

MONTANA UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

## Veterans Initiative

September 2012

### Purpose of Work Group:

- Ensure that the MUS continues to excel as a veteran friendly system by providing services, financial aid, and instruction necessary for today's veterans to successfully access and complete college

### Members:

(Regent Jeffrey Krauss, Bozeman; Bruce Knutson, Veterans Liaison for Senator Tester; Brenda York, Director of Veterans and Disability Services at MSU-Bozeman; Ricki Jones, Financial Aid Director at UM-Western; Justin Rapp, Veterans Coordinator at UM-Missoula; Jack Bailey, Veterans Education Program Manager at Office of Public Instruction; Luke Petriccione, Veterans Upward Bound; Julie Rummel, Financial Aid and Veterans Specialist at MSU-Great Falls; OCHE Staff – Jessica Brubaker and Ron Muffick)

### Need:

- Enrollment of veterans in the MUS has doubled over the past five years and is projected to double again over the next five years (UM – 800+, MSU 500+, MSU-Billings 200+, MSU-GF 200+, UMW 100+)
- 8-10 percent of the total student population is expected to be veterans in the next 5 years making them our largest identifiable target group
- Veterans issues including the “Principles of Excellence”, “Financial Aid Shopping Sheet”, and Post 9/11 GI Bill require additional administrative work by MUS staff
- Regent interest in ensuring we, as a system, are “Veteran Friendly”

### Approach:

- Determine best practices to ensure we as a system are veteran friendly and provide the necessary services to veterans (conducted conference calls and research)
- Determine gaps in services or other areas that could be improved (surveys of what services are currently provided)
- Determine areas where a system or legislative initiative could assist in improving services, in filling gaps in services or improving consistency for veterans throughout the system

### System-Wide Solutions:

- A coordinated approach to all veterans that enter the system that includes a holistic support system for veterans which addresses veteran specific needs in the areas of engagement, academic counseling, academic support, financial aid and financial literacy, counseling and tutoring services (service level varies from larger campuses to smaller campuses)
- A consistent system approach to veterans issues and policies which provide comparable levels of service at all system campuses

**Best Practices for Campuses:**

- Veterans Advisory Board on each campus
- Dedicated veterans space
- Professional level administrator overseeing veterans services
- Central point of contact for veterans
- Upgrade of campus online veterans information
- Veterans specific assistance for admissions and enrollment (veterans friendly policies)
- Peer mentoring and student veterans organizations to engage veterans, partnering with student government
- Academic support services
- Disability, health and mental health services
- Housing assistance
- Faculty and staff training on veterans issues
- Career services
- Partner with tribal colleges to reach Native American veterans
- Review transferability of military training and courses
- Improve data and tracking for veterans and dependents