



AMERICAN COUNCIL ON EDUCATION

ACE/WAL-MART SUCCESS FOR VETERANS AWARD GRANTS

LIVE Executive Summary

The LIVE program provides veteran students at Lane Community College with a fully integrated first-year experience (FYE) that builds on the college's current Title III program. LIVE is designed to engage veteran students more fully in their learning and to assist them with the transition back to college. LIVE involves seven key research-based factors in the FYE that provide veteran students the additional support services tailored to their specific needs while building capacity to maintain these transformative processes beyond the grant period. Those factors include the following: learning communities, first-year experiences, advising services, supplemental instruction, early alert and intervention systems, campus climate, active and collaborative learning strategies.

LIVE integrates existing college reform efforts with an active veterans' office to provide a replicable program tailored for students transitioning from a command structure back to a civilian life with its multitude of choices. The project director for the LIVE is a veteran and faculty member of Lane Community College.

Lane's Integration of Vets in Education (LIVE): Moving from Command to Choice–Proposal Narrative

Project Purpose

The needs of veteran students are immense and well beyond the scope of traditional educational programs. The Lane Community College's (Lane) Student Veterans Resource Center (SVRC), as an example, provides students with an array of services bulleted below:

- Acts as an advocate for student veterans and their family members.
- Promotes the university or college as a "Veteran Friendly" school.
- Provides a comfortable environment for both student veterans and their families.
- Advises and assists with academic registration.
- Assists with application for educational benefits.

- Advises the institution of higher education faculty and staff on veterans' issues.
- Disseminates information on agencies that support veterans such as TRICARE, Department of Veterans' Affairs, Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs, Regional VA Healthcare, Oregon Employment Department, WorkSource Oregon, Oregon Department of Labor, and other resources.
- Coordinates with county Veterans' Service Officers, to schedule regular meetings with student veterans and their families on campus.
- Provides referral services to student veterans and their family members to governmental and non-governmental agencies for both benefits and services.
- Assists student veterans with mentoring services (i.e., proposed Battlebuddy program).
- Hosts a Help Desk to refer student veterans and their families to the appropriate agencies for assistance; and
- Assists student veterans and their family members in securing employment.

While these services are critical for veterans to transition from the command structure of the military back to the less structured environment of choice in a college or university, Lane seeks to develop a replicable program specifically for a cohort of 30 to 60 veteran students to engage veteran students in holistic way to help engage them in their educational pursuits to improve their chances for academic success.

The Lane's Integration of Vets in Education (LIVE) is based on a research-based, federally funded Title III grant, which provides a fully integrated first-year experience (FYE) for groups of like students. Lane is undertaking this FYE effort at an institutional level, and the college seeks funding from the ACE/Wal-Mart grant to investigate how to establish an FYE specifically for veterans that will more fully engage them in their educational experience and improve their learning and satisfaction.

LIVE will work directly with the SVRC to provide advice and academic assistance to student veterans. In striving to "gain and retain" veterans and their family members as students, the SVRC serves as a conduit to facilitate the bridge and ease the transition between veterans and their families in securing educational benefits and attaining an education at any Oregon public or private institution of higher education. LIVE will complement the SVRC by strengthening the efforts to retain students.

LIVE uses the Noel-Levitz Success Formula (Success = student engagement, student learning, and student satisfaction) as a foundation for plans for improved student success and, at the institutional level, retention of students. This formula represents a philosophy that helps the college more actively help students succeed through more efficient, understandable support systems while helping students help themselves by becoming more engaged learners. Building on years of college planning, successful pilots, and research to resolve significant problems in student

engagement, satisfaction, fall-to-fall persistence, and graduation rates—the Title III program builds upon widespread planning and growing consensus to support a college-wide FYE to serve all first-year credit students who take at least 6 units and wish to earn a degree, certificate, or transfer to a four-year university. LIVE is so critical because it emphasizes and deals with the special needs of veteran students while optimizing current college reform efforts.

Goals

Lane has three overarching goals for veteran students, which are aligned with the college-wide Title III efforts to improve student learning, engagement, and satisfaction on campus. The LIVE goals are as follows:

1. Improve veteran student engagement, learning, and satisfaction by increasing the number of veteran students enrolling in, and successfully completing, a comprehensive, integrated FYE learning community.
2. Improve veteran student engagement, learning, and satisfaction by developing a holistic approach to student learning through strengthening and integrating co-curricular activities (e.g., orientation, advising, tutoring, peer mentors, supplemental instruction, etc.) with curricular activities.
3. Improve veteran student engagement, learning, and satisfaction by systematically assessing the FYE and using assessment results to improve practice for services to veterans.

Potential Impact

The LIVE program builds capacity at Lane Community College by leveraging the existing FYE experience program, tailoring an experience for veteran students to engage more in their education and learning, and building assistance among veterans to reinforce their learning and engagement on campus as they depend on each other and integrate back into civilian life. The LIVE FYE also represents an excellent middle point from the command structure of the military to the freedom of education choice in that LIVE provides a directed, intentional educational choice that provides veterans with the tools for the transition and provides a higher level of structure in their first year of college. Research also indicates that students in such FYE structures persist from year to year at higher levels than their counterparts not in FYE programs. At Lane, those percentages have varied by as much as 40 percent before (47 percent vs. 87 percent).

LIVE is also replicable for other college campuses in that they can simply use and adopt the courses for their own veteran programs. The program includes broad outreach component to recruit and bring students to campus and to channel them into the LIVE program. With Lane President Mary Spilde taking over the chair of the American Association of Community Colleges in July 2009 and in her role as a board member for the League for Innovation in the Community College, Lane will have the opportunity to facilitate the dissemination of our project and other projects broadly to members of both groups.

Project Sustainability

LIVE has been designed to sustain itself beyond the initial two-year development and implementation period. Once the veteran's integrated FYE learning community is established, there are no additional costs to offer the learning communities sequence of courses, and the administration of the courses can be coordinated by the Learning Communities Coordinator.

While the issue of providing release time for a faculty member to fulfill the other elements of the FYE may be more difficult without dedicated funding and with the decline in public funding of higher education, the ACE/Wal-Mart grant would provide the college with sufficient time to develop that transitional model for other leadership to retain the built-in capacity. The twenty-member multi-county VET-NET, which is included at the end of this application, also meets quarterly to discuss veteran issues will be able to provide guidance for this area. (Two VET-NET members have provided support letters.) In addition, the Oregon State Legislature is considering funding a permanent presence of veteran offices on Oregon public colleges and universities, which might provide an excellent resource to leverage to maintain LIVE at its proposed levels without additional college funding.