



Veterans Caucus Meeting Minutes

California Community Colleges Veterans Caucus (CCCCVC)

The Community College League of California's
2024 Annual Trustees Conference (Hybrid)

Saturday, May 4, 2024

Time: 3:45pm – 4:45 pm

La Jolla, Cove

Attendees via Zoom: Bill Withrow; Larry Kennedy; Donna Ziel; Juan Arzola; Evelyn Andrews; Obianuju Nzewi

Attendees in Person: Dr. Rick MacLennan [Additional participants]

1 Welcome and Introductions:

Dr. Rick MacLennan called the meeting to order at 3:49 PM. He welcomed everyone to the meeting; calling for introductions around the room and zoom, meeting participants introduced themselves.

In the course of introductions, some participants briefly mentioned some issues and challenges faced by veterans that need to be addressed, such as the increase in mental health challenges and how this affects their spouses - whether the G.I. Bill covers spouses, the peculiarities of the veterans student's orientation, issues regarding credit for prior learning, cost of living expenses through the G.I. Bill, and the importance of CPL and MAP initiative, etc..

2 Strategic goals planning:

Dr. Rick MacLennan noted the palette of issues and challenges that were raised by participants, expressing that the length and breadth of the subject matter that impacts veterans is enormous. On strategic planning and goals, he stated the following, based on feedback he has received and the previous meetings:

- The caucus' agenda is too big, therefore a sixty-minute meeting two or four times a year, will not help the caucus advance the agenda; so there has to be some organizational capacity that enables the caucus meet more frequently.



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- For the caucus to elevate and focus on an advocacy role, the caucus will need to develop an advocacy agenda. He referenced a 2018 publication updated in 2020, that highlights several issues, which he noted will be a

good starting point and serve as a blueprint for the advocacy agenda. He also stated that the caucus may look at a strategic outreach activity such as letter-writing or identifying some caucus members who will meet with leadership to advance the agenda.

- The need to address some CalVet issues that veterans are facing.

Dr. Rick MacLennan opened the floor for comments and contributions from the participants regarding the caucus' efforts in the advocacy role, including communication strategies. Participants shared their thoughts on next steps, which include the following:

- Cohesion and connectiveness – the need to meet up with others with the same interests, for instance, at the summit in July.
- Concerns regarding a lack of communication with veterans letting them know the opportunities available to them.
- Concerns regarding categorical funding around the veterans center and the specificity as to the purpose of the funding; advocacy for funding at the state level and federal level; the need for outreach to help veterans connect with the veterans centers – and having a structure/organization around that.

Following discussions. The caucus agreed to meet more frequently, once a month or once in two months to effect change.

Additional issues identified as part of the advocacy agenda include:

- Credit for prior learning
- Providing counselling for students to address mental health/suicide/homelessness
- A need to ask for a refresher of the 2020 publication that will be used as a platform for sharing these issues in the course of the outreach.



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- Best practices regarding the integration of the veterans resource center with the disability center.
- The need to create a faculty veterans caucus with the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges (ASCCC).
- The need to echo the voice of women/female veterans, citing President Biden's March 2nd Executive Order requiring for more women-specific research related to healthcare, noting that addressing women's issues will tie into issues that address others as well.
- G.I. Bill issues (including the discharge conditions).
- Advocacy strategy such as putting together a program for the mayor's conferences at the state and national level.

The caucus agreed to gain some traction on networking - messaging and contacting; leverage what we have and identify and integrate with other groups that have the same interests, while noting the lack of a database - which in itself, is an agenda advocacy item.

Participants signed a sign sheet indicating that they would like to be contacted for the meetings regarding the advocacy strategy.

The previous meeting (January 29, 2024) minutes were approved unanimously.

3 Adjournment:

The meeting adjourned at approximately 4:50 PM.