

**Wellness and Student Veterans at North Carolina State University:
Survey Synopsis, Spring 2010**

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North Carolina State University seeks to make the campus a welcoming place for student veterans. One way to achieve this goal is to foster the wellness of student veterans. To learn more about the wellness of student veterans, the NCSU Center for Family and Community Engagement conducted an online survey in the spring of 2010. The survey is intended to assist the university and other groups in planning for student veterans.

To measure wellbeing, the Center administered the adult version of the Five Factor Wellness Inventory (Myers & Sweeney, 2005). The survey was emailed to student veterans in late April and early May. The NCSU Student Veterans of America (2010) encouraged participation through their newsletter. Among the 362 students sent the survey, 65 responded. Fourteen respondents who answered none or one of the wellness items were removed from the sample. The remaining 51 participants had completed 84% or more of the items.

Because of the low response rate to the survey, the findings cannot be generalized to NCSU student veterans as a whole. The low response rate was likely a function of the timing of the survey at the end of the spring semester. Nevertheless, the 51 students in the study sample responded to most or all items. Thus, the instrument appears to be readily completed by student veterans on campus. Given that enrollments of student veterans are projected to substantially rise over the next five years at NC State University and other universities in North Carolina, ongoing planning for their smooth introduction into post-secondary education and sustaining their wellbeing is warranted.

Recommendation 1: Repeat the administration of the Five Factor Wellness Inventory with NCSU student veterans in order to plan for increased enrollments at NC State University and other universities in North Carolina.

The student veterans' mean scores in nearly all components of wellness compare favorably with those of other populations, including at military colleges. The exception is Spirituality, which does not refer to religiosity and instead to a person's overall sense of purpose, meaning, and optimism toward the future. This raises questions about the impact of military

experience, especially combat deployments, on a sense of spirituality. It also raises questions about how to assist student veterans in making transitions after military service, moving beyond immediate concerns, and firming up their life directions.

Recommendation 2: Encourage sharing among student veterans about what has helped them to make positive transitions, set overall aims, and gain a sense of purpose and meaning.

An area requiring attention is the lower perceptions of wellness among women student veterans. Their total wellness mean was significantly below that of the men, and on all aspects of self, they scored lower than the men. Three areas—Positive Humor, Spirituality, and Exercise—stand out as significantly lower for the women, and deficits in these areas are likely to increase stress. Compared with the men, the women rated themselves as being less likely to laugh appropriately about their own and others' foibles and life circumstances, having less of a sense of a higher purpose and oneness with the universe, and lacking adequate physical activity. These lower scores for women are atypical for various populations, including military colleges.

Recommendation 3: Provide supportive outreach to women student veterans, promote sharing among them, and encourage means of stress reduction.