



Green Zone – Defined as a military zone that has been secured as a place of safe harbor for allied military personnel within a larger zone of combat operations, in order for these men and women to successfully prepare, train and resupply for continuing operations outside of the “Green Zone”, or the “Red Zone”.

**LEARNING HOW TO EFFECTIVELY INVEST IN OUR  
MILITARY VETERAN STUDENTS’ TRANSITION TO THEIR  
NEXT CHAPTERS OF LEADERSHIP AND SERVICE!**

This document has been adapted from  
*“Core Competencies For Working with Military-Connected Students” – Texas A&M San Antonio*

# ON CAMPUS AND COMMUNITY:

## VALUES & ATTITUDES

- Regularly examine your own values, especially those that may be in conflict with military cultural values. Everyone has implicit biases; be willing to examine your own.
- Have respectful conversations about differences, but avoid imposing on others your own values that may conflict with military cultural values.
- Remember that the preservation of respectful expression of differing opinions and values is the lifeblood of higher education.
- Increase your knowledge of culture, behaviors, courtesies, customs, and expectations that may be unique to military culture.
- Understand that our mission, goals, and policies have been intentionally crafted to incorporate principles and practices of embracing diversity and multiculturalism, which includes our military-connected student body.

## ENGAGING ONE-ON-ONE

- Welcome military-connected students! Let them know that they are a vital part of our campus community.
- Recognize that individuals with military backgrounds are at various stages of transition. Some students will easily adapt to college culture; others will not.
- Ask questions carefully and respectfully. Use common sense; avoid invasive questions about potentially sensitive issues.
- Do not attempt to provide mental health counseling or any other service for which you are not legally qualified, credentialed and authorized. If services are required, refer to appropriate office (e.g., Counseling Center, VA Mental Health Center). If referring someone to the VA Mental Health Services, the VETS Program (254-710-7264/Kevin\_Davis1@baylor.edu) has contacts within the office that help streamline this process.
- Be open to learning. Make efforts to learn about each student's unique life experiences. Avoid making assumptions about their experiences, values, or goals.
- Consider other factors that may influence the student's self-concept. Understand that age, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, religion, and other values influence identity.
- Understand that our military-connected students have many characteristics in common with other non-traditional students. In that sense, their needs are not foreign or new.

# IN THE CLASSROOM:

## SYLLABI

Understand the critical importance of course syllabi. For many military students, syllabi are interpreted as strict contracts to be followed explicitly. The idea that such a document is “tentative and subject to change” with minimal notice can be confusing and upsetting. Like other non-traditional students, military students often have multiple commitments (i.e., children; jobs) while in college. Substantive or unexpected changes to syllabi can be very disruptive for a military student or family member who may not be able to arrange time off work or secure childcare with short notice.

- Consider adding a ***Military Student Advisory*** in your syllabi [Example below].

**Veterans and active duty military personnel are welcomed and encouraged to communicate, in advance if possible, any special circumstances (e.g., upcoming deployment, drill requirements, disability accommodations). You are also encouraged to visit the VETS Program Office with any questions at (254) 710-7264.**

- Attempt to screen books, movies, and other media resources for potential “trigger” content
  - (e.g., graphic violence, inflammatory topics, war imagery etc.) before sharing with students.
  - *Visual material is particularly salient and evocative.* Try to give students prior notice and decide if you might allow disinclined students to engage in other content without penalty or stigmatization.
- Consider adding a ***Content Advisory*** to syllabi [Example below].

**Throughout this course we will discuss [TOPICS] and/or potentially disturbing issues [EXAMPLE]. We may watch films or read articles that represent beliefs and life experiences that are different from your own. You will encounter facts, ideas, claims, images, stories, hypotheses, theories or perspectives that may upset or trouble you. Every effort will be made to provide advance notice and [YOUR POLICY].**

NOTE: Military students may have difficulty asking for help or assistance; they may believe it to be a sign of weakness or incompetence. Assure students that it is acceptable and even desirable to seek clarification and guidance. Explain that learning to ask for help can reflect maturity and wisdom.

## R-E-S-P-E-C-T

- Military students may be transitioning from a highly structured and hierarchical environment; formalized respect is an integral part of that environment. Respect is conveyed via speech, conduct, and attitude. Many interactions in the academy can, at first, seem disrespectful or disorganized to a military student. The freedom with which opinions are shared, the diffidence shown to rules, laxity with deadlines, accountability, or meeting times – all of these factors can be frustrating for a new military student. As a result, some may:
  - feel disrespected if they believe they are being “treated like a kid”
  - feel the need to correct peers who are not paying attention to the instructor, texting or engaging in what is perceived as disrespectful behavior
  - feel uneasy or frustrated in an environment with cross-talk, open debate/disagreement
  - attempt to “step up” and take charge if they perceive a lack of leadership
  
- If this happens, rely on your greater experience to exercise patience and compassion. Understand that this behavior may derive from anxiety or insecurity; carefully redirect the student if necessary (preferably in private). Typically, students can be guided towards developing more tolerance for this new and unfamiliar environment.

## HUMOR & LANGUAGE

The military has its own lingo – as do all cultures. Author and retired U.S.M.C. Colonel Austin Bay writes, *“Warrior slang is a language of discipline and shared suffering, experiences that produce a tough human epoxy: the industrial strength social and emotional glue binding military comrades and building military units.”* Most military students are well aware of their differences, and do not engage in “warrior slang” with non-military members. Nonetheless, understand that:

- The experience of living and working in high-risk, dangerous or volatile environments (e.g., law enforcement; ER physicians; military members) often produces a coping style that can be easily misunderstood by those not familiar with the culture. It is quite common for such professionals to develop a dark sense of humor or make seemingly cynical and unfeeling comments. This behavior serves as a physiological and cognitive buffer and has been found to correlate with group cohesion and a higher sense of control. It is a common psychological self-protection mechanism for those forced to deal with highly traumatic and incomprehensible material in environments with low personal autonomy (i.e., they cannot quit the scene at will). Such language and humor is typically not with malicious intent but can be shocking to those unfamiliar with the circumstances of the speaker’s experience. If you find language or humor unacceptable, take the student aside privately and explain why it was inappropriate. Don’t assume; clarify meaning and intent.

## PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENTS

Most military students will blend into the classroom; however, some may initially find the college environment challenging.

- They may be uncomfortable in unfamiliar, loud, or enclosed spaces.
- They may choose to arrive early and take a consistent position in one area of the room. Conversely, they may prefer to arrive last, after everyone else has been seated.
- Some students may feel uneasy in windowless rooms or with doors closed.
- They may prefer to sit in the back row and might be ill at ease with anyone behind them.
- Be aware that stance and personal space may be different for military members; provide a respectful distance and follow the student's lead.

Note: You may reach out to the VETS Program or the Office of Access and Learning Accommodation (OALA) directly to coordinate any special accommodation requests from a veteran.

- OALA – Anna Shaw (Accommodation Coordinator/VETS Partner)  
[Anna\\_Shaw@Baylor.edu](mailto:Anna_Shaw@Baylor.edu) (254) 710-2416

## LEARN TO *RESPOND*, RATHER THAN *REACT*

- Engage in difficult conversations in private and always protect the student's confidentiality.
- Never engage in escalating or emotional debates in a classroom or any open setting.
- Do not allow students to engage in such debates.
- Never involve other students in a conflict with a student.
- Choose to **respond**, rather than **react** to challenging situations.
- Develop skills to deescalate uncomfortable situations.
- Be conscious of your own emotions and behaviors.
- Model the cognitive flexibility and perspective-taking that you wish your students to emulate.

## PRIVACY & CONFIDENTIALITY

- Maintain strict privacy of communication with all students; be particularly careful with any information related to health or wellness.
- Never share information about a student with another student.
- Share information with colleagues only as permitted by law.
- Protect the student's confidentiality.
- Be clear about FERPA guidelines and ethical boundaries.
- Do not ask military students to identify themselves publicly; if they wish, they may self-disclose.
- Also, avoid asking questions which require students to answer "on behalf of the military."

## PRACTICE OUR VALUES

Baylor University is committed to being **inclusive** and embracing of **diversity** and **multiculturalism**. Demonstrate this commitment in your own behavior. Intervene in an appropriate manner when you observe others engaging in behaviors that show cultural insensitivity, biases, or prejudice.

From Baylor's Department of Diversity and Inclusion:

"We seek to embody Christ's teachings of love and inclusivity across boundaries of racial, ethnic, gender, socio-economic, religious, and other expressions of human difference. Because, at Baylor, "Love thy neighbor" are not just words...they are a way of life."

<http://www.baylor.edu/diversity/>

## BAYLOR VETERANS RESOURCE CONTACTS:

**VETS Program** – *Kevin Davis*

[Kevin\\_Davis1@baylor.edu](mailto:Kevin_Davis1@baylor.edu) – (254) 710-7264

**VA Education Benefits Coordinator** – *Jessica Alford*

[Jessica\\_Alford@Baylor.edu](mailto:Jessica_Alford@Baylor.edu) – (254) 710-8241

**OALA Accommodation Coordinator/VETS Partner** – *Anna Shaw*

[Anna\\_Shaw@Baylor.edu](mailto:Anna_Shaw@Baylor.edu) – (254) 710-2416

**Baylor's Counseling Center**

[Counseling\\_Center@baylor.edu](mailto:Counseling_Center@baylor.edu) – (254) 710-2467

**VA Veterans Crisis Hotline** – 1-800-273-8255