartmath.org/support/faqs/heartmath-system-faqs/>

Educational Programs

Fall 2017 VBSN Speaker Series Event For Patient's Sake, Advocate: Confronting the Drug Epidemic was held on November 14, 2017. This event was videotaped and the program with resources and presentation are available online at: <https://www.ju.edu/nursing/drug-epidemic-advocate.php>

JU VBSN Program created a documentary Seeds of Success. It is available for viewing online (<https://youtu.be/bupsXC-RwRY>).