



2023
NASPA
SYMPOSIUM ON
MILITARY-CONNECTED
STUDENTS

Doing the Work of Two When You Are Only One

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Director of Veterans Services, MWCC

23 years in higher education

13 years working with student veterans

9 years of veterans services oversight

US Army/Army National Guard Veteran

Air Traffic Controller

Communications Platoon Sergeant



Organization/Prioritization

Single Tasking

Active Listening/Kindness

Delegation

Standardization

Patience

Self-Care

Organize, Prioritize

Organize. Organize. Organize.

Have a prioritized to-do list. I use written list with A/B priorities.

Time Management

- ❑ Daily to-do list
- ❑ A's – Urgent! What absolutely, positively must be done today!
- ❑ B's – Important, but if necessary, can wait until tomorrow.
- ❑ C's – Should not be on your list! If it's not urgent or not important, it has no business being on a to-do list or in your life!
- ❑ Work on ONE task at a time!
- ❑ Review list at end of day.

Organize, Prioritize

Longer term items I put as appointments on calendar.

Treat emails/phone as walk-ins, answer/look at right away.
Prioritize immediately.

Be prepared to re-prioritize. A new email or phone call may change the relative urgency of your tasks.

Single Tasking

“Hoping for efficiency by combining two pure productivity tasks — say, composing a letter while following a presentation — is folly. That’s all cognitive cost and no emotional benefit.” – Daniel Willingham

“A human mind is a wandering mind, and a wandering mind is an unhappy mind. The ability to think about what is not happening is a cognitive achievement that comes at an emotional cost.” - Matthew A. Killingsworth and Daniel T. Gilbert

Single Tasking

“Men have become the tools of their tools.”
— **Henry David Thoreau**



Calm Single Tasking

“Catch yourself the next time you find yourself thinking in terms of quantity. Simply notice the feeling of urgency and the tendency to rush through them. Notice, also, the inclination to shrink back. Although they seem like opposite tendencies, both come from the same feeling of aversion, and serve only to keep us out of touch with the actual task. We’re taken aback by the enormity of what we’ve created in our minds, so we say, ‘I’m just going to plow through it and get it done, or, It’s too overwhelming and I don’t know where to start.’ Both responses pull us out of the freshness of direct experience. They both bind us to the fantasy of a task rather than the reality of it, warping our sense of what is really required. A task is done in steps, because reality is made up of steps, infinitely divided flashes of time that are too small to measure. We come to life and our energy soars when we join that moment, rather than standing separate from it—when we rise to the occasion rather than sink into the pit of resistance. When we join the moment, we join time. We are time.” - Donna Quesada

Calm Single Tasking

From *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* by Robert Pirsig

“...I’ve a set of instructions ... which open up great realms for the improvement of technical writing. They begin, ‘Assembly of Japanese bicycle require great peace of mind.’”

“That’s a good instruction” ...

“At first I laughed because of memories of bicycles I’d put together and, of course, the unintended slur on Japanese manufacture. But there’s a lot of wisdom in that statement”.

“Peace of mind isn’t all superficial, really,” I expound. “It’s the whole thing. That which produces it is good maintenance; that which disturbs it is poor maintenance. What we call workability of the machine is just an objectification of this peace of mind. The ultimate test’s always your own serenity. If you don’t have this when you start and maintain it while you’re working you’re likely to build your personal problems right into the machine itself.”

Calm Single Tasking

When starting a project, task or a test, think of nothing else.

Concentrate only on the task at hand in a calm and relaxed manner. Don't think about what you will be doing or must do after this task.

My personal experience has proven that I will accomplish the task more quickly, with fewer problems than if I rush through thinking about all the other things I have to do.

Embrace interruptions as an integral part of your job instead of a distraction from your job.

Calm Single Tasking

“Talking to you is the most important thing in the world I should be doing now!”
– Fred Rogers

The complete concentration on a student facilitates active listening, reflection and a proposed course of action.

Listen, Listen, Listen

Take your time. Don't react. Hear everything. Ask for clarification. Read and re-read everything. Your goal is to be accurate and thorough even at the expense of prompt.

Draft replies. Never type a reply and hit send before re-reading message and your reply. Re-read before sending.

Always take the time to add kindness.

Efficient may not always be Effective

Military communication is efficient, concise and unemotional. That is *not* what is needed now.

Be professional but be personal. Share a story. Let the person “see” you.

People in general and veteran students in particular are hungry for kindness. Before hitting “send” always check for kindness.

Never respond when you are upset or angry! (Especially when you have every right to be!)

In-person conversations are usually more effective (and ultimately more efficient) than email!

Never Do What You Can Delegate

This is a management guideline that I have used for years. Sometimes (most times) it saves you time. Sometimes it does not.

When you let the people who are trained to do a job, do the job, it saves you time.

When you teach someone, student or co-worker, to do a job they should be doing, it will likely take you more time. In the long run though, it will be better for everyone, especially you.

Never Do What You Can Delegate

Especially true when you can delegate that job to the student veteran. Direct, don't do.

“My job is not to help veterans. My job is to help veterans help themselves.”

“When you are working harder than the client, something is wrong.”

“Now that you have led him to water, why are you holding his head under?”

Never Do What You Can Delegate

Use available resources (other schools?) to mimic successful programs.

Once you have created something that you know you will use again, save it so you can selectively copy and paste later. Just be sure you don't mix up the names!
(Standardize and Duplicate)

Standardize and Duplicate “Getting Started” sample

Initial Steps for Veteran Student Enrollment

1. Your very first step would likely be to apply for GI Bill® benefits. Here is a link: <https://www.vets.gov/education/apply/>. If you have used your benefits at another school, you'll want to fill out a VA-22-1995: <http://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-22-1995-are.pdf> to assign the benefits to Mount Wachusett Community college.

GI Bill® is a registered trademark of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). More information about education benefits offered by VA is available at the official U.S. government Web site at <https://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill>.

2. Send your military transcripts to us by going to the Joint Services Transcript site: [Home page \(doded.mil\)](http://www.airuniversity.af.mil/Barnes/CCAF/). If you are an Air Force veteran, try <http://www.airuniversity.af.mil/Barnes/CCAF/>.

3. Apply to the college: [How to Apply - Mount Wachusett Community College \(mwcc.edu\)](#). This includes steps on sending us any transcripts from high school and any previous colleges as well as activating your iConnect account. When you apply, be must choose a program. GI Bill® benefits can only be used for classes that apply to a specific program/major the student is enrolled in. Previous college transcripts will not be evaluated unless you are enrolled in a program/major.

4. Once you have activated iConnect, you must complete MOUNT 101. Mount 101 is your 'Welcome to MWCC' and a necessary step in order to register for classes. Directions for Mount 101 and iConnect activation can be found in your acceptance letter sent by Admissions.

5. Apply for financial aid. This is highly recommended and completely independent of your VA benefits. <http://mwcc.edu/financial/>. For free personalized help with your FAFSA application contact: North Central Educational Opportunity Center, 978 630 9820, vlaporte@mwcc.mass.edu.

6. Send us a copy of your DD214. You may be able to obtain this from your old unit or the National Archives: [Request Military Service Records | National Archives](#).

7. Sign a Mass Veteran tuition credit, <http://mwcc.edu/admissions/files/2013/01/Categorical-Tuition-Waiver-Approval-Form.pdf>.

8. Sign a health insurance waiver, <https://www.gallagherstudent.com/students/user-login.php?idField=1198>.

9. We have a small lending library of textbooks. When you know the exact title of the textbooks you need, let the Director know. You may borrow anything we have for the term at no charge.

10. Any questions? Contact the Director of Veterans Services: r_mayer@mwcc.mass.edu, 978 630 9408.

[The Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D. Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020](#) requires educational institutions to make certain disclosures to students using federal military and/or VA educational benefits. You can find this and other financial information at NCES College Navigator site: <https://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/?s=MA&z=01440&z=0&of=3&l=91+92&ct=1&id=166957>.

The Top Seven Ways to Throw Away Your Money!

1. **No-Show** – Sign up for a class and then don't participate. The VA will not pay *anything** for any class with a “non-punitive” grade. A “non-punitive” is one that does not affect your GPA calculation. The student is responsible for 50% of the cost of the class. The student is responsible to repay the VA for any payments made in connection with this class.
2. **Withdraw** – The VA will not pay *anything** for any class with a “non-punitive” grade. The student is responsible for 100% of the cost of the class. The student is responsible to repay the VA for any payments (such as BAH or other stipend) made in connection with this class.
3. **Stop attending classes** - This will likely result in a “Stop Out”. The VA will not pay for any portion of classes that a veteran student stops attending. So, even though you will receive a grade of “F,” you will be responsible for the portion of class you stopped attending from the date of you stopped attending. Moreover, you will not receive any BAH payments made after the “stop out” date.
4. **Don't report Attendance** - New regulations require that students using any form of GI Bill® verify their attendance with the VA every month. After the last day of an active semester month call the Education Call Center at 888 442 4551 to report attendance.
5. **Keep your status a secret** - Your benefit status is *never* shared directly between the VA, the National Guard or any other agency and the college. If you don't tell us what you want to do with your benefits, we won't know and won't be able to help you. The student is responsible for 100% of the cost of the classes.
6. **Sign up for classes that do not apply to your program** - All forms of GI Bill® benefits require that all classes must apply to the degree/certificate program in which you are enrolled.
7. **Don't fill out a Mass Veteran Tuition Waiver if you are a Mass veteran** - We cannot bill the VA (or the Mass Guard) for tuition that should be waived. This tuition will remain on the student's bill and therefore be the student's responsibility.

* Anything means the cost of the course and any BAH or stipend associated with that course or courses.

Standardize and Duplicate

Post Documents That Can be Read
Only computers with Microsoft Office installed can read
Word or Excel documents.
Just about anything can read a PDF.

The screenshot shows the website for the Veteran Student Success Center at Mount Wachusett Community College. The page features a navigation menu with links for 'Apply for Admission', 'Current Students', 'Contact', 'Quick Links', and 'Site Index'. The main content area is titled 'Veteran Student Success Center' and includes a 'WELCOME and THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE' message. Below the message, there are several bullet points listing services such as 'Steps to Enroll', 'Register for classes', 'Waiver of Military Transcripts', 'Veterans benefits and financial aid', 'Textbook loan program', 'Referrals to on and off-campus service providers', and 'Peer Tutoring/Peer Mentoring'. A 'Financial Aid QUESTIONS?' section is also visible on the left side of the page.

The screenshot shows a web portal for Mount Wachusett Community College (MWCC) with a focus on announcements. The page features a navigation menu with links for 'Home', 'Courses', 'Community', and 'Services'. The main content area is titled 'Announcements' and includes a 'Welcome' message dated February 9, 2011, and a 'Summer Term' announcement dated April 14, 2011. The 'Welcome' message mentions the college's commitment to providing quality assistance and guidance throughout the academic career at MWCC. The 'Summer Term' announcement mentions that many of the classes are open up for Summer and Fall courses now. A '24/7 Phone Support 1-866-520-7129' is also displayed at the bottom of the page.



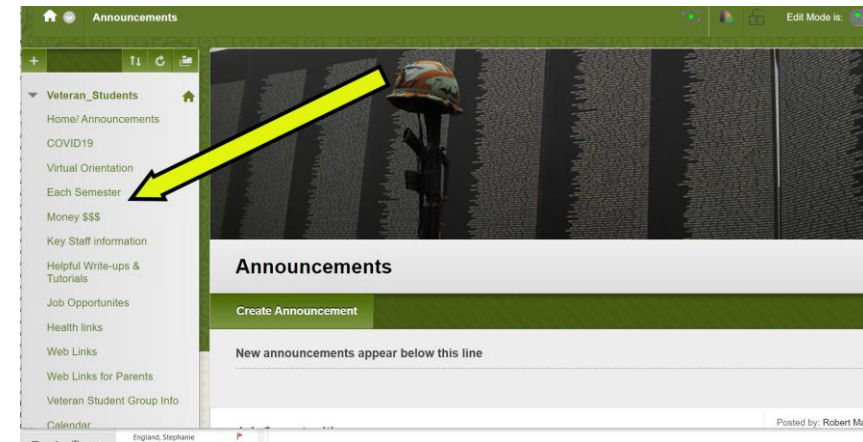
Standardize and Duplicate

Be visual.

Your instructions should include photos, diagrams.

Any way to make it easier for the student to see what you mean.

Crs	Course	Section	Campus	Name Supported	Cycle	Credits	Start End	Room	Begin End	Days	Title	Instructor	Notes	Books	Seats Available
14693	BUS212	WEB	WEB	No	1	3	20-JAN-21 to 10-MAY-21	NOMEET	*		Business Law II		Class will incorporate use of a 3-D printer whenever possible. This course is required for engineering major.		24
14405	CAD101	C	GAR	Yes	1	3	20-JAN-21 to 10-MAY-21	209	09:30 am-12:10 pm	M	Introduction to CAD	Olazak P		View	6
14172	CHC102	T1G	WEB	No	1	3	20-JAN-21 to 10-MAY-21	ONLINEMEET	05:20 pm-08:00 pm	T	Foundations of Yoga	Goewey A	Classes will meet at scheduled time virtually. Students must enroll in CRN 14985 LE1 CHE107 lab. Knee-length lab coat required, available for purchase at the College Bookstore.	View	11
14984	CHE107	SM	WEB	No	1	4	20-JAN-21 to 10-MAY-21	NOMEET	*		General Chemistry I	Ananthoji R	Knee-length lab coat required, available for purchase at the College Bookstore.	View	10
14985	CHE107	LO1	GAR	No	1	0	20-JAN-21 to 10-MAY-21	S305	01:45 pm-03:55 pm	M	General Chemistry I	Ananthoji R	Knee-length lab coat required, available for purchase at the College Bookstore. Must also take CRN14164 CHE107 lab.	View	10



Be Patient

Be patient with your *veterans*. This is mostly new to them. They came from a culture of being told what to do many, many times. (Training vs. Education)

Be patient with your *co-workers*. They likely aren't as good at their jobs as you are at yours. There is no sense in getting angry. Try to be helpful and persuasive in assisting that individual to do what you need them to do. You still need their cooperation.

Be patient with *yourself*. You are really good at what you do, but you cannot and should not do everything. (See Move On.)

Be OK with Moving On

Sometimes there is nothing you can do to help a student. If you did everything you could, accept that and move on.

Take Care of Yourself

This was a *really* hard job before COVID. It's even harder now.

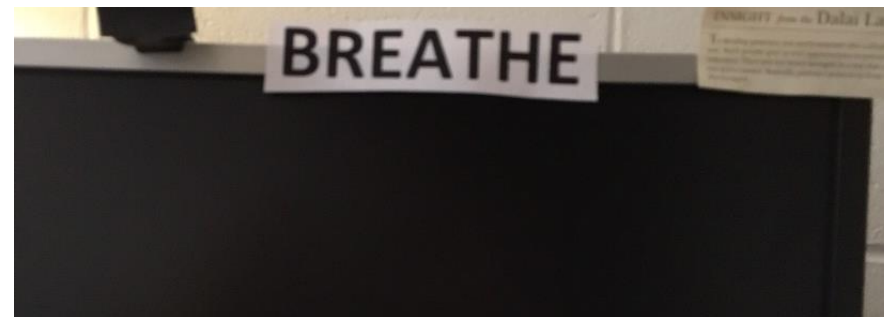
Meditation (VA 5 minute grounding)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q4oqk5spCXY>

Stop and Breathe

Walks (sunshine)

Move the sign!



Take Care of Yourself

Be available by phone, zoom or email **during** the hours you would normally be available. I don't think 24/7 is a good idea. You are sending wrong message.

Don't peek at your business emails on the phone!

Okay sometimes we all do, but, if you do, go ahead and take care of whatever quick issues you can. Write the other ones on your to-do list so you don't forget. Then, forget about them!

Take Care of Yourself

You have (and should have) a life outside of work. Live it!

Utilize automated, out of office messages.

Take care of yourself. You will be of greater value to everyone if you do.

Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance – ©1974 Robert Pirsig

The High Price of Multitasking - Daniel T. Willingham, *NY Times*, July 14, 2019

A Wandering Mind Is an Unhappy Mind, Matthew A. Killingsworth and Daniel T. Gilbert, *Science*, November 12, 2010

The Buddha in the Classroom: Zen Wisdom to Inspire Teachers, ©2011
Donna Quesada