Faculty Advising and Student Veterans: Adventures in Applying Research and Training

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Research consistently finds that high quality academic advising, particularly from faculty advisors, contributes to student veterans' success at universities. Drawing from previous research, considerable training in advising student veterans, and his own experience, the author offers five suggestions for faculty advisors of student veterans: (1) learning more; (2) weighing experience versus training and research; (3) avoiding sweeping generalizations; (4) developing relationships with various campus offices; and (5) seeking a balance between advising ideals and students' circumstances. The author concludes with directions for future research about faculty advising of student veterans.

Keywords: academic advising, faculty advisors, undergraduate students, student veterans

Introduction

Shortly before I completed graduate school, a friend of mine who finished a few years before told me that she expected I would love being a faculty member, and she mentioned that I would realize rapidly that graduate school had not fully prepared me for the nuances of faculty life. My friend's prediction came true as soon as my first week in my job as an assistant professor, when students on the first day of class wanted to know how that class fit into the curriculum of a minor offered on campus. I had no clue, and I realized I had quite a bit to learn about academic advising. As I attended training workshops and read as much as I could about the policies and procedures of the university, I became increasingly educated not only in the details of faculty advising, but even more so in what I *did not yet know*.

The particularities of advising student veterans[1] emerged rather quickly as an area where I found myself thoroughly deficient and profoundly in need of as much education and information as I could get. Because I work in an interdisciplinary department that allows students to self-design portions of their majors, my department offers one of the best opportunities for maximizing the

usefulness of veterans' credits, as we can often apply those credits to specific degree requirements rather than simply filling the veteran students' free electives with their military credit as many departments do. Furthermore, I work on a regional campus system designated as a Purple Heart University; given the number of active duty students and student veterans we serve and the institutional commitment to advising such students with excellence, I knew I needed to learn.

Now in my third year as a faculty advisor, in this article I humbly offer some best practices for faculty advisors of student veterans based on my experience, training, and research, especially aware of the places where my experience contradicts or complicates trends in research or training. Mindful that most faculty advisors in disciplines outside student affairs, higher education, and related fields have no formal academic training in how to advise undergraduates, I hope this article provides useful information to other faculty advisors of student veterans and offers avenues for future research in the area with the ultimate goal of improving student veterans' undergraduate experiences through higher quality academic advising. I begin with a review of scholarly research on advising student veterans, and then I turn personal narratives of my own experiences both sitting in training sessions and working with student veterans. I explore places of overlap and tension among my experiences, previous research, and the training I have received.

Literature Review

While my own program's suitability for student veterans and my campus's focus on serving student veterans stand as the proximate impetus for my interest in writing an article like this, I posit at least two reasons the topic merits scholarly attention more broadly: demographics and ethics. First, demographically, campuses have begun to see an increase in the number of student veterans and will likely continue to experience an influx. The "Post 9/11 GI Bill" of 2008 provides additional resources to veterans who served in any way related to the U.S. military's global response to terrorism since 2001, and many such veterans have left the service and turned toward higher education, a trend

scholars predict will continue (Ryan, Carlstrom, Hughey, & Harris, 2011; Vacchi, 2012). As such, admission offices, financial aid offices, and student services staff must know how to serve student veterans, and many such offices have training and staff dedicated to that purpose. Have faculty advisors kept pace? But a second reason of much greater importance ought to compel us all to care about providing high quality faculty advising to student veterans: a commitment to social justice in higher education (see England, 1999; Spencer, 2015a). Making the university accessible to all students means approaching not only teaching but also academic advising with flexibility, adaptability, and a deeply contextual awareness of students' needs. In short, we ought to provide high quality academic advising to all students—and when we recognize that as a group, some students tend to bring different or specialized strengths and needs to the advising encounter, we who understand ourselves as ethical and conscientious faculty advisors should (in the deontological sense) learn as much as we can about how to serve this population (and various others) most effectively.

If admission counselors, financial aid officers, student services personnel, and professional advisors at universities learn about working with student veterans, why do faculty advisors need such training as well? I can imagine worn out faculty who might say: *Even faculty who spend quite a bit of their time advising undergraduates get little credit for it compared to the big three categories of teaching, research, and service that constitute requirements for annual evaluation, tenure, and promotion.* Why advising ought to count more for annual evaluation, tenure, and promotion deserves its own attention in another article,[2] but for my purposes here, I point to the considerable research that elucidates the value of quality *faculty* advising for student success. Studies of student veterans' experiences on campuses concluded that student veterans self report a strong desire for faculty who understand their uniqueness as a student population (Persky & Oliver, 2010; Rumann & Hamrick, 2009; Ryan et al., 2011). Rumann and Hamrick (2009) found, in fact, that faculty members lose credibility with student veterans when they

lack basic understandings of military culture and terminology. Without mincing words, Vacchi (2012) underscores the critical importance of high quality faculty advisors for student veterans:

> Contact between advisors or faculty and student veterans should be of good quality, as it should be for any student. The advisor should understand the nuances of transfer credits and understand the student veteran's individual needs in order to provide the best advice. Advising in the military is a personal endeavor and considers the personal and leader development needs of each military member. With this background, student veterans expect no less from college academic advisors. The quality of contact between faculty and student veterans may be the most important nonfinancial key to ensuring the persistence of student veterans. (p. 20)

More specifically, research has found that particular competencies stand out as especially valuable for faculty advisors of student veterans, including the ability to read and understand military transcripts (Ryan et al., 2011), facility with the nuances of rules governing the use of military benefits to fund higher education (Ryan et al., 2011), and knowledge about how to apply credits earned in the military to university, divisional, or programmatic graduation requirements rather than simply as free electives (Persky & Oliver, 2010). Moreover, the best faculty advisors focus not just on how to get student veterans graduated, but listen closely to students' individual needs (Ryan et al., 2011; Sportsman & Thomas, 2015) and offer advice for more long-term career development (Richardson, Ruckert, & Marion, 2015; Wilson & Smith, 2012).

Of course, I have thus far presumed that student veterans constitute an identifiable group with unique needs, and further that such a group experiences some degree of disadvantage or disenfranchisement, at least on university campuses if not in U.S. society more broadly. These ideas recur in research about advising student veterans (sometimes as starting points, and other times as empirically supported conclusions), but I write here with hesitance because I worry about

generalizing too sweepingly or treating a widely diverse group as monolithic. Vacchi (2012) lamented that research about the transition from military to civilian life too often assumes the worst of veterans (especially veterans' mental health), when in fact a majority of veterans transition to academic life successfully. I proceed, then, with Vacchi's admonition in mind, cognizant too of the truism that individuals vary tremendously within groups. Scholars studying student veterans' experiences justify the claim that student veterans constitute a group with particular needs by differentiating between military culture and civilian culture (university culture in particular) (Ryan et al., 2011; Sportsman & Thomas, 2015). Where military culture values structure, routine, order, and a clear chain of command, universities function as highly differentiated organizational cultures that not only embrace ambiguity but build it into their systems and processes (see Eisenberg, Murphy, & Andrews, 1998; Martin, 2001). In the military, explained Sportsman and Thomas (2015, p. 44), people "must learn how to become part of a group, to think like their peers, and to anticipate the needs of their mission," a worldview often at odds with U.S. American individualism and the many ways university campuses celebrate (even fetishize) such individualism. Sportsman and Thomas (2015, p. 46) continued:

> Detailed steps are nearly always outlined for every military task, and strict compliance
> is expected. For these reasons, the "college way" of doing things may seem lax, unclear,
> or lacking in specificity. In this regard, advisors in colleges have an important role to
> play in the guidance of returning veterans.

These cultural differences can mean, for some student veterans at least, difficulty relating to classmates who have comparatively limited life experience, more myopic priorities, and lower levels of maturity (Ryan et al., 2011; Sportsman & Thomas, 2015). Many student veterans also perceive university campuses and faculty in particular to exude an anti-military bias (Anderson & Goodman, 2014; Richardson et al., 2015; Rumann & Hamrick, 2009). To compound these challenges, student veterans returning from deployments may also experience isolation at home, as many returning

service members find that their families have adjusted to their absence, *can* get along functionally without them, and must readjust to their return (Jennings-Kelsall & Solomon, 2013; Livingston, Havice, Cawthon, & Fleming, 2011). Although a minority of returning veterans experience mental health concerns, Ryan and colleges (2011) suggested that advisors also need to understand warning signs and the stigma attached to seeking help so that advisors can steer affected students toward seeking appropriate treatment. Crucially, advisors without proper training to treat mental health concerns need to know the resources available on campus where they can refer students (Pellegrin, 2013).

Despite these findings, other research suggests that student veterans' adjustments to academic life relate to more than they differ from civilian students' adjustments (from high school to college, for instance) and that many studies problematically overstate the prevalence of mental health problems among student veterans (Vacchi, 2012). Furthermore, Cass and Hammond (2015) contended, the military's cultural influence translates in helpful ways for student veterans, who often bring increased focus and skill to their educational pursuits as compared to their civilian counterparts. Student veterans also report having a better university experience when they have a chance to interact with other veterans, whether as peer mentors or as staff and faculty members who have disclosed their veteran status (Branker, 2009; Cass & Hammond, 2015; Livingston et al., 2011; Pellegrin, 2013; Rumann & Hamrick, 2009).

Training Meets Reality

Against the backdrop of this body of research about faculty advising and student veterans, for the remainder of the paper I reflect on my own experiences as such a faculty advisor. I embrace here a phenomenological epistemology that suggests experiential learning constitutes a kind of knowledge generation (Scott, 2013). Drawing from the autoethnographic tradition (see Adams & Manning, 2015; Manning & Adams, 2015), I use my own story of venturing into the realm of faculty advising

for student veterans to complicate, illuminate, and extend both previous research and the training I have received.[3] As a method, autoethnography relies on description and details of singular experiences to advance claims about particular contexts and subjectivities. I seek in this essay neither statistical probability nor absolute certainty, and I make no claims of distanced objectivity (indeed, in an essay like this, a goal of objectivity seems inappropriate at best, and perhaps irresponsible—this is about our students' educations and lives!). Instead, I offer what I hope readers will agree constitutes qualitative significance. As Manning and Kunkel defined it: "the type of generalizing found in qualitative studies is analytic and not statistical" (2013, p. 39). For my purposes, this means readers ought to consider my conclusions alongside their own experiences, research, and training, and (most important) with a deeply reflective consideration of their own contexts, capaciously understood.

I visit a section of the introductory class my department offers to introduce students to interdisciplinary study. A common assignment for all sections of the course requires students to put together their self-designed degrees, following a complex set of rules I lay out in a detailed PowerPoint presentation. Because our program appeals to a number of transfer students, I explain that students who took upper level classes at other universities may petition to use those classes to meet upper level requirements in their self-designed major so long as they include a syllabus from the school where they took the class. After the presentation, Cameron, sitting in the front row, asks if he can use a course from his military training that appears on his transcript as a generic management elective (i.e., the class does not exactly match any course we offer at the university). "Sure," I tell him, "just send a syllabus." He was polite but looked disappointed as he tried to explain that he did not have a syllabus for his military training.

In my second semester with responsibilities as my department's lead academic advisor, I had this encounter, my first experience advising a student veteran. Although I redeemed myself with this particular student later, I failed spectacularly in this initial conversation, though I only realized my faux pas later in the week when I received my first bit of training on the particularities of advising

student veterans. In that training, I learned about Joint Service Transcripts (JST) and the American Council on Education (ACE) credit evaluation process.[4] As the patient trainer answered my many questions, both during the training and by email in the months that followed, I learned how to deal with Cameron's credits. I consulted with a subject matter expert to validate the credits as upper level based on the ACE recommendations and then worked with Cameron to get those classes added to his self-designed degree. Even in this successful outcome for the student, I made another error in consulting with the subject matter expert, as ACE had already recommended upper level credit for that course, and according to the laws of my state, my public university had to acknowledge the class as such.

So, my first lesson: **Figure out what you do not know, and learn it!** Faculty members do not always excel at humility, but for faculty advisors without a military background, acknowledging what we do not know paves the way to seeking out the training and experience we lack. As I quipped to several colleagues, up until I learned to read military transcripts, I thought of myself as a reasonably smart person. Fortunately, what faculty may lack in humility we often make up for in curiosity and the desire to learn. After all, that stands out as one of the primary reasons we enter this profession. The challenge, of course, comes in the form of the unknown. How do we know what we do not know? Until I learned about how to read military transcripts, I did not even realize military credit came into someone's academic record differently than transfer credit from other universities (the fact that my institution's degree audit displays military credit in the same section and a similar manner as transfer credit aided my ignorance, no doubt). Ultimately, we cannot reach certainty that we know all we can know about advising (or anything else), but we can improve our odds by seeking out training, talking with experienced faculty and professional advisors (particularly those with a military background), and [unfortunately?] trial-and-error. Of course, we want to avoid mistakes not only because they detract from our credibility (Rumann & Hamrick, 2009), but also because we want to

give our students the best advice possible. Importantly, when we make mistakes, we also want to correct them and learn from them. For instance, I not only figured out how to help Cameron apply his credits for upper level degree requirements, but I also worked with a retired faculty member (and veteran) and the registrar's office to establish a more streamlined process for automatically counting courses for upper level credit when the ACE recommendation warrants it. I feel grateful for Cameron's gracious (if unwitting) willingness to serve as a guinea pig for me—but now that I know what to do in situations like his, I can apply that knowledge in novel cases.

The campus dean of students invites several faculty members to attend a training at a nearby community college about advising student veterans, and the dean's office covers the costs. I sign up eagerly. The trainer, a veteran himself, has a background in counseling and psychology. He focuses primarily on veterans' mental health concerns, including signs campus counselors should watch for and different strategies for counseling veterans. Most of the people in attendance—from schools all over our state—work in student services or counseling offices. We are one of only two schools to bring faculty or administrators. Some parts of the training go over my head—I teach and conduct research in communication, not psychology, and I have never worked as a clinician. Still, other parts of the training resonate with me, often in uncomfortable ways. The leader explains why many student veterans feel isolated on campus, including having faculty who do not understand military culture. He shows a sketch video of campus counselors making various errors evidently regarded as egregious (like referring to a Marine as "soldier" or an Army veteran as "sailor"). The trainer further remarks that student veterans will not trust faculty or counselors who cannot speaker their language. For example, he said, counselors must know what someone means if he says, "I served for a year in OEF." Faculty members who criticize the military in their classes also contribute to student veterans' alienation, he told us.

As much as I appreciated this training session, and as useful as I found it in introducing me (again) not only to a vast amount of new information but also to a deeper awareness of how much I do not know, I also experienced a good deal of anxiety during and after the session. I have of course

heard of Operation Enduring Freedom, but before this training I probably would not have recognized it by its acronym. If not knowing that harms my credibility, my error with Cameron must have been even more substantial than I realized! *But wait a minute—is that even a fair expectation? Anyone in any specialized job has a particular set of jargon, including acronyms, not comprehensible to people outside that field or institution/corporation, right? Oh no! Now I'm being defensive. I went to the training to learn, not to defend what I don't know.*

Like the last one, this training reinforced for me that I have work to do, but it also raised new questions. Although I never use "Marine" or "solider" as pronouns (i.e., replacing people's names with these terms when addressing them in conversation or writing),[5] I have heard other trainers use "soldier," in the generic and constative sense, to refer to anyone who serves or has served in any branch of the military. The two dictionaries I checked suggest the commonality of the generic use in English speech, and even several journal articles about advising student veterans employ "solider" in the generic (e.g., Cass & Hammond, 2015; Rumann & Hamrick, 2009). But the training video irreducibly and unequivocally framed such language use as verboten when referring to veterans of any military branch besides the Army. If using the wrong term can pose such a serious threat to credibility, where might I learn the definitive rule? Or does such a rule even exist?

I also felt some trepidation about the remark that course content perceived as critical of the military might offend student veterans. Here, the training echoes at least some published research. For instance, Vacchi (2012, p. 20) lamented the classics professor who "went on a rant about the illegality of the War in Iraq" and offended a student veteran who in turn dropped the class. While I certainly follow Vacchi's advice to avoid opining on war when the class topic does not warrant it, I raised my hand during the training to ask about something I *do* discuss in class. I teach a course about conflict communication, and I assign students to read a fascinating article about the Tailhook scandal (Violanti, 1996). The article analyzes the Navy's responses to allegations of sexual violence and

harassment and appropriately reaches fairly damning critiques in several places, but the article does not "rant" or offer unsubstantiated opinions. The article inspires nuanced discussions about organizational conflicts, power, and gendered violence and connects directly to the course's learning objectives (i.e., the article focuses on organizational communication about conflict with the Navy as a case study; it does not set out to demonize the Navy as a synecdoche for the whole military). Despite all of this, and in light of academic freedom, should I hesitate to use this article? Obviously a considerable difference exists between discussing peer reviewed research and pontificating as an ideologue, but what if the line between these positions appears clearer to me than to a student veteran who already believes (rightly or not) that campus faculty harbor anti-military bias?[6]

Lesson two: **Weigh research, training, and experience to make a decision based on your best judgment.** I have provided more questions than answers about language use and the balance of faculty academic freedom and student veterans' openness to academic discussion of the military because these questions elude easy and universal answers. In my own case, I choose not to refer to anyone as "soldier," and I continue to use the article about Tailhook, though I discuss it with more care and sensitivity than I might have before the training, mostly by framing the article within the context of the unit and the class so that the case study of the Navy does not distract students from the important communication concepts I want them to understand that the article reveals. My point: as faculty members, whether while advising or teaching, we have a number of commitments to balance. These commitments vary in priority based on time, salience, context, and a number of other factors; when they come into conflict, we have to make the best choice we can that helps us meet our goals and manage our constraints.

A final concern I have based on the training session I attended with the military psychologist centers on the considerable attention paid to the mental health concerns of student veterans. As Vacchi (2012) observed, this disproportionate focus on mental health concerns may disadvantage our

student veterans to the degree that it draws on and advances stereotypes and stigmatization. Of course, for the audience at the training—primarily those staff on campus whose work makes them most likely to encounter student veterans with mental health concerns—this focus made sense. But as a faculty advisor, I wonder if an oversaturation of training about student veterans' mental health makes student veterans less likely to self-identify on campus for fear of being pigeonholed and stereotyped, potentially cutting them off from access to resources unrelated to mental health (such as priority registration). This concern combines in my view with the ubiquitous refrain that student veterans cannot relate to their 18-year-old classmates who show up late and wear flip flops in December, an idea that came up frequently during the training and, as I mentioned above, in previous research as well. Conceptually, I understand these generalizations about mental health and military culture and their relative applicability to a plurality of student veterans, but again my own experience gives me pause. While I can say I have observed that student veterans come with greater preparation and organizational skills compared to their civilian classmates, I have not found this in every case. Nor do I observe the student veterans in my courses or advising sessions to separate themselves from their classmates. Thus, my third lesson: **Recognize the limitations of generalizations, and expect widely varied individual differences.** I give this same advice to introductory communication courses when I talk about intercultural competence. We might be able to make overall generalizations about culture based on patterns, but we cannot expect that because, for instance, Germany has a strong time orientation that every German person we meet will always be especially punctual. Indeed, all the training about student veterans in the world cannot replace the value of the faculty-student advising encounter as an interpersonal interaction characterized by empathic listening and individual attention for the singular student sitting in the office in a given hour. This does not mean ignoring the training and research, but allowing the training and research to inform (without determining) one's approach to getting to know the student.

Kendra comes to my office with a lot of credits, so many that she can probably graduate in two semesters if we plan carefully. One requirement she has not yet fulfilled, a newly added university-wide praxis requirement, asks students to get some sort of workplace experience in a for-credit manner that will appear on transcripts. Nursing clinical work, student teaching, internships, and independent research with faculty all count for this category. More confident in my reading of Kendra's JST because of the experience under my belt, I ask her to explain some of the credits that came in as generic engineering elective hours. She tells me that she had to learn to repair planes, and as she elaborated, I decided we should try to petition this training to meet that requirement. I asked Kendra to write a paragraph that repeated what she just told me, and we set to work on the petition process. To succeed, we have to petition the appropriate academic department (in this case, engineering) and the office that handles university-wide graduation requirements. Representatives for both departments need to approve, as do I as Kendra's advisor. In my cover letter for the petition, I offer brief descriptions of military credit to justify our lack of a "normal" syllabus, and I copy our veteran services staff person in case anyone has questions. To our great delight, the petition sails through the process with everyone's support. I later learned that various campus officers are working on streamlining a process for counting JST credits for this requirement for student veterans, and perhaps Kendra and I set an auspicious precedent (albeit unwittingly).

This narrative corroborates research that suggests the utility of knowing how to apply military credit to particular degree requirements. My comfort and competence with the university curriculum and the petition process helped in this case, as did my relationships with various offices and staff at the university. Although no one had to ask questions this time, including relevant stakeholders on the email threads kept them abreast of the process and allowed them to work on mitigating the legwork future iterations of the same problem might invite. Lesson four: **Build relationships on campus.** In this encounter and others, I drew on and benefitted from relationships with staff in various campus offices. Not only had folks on campus provided or sent me to helpful training, but they also helped when I needed to apply what I learned to assist a student. For an institution to call itself friendly to

student veterans, various staff and faculty must work together to serve students. I feel privileged to work in a place that embodies that spirit, not just in a lofty mission statement, but in the everyday messiness of working through often complex situations.

Before I depart from this narrative, though, I observe another important detail about the significance of applying student veterans' military credits to as many requirements as possible. On this point, previous research, my training, and my experience converge, but the constraint of military education benefits introduces an external complication not adequately accounted for in research as of yet: students who use military education benefits may only take classes that meet requirements for their degrees; otherwise, an official who certifies student veterans' credits will reject a portion of their schedule, which can result in a reduction of the funds the student veterans receive. Where much research in student development and academic advising advocates for a longer view of students' lives than the micro-realities of scheduling for next semester (Richardson et al., 2015; Truschel, 2015; Wilson & Smith, 2012; Workman, 2015), the exigency the certifying official presents resonates in real, material ways for my students. Certainly when I advise undecided traditional students in their first year at the university, I offer prosaic but solid suggestions: *take general education courses and see what you find interesting; that can help you decide on possible majors.* Even where that advice might help the development and career trajectory of a particular student veteran sitting across from me, I will likely find myself bound by the rules of her funding. Because her 20-30 military credits fill every elective in the degree, she can only register for classes that demonstrably meet requirements, i.e., the certifying official will look to see exactly where each class counts. If the official finds no match, the student's funding may decrease. Practically, this means that advising student veterans may require more creative approaches to the larger conversations that typify high quality academic advising, complemented with a meticulous plan for completion—with little or no room for error (sometimes, not even one extra class). The fifth lesson: **Balance principles and practice as best as possible.**

I have found that students, whether student veterans or civilian students, often appreciate the directness of my approach. By the time students get to my office, they have usually attained junior or senior status and often tell me they want a degree as fast as possible. Sometimes, they have been to several other offices before mine and feel like pinballs who have been bounced from admission to financial aid to advising, and perhaps to a few other places, before they finally make their way to me, and they tell me they want to graduate, however they can. In many cases, though, students' other desires contradict the need for speed. For instance, a student might insist on completing an additional minor because she wants that credential on her resume, even though she acknowledges it adds a semester or a year to her timeline based on course offerings. I tell such students that I can help them plan for the academic path best for their goals, or I can get them out as fast as possible. Different students answer differently, but my somewhat unfortunate point here stands: student veterans who use their educational benefits probably do not have the luxury of making that choice—the process forces the path of expedience. Of course, fast need not synonymize with shoddy, and I stand by the quality of the degrees my department offers regardless of whether I help someone finish such a degree in one year or three. Nevertheless, I have had times where I agree with a student that the option better for his stated goal would require more time, so we agree to make the best of the quicker option. Here again, no universal rule applies. Students ultimately have to decide for themselves based on their own priorities and informed by our guidance.

Conclusion: Soldiering On

In sum, drawing on past research, training, and my own experience advising student veterans, I have offered here five suggestions for best practices for faculty members who have the fortunate opportunity to get involved with advising and to work with student veterans in particular. I submit that faculty advisors ought to commit to learning what we do not (yet) know; consider research, training, and experience as we make decisions; understand characteristics that tend to adhere to

student veterans as a group without substituting generalizations for getting to know individuals; cultivate and maintain a healthy network of support among various campus stakeholders; and manage the tension between ideals and material realities as effectively as possible.

I call for future research, both qualitative and quantitative, that explores best practices for advising student veterans, especially in ways that explore further the places of tension I highlighted in this essay as I examined the overlaps and disjunctions among the scholarly record, the training events I attended, and my actual experience working with student veterans. Although Livingston and colleagues (2011) called their civilian status a limitation in their article on advising student veterans, I suggest that my non-experience in the military—while it certainly *harms* my effectiveness as an advisor to student veterans—probably *helped* my ability to write this article. Because so much of the terminology and culture belongs not to me but to a group with which I do not identify, I had to do more work to make an intelligent and intelligible contribution. Certainly veterans themselves should continue to contribute to this body of knowledge, and perhaps fruitful collaborations between veteran and civilian faculty advisors will enrich what we know about effective advising as well. I also observe that much of the extant research on academic advising of student veterans comes from professional advisors and faculty members trained in student development, higher education, and related disciplines—as the majority of such research should, given these scholars' expertise. In addition, I hope my colleagues in communication and other disciplines who engage in faculty advising might also participate in conducting research on best practices for faculty advising. I hope my communication background informed this project in ways that illuminate how the advising encounter requires listening and rapport building as interlocutors work together to co-construct the student's educational experience, and I suspect research on effective faculty advising of student veterans from various other disciplines would enlarge the scope of what we know about how to do such work with the excellence our students expect and deserve.

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Notes

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[1] Throughout this essay, I use the term "student veteran" as a catch-all term for undergraduate students who serve or have served in any branch of the U.S. military, Reserves, or National Guard, regardless of whether such students use military benefits for their education. I acknowledge, following Vacchi (2012), the difficulties inherent in defining and naming the population at the center of this article and find "student veteran" the clearest, most parsimonious, and most accurate nomenclature, even while it has problems. For example, active duty students are by definition not (yet) veterans. Furthermore, many of the issues I discuss about the complexity of advising student veterans apply to family members of veterans, or surviving dependents of military personnel who may use educational benefits, even while the challenges and complexities family members face differ from those of veterans themselves (see, e.g., Jennings-Kelsall & Solomon, 2013). As a communication scholar, I recognize the importance of precision and care in word choice, even while "advanced study in an area necessarily complicates the assumptions and terminology otherwise regarded as basic in the field" (Spencer, 2015b, p. x). Ultimately, I hope this article inspires additional research and discussion, not just about how we can all advise more effectively, but also about the language we use to talk about this important work (see also, Grohowski, 2014).

[2] Though beyond the scope of this essay, a robust body of scholarship discusses the role of faculty in undergraduate advising and the degree to which universities ought to value such work in decisions about tenure and promotion (e.g., see especially Allen & Smith, 2008; Boyer, 1990; Boyer, Moser, Ream, & Braxton, 2015; Hunter & White, 2004; Miller, 1987).

[3] I use pseudonyms for students' names throughout the essay.

[4] For the uninitiated: The American Council on Education translates military training into college credit by making recommendations for credit based on which training someone completed, when, and where, on a document called the Joint Service Transcript. University registrars' offices then post these credits to students' records following their established procedures. See Boerner (2013) for a further discussion of this process.

[5] I should note that my idiolectal tendency on this matter results not from a principled objection, but what for me seems a normal development of speech patterns. I suspect my lack of a military background contributes to the degree to which this terminology feels unnatural for me.

[6] Here, I acknowledge that I depart a bit from the context of faculty advising as I ruminate about my approach to teaching a particular article, but I suggest this move makes sense within the context of *faculty* advising. At my institution and others, "teaching and advising" is the full name of the category that counts the most in annual reviews and toward tenure and promotion, so I resist any kind of false distinction that separates teaching and advising for faculty advisors. When we are at our best, these parts of our jobs inform and even mutually constitute one another.