Focus groups were conducted between 8/1/2009 and 10/9/2009. The purpose of the focus groups was to secure input from veterans and families on print/electronic materials, including usefulness and accessibility. Focus groups consisted of a mixture of 1) VA Work-Study student-veterans 2) student-veterans enrolling at OCC for first time and applying for GI Bill benefits, and their family members who accompanied them to the OVA 3) currently enrolled student-veterans. Approximately 47 veterans/family members were involved in discussions and of these 23 completed and submitted a questionnaire.

**Key Findings**

► Although in discussions veterans/family members expressed more interest in useful information available on-line as compared to a brochure/publication, **only 22% (5 of 23) indicated they had viewed the OVA web pages contained on the OCC website.** In discussions, most veterans/family members stated that they weren’t aware of the OVA website as it wasn’t readily accessible from the OCC main webpage. Two comments were received that when “veterans” was entered in the Search box on the OCC main webpage, only the office location and business hours were displayed, not the main OVA webpage.

► Excluding VA application forms and OVA information hand-outs, only **4% (1 of 23) indicated they had availed themselves of brochures from the OVA.** The OVA makes available a dozen publications detailing benefits and information for veterans produced by the U.S. Dept. of Veteran Affairs, the New York State Division of Veterans’ Affairs, The New York Army National Guard, VA Healthcare Network of Upstate New York, the Vet Center and the OVA itself.
In regards to information veterans/family members would like to see on a re-designed OVA website, **78% (18 of 23) indicated they would like to see a summary of all VA education benefit “chapters” and 57% (13 of 23) indicated they would like to see a “Resource Guide” listing federal, state and county agencies that serve veterans.**

**Question Responses**

Q1. Have you viewed the current OVA web pages on the OCC web site?

- Yes (5)
- No (18)

Q2. If so, what information did you access?

- What are the Benefits & Services (1)
- GI/Montgomery Bill Self-Verification (1)
- New Education Benefits (3)
- Veterans Association (1)
- Additional Resources (1)
- Contact the Veterans’ Affairs Office (3)

Q3. Have you obtained any VA Brochures or other publications from the Office of Veterans’ Affairs? If so, which ones?

- GI Bill (1)

Q4. What information or features would you like to see on a re-designed OVA website?

- Summary of benefits for all VA education “chapters”, including the new Post 9/11 GI Bill. (18)

- Resource Guide listing federal, state and county agencies that serve veterans, including web sites, VA 800 numbers, and addresses, phone numbers and contacts for local offices (such as VA Medical Center, NYS Dept. of Labor (CNY Works), etc. (13)
Testimonials from former/current OCC student veterans that would highlight their experiences with the OVA and OCC. (3)

Short interview with the OVA Coordinator, welcoming all veterans and dependents and explaining services provided by the OVA. (6)

Notice of OCC and regional events that may be of specific interest to veterans/their families. (11)

Notice of Vet’s Club events. (11)

Notice of proposed legislation affecting veterans. (9)

**Actions Taken Resulting From Focus Group Responses**

1. OVA website re-designed with additional information, including opening video slide-show, Veterans Resource Guide and summary of Veteran Benefit chapters.
2. Search box now gives selection for various links including OVA main page.
3. Onondaga Community College Veterans Facebook page established. Notices regarding veteran legislation, Vet Club meetings and other items of interest to veterans posted to Facebook and sent out via Veteran E-mail list.
4. OVA will be adding to website with student-veteran testimonials, interview with OVA Coordinator and other features.
5. Brochures will soon be produced listing OVA services, check-list for application and VA processes and other information for prospective students.