

SUNY New Paltz
**The Journey to Veteran and Military
Services**
1968 – 2019 & Beyond



Today's Objectives

- To share an interesting story that parallels the nation's political and cultural landscape of the past 50 years.
- To describe a successful strategy for developing a comprehensive veteran and military services program on a college campus.
- To review the demonstrated benefits of having such a program.

The 70's

Were Hard on SUNY New Paltz's Reputation

- Radically liberal.
- A party school of the first magnitude.
- The drug capital of the Northeast.
- Berkley on the Hudson.
- Open admission.
- Declining enrollments.
- Relaxed or non-existent student conduct standards.
- Retrenchments and department closures.
-a reputation earned....







**They've got an invisible program
to end an undeclared war
backed by a silent majority.**



Edison Square Garden Rally: 1970 Senators for Peace and No to Pkcs.
Thursday, March 12, 7:30 P.M.





Campus Culture Became Profoundly Anti-military

- Military recruiters were banned from campus.
- Aside from athletic events, the National Anthem was intentionally not used for any institutional events including commencement and convocation.
- American flags were not flown in any prominent location including in front of the administration building or main entrance.

The 80's and 90's at SUNY New Paltz

- Developed significantly higher expectations of student behavior and academic performance.
- Developed significantly higher admission standards.
- Added STEM programs including Engineering.
- College's improved reputation resulted in growing popularity.
- And then.....



9/11 Changed Everything

- The attack struck the SUNY New Paltz community very hard.
- Attitudes about the military, war, and patriotism changed overnight.
- Students and staff began to deploy and enlist.
- The campus developed LOA and financial accommodations policies for those who deploy.
- Student service administrators began to think in earnest about veteran and military student needs.

9/11 Continued

- Veterans began to return to pursue an education and the numbers were growing.
- Admission developed and implemented population sensitive admissions standards and transfer equivalencies for veterans, active military, Reservists, and National Guard members.
- In 2008, the Post 9/11 GI Bill significantly increased accessibility to higher education for qualified veterans.

Flying the Flag

Before 9/11



After 9/11



Singing the National Anthem at Commencement



Building Institutional Support for OVMS

- There must be a champion on the president's cabinet.
- Collect data to support the need for investment in OVMS services.
- People support what they help to create – assemble and charge a group of stakeholders to develop a strategic plan for addressing institutional needs to serve veteran and military affiliated students.
- Talk to veteran and military affiliated students as well as faculty and staff who have or are serving.

Veteran and Military Services Strategic Planning Task Force

- Academic Advising and Student Success
- Counseling Center
- Disability Resource Center
- Financial Aid
- Student Accounts*
- First-year Admission
- Transfer Admission
- Graduate School Admission

Veteran and Military Student Focus Group Findings:

- Students need assistance in navigating the VA's complex bureaucratic systems in order to successfully access veteran and military benefits.
- Students need support and guidance managing the transition from military life to the college/university environment.
- They desire opportunities to network with other veteran and military students.
- Expressed deep concern that members of the campus community do not understand them and cannot relate to what they have experienced.

Task Force Proposal Outcomes

- Secured institutional funding to establish an Office of Veteran and Military Services.
- Conducted a national search for a professional coordinator.
- Moved classified staff VA benefits specialist from Student Accounts to OVMS.
- Developed offices adjacent to a lounge area in the Student Union Building.
- OVMS became fully operational in June of 2014.
- The Veteran and Military Services Strategic Planning Task Force transitioned to the OVMS Advisory Board.



Current OVMS Services and Programs

- Offer a dedicated staff to support veteran and military affiliated students.
- Provide a faculty and staff mentoring program for new veteran and military affiliated student protégés.
- Support New Paltz students enrolled in the Marist College ROTC program.
- Provide laptop computers for OVMS student use.
- Provide networking opportunities through social, recreational, and small group discussion events.

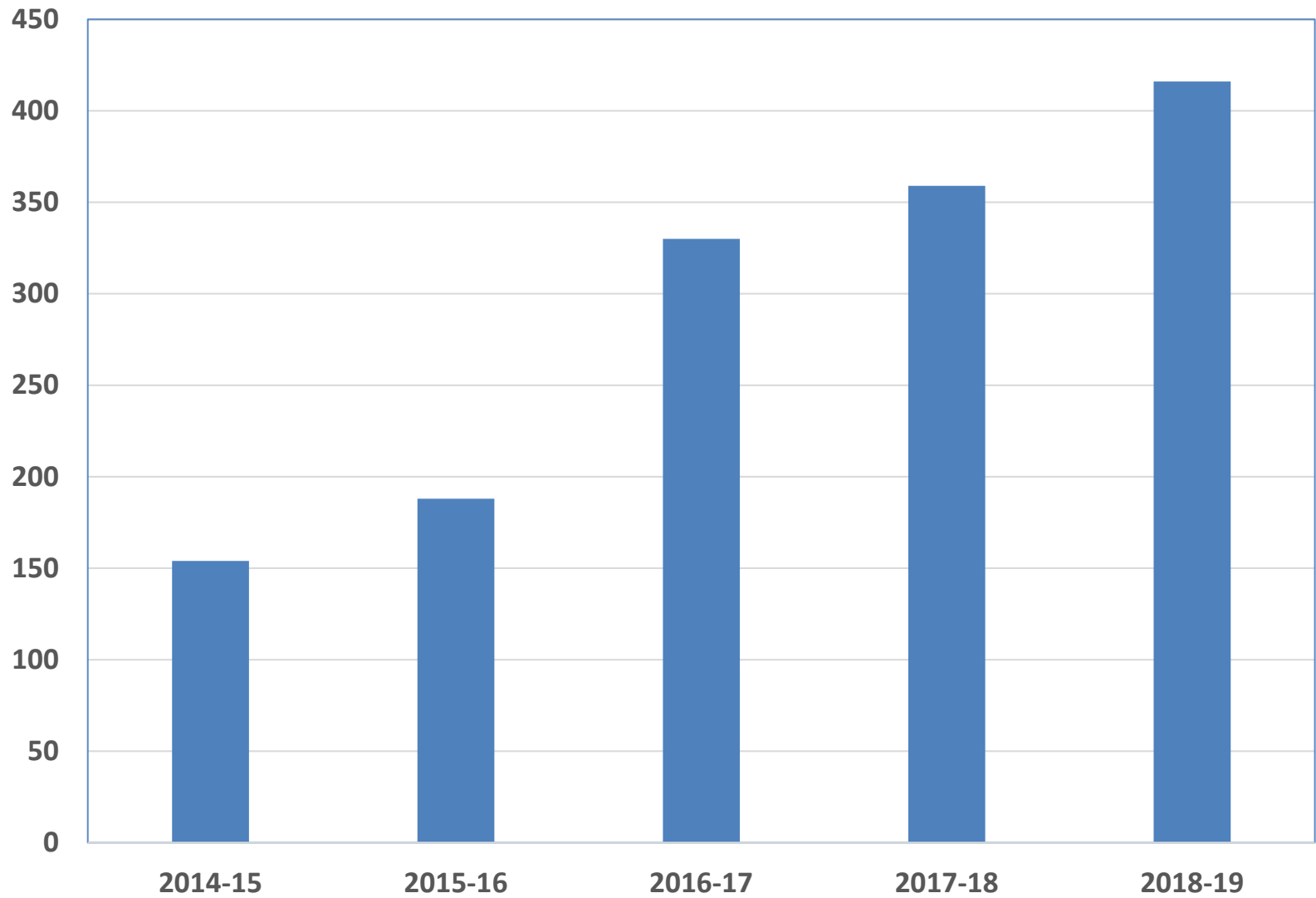
OVMS Services and Programs, Cont'd

- Provide on-going training to faculty and staff relative to effectively accommodating the unique needs and perspectives of veteran and military affiliated students.
- Offer a networking fair for jobs and internships specifically targeted at veteran and military affiliated students.
- Serve as the first point of contact for students whose education is interrupted by deployment or training and to continue as the institutional liaison to them.
- Facilitate priority registration for all active, Reserve, or National Guard students.

OVMS Broader Program Accomplishments

- Founded the Consortium on Veteran and Military Affiliated Education (from 11 institutions in '14 to 43 in '19)
- Top 100 best schools in the country for veterans and service members on Victory's Military Friendly list.
- Ranked #16 in the Northeast for Best Colleges for Veterans by U.S. News.
- Received a total of \$350,000 in grants to expand and improve college and university services to veteran and military affiliated students.
- OVMS became a target for philanthropic giving, and

Veteran & Military Affiliated Students



Impact on Institutional Culture

- Col. Joseph Davidson '90, Deputy Commandant of United States Military Academy at West Point (2016 photo)



Alumni Engagement and Philanthropy

Letter from Retired Marine Corps Full Bird Colonel

“This is the first time I’ve contributed money to New Paltz since graduating in 1968. I’ve always felt the college did nothing for veterans or the military since kicking Marine recruiters off campus following the April 1968 protest...This past issue of the New Paltz Magazine was the first recognition, of any significance, of the military that I can remember...I am pleased that you have finally made an effort by recognizing our newest veterans and will happily contribute on an annual basis.”

Annual Veterans Day Dining-In



**6TH ANNUAL
VETERANS DAY DINING-IN**
Masquerade Ball



Memorial Day Wreath Laying Ceremony



Current Priorities for Future Development

- Renovate OVMS space to include a dedicated lounge for use by veteran and military affiliated students.
- Build a base of ten ROTC cadets so the Army will authorize on-site instruction and training.
- Fully implement the joint Community College of the Air Force and SUNY New Paltz educational program.
- Further advance the capabilities and quality of services provided to veterans, active military and veteran and military dependents.
- Continue to work with Development and Alumni Affairs to promote philanthropic support for veterans and military affiliated students.

Thank You Questions?

