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UMass Boston planning center for fast-growing student veterans population

Posted by Matt Rocheleau October 23, 2013 12:10 PM

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By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

UMass Boston is working to open a center that will offer an array of services for students who are veterans – a fast-growing group at the school’s Dorchester campus and at colleges nationwide.

The university hopes to open the tentatively-named Center of Excellence for Veterans next fall, said Kathleen Teehan, vice chancellor for enrollment management.

“It’s our first step in thinking of what we could and what we should be doing for veterans,” she said. “We know from the veterans already on campus that they would definitely appreciate the space.”

She said the center will be based off a model created by the federal [education department](#) and will feature veterans-specific services, including financial- and benefits-related information and assistance and it will also offer tutoring, advising, counseling, educational opportunities and social space.

It will be a one-stop space for veterans on campus, housing both new offerings as well as programs already at UMass Boston.

“A lot of the services exist but because they’re in different areas they might not seem as comprehensive or accessible,” said Teehan.

The center will be located in an already-existing on-campus space, she said. Officials are searching now for possible locations.

Meanwhile, new staff is being hired, including filling one new position that will recruit veterans and help them through the application process and another position that will help build out the center.

Teehan said she expects people will be hired to those jobs by January.

She projected that filling those two positions will cost about \$125,000 and renovating the space for the center will cost another \$75,000 to \$100,000. Officials hope to attract donors to help fund the center.

The number of veterans studying at UMass Boston has nearly tripled over the past eight years, from 228 in 2005 to 605 this fall, according to Teehan. The school has already [begun promoting](#) what it can offer to veterans through a advertising campaigns.

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About 1 million veterans and their dependents have enrolled in US colleges and universities over the past four years, the [Associated Press reported](#) this month, citing figures from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The AP report attributed the rising enrollments to the drawdown of troops in Iraq and Afghanistan and more generous financial incentives to help cover veterans' tuition, housing and books.

And, the AP report said, many other schools across the country are making efforts to provide more services to veterans, including centers similar to the one UMass Boston is planning.

Matt Rocheleau can be reached at mjrochele@gmail.com. Looking for more coverage of area colleges and universities? Go to our [Your Campus pages](#).

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