



Completing the Mission II:

A Study of Veteran Students' Progress
Toward Degree Attainment
in the Post 9/11 Era

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PREFACE

On June 30, 2008, the United States Congress passed legislation that changed the landscape for a generation of college learners — servicemembers and veterans of the Post-9/11 era. The “Veterans Educational Assistance Act,” or what is now commonly referred to as the Post-9/11 GI Bill, distinguished itself as the most generous educational entitlement for the military since the “Servicemember Readjustment Act of 1944—the GI Bill.” As anticipated, the influx of these learners to college campuses surged in the four years since its enactment, resulting in nearly 1 million military-affiliated students — active and separated — attending higher education institutions across the nation. The result is an unprecedented opportunity for first-generation learners to seek and attain a higher education degree and benefit from the increased earning potential and expanded career paths that higher education offers.

The generosity of this program, however, tells only part of the story. Separating veterans returned from their military service under the umbrella of a struggling economy.

Unemployment numbers — at times reported at more than 25 percent — for the youngest veterans (18-24 years) skyrocketed as the volume of these new jobseekers flooded an unstable market. Veterans increasingly sought out higher education, in fashion similar to the Post-World War II era, and enrollment at surveyed campuses increased as much as 500 percent since the fall of 2009. With one million more separations predicted in the next five years — many of them involuntary — these numbers are likely to continue to rise.

Colleges and universities across the nation are increasingly cognizant of the presence and needs of this population and are taking steps to support these students as they transition from soldier to student. The significant price tag associated with this entitlement, which is estimated at \$36 billion to date, is driving an increased emphasis on outcomes for those utilizing it. Programs like the “Principles of Excellence” — federal guidelines for educational institutions receiving federal funding — have been set up to “watchdog” institutions in light of this expenditure. The executive order establishing the Principles of Excellence appears in Appendix A.

“The wage advantage for workers with a bachelor’s degree or better has remained high and mostly stable at 97 percent. The wage premium for bachelor’s degrees or better relative to high school diplomas skyrocketed from 44 percent in 1981 to 100 percent in 2005 and has only fallen to 97 percent since the beginning of the recession in 2008.” (Carnevale)

Are these veteran students successfully moving toward earning a degree? How do they compare to the more traditional student population? How are campuses adapting to their needs? These are a few of the questions this study will explore utilizing data from 23 four-year campuses across 20 states and the District of Columbia.

THE STUDY

In the fall of 2011, Operation College Promise (OCP) teamed up with the Pat Tillman Foundation (PTF) to begin a process of assessing student veterans' progress toward degree attainment. The initial research targeted institutions that had either attended OCP's signature training, the Certificate for Veteran's Service Providers (CVSP) training, or were partners with the PTF. A small but diverse group of four-year institutions participated in the pilot study, which sought to analyze the success rate of students at institutions with robust campus support services for military-affiliated students (defined as active/Guard/Reserve military and military dependents). Since many in this new student population were in the early stages of pursuing their degrees, the reviewers determined that evaluating graduation rates was, in most cases, premature. They developed an alternate formula for reviewing student progress with the input of campus leadership.

About 200 students were assessed based on four basic categories, which are common success indicators for a

traditional cohort. The Graduation Probability Indices (GPI) included GPA, retention from semester to semester (in the same academic year), credits earned versus credits pursued, and utilization of on-campus services. The results in the pilot study debunked common rhetoric that veterans were not having success in higher education and, rather, highlighted just the opposite. Military affiliated students were excelling on campuses with basic support services

"While it can be difficult for colleges to obtain data on their student veteran population, it is critical since the data will ensure programs and services that are being implemented are truly supporting veterans and helping them achieve their postsecondary goals." (American Council on Education, 2011)

(Lang & Powers, 2011).

This study expands the review of the four primary indices to include a separate assessment of the commonality of on-campus programs and services among the participating campuses. These programs include the basic framework developed by OCP as the *Framework for Veterans' Success* (The OCP Field Guide, May 2011). A student veteran survey provided feedback on available services and which services students deemed most effective.

Conducted in the summer of 2013, the Graduation Probability Indices (GPI) research project was initiated to continue to build on a mechanism for ongoing evaluation of student veterans' progress toward degree attainment. This longitudinal initiative is not intended to be universally conclusive, but rather illustrative of a sample population of veteran students, annually tracked for progression. This endeavor is a collaborative venture of Operation College Promise (OCP), and the Pat Tillman Foundation (PTF) with the support of Got Your 6 (GY6)

METHODOLOGY

The research contained in the report includes 741 students on 23 voluntarily participating campuses. The selection process for participation was limited only in that each institution was a four-year college or university, 19 of which are public. The report includes a total of 23 schools representing 20 states and the District of Columbia.

Initial data collection requests to the institutions, the “Students Identifier List” (SIL), asked for no fewer than 50 students from each campus who met the following requisites:

- ◆ Underclass students (*i.e.*, freshmen and sophomores)
- ◆ Students enrolled full-time and degree seeking (defined by taking 12 credit hours or more)
- ◆ Students currently using the Post-9/11 GI Bill, and are not spouses or independents.

Each campus list was then coded for random selection of no more than 40 students, which varied depending on the size of the sample.

*“We need to track these numbers to defend the Post-9/11 GI Bill. It’s an investment into our military. It’s an investment into our country.”
— Michael Dakduk, Executive Director,
Student Veterans of America (Wagner, Cave, & Winston, 2013).*

The first qualification was modified to accommodate institutions which did not have the number of underclassmen represented and requested to participate. In these cases, many of the students were transfer students and the institutional definition of their class status varied. While about 45 percent of the sample is identified as freshman or sophomore (the largest percentage having enough credits to be classified as sophomores), the remaining students were tracked in a similar fashion and compared to the traditional student 6-year graduation rate.

When the initial identifier list, SIL, was received, specific instructions on the Graduation Probability Indices (GPI) data collection points were provided. Similar to the 2011 pilot, the primary components of the GPI were students’ GPA, credits earned compared to those pursued (the “Success” rate), and retention from fall semester to spring semester (the “Persistence” rate). The “Success” rate was modified to analyze the percentage of credits earned against those pursued to give a better indication of progress toward degree attainment. The previous report evaluated the percentage of students earning all credits pursued, which limited the ability to accurately evaluate the number of credits earned toward degree attainment. While utilization of on-campus services was removed from the GPI methodology, research did include an evaluation of the presence of these support services to assess the commonality and prominence of support services found on the participating campuses.

The GPI assists OCP in gathering higher education retention and completion rates, particularly among those institutions that have participated in either the CVSP program or have worked specifically with the Pat Tillman Foundation. The collection of this data is timely as we assess the progress of students receiving comprehensive campus support, and address the question of the effectiveness of the Post-9/11 GI Bill and the success of students utilizing it. While the study cannot feasibly measure all higher education institutions, it does provide a strong measurable sample that indicates the performance and success where supportive services are being offered. We believe this is a useful model with which to measure contemporary-era veterans in higher education, in the same way that all useful data necessarily select a milieu in which meaningful and predicative measures can be made.

“In the two years since the Post-9/11 GI Bill went into effect, we have watched the impact of this new generation of servicemembers from Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and other conflicts unfold on college campuses.” (Lang & Powers, 2011)

2013 Participating Universities			
	2011-2012 Year		
Institution	# Total Veteran Students	# Total Students	Tuition (In-State/Out)
Arizona State University	1,816	58,404	9,720 / 22,319
Baldwin Wallace University	102	3,509	26,396 / 29,396
Coastal Carolina University	397	8,517	9,760 / 21,560
Colorado State University	1,348	22,500	7,952 / 23,652
Eastern Kentucky University	1,217	13,902	6,960 / 19,056
George Mason University	2,172	20,782	9,266 / 26,744
George Washington University	722	10,406	44,148 / 44,148
Georgetown University	419	7,590	41,393 / 41,393
Mississippi State University	2,111	16,312	5,805 / 14,670
Missouri State University	650	17,187	6,598 / 12,418
Montclair State University	232	14,590	10,646 / 19,394
Purdue University	517	31,988	9,478 / 27,646
Texas A&M University (College Station)	560	39,867	8,421 / 23,811
University of Alabama	453	26,234	8,600 / 21,900
University of Arizona	994	30,665	10,035 / 25,494
University of Denver	259	5,453	37,833 / 37,833
University of Maryland	603	37,631	8,655 / 26,026
University of Michigan—Flint	250	6,959	8,712 / 17,014
University of South Florida	1,750	47,000	32,364 / 32,364
University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee	1,006	24,270	8,675 / 18,404
Institutions in Study That Did Not Participate in Voluntary Survey of Campus Support Services			
University of Minnesota	n/a	34,812	13,022 / 18,022
University of New Mexico	n/a	22,643	5,809 / 19,919
University of Wyoming	n/a	10,163	4,125 / 12,855

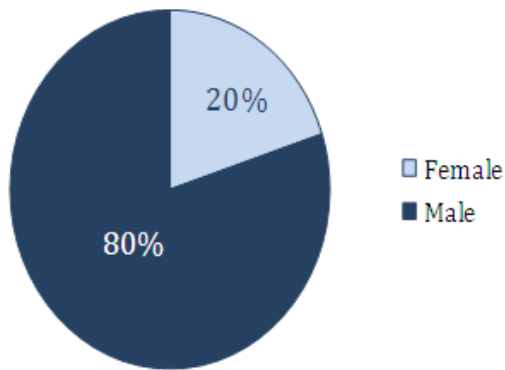
Source: *College Navigator* (National Center for Education Statistics)

STUDENT VETERANS DEMOGRAPHIC

Student Veterans Surveyed (2011-2012 Academic Year)

For the 2011-2012 school year, data on 741 student veterans were selected at random across 23 campuses. Of these students, 146 were females; making up 20% of the veteran population. Females comprise 14.6% of Active Duty, 19.5% of Reserves, and 15.5% of National Guard members (StatisticBrain.com, 2012). There were two schools in the sample where female veterans made up more than half of the veteran population.

Percentage of Female Veteran Pursuing Degrees



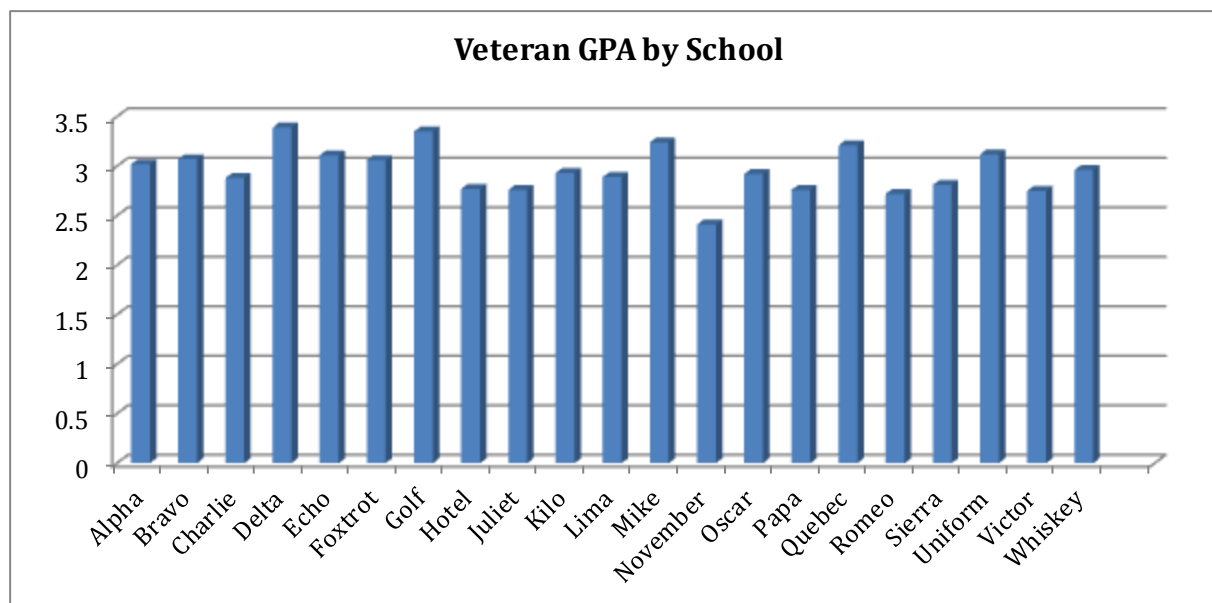
Most incoming military-affiliated students in this study entered school with sufficient credits to be designated as having sophomore class status with a majority, on average, of 28 transfer credits—awarded through a combination of military and prior educational pursuits. Few veterans begin college with no prior academic or experiential credit.

The most popular majors among the sample were: Engineering, Business, Psychology, Criminal Justice, Biology and History.

FINDINGS

Grade Point Averages (GPA)

The correlation of high GPA (defined as a 3.0 or greater) retention, and progress toward degree attainment is an obvious one. Research through a study conducted at DePaul found that, among a general student body, students with a GPA of 3.0 or above had the highest retention rate at 85.6%. As GPAs decrease, the likelihood of retention also decreases. Similarly, this study showed that students with GPAs of 3.0 or better had the highest graduation rate, at 77.4%, while those with lesser than a 2.0 were least likely to earn a degree, at 13.3% (DePaul, 2011). A 2007 study by Baylor University on first-term graduate rates demonstrated a stronger positive connection—85.6% of students with greater than a 3.0 earning their degree (Baylor, 2007). GPA as a predictor for “Persistence” has a similar positive correlation as an indicator of “Success” for military-affiliated students. **Students surveyed in the first year of this study averaged a 2.98 GPA (with a mode of 4.0), slightly lower than the 3.04 reported in 2011 (Lang & Powers, 2011), yet still indicative of a promising path toward “Persistence” and ultimately, degree attainment.**



Note: For statistical purposes, the lowest and highest GPA's were not included in the median calculation.

Percentage of Credits Earned Versus Pursued ("Success Rate")

Given that a majority of college undergraduate programs require between 120 and 130 credit hours for degree completion, with an average semester load of approximately 15 credits: critical data to examine when comparing veteran to general student population success are credits earned versus credits pursued, and the average credits accomplished per year, are critical data to examine when comparing veteran to general student population success.

A majority of veterans fall into a "non-traditional" categorization for higher education learners. A majority of veterans are in student groups that research and policies often overlook: nontraditional-age, part-time, and mixed enrollment (those who change their enrollment status from full-time to part-time or vice versa) students (Shapiro, *et al.*, 2012, p.49). Adult learners are defined as those older than 24 and represent greater than 80% of the students surveyed in this report. A new National Student Clearinghouse® Research Center™ study shows a

"But the good news is that today's colleges and universities are soon to enjoy a great influx of academically born-again, highly motivated students. War, as I can personally attest, has a way of reordering ones priorities and values and today's veterans will soon have access to the best education benefits available since the World War II GI Bill" (Palm, 2008).

dramatic increase in the U.S. college completion rate when non-traditional student pathways are included, driving the completion rate from 42 percent to 54 percent (Shapiro, *et al.*, 2012, p.49). In addition, the results show that more than 75 percent of full-time students complete college within six years, which is higher than what has been reported in previous studies (Shapiro, *et al.*, 2012). Data demonstrate that the inclusion of veterans in this group of "non-traditional" students continues to raise the success rate data of the general student population. Another yardstick of success for veteran students is the expectation versus the reality of the time needed to graduate. According to *"The American Freshman: National Norms Fall 2012"* report from the Cooperative Institutional Research Program, "the vast majority (84.3%) of incoming first-year students believe that they will graduate from college in four years. This will likely only come true for approximately half of them" (HERI, 2012).

Using the GPI definition of "Success," or percentage of credits earned versus those pursued, veterans, as non-traditional students, have met, or exceeded, the "Success Rate" of their traditional peers. **In the last report (Lang & Powers, 2011), the number of students earning all credits pursued averaged 71% for Fall 2010-**

Spring 2011. The statistics for this cohort, which assessed the percentage of credits earned of those pursued (Fall 2011-Spring 2012), indicates a 90.5% “Success Rate.” These “non-traditional” students averaged **24.5** credits per year with an average transfer of **28** credit hours. This would indicate that these students, should they continue to progress in the same trajectory, will be eligible for a degree well within the five-year mark and, with the addition of transfer credits, potentially within four years. These successes come despite the burden of veterans as “non-traditional” students who are more likely to have additional time constraints due to employment and family responsibilities.

Persistence Rate

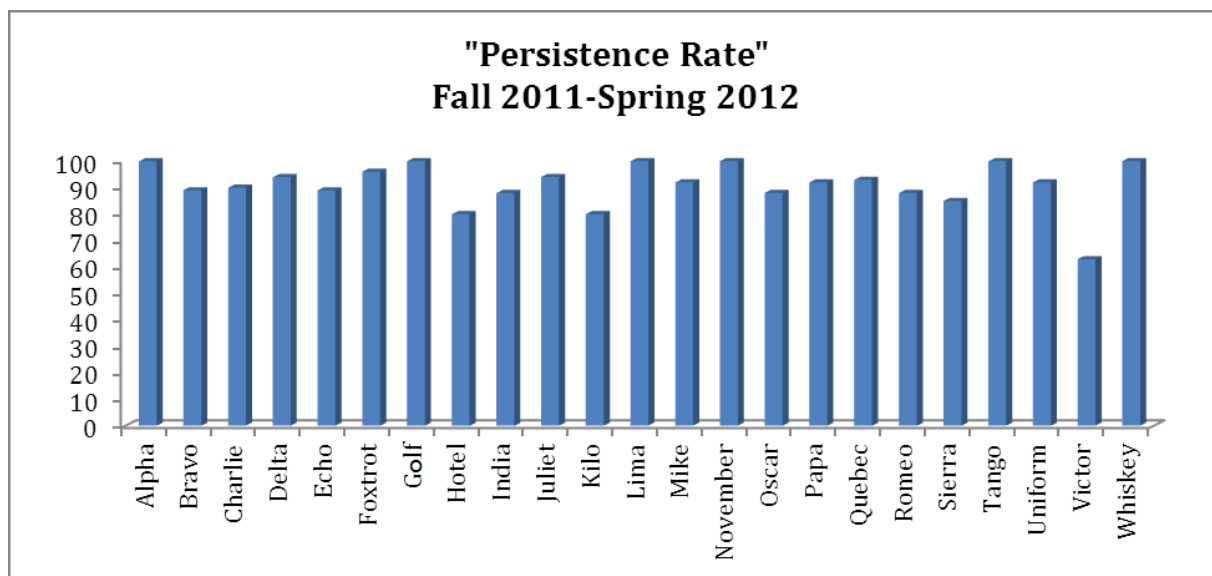
A major concern in higher education is “Persistence.” Academics and institutions are continuously grappling with effective techniques to reduce the number of “dropouts” or “stop outs.” Veteran service providers are particularly aware of this objective in light of several factors. First, the confines of the Post-9/11 GI Bill place a time limit on education benefits, making efficiency in pursuing a degree plan even more critical. Second, a discouraged military student who leaves college will be unlikely to return.

The growing emphasis on ensuring a smooth transition from military to civilian campus life is evident through the recent institutions of the Department of Veterans Affairs’ (VA) Vet Success on Campus (VSOC) program, “strengthening partnerships with institutions of higher learning and creating opportunities to help veterans achieve success by providing outreach and transition services to the general veteran population during their transition from military to college life.” VSOC began as a pilot in 2009 at the University of South Florida, and is currently located at 32 campuses across the country. Other governmental initiatives include “students.gov”: an official U.S. government website designed for college students and their families. The website states, “Our mission is to provide you with easy access to information and resources from the U.S. government—all the info you need, in one place, from all parts of the government.”

On the nonprofit side, other initiatives include such veteran support programs as “mappingyourfuture.org,” a national, collaborative, public-service, nonprofit site providing career, college, financial aid, and financial literacy information and services for students, families, and schools.

On the academic side, research projects are being conducted to recognize the special needs of veterans and how best to accommodate them as “non-traditional” students. One study from the University of South Florida is titled “*Elements of a Veteran Friendly Campus: Perceptions by Student Veterans, Faculty and Staff.*” The study seeks to “identify barriers that veterans face when they leave the military to attend college. These data will enable USF to develop programs and services that will aid the reintegration process for veterans attending USF.” Other studies include “*Behavioral Health Screening for Student Veterans*” also at USF, and Radford University’s Student Veteran Research Team studying “the evolving needs of student veterans at Radford University.” OCP’s “Field Guide” has a variety of commonly sought after resources to support veterans and veterans’ service providers.

Our study indicates that the “Persistence Rate” among participants average 97%, slightly higher than the 94% reported in 2011 (Lang & Powers, 2011), and significantly higher than the average for traditional students of 65.7% from first year to second year (ACT, 2008). Several factors may contribute to this high rate of persistence, and its continuing increase. These include a renewed emphasis by institutions, governmental, business, academic and veteran support nonprofits on keeping veterans in school. Additionally, in some cases, postsecondary education has become a byproduct of a challenged economy. Veterans who remain in school not only gain college credit but also receive a transitional mechanism for their next mission—success in civilian life.



Programs and Services

According to the “From Soldier to Student II” (ACE) report, all types of institutions report that the most confounding challenges they see facing their military and veteran students are financial aid (likely based on the ongoing delays in the receipt of VA education benefits), retention/degree completion, and social acculturation to campus life (McBain, *et al.*, 2012). Thus, a top priority must be to match the appropriate level and targeting of programs and services to these veteran students needs. Excerpts from the ACE report can be found in Appendix B.

Most Prevalent Support Service on Campus

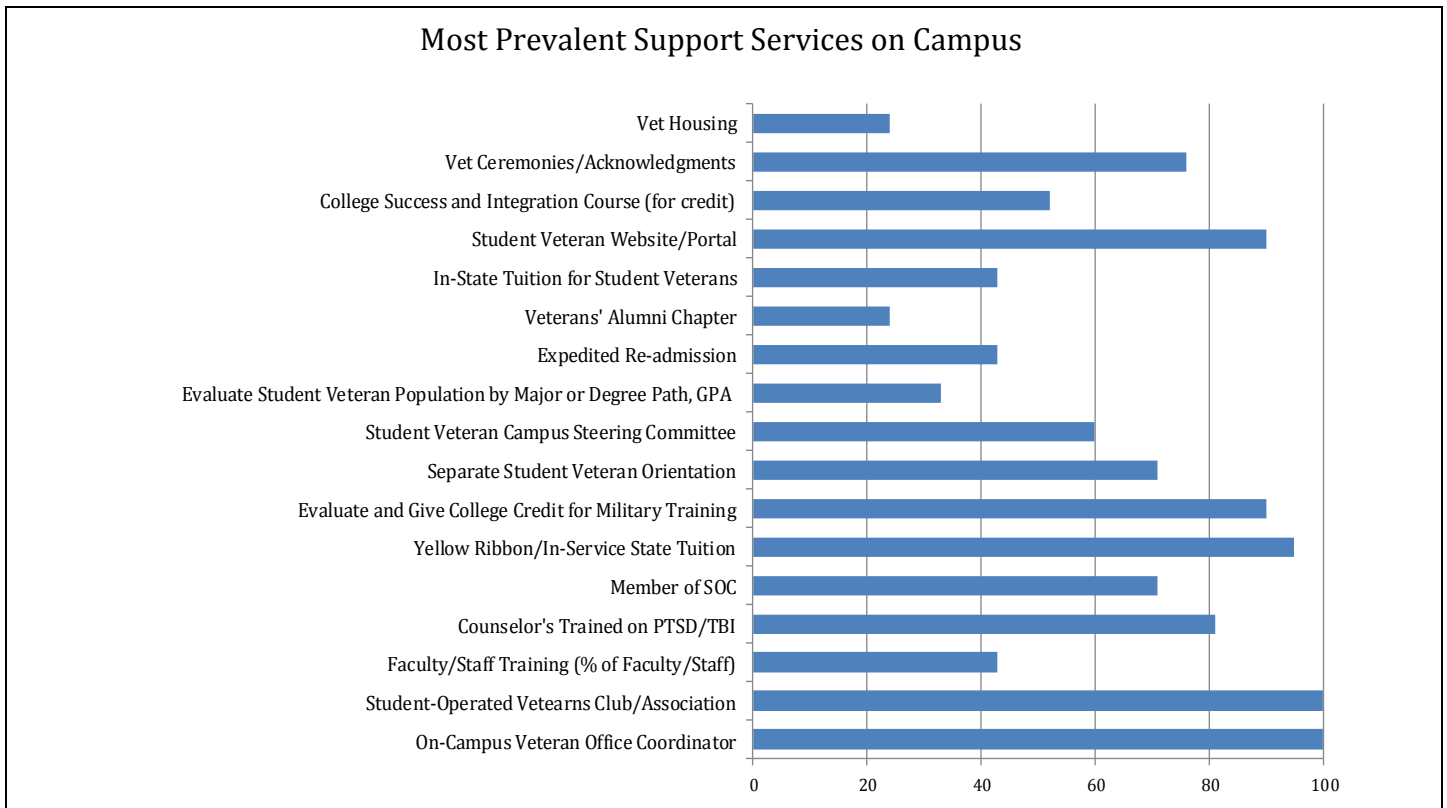
There are a variety of services that research has identified as effective in supporting a military student’s transition from soldier to student. However, each campus is unique and administrators should be cognizant in crafting support mechanisms that both reflect their demographics and take into account input from military-affiliated students. Some initiatives have become commonplace among institutions. One of these is the presence of a veterans’ office with a coordinator to facilitate academic issues for veterans such as registration and advising. A transitioning military student may not find the enrollment process intuitive, and having one central point of contact reduces the bureaucratic obfuscation that may arise by “bridging-the-gap” between the structured design of the military and the more amorphous campus environment. Supporting the establishment of a student-operated veterans’ club or association has proven to be beneficial to both veterans and the entire student body, as these groups foster activities on campus that can lessen the military-civilian divide.

“The survey continued, unsurprisingly, to find great diversity in how institutions serve veterans, the variety of services and programs offered, and where services and programs are housed within the administrative infrastructure. Most responding campuses plan to continue considering veteran-friendly changes to their institutions in the next five years, the top two of which are increasing the number of services and programs for military and veteran students and providing professional development for staff on dealing with the issues facing many service members and veterans.” (McBain, et al., 2012)

Yellow Ribbon/In-Service State Tuition programs, Evaluation and Receipt of Credit for Military Training, Student Veteran Website/Portal and Career Counseling also prove to be assets in attracting military students and facilitating their progress toward degree completion. Once reserved for a small group of institutions, more and

more campuses are focusing on flexibility in their review and assessment of military transfer credit. Similarly, a growing number of institutions and states are making higher education more affordable by instituting Yellow Ribbon Agreements or In-State Tuition policies. Both are great assets to military students, particularly in traditionally high cost tuition institutions and/or states.

Initiatives on the rise on these campuses including having on-site counselors trained in Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder/Traumatic Brain Injury (PTSD/TBI), separate student veteran orientations, and special veteran ceremonies.



Room for Improvement

The following are areas in which institutions could further enhance efforts to serve military and veteran students:

Assisting military and veteran students with their transition to the college environment. Only **37** percent of postsecondary institutions with services for military students and veterans provide transition assistance. According to the *From Soldier to Student II* survey (McBain, *et al.*, 2012), social acculturation for military and veteran students was identified by **55** percent of institutions as a priority, demonstrating at least an awareness of the issue even if services have not yet been sufficiently developed. The campus environment is often incongruous to a military student compared to what he or she became accustomed to during his or her service.

Providing professional development for faculty and staff on the transitional needs of military students was also a priority of institutions responding to the *From Soldier to Student II* survey. “Only **47** percent of institutions that service military students and veterans provide training opportunities for both faculty and staff to be better able to assist these students with their transitional issues” (McBain, *et al.*, 2012, pp.47-48).

Only **28** percent of institutions with programs and services for military personnel have developed an expedited re-enrollment process to help students restart their academic efforts (McBain, *et al.*, 2012, p.48). Any process to

ease the complications for veterans in continuing higher education following a deployment will facilitate degree attainment.

Veteran Responses

OCP conducted an online survey to gauge the opinions of veterans on the effectiveness of some of the more popular support services. The results very much mirrored the programs and services discussed above, which support the notion that campuses are responding appropriately to the needs of this population. Among

"Strong support from the Veteran Services Office helped keep me on track to graduate." (OCP Student Survey, 2013)

respondents, the vast majority praised the existence of having a veterans' office/coordinator available to them on campus as a great benefit. This also suggests a positive correlation between providing a veterans' office/coordinator on campus, and higher

retention rates among the veteran population.

The second most popular service on campus is the formation of a student veterans' organization (SVO) along with a veterans' center. One of the objectives of the SVO (many of which are members of the national Student Veterans Association) is to make the general student body aware of veteran presence, as well as to contribute to an enhanced college experience on the entire campus. This is accomplished through

participation in activities such as fundraising events and collaborating with other student organizations and community service projects. Another benefit is having access to

"Our organization works together as a team, informing each other about which classes to take and which professors are best. I also value that we're surrounded by people who, theoretically, know what we've been through, so we have each other's back. A shoulder to cry on, figuratively speaking of course." (OCP Veteran Survey, 2013)

other veterans. The Student Veterans of America (SVA) creates a sense of community among veterans during their critical transition from active duty to college life.

Note: According to this survey, the most beneficial campus service was a veteran center on campus especially one with a specific office/lounge where veteran students can meet, work together and learn about veteran/military student benefits and programs.

Additional Services Veterans Would Like to See (Per OCP Survey, August 2013)

- ◆ Priority registration for classes; all veterans should be able to register at the same time as seniors.
- ◆ Greater collaboration between student veterans organizations and the administration.
- ◆ Employment opportunities geared toward graduating veterans.
- ◆ Additional veteran-specific training for interacting with the community outside of the veteran support office.
- ◆ An annual veterans' "Meet and Greet" with department heads.
- ◆ Separate orientation for new students.

CONCLUSION

There has been much debate on the effectiveness of the Post-9/11 GI Bill and the progress of veterans pursuing a college degree. The price tag of \$36 billion for the Post-9/11 GI Bill has prompted the call for wider and more detailed data collection and analysis to ensure that vital funding continues to successfully support this population. Some of the misunderstanding in researching student veterans' progress toward degree achievement may have come from previous analysis of various types of institutions (2-year versus 4-year, public versus private, for-profit versus not-for-profit) and from drawing oversimplified conclusions. The institutions that have participated in this round of research have demonstrated an established commitment to their military student population through crafting substantial campus-appropriate support apparatuses. Each eagerly shared their data, and their ability to tabulate it with accuracy denotes a further commitment to assessing the headway of their own veteran-student population. This type of data collection is not universal, so it is important to point out that additional institutions throughout the nation are assisting this population in efficient and effective ways, but may not have established a systematic reporting process to provide comprehensive data.

The study does not seek to directly correlate programs and services provided with student veteran success, although the input of this population in its crafting would indicate that certain provisions (for example, a central point of contact) are indispensable and form a bedrock for a successful reintegration.

This report contains several illuminating data points that dispel some common misperceptions regarding veteran students. The students' GPAs, "Persistence Rates" and "Success Rates," suggest that most of the students polled are on track for timely degree attainment. They are taking sufficient credits to graduate within six years and are in line, or in some cases exceeding, their traditional peers in terms of persistence and retainment.

The total student population of the schools that voluntarily participated in the "Campus Profile" survey was about 500,000. Of course, about 4.0 percent, or 20,000 students, were classified as military-affiliated (veterans, active-duty, Guard, Reservists or dependents). Most of the Post-9/11 recipients fall into the "veterans" category although recent changes to the program will permit more Guard and Reservists to take advantage of the program. The average tuition of the schools was \$14,084 for in-state students and \$24,176 for those from out-of-state. All responding institutions provided either a "Yellow Ribbon" or in-state tuition policy to mitigate costs above the maximum tuition level permitted by the VA (at the time of print, the maximum was \$18,077).

Colleges and universities in this study have prioritized their support for these predominantly non-traditional students and have responded to external and internal research that identify key on-campus resources. They have established top-down support for the development of programs and services that are effective and efficient that often have very little direct funding support. Administrators on these campuses are dedicated and diligent in implementing policies that maximize the potential for veteran students and continue to respond to the input of this population. Further, this study illustrates that the programs and services these institutions are offering can be both systematically and financially practical while responding to what research suggests is effective. Often-times veteran-specific considerations mirror, or are simply an expansion of, existing campus support that is vital to a traditional population but with a twist: the understanding that these veteran students are non-traditional, highly motivated, disciplined and determined.

"Although data are still not fully developed by VA and others, that doesn't mean the GI Bill per se isn't a great program; and preliminary data do show very strong academic success among Post-9/11 student vets. Universities across the country are very busy gathering such data for their own campuses. When the VA's study is ready to report, it will only add to the solid news, I am fully confident. The data may be lagging, but that doesn't mean the performance isn't already there." (Rod Davis, Director, Veterans' Support Office, Texas A&M University System, 2013)

CONTRIBUTORS

Operation College Promise (OCP)

Operation College Promise is a national policy, research and education program based in Trenton, New Jersey, which supports the transition and postsecondary advancement of our nation's veterans. OCP was founded by the New Jersey Association of State Colleges and Universities (NJASCU) and was one of 20 recipients of the American Council on Education/Walmart "Success for Veterans" grants in 2009. Among its offerings is the nation's first and most widely disseminated multi-state, multi-institutional training program for professionals working with veterans — the Certificate for Veterans' Service Providers (CVSP) program. OCP has also produced the first national resource publication, *The OCP Field Guide*, specifically designed for veterans' service providers.

The CVSP training has been offered at six locations that include The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey, Ramapo College of New Jersey, Texas State University-San Marcos, the University of North Carolina-Charlotte, Texas A&M-San Antonio, and Ashford University-San Diego. About 500 professionals from 30 states have participated.

Pat Tillman Foundation (PTF)

Family and friends created the Pat Tillman Foundation in 2004 to honor Pat's legacy and pay tribute to his commitment to leadership and service. The mission of the Pat Tillman Foundation is to invest in military veterans and their spouses through educational scholarships—building a diverse community of leaders committed to service to others. To date, 290 Tillman Military Scholars representing 34 states and attending 92 academic institutions nationwide have been awarded over \$4.1 million in scholarship support.

Got Your 6 (GY6)

Got Your 6 is a collective impact campaign designed to help bridge the military-civilian divide. Combining the reach and resources of the entertainment industry with the expertise and commitment of more than 30 nonprofit organizations, the campaign works to advance the conversation in America so veterans and military families are seen as leaders and civic assets who will invigorate our communities. In 2013, Got Your 6 distributed grants totaling nearly \$3 million to a dozen veteran-focused nonprofit partners. For more information, visit www.gotyour6.org. Be the Change, Inc., an independent 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization, is the organizing body and fiscal sponsor of Got Your 6.

OTHER RESEARCH

In the continuation of tracking veteran student progress toward attaining undergraduate degrees, it is essential to explore both how the analysis of student data can be improved and what additional research questions should stem from that data. It is the hope of this study that the repeated collection of data from the participating schools will allow for more standardization in both the collecting and the reporting of information from both veteran students and the general undergraduate population.

Our sample size increased from 7 to 23 schools in this updated Pilot Study. We will continue to poll additional schools, from different geographies, economic strata (by tuition costs), and those most, and least, available to veteran populations. In this challenge we will further develop research in the following areas:

Expand data collected from the pilot schools and promote standardized data-keeping, interpretation, and definitions of student services and characteristics;

Seek to include additional partner schools for the 2014 assessment;

Survey participants in future CVSP programs on data collection mechanisms;

Evaluate the success of Post-9/11 GI Bill beneficiaries' progress toward degree completion.

The increasing sophistication and outreach of our analysis will continue as this 6-year study progresses. During this time, we seek to shed light on several additional research questions, such as:

What is the correlation between services offered to veterans and their success in both degree initiation and completion?

How are the characteristics of “non-standard” students identified and how do veterans fit into that picture from both a positive foundational background (most veterans enter as sophomores due to their previous experience and transfer credit) and differences from other types of non-standard students (by age, background, life, circumstances)?

What does the data from veteran surveys report on the most prevalent and useful campus services, and what services do veterans most desire to help them be successful in their quest to complete an undergraduate degree?

How can a survey of several pilot schools on graduate degree attainment (or career certifications) best be used to facilitate the continuation of veteran education past the undergraduate level?

What are the unique characteristics of the next wave (Post-9/11) of veterans returning to civilian life, and what are the best ways to welcome and utilize their experience and skills in postsecondary academic environments.

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Appendix A

Executive Order issued by President Obama, April 27, 2012

The White House

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release April 27, 2012

Executive Order—Establishing Principles of Excellence for Educational Institutions Serving Service Members, Veterans, Spouses, and Other Family Members

EXECUTIVE ORDER

ESTABLISHING PRINCIPLES OF EXCELLENCE FOR EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS SERVING SERVICE MEMBERS, VETERANS, SPOUSES, AND OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, and in order to ensure that Federal military and veterans educational benefits programs are providing service members, veterans, spouses, and other family members with the information, support, and protection they deserve, it is hereby ordered as follows:

Section 1. Policy. The original GI Bill, approved just weeks after D-Day, educated nearly 8 million Americans and helped transform this Nation. We owe the same obligations to this generation of service men and women as was afforded that previous one. This is the promise of the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008 (title V, Public Law 110-252) (Post-9/11 GI Bill) and the continued provision of educational benefits in the Department of Defense's Tuition Assistance Program (10 U.S.C. 2007): to provide our service members, veterans, spouses, and other family members the opportunity to pursue a high-quality education and gain the skills and training they need to fill the jobs of tomorrow.

Sine the Post-9/11 GI Bill became law, there have been reports of aggressive and deceptive targeting of service members, veterans, and their families by some educational institutions. For example, some institutions have recruited veterans with serious brain injuries and emotional vulnerabilities without providing academic support and counseling; encouraged service members and veterans to take out costly institutional loans rather than encouraging them to apply for Federal student loans first; engaged in misleading recruiting practices on military installations; and failed to disclose meaningful information that allows potential students to determine whether the institution has a good record of graduating service members, veterans, and their families and positioning them for success in the workforce.

To ensure our service members, veterans, spouses, and other family members have the information they need to make informed decisions concerning their well-earned Federal military and veterans educational benefits, I am directing my Administration to develop Principles of Excellence to strengthen oversight, enforcement, and accountability within these benefits programs.

Section 2. Principles of Excellence for Educational Institutions Serving Service Members, Veterans, Spouses, and Other Family Members. The Departments of Defense, Veterans Affairs, and Education shall establish Principles of Excellence (Principles) to apply to educational institutions receiving funding from Federal military and veterans educational benefits programs, including benefits programs provided by the Post-9/11 GI Bill and the Tuition Assistance Program. The Principles should ensure that these educational institutions provide meaningful information to service members, veterans, spouses, and other family members about the financial cost and quality of educational institutions to assist those prospective students in making choices about how to use their

Federal educational benefits; prevent abusive and deceptive recruiting practices that target the recipients of Federal military and veterans educational benefits; and ensure that educational institutions provide high-quality academic and student support services to active-duty service members, reservists, members of the National Guard, veterans, and military families.

To the extent permitted by law, the Principles, implemented pursuant to Section 3 of this order, should require educational institutions receiving funding pursuant to Federal military and veterans' educational benefits to:

- prior to enrollment, provide prospective students who are eligible to receive Federal military and veterans educational benefits with a personalized and standardized form, as developed in a manner set forth by the Secretary of Education, working with the Secretaries of Defense and Veterans Affairs, to help those perspective students understand the total cost of the educational program, including tuition and fees; the amount of that cost that will be covered by Federal educational benefits; the type and amount of financial aid they may qualify for; their estimated student loan debt upon graduation; information about student outcomes; and other information to facilitate comparison of aid packages offered by different educational institutions;

- inform students who are eligible to receive Federal military and veterans educational benefits of the availability of Federal financial aid and have in place policies to alert those students of their potential eligibility for that aid before packaging or arranging private student loans or alternative financing programs;

- end fraudulent and unduly aggressive recruiting techniques on and off military installations, as well as misrepresentation, payment of incentive compensation, and failure to meet State authorization requirements, consistent with the regulations issued by the Department of Education (34 C.F.R. 668.71-668.75, 668.14, and 600.9);

- obtain the approval of the institution's accrediting agency for new course or program offerings before enrolling students in such courses or programs, provided that such approval is appropriate under the substantive change requirements of the accrediting agency;

- allow service members and reservists to be readmitted to a program if they are temporarily unable to attend class or have to suspend their studies do to service requirements, and take additional steps to accommodate short absences due to service obligations, provided that satisfactory academic progress is being made by the service members and reservists prior to suspending their studies;

- agree to an institutional refund policy that is aligned with the refund of unearned student aid rules applicable to Federal student aid provided through the Department of Education under Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as required under section 484B of that Act when students withdraw prior to course completion;

- provide educational plans for all individuals using Federal military and veterans educational benefits that detail how they will fulfill all the requirements necessary to graduate and the expected timeline of completion; and

- designate a point of contact for academic and financial advising (including access to disability counseling) to assist service member and veteran students and their families with the successful completion of their studies and with their job searches.

Section 3. Implementation of the Principles of Excellence

The Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs shall reflect the Principles described in section 2 of this order in new agreements with educational institutions, to the extent practicable and permitted by law, concerning participation in the Yellow Ribbon Program for veterans under the Post-9/11 GI Bill or the Tuition

Assistance Program for active duty service members. The Department of Veterans Affairs shall also notify all institutions participating in the Post-9/11 GI Bill program that they are strongly encouraged to comply with the Principles and shall post on the Department's website those that do.

The Secretaries of Defense, Veterans Affairs, and Education, in consultation with the Director of the Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection (CFPB) and the Attorney General, shall take immediate action to implement this order, and, within 90 days from the date of this order, report to the President their progress on implementation, including promptly revising regulations, Department of Defense Instructions, guidance documents, Memoranda of Understanding, and other policies governing programs authorized or funded by the Post-9/11 GI Bill and the Tuition Assistance Program to implement the Principles, to the extent permitted by law.

The Secretaries of Defense, Veterans Affairs, and Education shall develop a comprehensive strategy for developing service member and veteran student outcome measures that are comparable, to the maximum extent practicable, across Federal military and veterans educational benefit programs, including, but not limited to, the Post-9/11 GI Bill and the Tuition Assistance Program. To the extent practicable, the student outcome measures should rely on existing administrative data to minimize the reporting burden on institutions participating in these benefit programs. The student outcome measures should permit comparisons across Federal educational programs and across institutions and types of institutions. The Secretary of Education, in consultation with the Secretaries of Defense and Veterans Affairs, shall also collect from educational institutions, as part of the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System and other data collection systems, information on the amount of funding received pursuant to the Post-9/11 GI Bill and the Tuition Assistance Program. The Secretary of Education shall make this information publicly available on the College Navigator Website.

The Secretary of Veterans Affairs, in consultation with the Secretaries of Defense and Education, shall provide to prospective military and veteran students, prior to using their benefits, streamlined tools to compare educational institutions using key measures of affordability and value through the Department of Veterans Affairs' eBenefits portal. The eBenefits portal shall be updated to facilitate access to school performance information, consumer protection information, and key Federal financial aid documents. The Secretaries of Defense and Veterans Affairs shall also ensure that service members and veterans have access to that information through educational counseling offered by those Departments.

Section 4. Strengthening Enforcement and Compliance Mechanisms. Service members, veterans, spouses, and other family members should have access to a strong enforcement system through which to file complaints when institutions fail to follow the Principles. Within 90 days of the date of this order, the Secretaries of Defense and Veterans Affairs, in consultation with the Secretary of Education and the Director of the CFPB, as well as with the Attorney General, as appropriate, shall submit to the President a plan to strengthen enforcement and compliance mechanisms. The plan shall include proposals to:

- create a centralized complaint system for students receiving Federal military and veterans educational benefits to register complaints that can be tracked and responded to by the Departments of Defense, Veterans Affairs, Justice, and Education, the CFPB, and other relevant agencies;

- institute uniform procedures for receiving and processing complaints across the State Approving Agencies (SAAs) that will work with the Department of Veterans Affairs to review participating institutions, provide a coordinated mechanism across SAAs to alert the Department of Veterans Affairs to any complaints that have been registered at the State level, and create procedures for sharing information about complaints with the appropriate State officials, accrediting agency representatives, and the Secretary of Education.

institute uniform procedures for referring potential matters for civil or criminal enforcement to the Department of Justice and other relevant agencies;

establish procedures for targeted risk-based program reviews of institutions to ensure compliance with the Principles;

establish new uniform rules and strengthen existing procedures for access to military installations by educational institutions. These new rules should ensure, at a minimum, that only those institutions that enter into a memorandum of agreement pursuant to section 3(a) of this order are permitted entry onto a Federal military installation for the purposes of recruitment. The Department of Defense shall include specific steps for instructing installation commanders on commercial solicitation rules and the requirement of the Principles outlined in section 2(c) of this order; and

take all appropriate steps to ensure that websites and programs are not deceptively and fraudulently marketing educational services and benefits to program beneficiaries, including initiating a process to protect the term “GI Bill” and other military or veterans-related terms as trademarks, as appropriate.

Section 5. General Provisions.

This order shall be implemented consistent with applicable law and subject to the availability of appropriations.

Nothing in this order shall be construed to impair or otherwise affect:

- (i) the authority granted by law to an executive department, agency, or the head thereof; or
- (ii) the functions of the Director of the Office of Management and Budget relating to budgetary, administrative, or legislative proposals.

This order is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by any party against the United States, its departments, agencies, or entities, its officers, employees, or agents, or any other person.

BARACK OBAMA

Appendix B

“From Soldier to Student II: Assessing Campus Programs for Veterans and Service Members”

Excerpted from Executive Summary (pgs. 7-10)

Summary of Key Findings

All Responding Institutions

More than half of all responding institutions (62 percent in 2012, a slight increase from 2009’s 57 percent) currently provide programs and services specifically designed for military service members and veterans, and approximately 71 percent of all responding colleges and universities (versus 57 percent in 2009) indicated that providing programs and services for military service members and veterans is a part of their long-term strategic plan. Sixty-four percent of all responding colleges and universities reported engaging in recruiting efforts specifically designed to attract military service members and veterans.

- Average enrollment of servicemembers and veterans at responding institutions has increased significantly since the 2009 survey. All responding institutions averaged approximately 453 active-duty military students and 370 veteran students in 2012, compared with average enrollments of 201 active-duty military students and 156 veteran students in 2009.
- Public four-year institutions (74 percent) and public two-year institutions (59 percent) are more likely to have programs specifically designed for military veterans than private not-for-profit colleges and universities (51 percent).
- Most responding campuses plan to continue considering veteran-friendly changes to their institutions in the next five years, the top two of which are increasing the number of services and programs for military and veteran students and providing professional development for staff on dealing with the issues facing many service members and veterans. Providing professional development for faculty members is also a top priority for institutions.

Institutions that Provide Services for Veterans and Military Personnel

- The survey continued, unsurprisingly, to find great diversity in how institutions serve veterans, the variety of services and programs offered, and where services and programs are housed within the administrative infrastructure.
- Eighty-nine percent of colleges and universities that offer services to veterans and military personnel have increased their emphasis on these services since September 11, 2001, including 93 percent of public four-year institutions, 85 percent of public community colleges, and 89 percent of private not-for-profit four-year colleges and universities. The top two areas of emphasis, regardless of sector, have been the establishment of marketing and outreach strategies to attract veterans and military personnel and the establishment of new programs and services for servicemembers and veterans. These two areas have reversed position since the 2009 survey.

- Many institutions provide financial assistance in the form of discounts or scholarships specifically for veteran students and military students. Thirty-three percent of all responding institutions offer veteran scholarships; 24 percent of all respondents offer scholarships for military students.
- Approximately 82 percent of all institutions have an established policy regarding tuition refunds for military activations and deployments.
- Almost all campuses that have services for veterans and service members offer some type of academic support or student services designed specifically for these students. Aside from U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) education benefits counseling, the most frequently cited services were financial aid/tuition assistance counseling (67 percent) and special campus social and/or cultural events (66 percent).
- Eighty-four percent of all institutions that offer services for veterans and military personnel provide counseling to assist these students with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Fewer institutions have established programs or services specifically designed to assist veterans with physical disabilities and less visible disabilities such as brain injuries; only 55 percent and 35 percent of institutions respectively reported having staff trained to assist veterans with these two conditions. This is still an increase from the 2009 survey.
- Eighty-three percent of all reporting colleges and universities with programs and services for veterans and military personnel award evaluated credit for military training; 63 percent awarded evaluated credit for military occupational experience.

Programs and Services by Level of Veteran/Military Enrollment

- Generally, colleges and universities that have larger service member and veteran populations are more likely to offer programs and services for these students than institutions with smaller military and veteran populations. Services that appear to be especially sensitive to the size of the student veteran population are training staff specifically to work with veterans, establishing an office dedicated to working with veterans, and creating targeted recruitment of military personnel and veterans.
- This study also revealed that postsecondary institutions with smaller veteran and active-duty military populations are continuing to increase their emphasis on serving these students, particularly since September 11, 2001. Much of the increased emphasis has been on new programs for service members and veterans, including counseling services, the appointment of committees to develop action plans to respond to military and veteran students' needs, and increasing marketing and outreach to veterans.

Programs and Services by Administrative Structure

- The presence of a dedicated office for veterans and military students is an indication of institutional commitment; 71 percent of institutions that offer programs and services for veterans and military personnel have such an office, as opposed to 49 percent in 2009.
- Among colleges and universities that have a dedicated office that provides support for military students, 91 percent of institutions have increased their emphasis on services and programs specifically for service members and/or veterans since September 11, 2001. Eighty-six percent of institutions that do not have a dedicated office have increased their emphasis on veterans and military personnel after September 11, 2001 (versus 56 percent in 2009).

- In general, institutions with a dedicated office were more likely to make programmatic changes after September 11, 2001, than institutions without a dedicated office. These changes including establishing new programs and services (77 percent of institutions with a dedicated office versus 68 percent of institutions without such an office) and increasing staff in existing programs and services for service members and veterans (63 percent versus 34 percent). Institutions with a dedicated office continued to be more likely than those without such an office to engage in recruitment efforts targeted to service members and veterans (67 percent versus 56 percent) and to have added or expanded training for faculty and staff regarding the transitional needs of these students (53 percent versus 43 percent).
- Institutions that have a dedicated office for veterans and military personnel are much more likely to tailor common services, including financial aid/tuition assistance counseling, employment assistance, academic advising, campus events, and career services, to these students. Institutions in the process of establishing a dedicated office for military and veteran students are the most likely to sponsor a student organization for veterans and military personnel.
- Campuses with a dedicated office are more likely than those without to offer specialized counseling and support groups, and to refer students to support services offered by the VA. Peer support groups are still unevenly utilized by institutions with dedicated offices for veterans and military personnel.
- Regarding administrative policies on such matters as financial aid or awarding college credit, as in 2009, there are few differences between institutions with and without offices dedicated to military personnel and veterans. This may be because these broad academic policies are outside the purview of an office of military/veterans services.
- All types of institutions report that the most common challenge they see facing their military and veteran students are finances, retention/degree completion, and social acculturation to campus.
- Respondents from every institutional sector, regardless of the presence or absence of an office dedicated to military personnel and veterans, reported Post-9/11 GI Bill payment delays by the VA. All sectors also reported overpayments by the VA and having to process multiple enrollment certifications for veteran students based on changes in enrollment.

APPENDIX C

Got Your Six Education Pillar Pledge

On behalf of the below mentioned institution, I pledge to implement or enhance resources, programs, and policies to support our student veteran population.

I recognize that Student Veterans of America, the Pat Tillman Foundation, and Operation College Promise suggest utilizing the below recommended resources to implement high-quality programs and services:

- *The Student Veterans of America Chapter at your school or other student veteran leaders;*
- *The American Council on Education's Toolkit for Veteran Friendly Institutions; and*
- *Operation College Promise's Field Guide*

**Note all the below information should be for the individual taking the pledge on behalf of your Institution of Higher Learning.*



STUDENT VETERANS
of AMERICA



GOT YOUR SIX



**PAT TILLMAN
FOUNDATION**

Campus Name (*)

Campus Address (*)

Campus City (*)

Campus State (*)

Campus Zip Code (*)

Signatory First Name (*)

Signatory Last Name (*)

Signatory Position at School (*)

Signatory Email (*)

Campus Point of Contact First Name (*)

Campus Point of Contact Last Name (*)

Campus Point of Contact Position at School (*)

Campus Point of Contact Email (*)

Campus Point of Contact Phone Number (*)

By clicking submit, I attest that all above information is accurate and complete to the best of my knowledge.



PAT TILLMAN
FOUNDATION

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