



CAROLINA VETERANS ORGANIZATION

FPG Student Union, Room 3506

Chapel Hill, NC 27599

Phone: (919) 917-0286 Email: carolinaveterans@gmail.com

<http://veterans.web.unc.edu>

Communication Audit

Backgrounder:

The Carolina Veterans Organization (CVO) was started in the fall of 2013 so it a relatively young organization. In this short time they have launched two community service projects, one for each semester. In the fall they organize “Ruck for Hunger” which is a food drive for a local food bank. In the spring they organize a spaghetti dinner to feed homeless people around Chapel Hill. The group has benefited from a core group of dedicated members who organize events and coordinate with other organizations.

CVO has a strong bond with the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) on campus. A majority of events CVO organizes with the ROTC program. Their relationship sees them supporting each other’s events throughout the year. This connection allows them to mentor future officers of the United States military and also share a connection with the active duty faculty that leads ROTC.

Most recently the University of North Carolina has hired a Veterans Resource Coordinator, Amber Mathwig, who works within the university administration. With Amber the group is working to create a Veterans Resource Center. Through this they have also built a relationship with the Transfer Student Coordinator who helps advertise CVO to incoming transfer students. This is a major step forward in reaching incoming veterans.

The organization is lead by group President Michael Hart, a graduate student who has served three combat tours between 2004 and 2008 with the US Army. Tyler Stevenson, another veteran of the army, serves as the vice president. Their public affairs officer is Lacy Jo Evans, a Marine Corps veteran, whom puts out a monthly newsletter and helps reach out to several organizations.



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The over-arching mission of CVO is to foster a community for veterans to share and socialize with and also seek support as they transition out of the military. The organization works to build a strong social and professional network for veterans of all branches. They also utilize the skills that veterans developed during their service to continue to serve the community and integrate with the local community. This is a powerful tool in helping veterans' transition from military service into their future careers.

SWOT: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<p><u>Internal Communication:</u> CVO has a strong internal communication through a private Facebook group. The page is effectively used to communicate events and organized participation. Also they put out a monthly newsletter to members. Also the group holds weakly meetings during the fall and spring semesters where they can go over plans and evaluate their approach.</p> <p><u>External Communication:</u> They have two websites: a Student Life and an UNC website. They also have a Twitter account. Their events are included in the Transfer Student Emails.</p> <p><u>Leadership:</u> As all of CVO's members come from the military they have all have strong leadership qualities. They</p>	<p><u>Internal Communication:</u> They know that they are not reaching all the veterans currently enrolled at UNC. Also a core group within the organization coordinates a lot of the events.</p> <p><u>External Communication:</u> Their Student Life and UNC websites are poorly maintained and rarely updated. Likewise their last Twitter post was June 9th of this year. They need to engage more people on twitter.</p> <p><u>Leadership:</u> They will soon see a large turnover of leadership at the end of the current semester and after the spring semester.</p> <p><u>Other:</u> Their organization is aimed at a small subset of the university population</p>	<p><u>Internal Communication:</u> Work with Academic Advising to reach incoming veterans. The opening of the Veterans Resource Center will offer wider exposure.</p> <p><u>External Communication:</u> Develop a stronger social media presence with Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Work with other student organizations to develop fun events for both traditional students and veterans. Work with the other veterans groups within the Carolina family (e.i. Law School, Business School, Nursing School).</p> <p><u>Leadership:</u> Growing the organization with new members. Increasing membership participation at events and just regular meetings.</p>	<p><u>Internal Communication:</u> Members have to be active Facebook users to know what is going on. Also if there is a lot of traffic on the page important information may get missed.</p> <p><u>External Communication:</u> It is important for the group to continue to be proactive in attempting to recruit more veterans into the group. Without growth the group will collapse.</p> <p><u>Leadership:</u> Continued strong leadership is required to carry the organization forward as students graduate and new students come in.</p> <p><u>Other:</u> If they do not continue to build on what they have already establish the group will stagnate and growth</p>



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are able to organize and self-manage tasks with little outside input.	so they need to work to involve themselves in more student activities.	<u>Other:</u> Improve fundraising so the group can organize group outings.	will stop. It is important for the group to continually look to grow their opportunities.
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Recommendations:

The first recommendation would be to revamp their social media presence and develop a social media strategy. This will ultimately aid the group in gaining support with their service projects. Likewise this will make the group more visible amongst the student body. Also creating a public Facebook page that allows traditional students and other student organizations to follow CVO's events. As younger veterans leave the military they are also using newer social media so utilizing Twitter and Instagram would benefit them to reaching a larger audience. Included in this is rebuilding both their websites to mirror each other and direct people to their social media accounts.

The group has done a great job of establishing their two service projects. The next step is to also develop more social events. During the semester they talked about organizing a camping trip, but never got it off the ground. One of the largest issues is the group's lack of funds to pay for these events. As most students are on a tight budget, it is hard to get participation when members are expected to pay for these events. For this reason the group needs to develop a fundraising campaign.

Another step in growing the organization is to begin to partner with other student organizations and supporting their activities. These relationships should be reciprocal in nature as the organizations support each other and grow participation in events. As CVO wants to work on creating a bridge between traditional students and veterans, utilizing these events would work



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best at growing networks. Included in this is developing stronger ties with the other veterans groups within the Carolina family. These relationships can also share the cost burden of hosting events for students.

Finally recruiting is key to continuing the organization. For this reason it is important to build on the relationships with the Transfer Student Coordinator, Veterans Resource Coordinator, and Academic Advising as they are better seated to reach new veterans. As the organization has a fairly quick rate of turnover they need to maintain a high level of activity to continue as a viable organization. This means also leading stronger recruitment drives like the “Coffee with a Veteran” program. Developing new leadership also allows for new ideas to come in and continually grow the organizations reach and activities.