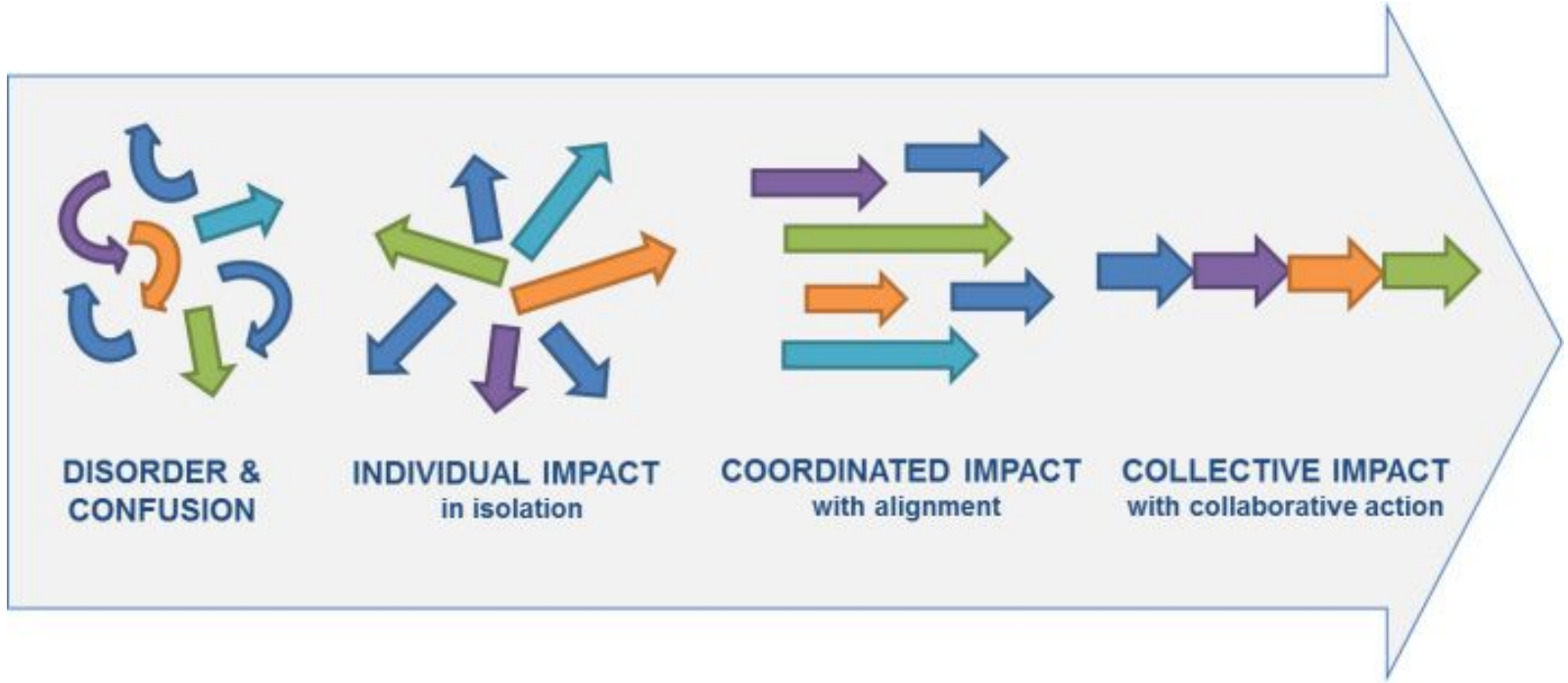
UAB The University of Alabama at Birmingham

Building Bridges: Common Problems and How To Utilize Your School's Resources

Helping SCOs move from isolated efforts to coordinated support

Demetrius Pearson
Director of UAB Veteran Services

Moving Together or Moving in Silos?



Which stage is your school living in right now?

© UAB. All Rights Reserved.

What is one problem you regularly need another person/department's help to solve?



© UAB. All Rights Reserved.

The Universal Problem

- SCOs are accountable for outcomes influenced by many other offices
- A student's issue rarely stays in one lane
- Delays, confusion, and miscommunication can affect benefits
- Military-connected students often need coordinated support, not just one office

Students do not experience our campuses as separate departments; they experience it as one institution



© UAB. All Rights Reserved.

Different Institutions. Shared Challenges.

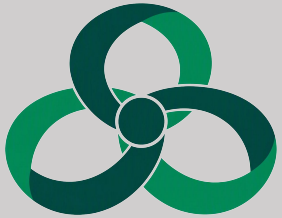
DEDICATED OFFICE

Dedicated teams of SCOs and military professionals



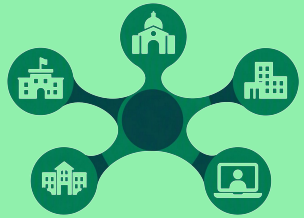
WEARING MULTIPLE HATS

Financial Aid, Registrar, or other primary roles



DISTRIBUTED SUPPORT

Small campuses, satellite locations, online students



Which structure best describes your role?

© UAB. All Rights Reserved.

Common Problems, Shared Responsibilities

01 ENROLLMENT

Schedule changes, withdrawals, program requirements

02 FINANCIAL

Tuition, aid coordination, holds, payment timing

03 STUDENT SUPPORT

Academic struggles, basic needs, personal crises

04 OPERATIONS

Unclear handoffs, disconnected systems, slow communication

© UAB. All Rights Reserved.

Let’s Solve This One

Scenario

Jordan is a sophomore dependent of a 100% disabled veteran. She’s using Chapter 35 benefits and arrived with an out-of-state merit scholarship. She’s enrolled at 9 credit hours this semester.

What we know

- Chapter 35 pays based on enrollment level
- Her scholarship only covers part of tuition
- She has a remaining balance due before the payment deadline

She comes to your office and says:

“I don’t understand why my bill isn’t covered. I thought I had everything lined up.”

Who needs to be involved to solve this?

© UAB. All Rights Reserved.

The “One Stop Shop” Myth

UAB Case Study #1

1,400+ GI Bill students	**4** Professional Staff
10 Work-study Students	**Dedicated** Veterans Lounge

What We Control

- VA Certifications
- Benefit Guidance
- Emergency Grants

What We DON’T Control

- ANGEAP
- AL GI Dependent Scholarship
- Federal TA
- Class Registration
- Residency Status
- Scholarships



© UAB. All Rights Reserved.

Reality: We Are HUBs



Who is missing from your current network?

© UAB. All Rights Reserved.

A Solution: Veteran Advisory Board

A standing group of campus stakeholders who play a direct role in military student success

Who belongs at the table:

- Anyone whose office your students interact with when things go wrong
- Anyone who has authority to make exceptions, create policy, or flag patterns
- Anyone who currently sends students back to you without a warm handoff



© UAB. All Rights Reserved.

The Veteran Advisory Board: UAB's Model

Who's at the Table

- Admissions
- Registrar
- Student Accounts
- Financial Aid
- ROTC
- Scholarships
- Academic Advising
- First Line Leader
- IT/Web Teams

Anyone who plays a role in your office's processes

What It Has Produced

- ★ **Early Registration Priority**
  First access to classes
- ★ **Application Fee Waivers**
  Fewer barriers to applying
- ★ **New Website and Digital Intake**
  Easier student self-service
- ★ **Formalized Referral Pipelines**
  Clear paths to the right support

In two years. Because the right people were in the same room.

© UAB. All Rights Reserved.

Building Your Version of the VAB

DEDICATED OFFICE

- Formal board with regular meeting cadence
- Broad membership across divisions
- Shared agenda, tracked outcomes, follow-up accountability
- Senior leadership as a champion or co-chair



WEARING MULTIPLE HATS

- 3 to 4 invested partner relationships
- Financial Aid and Dean of Students as your first two
- Biannual or quarterly touchpoint
- One faculty ally in a high-enrollment program



DISTRIBUTED SUPPORT

- Two relationships you invest in consistently
- One ally in Student Affairs who will send students your way
- Informal check-ins beat no structure at all
- A peer ambassador costs nothing and extends your reach



© UAB. All Rights Reserved.

This Is Why the Bridges Matter

Both require information from offices outside your own.

VA COMPLIANCE SURVEY

- Arrives without warning, with a strict response window
- Requests enrollment certifications, financial records, and student data
- That information lives in Registrar, Financial Aid, and Student Accounts
- If those offices don't know you, your timeline becomes their problem

You need a relationship before the request, not because of it.

ANNUAL CATALOG SUBMISSION

- Requires current program info, tuition rates, and policy language
- Input comes from Academic Affairs, Registrar, and Financial Aid
- One missing piece holds up the entire submission

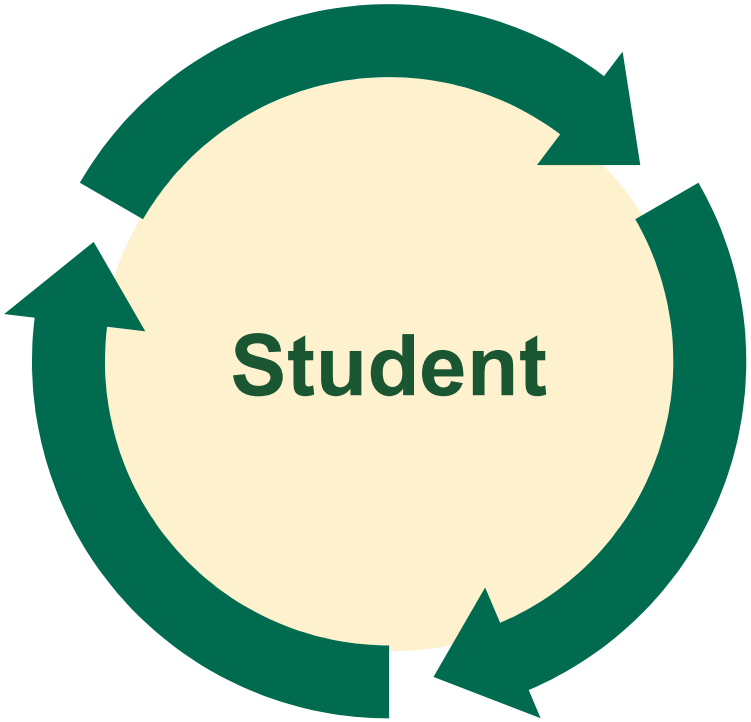
Your catalog is only as accurate as your partnerships.

"The offices that answer your compliance calls and catalog requests are the same ones you should already know by name."

© UAB. All Rights Reserved.

The Referral Cycle

Warm Handoff
you make the connection



Two-Way Flow
they send students back to you

Follow-Up
you confirm the referral landed

“You don’t have a referral system until students actually get referred.”

© UAB. All Rights Reserved.

Your First Month

WEEK 1

Map Your Gaps

List three recent student problems and the offices you called.

WEEK 2

Make One Call

Invite one partner to a 20-minute coffee outside a crisis.

WEEK 3

Define Your Referral Signal

Send a 2–3 sentence referral guide to your top three contacts.

WEEK 4

Propose the Meeting

Invite the right people to discuss one shared agenda item.

“The bridge you build today is the student you catch tomorrow.”

© UAB. All Rights Reserved.

UAB The University of Alabama at Birmingham

Questions?