



Veterans Resource and Opportunities Center (VROC)

Program Review - Comprehensive Review

2023 - 2024

Program Context

Mission (100 word limit)

1- How does your program align with the college and district mission? <https://smccd.edu/dpgc/files/dsgc-DistrictMission.pdf> <https://canadacollege.edu/about/mission.php>

The Veterans Resource and Opportunity Center (VROC) at Cañada College aligns with both the College and District Mission statements by:

Engaging with and empowering our military connected community to access Veterans Benefits so they can transform their lives through a college education.

Providing open access to our military connected community and being responsive to their unique needs. The VROC provides a space for veterans to build community and where camaraderie, diversity, inclusiveness, and peer support are practiced and advocated. VROC shares best practices for academic success and provides invaluable information and resources for Service Members, Veterans, and Military Families (SMVF).

Program Description (500 word limit)

2- Who does your program serve?

Summary

VROC serves 35 certified Cañada College veterans and 185 overall Service Members, Veterans, and Military Families (SMVF) at Cañada College. Veterans include reservists, active duty, National Guard, and dependents. However, there are an unknown number of SMVFs who do not identify as SMVFs.

Our SMVFs consist veterans belonging to the following chapters:

Chapter 30- Montgomery GI Bill (Active Duty)

Chapter 31- Vocational Rehabilitation Benefits

Chapter 32: Veterans Educational Assistance Program (VEAP)

Chapter 33- Post-9/11 GI Bill

Chapter 35 Survivors and Dependents Assistance

Reserve GI Bill - Chapter 1606

Table 1

Of the 185 overall SMVFs non-certified SMVF students at Cañada College, 83% of Cañada's SMVFs are certified at either Skyline College or CSM because those schools belong to northern San Mateo County where certified veterans receive a higher monthly Basic Housing Allowance (\$4600 vs. \$4300). Cañada College belongs to the San Jose service area where the cost of living is lower. This difference has decreased to \$300 (Previously \$800).

Additional demographic highlights for Fall 2023

a. How many students are served by your program?

220

b. How does your program intentionally serve underrepresented, disproportionately impacted or racially minoritized students (ie. Black and/or Indigenous People of Color; Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and Asexual; 1st Gen; Foster; Homeless; Undocumented; Veteran; Low-Income; or other disproportionately impacted student populations identified in our Student Equity data, etc.)?

Events this past semester included inviting Emilio Gallegos, a US Marine Corp combat veteran to share his spoken word about what it means to be a veteran. His presentation reflected the veteran identity, destigmatized the veteran experience and provided insight into the challenges veterans face in returning to civilian life.

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3- How has student access, retention, and completion changed over the course of this program review cycle?

Student access, retention and completion have increased with the new Veterans Coordinator, expanded Veterans Center and the return to in person instruction. During the pandemic, SMVFs experienced challenges with virtual instruction and also missed a range of support services on campus. The new Coordinator and Center provide Veterans with knowledgeable staff and a supportive environment where they can access their benefits and complete the challenging certification process.

4- What delivery method(s) does your program utilize to best serve students? (ie. in person, in the community, online, hybrid, hyflex, scheduled appointments, drop ins etc.). How does your program determine which delivery methods are most beneficial for students?

VROC serves students in an in-person and virtual modality with staff being available by email and Canvas shell as well. However, our veterans are requesting a growing presence of in person support, especially coming out of COVID. As of Fall 2023, 71 students visited the VROC in August, 56 visited in September, and 12 visited from Oct. 1 to October 10. Pre-COVID, we also found it advantageous to collaborate between campuses as a means of increasing veteran collaboration and participation.

5- What are your on and off-campus community partnerships and how are they operationalized to support students?

Staff belong to the NorCal College SMVF composed of several VA staff and staff from various community colleges and universities. The VA medical outreach visits the VROC twice a semester to start any referrals veterans may need. The representative of the SMC Veteran Service Office is available to help with any documents needed to be filed. Staff also attend quarterly REGION 3 meetings that consist of schools within the Bay Area.

6- How does your program support Cañada College as an Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) and Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions (AANAPISI) designated institution?

57% of the total SMVFs certified this year are either Latinx (34%) or AANAPISI (23%). VROC provides equitable and open access to all SMVFs, regardless of their home-school, current status, or academic goals. Additionally, VROC staff demonstrate cultural competency, sensitivity and understanding of diverse academic, socio-economic, cultural, ability, gender identify, sexual orientation and ethnic backgrounds of students, staff and faculty.

Table 2

Looking Back

7- Describe major accomplishments since the last program review cycle.

VROC's MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

VROC has hired Jun Vera, a Marine Corp veteran, with extensive experience in student programming to serve as our new Veterans Coordinator. Juan supports veterans in person, virtually and/or via the new Veterans canvas shell. Connections/referrals continue to be made to SparkPoint, Personal Counseling, Counseling, TRIO, the Career Center and community partners.

VROC 800 ft² location now includes a dedicated counseling office, a private study room with 2 desktop computers with web cameras and headphones, a student work area with printer access, and a spacious lounge with a big screen TV for veterans to gather, watch TV and form community.

Cañada's VROC created a new standardized Canvas shell that is now shared Districtwide. This Canvas shell promotes veteran engagement and allows student veterans to attend VROC events across the District.

The 3 college's Veterans Center Coordinators continue to meet in order to increase collaborations and support for veterans attending multiple campuses.

Districtwide Veterans Coordinators, Registrars, Certifying Officials and Managers meet regularly to discuss certification and enrollment challenges and solutions.

VROC continues to meet the CCCC minimum qualifications for a Veterans Resource Center.

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a. How did your accomplishments help to close the opportunity gap for disproportionately impacted, underserved or racially minoritized students?

Having an in-person staff member throughout the week helps close the opportunity gap for our student veterans. Since student veteran age varies, so do the needs. Older Vietnam Veteran students may need help navigating the Canvas shell platform for online classes. Student veterans who have a disability rating may need help troubleshooting issues they may have with the VA. Juan, being a veteran who is familiar with the veterans process, closes the opportunity gap experienced by new student veterans around their benefits, student services and resources while allowing for a space to increase their sense of community on campus.

8- Describe major challenges since the last program review cycle. Have these challenges contributed to the expansion of or continuation of equity gaps?

The VROC Coordinator position at Cañada College is a shared 50/50 position with Probation Dismissal. While this split position was effective as we launched our new and expanded VROC, the more we look at equity gaps and opportunities for expanding Veterans support on campus, the more we realize that we have outgrown the current 50% Veterans position. Expanding the current position to 100% would allow VROC's Coordinator to expand veteran specific programming including: increasing VROC visibility on campus, expanding community partnerships and increasing the number of student veterans certified. These services are opportunities for closing equity gaps for our student veteran community.

Skyline and CSM Veterans continue to receive a higher monthly Basic Housing Allowance (~\$300) than Cañada veterans since we're assigned to the San Jose VA based on our location.

Student veterans have difficulty having their certification completed by the VA. This delays their Basic Housing Allowance which impacts their ability to focus on school

SMVFs are also impacted by government shutdowns,

Student veterans share mis-information with each other which delays their certification process.

Recent Veterans Coordinators' turnover has delayed Cañada's ability to develop sustained Veteran programming and develop trust by veterans.

Impact of Resource Allocations Process (250 word limit)

9- Describe the impact to date of previously requested resources (staff, non-instructional assignment, equipment, facilities, research, funding) including both resource requests that were approved and were not approved.

A 1.0FTE OAll to provide coverage for VROC services - not approved

4 Student laptops to be used in the VROC study room - not approved

a. What impact have these resources had on your program/department/office and measures of student success or client satisfaction?

VROC has outgrown the 0.5FTE position and needs a 1.0FTE coordinator to build out Veterans programming. VROC has secured desktops in lieu of the laptops.

b. What have you been unable to accomplish due to resource requests that were not approved?

VROC's 50% position has outgrown our current need. Compared to other 1.0FTE staffed offices, VROC has been unable to build out:

Hiring and training student assistants

Expanding veteran student programming

Hosting additional veteran-centered community activities.

And, most importantly, up till this month, having a presence at VROC when the 0.5TE Coordinator is attending in-person meetings or tending to Probation Dismissal duties. These high-level activities include supporting veterans with:

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Understanding their VA benefits
Accessing their VA benefits and with
Securing their Basic Housing (living) Allowance (BHA).
(Student Assistants can't deliver high touch support to student veterans)

c. How have these resources (or lack of resources) specifically disproportionately impacted students/clients?

Student veterans are a disproportionately impacted community who belong to a wide range of ethnicities, abilities and financial stability. Most veterans have sacrificed years of their lives serving and find themselves playing "catchup" compared to their civilian counterparts. They are often older students with a set goal who may find it difficult adjusting from military to civilian/college life while many of them may also experience mental health challenges.

This position supports SVMFs, many of whom are BIPOC and/or have an assigned rating (a degree of mental health or physical disability), with matriculation, certification, personal counseling (PTSD), advocacy, and basic needs support.

SAOs and SLOs (100 word limit)

10- State your Service Area Outcomes (SAOs) and/or Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs).

Certified veterans will complete their VA certification - met
Certified veterans will access their GI bill benefits. - met

11- Describe how your program assessed your SAOs and/or SLOs.

Data is collected from the School Certifying Official (SCO) verified by the Department of Veteran Affairs through "Enrollment Manger", housed in Banner.

12- Summarize the findings of your program's SAO/SLO Assessments.

100% of veterans were certified
100% of veterans we able to access their GI Benefits

a. What are some improvements that have been, or can be, implemented as a result of SAO/SLO Assessment? Please include meaningful action plans to

Hosting orientations and workshops addressing veteran;s topics.
Hiring student assistants to table and inform the campus around veterans topics.

b. How did your program's SAO/SLO assessment address antiracism?

VROC welcomes and supports all SMVFs with certification and benefits regardless of race.

c. How did your program's SAO/SLO assessment address equity?

VROC equitably supports every SMVF to complete certification and understand their benefits.

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Looking Ahead

SAOs and SLOs for the Next Review Cycle (100 word limit)

13- State your SAOs and SLOs for the next review cycle. Describe how you will address identified opportunities for improvement. Discuss how you will address antiracism in the next program review cycle. Discuss how you will address equity in the next program review cycle.

Survey results will demonstrate VROC's efficiency in outlining key support services for veterans. Results will inform how VROC will enhance marketing materials and service delivery. VROC will look to address antiracism by ensuring that all staff completes the District's Unconscious Bias Training and welcomes all SMVFs in a welcoming manner. Equity will be addressed by ensuring that all SMVFs are supported regardless of age, color, ethnicity, background, etc...

SAO1: 70% of student veterans will be able to identify key support resources at Cañada College.

SAO2: Veteran students will be able to access the GI bill benefits

SAO3: Veteran students will be able to complete VA certification

SAO's 1-3 will provide VROC with an opportunity to assess student veteran understanding of key resources, ability to access veterans benefits and efficiency at completing their certification. Survey responses will also provide program staff with the opportunity to assess how effective VROC is at promoting resources and provide feedback on marketing materials and promotional practices.

Program Improvement Initiatives/Resource Requests (250 word limit)

14- With an equity and antiracism lens, what changes could be implemented to improve your program? Please include meaningful action plans to improve student access and success

For FY24, VROC proposes to:

Hire and train student assistants to provide office coverage and support to SVMFs. Through ongoing cultural competency training, this team will support and welcome student veterans of multiple ethnicities, races, genders and sexual orientations.

Partner with Financial Aid to ensure that scholarship and financial aid information is available to all SVMFs with a focus on aid for underrepresented veteran communities.

Host community events that highlight the Veteran experience and which celebrate the rich diversity found within our veteran community.

Work with PRIE to capture and analyze Veteran data around demographics, success, retention and persistence, to identify equity gaps to improve future programing.

Expand/Enhance off-site community partnerships and resources that would support our all student veterans across multiple resources.

VROC will also advocate for creating a safe space for Veterans and the campus community where racism is actively opposed.

15- How will you address the opportunities for improvement that you identified throughout the prior sections of this Program Review?

Efforts will include:

All new staff (classified & student) will attend a required segment on "Diversity and Inclusion", and the District's "Unconscious Bias Training".

Expand FAFSA outreach to Veterans.

Partner with off campus veteran's resources particularly those in EPA, NBH and NFO.

a. What additional antiracism training do you/your program need in the upcoming year?

VROC will also look to attend Anti-racism training offered by the District, Campus and Equity Center. Staff will also attend campus anti-racism training.

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b. What research or training will you need to accomplish these plans?

Our team will work with PRIE to create reports to identify veterans needs in order to increase our holistic support for our veteran community. VROC staff will also attend conferences and seek out training from community and government agencies who support veterans.

c. What supplies, equipment, or facilities improvements do you need?

Our team will utilize existing campus facilities to host professional learning and community building events as well as general supplies for the events.

If your program is requesting resources, please go to “STEP 2: Resource Request (OPTIONAL)” and submit your specific requests there.

Personnel - Classified Staff (2023 - 2024)

Personnel - Classified Staff (2023-24)

Hiring Division/Department:

ESSP / VROC

Position Title:

Veterans Coordinator

Is this position permanent?

Yes

Position Type

Full-time

Provide # of months

12

Program Goals this Request Supports

Supporting Veterans and our Military connected community on campus

Position: General Funds

70,000

Allocation: General Funds

70,000

Justification

1. Describe the specific needs for the position requested and the duties of this position in a brief statement.

This request is for a 50% increase to the current VROC Coordinator position to bring the position up to 1.0 FTE. The current position is split with Probation Dismissal. We have outgrown the VROC 50% position.

The VROC Program Services Coordinator (PSC) for the Veterans Opportunity and Resource Center (VROC) provides Service Members, Veterans, and Military Families (SMVF) at Cañada College with the support needed for them to succeed at Cañada College. The PSC assists in the planning, coordination, and implementation of services, such as student recruitment, orientation, job skills assessments and job placement, special events, tours, individual and specialized programs and other support for current and potential program participants. The PSC also works with other educational institutions, community and business representatives, veterans' organizations, governmental agencies and the general public in order to exchange program information and services that directly impact students' academic success, along with mental health and well-being. PSC duties include:

- a. Serving as the primary college liaison for veteran students
- b. Assisting with the admissions and certification process
- c. Supporting SMVFs with understanding and gaining their GI Bill benefits
- d. Referring and connecting veterans to college, community and government resources
- e. Connecting veterans to campus support programs (Career Center, Colts U Transfer Station, Financial Aid Office, SparkPoint, etc...)
- f. Tracking and reporting on veterans' academic success, retention and persistence

Our sister campuses have proven that by having a full-time, permanent PSC for their respective VROCs, they

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have established a vibrant and extensive veteran presence at their colleges.

2. Explain how this position aligns with and supports the mission and strategic goals of the college.

VROC's mission statement is to provide a welcoming environment for veterans to complete their academic and personal goals. VROC's vision is to provide veterans, of all eras, with personalized service and encouragement by building connections to admissions & records, counseling services, financial aid, academic support services, fellow veterans and veteran related agencies and organizations.

VROC's mission statement aligns with the college's mission statement in that VROC supports a learning centered environment that ensures that all veterans and their dependents have equitable opportunities to achieve their transfer, career education and lifelong learning educational goals.

3. Explain how adding this position will strengthen the department or division.

Having a 1.0FTE VROC PSC will increase the quantity and quality of wrap-around services available to our Cañada College veterans and their dependents. VROC will:

- o Provide VROC with staffing who has experience in addressing the array of mental, social and emotional challenges facing returning veterans
- o Increase the number of veterans certified, units that veterans are enrolled in and overall veteran enrollment at Cañada College
- o Connect veterans to academic support programs and services designed to increase their retention, success and persistence
- o Connect veterans to necessary campus, Veterans Administration and community resources designed to ease the transition from the military back into civilian life
- o Streamline the admissions and certification process for veterans pursuing higher education

4. Explain how this work will be accomplished if the position is not filled.

The current position is 50% VROC and 50% Probation Dismissal position. Although student assistants have been hired, if the position is not filled, veterans visiting VROC will not receive the immediate service they would have if the coordinator was present. VROC will not have the necessary staffing bandwidth to properly address the range of academic, mental, social and emotional needs facing veterans at Cañada. Projects like hosting year-round Veterans events, weekly get-togethers, a book voucher program, launching a student club and providing professional development around supporting veterans will be delayed or may not be launched due to limited staffing levels. Our sister colleges have 1.0 FTE coordinators allowing them to provide year-round availability and visibility. Finally, veterans rely on consistency so by not staffing VROC full-time, we are dis-servicing our veterans and losing the momentum that we have generated with our new expanded VROC.

5. Critical Question: How does this resource request support closing the equity gap?

Having a full-time coordinator throughout the week helps close the equity gap for our SMVFs. Just as student veteran ages vary, so do the needs. Older Vietnam Veteran students may need help navigating the Canvas shell platform for online classes. Student veterans who have a disability rating (a confirmed degree of mental health or physical disability) may need help troubleshooting issues they may have with the VA. Juan, being a veteran who is familiar with the veterans process, closes the equity gap experienced by new student veterans around their benefits, student services and resources while allowing for a space to increase their sense of community on campus.

6. Critical Question: How does this resource request support Latinx and AANAPISI students??

57% of the total SMVFs certified this year are either Latinx (34%) or AANAPISI (23%). VROC provides equitable and open access to all SMVFs, regardless of their home-school, current status, or academic goals. Additionally, VROC staff demonstrate cultural competency, sensitivity and understanding of diverse academic, socio-economic, cultural, ability, gender identify, sexual orientation and ethnic backgrounds of students, staff and faculty.

Veterans Resource and Opportunities Center (VROC) - Resource Request Map Request to College Goals and Strategic Initiatives

Which of Cañada College's Goals does this resource request support

Student Access, Success, and Completion,Equity-Minded and Antiracist College Culture,Community Connections

Which of Cañada College's Strategic Initiatives does this resource request support?

Make registration easier,Connect students to the academic program(s) and classes they need,Ensure students (particularly part-time students) experience a sense of belonging and connection to the College that helps them persist and complete,Improve the financial stability of students ,Create and sustain an inclusive, antiracist, and equity-minded campus culture,Better share what Cañada offers,Strengthen K-16 pathways and transfer,Help students explore and find employment in fields of their choice,Help meet the basic needs of Cañada students and other community members

This position has been reviewed by the department or division and is recommended for hiring.

Dean/Director/Hiring Supervisor Name

Dr. Wissem Bennani

Date

10/13/2023