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### Research Review: Assessing the Impact of Military Cultural-Competence Training: Lessons for Creating an Inclusive Campus Environment

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## ■ Assessing the Impact of Military Cultural-Competence Training: Lessons for Creating an Inclusive Campus Environment

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**DATE:** 2021**LINK:** [www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/07377363.2021.1938804](http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/07377363.2021.1938804)**KEYWORDS:** Military-connected, inclusion, assessment, student veterans**ABSTRACT:**

“Campuses are increasingly offering military cultural-competency professional development training to staff and faculty to support military-connected students. Using four years of program data, we examine outcomes for a custom training, including retention of content knowledge, application of lessons on campus, and comparison of outcomes for in-person and online versions of the training. Results suggest that participants, both in-person and online, developed higher confidence and greater capacity to support student veterans. Evidence for examining training impact included correct response rates on a post-training quiz, scaled perceptions data, and open-ended feedback. Implications for research on the effectiveness of military cultural competency training are discussed, along with recommendations for creating an inclusive campus culture for military-connected students.”

**RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS:**

- This study examined the effectiveness of a military cultural-competency professional training program for staff and faculty in generating military/veteran cultural competence among participants.
- Throughout the training, participants revealed negative assumptions about military-connected students including associations with PTSD and mental health issues, as well as the perception that veterans attend college solely for government benefits. Positive assumptions included strengths such as determination and hard work.
- The findings of this study highlight the fact that incorporating military cultural competence training that includes scenario-based learning and addresses negative assumptions about veterans can effectively reduce prejudice and promote inclusion for military-connected students. It also facilitated the initiation of meaningful dialogues, fostered trust, strengthened connections, enhanced awareness of resources, and improved teaching practices, leading to a deeper understanding and appreciation of the veteran community.
- Participants expressed the need for more training on supporting veterans' mental and behavioral health, specifically addressing TBIs. They desired additional content and dedicated time for discussing classroom strategies when working with veterans, particularly those with acute or perceived behavioral/mental health issues.

## Implications

### FOR PRACTICE

This study offers valuable insights and strategies for effectively supporting veterans' mental and behavioral health. Practitioners working with student veterans or within the veteran community can apply these findings to enhance their interventions and support systems. Educators and institutions can use the study's findings to improve classroom interaction with student veterans. Understanding their unique experiences and challenges can foster a more inclusive learning environment and enhance the overall educational experience for these individuals. Additionally, building upon the study's findings, practitioners can tailor existing programs to address specific mental health disorders prevalent among the veteran population. This targeted approach can lead to more effective interventions and better outcomes for those experiencing specific challenges. Overall, these results provide practical implications for professionals, educators, and organizations working with veterans, which can contribute to the well-being and success of student veterans and the broader veteran community. Last, in practice collaboration with academic institutions and faculty possessing assessment expertise should be considered to ensure that military cultural competence training is properly evaluated leading to evidence-based practices and continuous improvement.

### FOR POLICY

The policy implications for this study include incorporating the strategies and information provided in the study to strengthen existing policies or develop new ones aimed at supporting veterans' mental and behavioral health. This may include allocating resources to enhance mental health services and interventions tailored to the unique needs of the veteran population. Policy initiatives could also be developed to advance military competency training by considering options such as conducting these trainings at military bases. This approach can ensure broader coverage and better accessibility of such training for professionals in various fields interacting with military personnel. Policy implications also include opportunities to establish formal partnerships between academic institutions and the Department of Veterans Affairs. These collaborations may have the potential to facilitate the exchange of resources, expertise, and mental health training to improve support services for veterans.

### FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Based on the findings in this study, future research should consider delving deeper into exploring training outcomes concerning military-culture competency training for professional development. While some institutions rely on proprietary online platforms and scenario-based learning for competency training, it remains essential to investigate the effectiveness of these methods in comparison to traditional in-person training. A comparative study would offer valuable insights into which approach yields better results and engagement among participants. Furthermore, findings suggest that there may be a need to examine how student veterans perceive the impact of inclusivity training on professors. Understanding the perspectives of student veterans regarding the effectiveness and relevance of such training in shaping the behavior and attitudes of educators can inform improvements in future training programs. Moreover, researchers should consider conducting a study to assess student perceptions of faculty military cultural competency and inclusiveness both before and after receiving training. This pre-and-post assessment may provide insights on faculty attitudes and behaviors towards student veterans.

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