

University Relations: UW System recognizes seven institutions for earning UW VETS Certification

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Two days before Veteran's Day, the University of Wisconsin (UW) System honored seven of its institutions at today's Board of Regents meeting for achieving UW Veterans Education and Transition to Success (VETS) Certification. In addition to the undergraduate and graduate tuition benefits the UW System awards to veterans under the Wisconsin G.I. Bill, this certification recognizes each institution's commitment to helping student veterans succeed. To be VETS certified, a campus must go above and beyond in providing a wide range of critical supportive services, including counseling, a welcoming campus environment, and giving student veterans a voice in university life.

"The UW System is a national leader in offering exceptional higher education services to student veterans," says UW System President Ray Cross, a U.S. Army veteran who served in Vietnam. "I am pleased to recognize these seven institutions, which have taken comprehensive steps to ensure student veterans have the best possible educational experience on their campuses."

The Wisconsin G.I. Bill offers the finest higher education benefit in the nation, which can be used for undergraduate or graduate education for full-time, part-time, and Flexible Option students. Eligible veterans, as well as spouses and children of disabled veterans, are not charged tuition and fees up to 128 credits. Assuming a standard course load, the Wisconsin G.I. Bill provides four years of 100% free tuition. Veterans are given priority registration at all UW institutions. In fiscal year

2017, 3,820 eligible veterans and 1,790 eligible family members took advantage of nearly \$24 million in UW-funded tuition, fee, and related benefits.

The seven institutions to receive UW VETS Certification will be UW-Eau Claire, UW-La Crosse, UW-Oshkosh, UW-Parkside, UW-Platteville, UW-River Falls, and UW-Stout. UW VETS certification is an important achievement that student veterans and others may consider as they choose a university. UW VETS Certification criteria includes:

Training campus faculty and staff on issues that student veterans may face in transitioning to college, such as scheduling, making connections, study habits, and health and welfare challenges

Conducting regular surveys of student veterans to identify needs and get input

Establishing a campus steering committee composed of student veterans, faculty, and staff to share information and provide guidance to campus leadership

Providing student veteran-focused orientation programming

Identifying internal and external counseling resources to assist student veterans with academic, financial, and social concerns

Providing a dedicated space on campus where student veterans can meet peers and receive help with benefits, enrollment, and connections to supportive resources

Following are a few highlights of each institution's achievements in earning the UW VETS certification.

UW-Eau Claire

Faculty and staff that complete Veteran Safe Space training receive placards to display in their offices, signaling they are allies ready to listen, help, and make informed referrals.

Detailed surveys of student veterans have praised the work of the Veterans Center and identified credit for prior learning as a priority issue.

UW-La Crosse

The UW-La Crosse Veterans Center offers guitars and guitar lessons to student veterans through its "Warriors Unplugged" program to build camaraderie and provide a supportive group to help improve mental and physical wellness.

The Veterans Lounge and Resource Center is now located in the new Student Union and features a kitchenette, ample lounge space, a dedicated computer lab, TV, and

comfortable seating where students can spend time in-between classes.

UW-Oshkosh

UW-Oshkosh leads all campuses in implementing priority registration for student veterans and annually hosts a Priority Registration Orientation and Resource Fair in cooperation with the Student Veterans Association where students are connected with the advising center, financial aid, student accounts, the Counseling Center, Project Success (learning disability center), Career Services, the Center for Academic Resources, and the Writing Center.

The Veterans Resource Center, the College of Nursing, and the Center for Teaching and Learning collaborate to train faculty and staff how to create welcoming classrooms and campus environments for student veterans.

UW-Parkside

UW-Parkside opened the Military and Veteran Success Center in 2017 to assist military service members and veteran students with the transition to college. The center offers a quiet place to study, a comfortable spot to connect with other veterans, and a meeting place for the Student Veterans Association club.

For the first time in its history, UW-Parkside will send two student veterans to the national Student Veterans of America conference in San Antonio. The conference is the country's single largest gathering of Post-9/11 veterans.

UW-Platteville

The Wright Center for Non-Traditional and Veteran Students, staffed part-time by work-study students, is a place for military and veteran students to study, meet with groups, eat lunch, socialize, and enjoy a cup of coffee.

The Veteran Services Office is a full participant in Orientation Days and provides individual counseling to students using military education benefits. Admitted students who indicate veteran status or benefits eligibility receive an email from Veteran Services inviting them to the Wright Center.

UW-River Falls

The campus Advisory Committee on Veteran Affairs, made up of staff, faculty and student veterans, identifies student veterans in academic trouble before they drop classes and potentially reduce the value of education benefits tied to enrollment.

The campus Military and Veteran Resource Center connects students to the Transition and Care Management program of the Minneapolis VA that provides returning veterans with a wide range of healthcare and disability services.

UW-Stout

UW-Stout engaged student researchers in a comprehensive evaluation of the Veterans Services Office, the Veterans Club, and the Military and Veteran Resource Center. The evaluators concluded that assistance with education benefits is the most important service provided on campus and that additional outreach is needed to connect online students with services.

The UW-Stout Veterans Club received a \$10,000 Vet Center Initiative grant sponsored by Student Veterans of America and Home Depot. Funds were used to furnish the Military and Veteran Resource Center with kitchen equipment.

Last fall, six UW institutions earned UW VETS Certification in the first year it was available: UW-Green Bay, UW-Madison, UW-Milwaukee, UW-Stevens Point, UW-Superior, and UW-Whitewater. Institutions must re-apply for certification every three years.