Executive Summary:

This plan is expected to assist the Military Student Services (MSS) department in annually preparing for the 5-year University Assessment Plan at Northern Illinois University (NIU). The goals of this plan are to identify notable assessment results as related to the departmental goals. Since MSS is a new department to the university, it is anticipated that these goals may shift as the office becomes more established. Based on the evidence produced from the results of carrying forth this plan, the department hopes to provide several recommendations to better enhance the efficiency and quality performance of the services dedicated to the men and women who have served in the U.S. Armed Forces and are students at Northern Illinois University.

a. Overview of Department Goals
   i. Provide support to all incoming and current military students at NIU.
   ii. Process service-related educational benefits accurately and promptly, and help veterans and military students locate and secure financial assistance.
   iii. Enhance the learning and development of military students.
   iv. Foster and advocate for NIU to be a supportive, welcoming, and inclusive community that is aware of and responsive toward issues faced by military students.

b. Brief Analysis of Departmental Assessment Status
   i. Initial Assessment strategy has been determined.
   ii. University Assessment Panel Plan has been drafted.

c. Select Recommendations
   i. TBD

Department History:

In August 2010, the Veteran’s Assistance Office formerly designated under Financial Aid expanded and became MSS, a stand-alone department within the Division of Student Affairs & Enrollment Management. The purpose of MSS is to provide comprehensive resources and a single point of contact for veteran and military students, dependents of veterans, and their families who attend Northern Illinois University.

Services provided by this office include, but are not limited to, outreach to the NIU veteran and military student population, processing of federal and state veteran and military educational benefits, mental health case management, educational and social programmatic support, and advocating individually and collectively for NIU’s military students. These services are designed to foster a welcoming and supportive campus environment for all veteran and military students.
Military Student Services collaborates closely with Financial Aid, the Counseling & Student Development Center, and Career Services to provide comprehensive services to military and veteran students. Additionally, MSS has in the past collaborated with departments in the Diversity & Equity Community of Practice to bring speakers from diverse backgrounds to Northern Illinois University.

**Departmental Mission:**

MSS aims to centralize campus and community resources, ease military students' transitions to and from the University, and provide holistic support to all military students as they persist to graduate from Northern Illinois University. This mission is in alliance with the University and Division of Student Affairs & Enrollment Management missions.

**Departmental Goals:**

Military Student Services department goals for 2013-2018 are to:

1. **Provide support to all incoming and current military students at NIU.** *This includes, but is not limited to, outreach efforts for prospective students, orientation services, mentoring initiatives, maintaining communication, educating about military withdrawal policy, and providing individual and group advocacy.*

2. **Process service-related educational benefits accurately and promptly, and help veterans and military students locate and secure financial assistance.** *This includes, but is not limited to, processing GI Bill benefits and state programs (e.g., Illinois Veterans Grant, Illinois National Guard Grant, accurately reporting and maintaining information for the Department of Veteran Affairs, and disseminating benefit-related information to help students maximize their educational benefits).*

3. **Enhance the learning and development of military students.** *This includes, but is not limited to, offering individual and group counseling, providing case management services, developing academic assistance and career-related workshops, and partnering with other service departments (e.g., Disability Resource Center, Health Enhancement).*

4. **Foster and advocate for NIU to be a supportive, welcoming, and inclusive community that is aware of and responsive toward issues faced by military students.** *This includes, but is not limited to, providing professional development for faculty and staff related to military students, creating campus-wide initiatives that show appreciation for and embrace veteran students, and advocating for changes in academic policies (e.g., becoming a Service Members Opportunity College affiliate, eligibility for priority registration).*

*military student is defined as veteran, active duty, National Guard, reservist, and dependent of veterans.*
Methods:

MSS is committed to ensuring our work is meaningful to the student population we serve. Therefore, it is necessary for MSS to frequently assess the quality of our programs and services through a variety of measures. By gathering data and generating evidence MSS will be able make sound decisions about the enhancement, continuation, or termination of the programs and services offered.

The timeline below details the activities over the course of the next five years for MSS Assessment plan.

DATA COLLECTION TIMELINE TABLE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
<th>Person Responsible</th>
<th>Outcome Addressed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Surveys</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAEM Survey – Divisional</td>
<td>Assessment of departmental usage</td>
<td>Periodically</td>
<td>SAEM Staff</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Survey – Departmental</td>
<td>Annual Survey of services and resources provided by MSS (Appendix A)</td>
<td>Annual</td>
<td>Assistant Director</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest Survey – Survey of</td>
<td>Survey of new military and veteran students (Appendix B)</td>
<td>Annual – during orientation</td>
<td>Assistant Director</td>
<td>1, 3, 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Participant Surveys –</td>
<td>Evaluations of events and activities offered by MSS.</td>
<td>As needed</td>
<td>Assistant Director</td>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Responsible</td>
<td>Frequency Code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientation Participant Survey</td>
<td>Evaluations and comments from Orientation surveys related to MSS</td>
<td>As needed</td>
<td>Assistant Director</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor Program Participant Survey</td>
<td>Assessment of mentor and protégé experiences in the MSS Sponsorship initiative</td>
<td>As needed</td>
<td>Assistant Director</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Training Learning Outcome Survey</td>
<td>This is a performance measure to ensure students have adequately learned the necessary information to assist in processing of military-related educational benefits.</td>
<td>Six months after training</td>
<td>Assistant Director</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus groups</td>
<td>Exploring the military student experience at NIU</td>
<td>As needed</td>
<td>Assistant Director</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal/External Review</td>
<td>Conduct comprehensive review of all departmental operations using Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS).</td>
<td>Every five years</td>
<td>Assistant Director</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Legend:
- **Orientation Participant Survey**
- **Mentor Program Participant Survey**
- **Staff Training Learning Outcome Survey**
- **Focus groups**
- **Internal/External Review**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OUTCOMES BY METHODS MATRIX</th>
<th>Surveys</th>
<th>Focus Groups</th>
<th>Internal/External Review</th>
<th>Benchmarking</th>
<th>Participation Rates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goal 1 Provide Support</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal 2 Process Educational Benefits</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal 3 Enhance Learning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal 4 Foster a Supportive Community</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Results:** (TBD)

**Further Information Needed & Timeline (TBD)**

**Resources Needed:**

None anticipated.
Appendix A – NIU MSS Annual Survey

The Office of Military Student Services is conducting a survey to assess the services we offer in order to better serve you. The survey will take approximately 5-10 minutes to complete. We greatly appreciate your time!

If you would like to be entered into the drawing for NIU apparel (valued at over $50) please complete the final question asking for your name and phone number. Thank you again for helping us to serve you better.

1. Military Student Services (MSS) is effective at the following:

2. Have you visited the MSS website (http://www.niu.edu/militaryservices/)? If not please skip to question 4.

3. Please rate the following about the MSS website:

   Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree N/A
   Outreach Efforts
   Benefits Processing
   Personal Counseling
   Advocacy
   Programming
   Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree

   The website is easy to navigate
   The website is helpful
   The website is informative
   The website is appealing to the eye
   Yes
   No

   Suggestions for improvement of the website

   4. Have you taken advantage of the following services? Check yes or no.
   Yes No
   Instructor notification (letting professors know about your situation)
   Programs (e.g., Food Frenzy Wednesdays, Annual BBQ, etc.)
   Assistance with academic concerns
   Assistance with financial aid/benefits processing
   Having MSS advocate for other specific needs (i.e. financial, academic, etc)
5. Have you visited our reception desk?

6. If so, please rank the quality of service you received:

7. Have you utilized our office for benefits processing and/or benefits related questions?

8. During your benefits counseling session, please rate your satisfaction:

   Excellent Average Poor N/A
   Staff were approachable
   Staff were informative
   The check in process was efficient
   Yes
   No
   Other (please specify)
   Yes
   No
   If not, why?
   
   Poor
   Average
   Good
   Excellent
   N/A

   If poor/average, what could have made your experience better?
   
   9. Please rank the quality of service for the following categories
   Poor Average Good Excellent N/A
   Timeliness
   Accuracy of information
   Friendliness
   Felt welcomed
   Would return
   Any other feedback on your experience?
   
   10. Please tell us how much you agree or disagree with the following statements

   11. Are you aware that MSS has program offerings based on the specific and self-reported needs of military students?
12. Did you attend any MSS events, activities, or programs during the 2011-2012 Academic year? (e.g., Food Frenzy Wednesdays, Dodgeball tournament, Veteran’s Day oil change, Kevlar for mind/stress relieving workshops, Pizza Party, Etiquette dinner/resume workshop, Sporting event (football game, basketball game), VetConnect, etc.). If so, please note which one(s) below. If not, please skip to question 11.

13. If you indicated you attended an MSS event, did you find the program to be helpful/engaging/informative? What would have made the program better, if anything?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MSS programs helped me to develop connections with my peers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The MSS monthly newsletter has helped me to stay informed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The MSS Facebook page has helped me to stay informed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that MSS kept me informed about important benefits related information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSS emails were informative and helpful</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I felt programs were adequately marketed via a variety of means</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Yes

No

Any suggestions on how to better these offerings?

14. Overall, how did you feel the programs offered by MSS met your needs? (if at all)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Adequately</th>
<th>Could be improved</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Any suggestions on how to better these offerings?

15. Have you utilized the MSS counseling services? (If not skip to question 14)

16. The MSS counseling services met my needs.

17. Check the counseling services that appeal to you? (Check all that apply)

18. Did you know about the following academic services that MSS offers?

Yes No

Faculty notification

One-on-One consultations
Exploring other majors
Academic-related programming

Yes
No

Strongly Agree
Agree
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

Group Counseling
Individual Counseling
Topical Sessions (e.g. stress management, conflict resolution, etc)
Resource Library
Art Therapy

19. Check the academic services that appeal to you. (Check all that apply)

20. Did you participate in the Sponsorship (Mentor/Protégé) program? (if yes please complete question 14; if no, skip to 15)

21. If you participated in the mentor/protégé program, please answer the following questions.

22. If you did not participate in the mentor/protégé program, please indicate why not and/or what would enhance your desire to do so:

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree
The mentor/protégé program met my expectations
I clearly understood the parameters of the program
I connected with my mentor/protégé regularly

Career Services (e.g. resume/cover letter writing, note taking workshops)

Etiquette Dinner
Transcript evaluation
Midsemester checks
Graduation preparation
One-on-one academic consultation
Tutoring
Stress management
23. Did you utilize our lounge space (4th floor Adams Hall)? If so, do you believe the space met your needs?

24. If you have visited our lounge but were unsatisfied, what would have improved your experience?

25. What issues and/or concerns do you have for this year that MSS can be of assistance with, if any?

26. What is your gender?

27. What is your year in school? (if currently taking classes)

28. Which best describes you? (choose all that apply)

29. If you would like to be entered into the drawing for NIU apparel valued at $50 please include your full name and the best number to reach you.

6. Demographic Information
   Name
   Phone Number
   Male
       
   Female
       
   Transgender
       
   Sophomore
       
   Junior
       
   Senior
       
   Super senior (5+ years)
       
   Graduate student
       
   Current undergraduate student at NIU
       
   Current student at another college or university
       
   College graduate
Appendix B - NIU MSS Spring 2012 Interest Survey

Please answer the following questions based on programs you would attend if offered!

1. Social Programs
2. Personal Management and Professional Development NIU

Socials (e.g., pizza party, ice cream, etc.)
Potlucks
Movies
Family oriented programs
BBQs
Cooking competitions
Other (please specify)
Managing your money
Resume writing
Networking and job search
Etiquette dinner
Cover letters
Alumni connections
Mentoring program
How to maximize your benefits
Other (please specify)

3. Academic programs

4. Recreation and Athletics

5. Hobbies
How to study
Talking to faculty
Campus resources
Writing skills workshop
Test taking strategies
Study groups
Stress management
6. Campus involvement

7. Personal development

8. For activities and events, what are the best days and times for you?

- Academic organizations
- Religious organizations
- Student government
- Political organizations
- Vet's Club/Veteran specific groups
- Volunteering
- Other (please specify)

- Decisionmaking
- Depression
- Drug/alcohol education
- Women's issues
- Men's issues
- Relationships
- Other (please specify)

- Monday Morning
- Monday Afternoon
9. Would you be interested in participating in publicity, marketing, media, or panel opportunities (e.g., panel speaking to staff and faculty about supporting veteran and military students on campus, etc.)?

10. In 2012 we are looking to make Military Student Appreciation Week a campus-wide event. Would you be willing to serve on the committee or have ideas of events you would like to see take place? If yes, please indicate below:

11. Have you attended MSS sponsored events or programs or utilized our services?

12. What year/level are you at NIU?

13. Gender

   Yes

   No

   If yes, please either email mss@niu.edu with your contact information and interest, or, indicate below (name, email, year in school, and best phone number):

   Yes

   No

   If "Yes," please indicate what and how it impacted you. If "No," please indicate what could have happened to make it a better experience or ideas for future programs/services:
14. Race/Ethnicity

15. Where do you live?

16. If you have a family, are you interested in programs that are family-friendly (e.g., BBQ, bowling, etc.)?

17. If you have children, would you be more likely to attend an event if childcare was provided?

18. Any other comments/suggestions regarding programming/events?

Off campus, under 10 miles away

Off campus, over 25 miles away

On campus (e.g., residence halls, Northern View Community)

Other (please specify)

Yes

No

If "Yes," what ideas do you have (if any)?

Yes

No

Other (please specify)