



Student Veterans and Service Members in Higher Education

Arminio, Jan; Grabosky, Tomoko Kudo; and Lang Josn
Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2015

Book Review

Tags: higher education | student learning | student service members | student veterans

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Arminio, Grabosky, and Lang (2015) provide a comprehensive overview of student veterans and service members from interviews and analyses of higher education institutions. This book speaks from history and experience of the U.S. military to present outreach opportunities for the modern reader. The best audience for this book would be higher education administrators and counselors because it primarily discusses the challenges of transitioning to student life in higher education. More importantly, the authors consider the life of the students beyond school, what the students have seen, the makeup of the military world, and how it sheds light on this one.

The study consisted of semi-structured interviews of sixteen higher education employees and fourteen students, and included a military spouse, and students at a community college and a public research-intensive institution with multiple campuses. Although this is a small set from which to draw specific conclusions, the volume provides valuable insights about service veterans and members enrolled in higher educational contexts. Student veteran and service members did not have direct support services at the research-intensive institution until after 9/11. The book documents how this change came about when students organized themselves and the campuses responded. The authors provide helpful lists of behaviors of facilitation (53) and advocacy of the student (61) and the system (65).

Drawing on an advocacy model put forth by Lewis, Arnold, House, and Torporek (2002) of the American Counseling Association, Arminio, Grabosky, and Lang describe best practices in higher education for this target student group. For example, there should be regular review of degree progress corresponding to military financial benefits and possible deployment. The authors also give weight to possible needs for counseling and disability services.

The three predominant cultural transitions between the military and higher education are the loss of collectivism, hierarchy, and masculinity. According to the study, student veteran and service members perceive themselves as outsiders in this environment (105). At the same time, "the military experience influences the college experience, but how it does depends on the individual and his or her experiences and contexts" (106). While the U.S. military is historically less tolerant of the LGBT community, one student participant in the study who identified as a lesbian felt accepted by her military colleagues (107). Higher education could further offer her the advocacy available at campus LGBT resource centers (89). If we continue to take her example, she still might find the individualistic culture of academics as a source of isolation when she once found quick comradeship in the military world. A few of the interviews in the study mention that academics are a source of concern because they differ from the hierarchy and structure of the military in their exercise of power as teachers, with one person commenting that they prefer instructions for assignments to be more direct about resources and expected outcomes. A lack of specific directions can be disconcerting to past and present military-related students. Although the book gives insight into specific teaching styles for student veterans and service members transitioning into higher educational contexts, it does not offer as much as it might. On the whole, the book is geared toward the student as a part of the higher education community.

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