A DATA-DRIVEN APPROACH TO VETERANS’ TRANSITION: EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, & POST-SERVICE SUCCESS

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2015 NAVPA Training and Veterans Conference, Oct. 5-9, 2015, Nashville, Tennessee
Public Support for Military

*Trends in Confidence in the Church and the Military*

Figures represent % Great deal/Quite a lot

- The church
- The military

Active Duty: 1,369,482 servicemembers (1,047,166 of whom do not hold a college degree), with projections of 5M servicemembers likely to enroll in universities by 2020.

Approximately 63% of veterans have attained some college or higher. This number is higher compared to the U.S. population (58%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Attainment</th>
<th>All Americans</th>
<th>All Veterans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Estimated Number</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Estimated Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>236,737,000</td>
<td>21,397,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than a high school diploma</td>
<td>28,791,000</td>
<td>1,227,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school graduates, no college</td>
<td>71,044,000</td>
<td>6,733,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>68,253,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>College graduates (Bachelors or Higher)</td>
<td>68,649,000</td>
<td>6,009,000</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Attainment</th>
<th>Gulf War Era II</th>
<th></th>
<th>Gulf War Era I</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>WWII, Korean War and Vietnam Era</th>
<th></th>
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<th>Other Service Period</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Estimated Number</td>
<td>%</td>
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<td>Estimated Number</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2,837,000</td>
<td>3,233,000</td>
<td>9,828,000</td>
<td>5,500,000</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than a high school diploma</td>
<td>39,000</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>783,000</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>355,000</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school graduates, no college</td>
<td>695,000</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>864,000</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>3,185,000</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>1,989,000</td>
<td>36%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Some college or associate degree</td>
<td>1,269,000</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>1,312,000</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>3,037,000</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>1,811,000</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College graduates (Bachelors or Higher)</td>
<td>834,000</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>1,007,000</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>2,823,000</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>1,345,000</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Diversity I: Race/Ethnicity

The majority of Americans and veterans are White/Caucasians.

There are some differences in ethnicity/race within each era of veterans.

Gulf War era I has the largest percentage of African Americans which is at 18% followed by post-9/11 veterans which is at 15%. Post-9/11 veterans has the largest percentage of Hispanics which is at 13% followed by Gulf War era I which is at 9%. And post-9/11 veterans has the largest percentage of Asians which is at 3% followed by Gulf War era I which is at 2%.

#### Estimated Number and Percentage of Total Americans and Veterans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity/Race</th>
<th>Estimated Number</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Estimated Number</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>236,737,000</td>
<td></td>
<td>21,397,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>187,643,000</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>18,003,000</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>29,088,000</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>2,469,000</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>35,519,000</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>1,385,000</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>12,810,000</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>314,000</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


#### Estimated Number and Percentage of Gulf War Era II, Gulf War Era I, WWII, Korean War and Vietnam Era, and Other Service Period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity/Race</th>
<th>Gulf War Era II</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Gulf War Era I</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>WWII, Korean War and Vietnam Era</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Other Service Period</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2,837,000</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>3,233,000</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>9,828,000</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>5,500,000</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>2,177,000</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>2,442,000</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>8,765,000</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>4,619,000</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>433,000</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>592,000</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>762,000</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>683,000</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>370,000</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>287,000</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>428,000</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>300,000</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>86,000</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>64,000</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>109,000</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>55,000</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Diversity I: Race/Ethnicity

- **White**: 949,989 (69%)
- **Black or African American**: 232,280 (17%)
- **Other/Racial**: 59,529 (4%)
- **Multi-Racial**: 42,107 (3%)
- **American Indian or Alaska Native**: 19,838 (1%)
- **Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander**: 14,260 (1%)
- **Asian**: 52,326 (4%)
- **Other/Unknown**: 59,529 (4%)
- **White**: 70% (Not Hispanic or Latino)
- **Black or African American**: 18% (Not Hispanic or Latino)
- **Other/Unknown**: 21% (Not Hispanic or Latino)
- **American Indian or Alaska Native**: 2% (Not Hispanic or Latino)
- **Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander**: 1% (Not Hispanic or Latino)
- **Asian**: 4% (Not Hispanic or Latino)
- **Multi-Racial**: 4% (Not Hispanic or Latino)
Diversity II: Women

- 90% all veterans are male and 10% are females
- The proportion of females are larger with veterans that served during Gulf War era I and II compared to any other period of service
- Women are the fastest growing population especially within post-9/11 veterans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>All Veterans</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>21,397,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>19,173,000</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2,225,000</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
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<td>5,500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2,259,000</td>
<td>2,626,000</td>
<td>9,458,000</td>
<td>4,830,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>579,000</td>
<td>606,000</td>
<td>370,000</td>
<td>669,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The highest number of disabled veterans served in Gulf War Era, including servicemembers deployed in GWOT. In this context, more than 1.5M Gulf War veterans are categorized by the VA as having a disability, which accounts for 40 percent of all disabled veterans receiving compensation.

Q: Do you have a service-related disability?

- Yes: 58%
- No: 32%
- Prefer not to answer: 9%

Q: What is your current service-connected disability rating?

- 0 percent: 6%
- 10 or 20 percent: 20%
- 30 or 40 percent: 21%
- 50 or 60 percent: 20%
- 70 percent or higher: 33%

Disability Status, Survey 1, 2015
Framing

- **Contradiction:** Broad public support for Post-9/11 servicemembers & veterans—but extremely little understanding (research) or even interest in veterans experiences during & after war. Academics & federal agencies—not part of the solution.

- How to get **academic institutions up to par** in supporting veterans’ success, understanding what those with national service have to offer academia (strengths), public, nation...

- Imbuing a lost sense of **public service**. Why has service become the purview of a minority—at high cost to them, not the whole country/community?
Policy Implications of Data Driven Research

Overall Approach: Using many sources of support (NSF, Google) and many federal datasets (ACS, BLS, IPEDS), we have developed an evidence-based picture of student veterans in their educational aspirations and experiences.

1. Post-9/11 Veterans—lost data, missing perspectives

2. Why is this research necessary?

3. How may research—evidentiary basis for servicemembers’ in transition and higher education—help positively influence stakeholders?
Guiding Research Questions

1. Who is serving? Who is going to school?
2. Does national service influence education and post-service careers—motivation and aspirations, preparedness, campus and career experiences?
   - Does STEM military training increase STEM aspirations?
3. Does post-service education influence transition?
4. What challenges—personal, services, systems—do servicemembers face in postsecondary education?
5. What strengths do servicemembers bring to postsecondary education?
6. Best education practices to ease post-service transition and positively affect academic success?
Prioritizing Veterans’ Perceptions

Primary Motivations:

- **Paradox:** Broad, public “support for troops” but too little understanding, especially of post-service life—beyond stereotypes.
- Research on student veterans tends to focus on academic performance (e.g., graduation rates) and challenges adapting to campus life.
- Gap in knowledge in servicemembers’ experiences, needs, expectations, and aspirations in transitioning to campus life.
- Clear need to identify leading institutional support systems, processes, and practices that best promote long-term student veteran success.
Research Design

Two-Part Study

*Study One*: Servicemembers’ Perspectives on Higher Education
  - Servicemember to Student Survey

*Study Two*: VPA & Academic Leaders’ Perspectives
  - Campus Policies & Programs for Student Veterans’ Success Survey
  - Semi-structured interviews & campus visits with student veteran professionals

Multi-Method Approach

  - Surveys (structured and open)
  - Interviews and campus visits

Great Support from Key Partners

  - U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
  - Student Veterans of America (SVA)
  - Military Times
Innovation in Research Instruments and Methods

- Targeting a population that has never been broadly surveyed on their educational experience before
- A multidisciplinary research team from Syracuse University to create a comprehensive and diverse view of complex problems
- Utilized an organizational frame that allows for multiple individual perspectives within the same survey—hence, capturing the whole scope of institutional factors that create ecosystems of veterans’ success
- Developed partnerships with academics and practitioners, and promoted discussions among veterans-serving institutions
- Collecting perspectives from different populations: service members, academic leaders, and thought leaders
- Designed and implemented practical solutions to support the success of student veterans
- Created one of the largest datasets on veterans and service members’ experiences in education, and a comprehensive and up-to-date database of veteran-focused programs
1. Survey One: Servicemembers’ Perspectives on Service and Higher Education
Survey I: Servicemember to Student Survey

- Focus on servicemembers’ *post-service life*, experiences, challenges & recommendations as these relate to education and *successful transition*.
- Data will help research team identify challenges, pathways for success, and *institutional best practices* at schools & training programs; inform veterans’ community, academia, and partners how to best support veterans educational attainment.
- *Extremely few studies* have collected or analyzed this data.
- Survey 1 implemented in Qualtrics; unique links generated per distribution channel; social media messaging crafted for partners’ networks.
- Survey dissemination began *May 16 2014*: still running to maximize bumps from other outreach efforts & instruments
- As of May 2015: over 8,561 respondents with 58% completion rate—twice online academic surveys (30%)
Survey 1: Servicemember to Student Survey

Research Questions: How are veterans doing in school?

Bringing Rigorous Research to the Subject of Veterans Education:

Calling the question: Why aren’t researchers studying veterans’ experiences in education? Social scientist have conducted similar research for veterans through the WW II and Vietnam eras, but not for the post 9/11 cohort

Who can provide knowledge/experience with this issue? In addition to student veterans, researchers’ need to consider veterans who are not enrolled, administrative officers at educational institutions, thought leaders, historical records and academic literature

How do we amplify the message? Leverage social media channels and a multi-pronged outreach strategy

Sample Survey 1 Questions:

What is your motivation for education and/or training?  
What is your preferred method of instruction and classroom environment?  
Do you feel comfortable sharing your experiences as a veteran/service member at your school?  
Were there any lessons or skills that you learned from difficult experiences in the military or on deployment?
Sample: Servicemember Characteristics

**Status**

Q. What is your current military status?*

- Veteran: 83%
- Active Duty: 4%
- Reserves: 3%
- National Guard: 5%
- Family member: 0%

The majority of the sample was veteran (83%) followed by armed forces (6% active duty, 4% reserves, and 3% from the national guard). 5% of respondents were from family members of U.S. armed forces or Veteran

Q. In total, how long did you serve on active duty?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Duration</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1 year</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3 year</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-8 years</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-20 years</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20+ years or more</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q. What rank did you attain?

- Junior Enlisted (E1--E4): 34%
- Senior Enlisted (E5--E9): 53%
- Warrant Officer (W1--W5): 1%
- Company Grade Officer (O1--O3): 5%
- Field Grade Officer (O4--O6): 6%
- Flag/General Officer (O7--O10): 0%

87% were enlisted, 1% warrant officer, and 11% were officer
Servicemember Characteristics

Survey 1: Servicemember to Student Survey

Branch

Branch of service is *comparable* to data from Defense Manpower Data Center and the VA but is slightly over and under represented in certain branches.

2012 DMDC Data
2012 Demographic Profile

VetPop2014
Estimation based off of Sept 2014
**Reasons for Joining the Armed Services**

*Q. Why did you join the armed services? Rank your top choices up to five.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education benefits</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A desire to serve your country</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New experiences/adventure/travel</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of purpose</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career opportunities</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A history of service in your family</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defend your country</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical skills and training opportunities</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial security</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retirement benefits in the future</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health care benefits</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of job opportunities</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Security/fullfillment</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military community, network, and overall quality</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve earning potential</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotion/advancement opportunities within the military community</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends enlisted</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Finding: Joining a Good Decision

Q. Overall, was joining the military a good decision for you personally?

88% of servicemembers indicated that joining the military was moderately or completely a good decision.
**Military Specialization**

*Did your military specialization or job(s):*

- **Promote your interest in education?**
  - 26% Not At All
  - 15% Slightly
  - 21% Moderately
  - 23% Very
  - 15% Completely

- **Promote your interest in a training, certification, or licensing program?**
  - 29% Not At All
  - 15% Slightly
  - 19% Moderately
  - 22% Very
  - 15% Completely

- **Prepare you for your education?**
  - 31% Not At All
  - 17% Slightly
  - 22% Moderately
  - 18% Very
  - 11% Completely

- **Promote your interest in STEM?**
  - 34% Not At All
  - 15% Slightly
  - 20% Moderately
  - 19% Very
  - 12% Completely

- **Prepare you for your civilian career?**
  - 34% Not At All
  - 18% Slightly
  - 21% Moderately
  - 16% Very
  - 11% Completely

- 74% indicated that their military specialization or job promoted their interest in education (rated from *Slightly* to *Completely*).
- 71% indicated that their military specialization or job promoted their interest in training, certification, or licensing program.
- 69% indicated that their military specialization or job prepared them for their education.
- 66% indicated that their military specialization or job promoted STEM compared to the 34% that indicated that it did not.
- 66% indicated that their military specialization or job prepared for their civilian career compared to the 34% that indicated that it did not.
Skills Developed During Service

Q. In thinking about your skills developed during service, please select all those that were strengthened or enhanced by your military experience. Select all that apply.

- Work ethic/discipline
- Teamwork
- Leadership and management skills
- Mental toughness
- Adaptation to different challenges
- Self-Discipline
- Professionalism
- Ability to get things done
- Training & teaching others
- Coping with adversity
- Confidence and self-esteem
- Perseverance
- Ability to complete the mission
- Working effectively with supervisors and other authorities
- Dealing with uncertainty
- Camaraderie and supporting peers
- Crisis management
- Making decisions in time and resource-constrained environments
- Social/Communication skills
- Resilience
- Time management
- Moral code and social responsibility
- Level-headedness and perspective
- Organization
- Cultural understanding
- Delegating responsibilities
- Goal Setting
- Technical expertise

Top 5 Skills Acquired
- Work ethic/discipline
- Teamwork
- Leadership
- Mental Toughness
- Adaptation
2. Post-Service Transition
**TAP Preparation**

**Q. Was the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) helpful to you?**

72% indicated had TAP while 28% said TAP does not apply. Of those that had TAP:

- 33% said TAP was not helpful
- 37% said TAP was somewhat helpful
- 30% said TAP was helpful or very helpful

**Q. Do you have any recommendations for TAP? (Optional)**

- The VA briefing was outstanding at Fort Polk. The TAP portion could have benefited from a mock interview, and one-on-one resume and cover letter counseling.
- YES. Increase knowledge/awareness of the Yellow Ribbon Program and provide a complete list of schools.
- Navy boot camp was 8 weeks, TAP was one week. There needs to be training on how to be a civilian again taught by civilians. Not the military and not some garbage government contractor.
Top Ranked Key Challenges in Transition

Q. From the following choices, what are the key challenges in your transition? Rank top five.

1. Navigating VA administration or benefits (41%)
2. Getting a job (42%)
3. Financial struggles (27%)
4. Getting socialized to civilian culture (27%)
5. Depression (22%)

Contradictory information from different sources (19%)
Employment preparation (18%)
Disability (18%)
Civilian day-to-day life (17%)
Understanding GI Bill benefits (17%)
Post-Traumatic Stress (PTS) and combat stress (16%)
Transition Assistance Program inadequate (15%)
Using and accessing GI Bill benefits (14%)
Mental health issues and behavioral adjustment (12%)
Transferring military course credits (12%)
Family, children & dependent obligations (11%)
Information about education opportunities (11%)
Anger management (10%)
Stigma of being a service member (10%)
College/university culture and climate (9%)
Physical injuries (7%)
Academic preparation (6%)
Education administrative obstacles (6%)
Getting along with others (5%)
Military Sexual Trauma (MST) (4%)
Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) (3%)
Other (2%)

Top ranked challenges revolve around Administration/ Benefits, Employment, Assimilation, and Wellness.

Top 5 Ranked Key challenges:
- Navigating VA administration or benefits
- Getting a job
- Financial struggles
- Getting socialized to civilian culture
- Depression
- Skills translation
Helpful Transitional Resources

Q. How helpful were the following resources in your transition? Rate only those relevant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Not helpful</th>
<th>Helpful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family and friend support system</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University G.I. bill processing assistance</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University administration</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran friendly policies on campus</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran service organizations (e.g. IAVA,</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health care services</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic advising</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran peer network</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military credit transfers</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal veterans’ campus organizations (e.g.</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faith based supports</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability services</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University covering for benefits delay</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help with college application process</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standardized test waivers (e.g. ACT, SAT)</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health services</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information on school selection (e.g. college</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chain of command</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military skill translators</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internships and mentoring</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other, please specify</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment recruitment firms (e.g. Orion)</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Administration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran friendly policies on campus</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran service organizations (65%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic advising (62%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Health care services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Disability services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Academic advising</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mental health services</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>University Administration</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Veteran friendly policies on campus</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran service organizations (65%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic advising (62%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Educations’ Role in Post-Service Transition

Q. How much do you agree with the following statement: education should play a role in post-service transition?

- Strongly Agree: 74%
- Agree: 18%
- Neutral: 7%
- Disagree: 0%
- Strongly Disagree: 1%
### Sources of Information Most Valuable

**Q: What sources of information about your transition were most valuable? Select all that apply.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government websites, VA network, and online sources</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal contact with individuals from college/university</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information from college/university</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family members or friends</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veterans network and Veteran Services</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military sources and information/education</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information from teachers or guidance</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education liaisons on bases</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any additional sources, please specify</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College ranking sources (US News &amp; World Report)</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College guidebooks</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertisement in media</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Top sources of valuable information:**

- Government websites, VA network, and online sources (33%)
- Personal contact with individuals from college/university (31%)
- Information from college/university websites (27%)
- Family members or friends (27%)
3. Post-Service Academic Goals, Motivations, and Barriers
Pursuing Higher Education

Q: Do you want to pursue higher education or training?

Q: What are your goals for your current or future education? Select all…

- Majority (53%) currently enrolled in school either full-time or part-time and 17% are planning to enroll in future.
- Over 19% have already completed their educational goals
- 7% unsure about future plans
- 4% do not want to pursue higher education or training

Top 3 reasons:
1. Too expensive (39%)
2. Disability & health issues (28%)
3. Benefits used up (26%)

Q: If no or unsure, why? Select all that apply.

- Too expensive
- Disability & health issues
- Benefits used up
- Already met education goals
- Don't have time
- Other
- Do not feel confident that I
- Apprehensive/uncomfortable
- Family obligations
- Accessing benefits is too
- Academics competes with my
- Not interested in higher
- Academics are too hard/
- Lack of peer support
- Military experience is sufficient
- Transferring benefits to family/
- Transferring credits too hard
- Taking a break
- Transition is too hard
- Current military obligations
- Other
Motivations for Education or Training

Q: Identify your motivations for education or training programs? Select all that apply.

Top motivations for pursuing education or training:
• Career/job opportunities (86%)
• Self-improvement and personal growth (70%)
• Making money/Improve economic status (68%)
• Professional advancement (55%)
• Make use of benefits (51%)
Q: Of problems or barriers identified, rank those that you have selected up to five.

Top ranked problems or barriers hindering pursuit or achieving education goals:

- Lack of financial resources/Financial burden (59%)
- Personal/family obligations (31%)
- GI Bill benefits expire before I complete my degree (28%)
- Conflict between job and school (25%)
- Health/disability issues (23%)
- Bureaucracy associated with VA paperwork and processing (22%)
4. Academic Experience: Perception & Culture
Comfortable at School

Q: Do you feel comfortable sharing your experiences as a veteran/service member at your school?

Majority (79%) said they feel comfortable sharing their experience as a servicemember at school.

Top reasons were:
- proud of service (82%)
- part of identity (80%)
- expect to be well received by peers (29%)
- expect to be well received by faculty/staff (29%)
- other (9%)

Q. Why do you feel comfortable sharing your experiences as a veteran/service member at your school?

- Proud of service: 82%
- It’s part of my identity: 80%
- Expect to be well received by peers: 29%
- Expect to be well received by faculty/staff: 29%
- Friends know me already: 20%
- I get benefits on campus: 9%
- Other: 6%
Not Comfortable at School: Why?

Q: Do you feel comfortable sharing your experiences as a veteran/service member at your school?

The majority (79%) said they feel comfortable sharing their experience as a veterans/service member at school:

- But one in five (or 21%) do not feel comfortable.
- Top reasons why were:
  - Other’s naivety or lack of familiarity with military service (62%)
  - Different maturity levels & worldliness of students on campus (59%)
  - Stigma/prejudice/bias (51%)
  - Age differences (50%)
  - Mismatch between military and academic culture (48%)
  - Conflicting political ideology or worldview with faculty/students (44%)
  - Different standards of professional behavior on campus (30%)
  - Fear of judgments and repercussions (28%)
  - Internal feelings and concerns about service (25%)
  - Fresh start/new identity (21%)
  - Other (12%)

Q: Why do you not feel comfortable sharing your experiences as a veteran/service member at your school?
Top Ranked Problems Encountered at School

Q: Of those selected, rank those that you have selected up to five.

Age differences (26%)
Lack of financial resources (26%)
Working full time job (25%)
Family responsibilities (22%)
Transferring academic credits (17%)
Few veterans resources on campus (16%)
Administrating veterans benefits (14%)
Taking classes not related to my major/area of study/ (13%)
Lack of understanding from faculty about military (13%)
Being a commuter student (13%)
Lack of "hands on" learning (10%)
Inadequate academic preparation (10%)
Child care responsibilities (9%)
Conflict or discomfort with faculty (8%)
Inadequate study skills or time management (8%)
Difficulty in selecting courses (8%)
Lack of opportunity to connect with other veterans (8%)
Unsure of my career goals (8%)
Conflict or discomfort with other students (7%)
Education interrupted due to service obligations (6%)
Intolerance on campus of different worldviews (6%)
Registering for classes (6%)
Classes too large (6%)
Lack of support for disabilities (5%)
Other (2%)
Helpful Campus Resources

Q: Rate how helpful these resources are for your education success. Rate only those that are relevant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Not helpful</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Helpful/Very helpful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flexible class schedules</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waiving registration fees</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preferred classroom settings and instruction</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military/veteran friendly campus</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedicated veterans office &amp; administrators on campus</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Hands-on&quot; learning</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priority registration</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veterans supportive faculty</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer or professional tutoring</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic advising/counseling</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic preparation courses &amp; remediation</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedicated staff with past military experience</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internships or research opportunity</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veterans lounge or resource center</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study groups</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veterans student support groups (e.g., SVA)</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veterans orientation program</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career services and counseling</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselors trained to meet veterans’ mental health needs</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application of service experiences toward degree</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health &amp; disability services tailored for veterans</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dept. of Veterans Affairs programs on campus (e.g.</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special on-campus social or cultural events for veterans</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific veterans programming (Veterans Legal Clinic)</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veterans specific courses</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedicated housing for veterans</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Top helpful campus resources:
Flexible class schedules (78%)
Waiving registration fees (78%)
Preferred classroom settings and instruction (78%)
Military/veteran friendly campus (77%)
Dedicated veterans office & administrators on campus (76%)
"Hands-on" learning (76%)
Priority registration (75%)
Veterans supportive faculty (74%)
Peer or professional tutoring (71%)
Academic advising/counseling (71%)
STEM Research & Findings

Premises & Preliminary Findings:

- Education and career trajectories of military servicemembers post-service comparison with civilian STEM pipeline (degrees and occupations).
- Changing nature of military service is increasingly technical and scientific.
- **Recommendation:** Policy mechanisms needed to link ample hands-on science and technology training and experience during service with STEM pipeline.
STEM Findings

- Women servicemembers more likely to pursue STEM degrees post-service.
- Servicemembers more likely to pursue STEM education & careers vs. civ.
- STEM education & careers lead to higher salaries

**STEM MOS:** Servicemembers...
- 43% respondents have STEM MOS assignments
- Those with STEM MOS more likely to pursue STEM degrees after service
- Those with STEM MOS: more likely to say military left a lasting impression on career goals and promoted interest in STEM.

**Active Duty:** Those serving longer more likely to report military impact on career goals and interest in STEM
- Time on Active Duty positively related to desire to pursue education after service and likelihood of choosing STEM degree.

**Positive Experiences in Military:** Those with positive military experiences more likely to report military impact on career goals and interest in STEM
Public Value Theory
Premises & Findings:

- Finding: public service continues after military service has ended among servicemembers: most are employed in public sector (49%), followed by private sector at 37%, non-profit sector at 8%.
- Post-9/11 GI Bill and higher ed. outcomes for veterans as public value
- GI Bill is a policy lever designed to encourage volunteering for military service—and ultimately contributes to greater public interest in an all-volunteer vs. compulsory force
- Military service and benefits may encourage public service and public value of service generally and in Veterans post-service transition.
- Results: Education benefits most common motivation to encourage individuals to join the military.
Public Value Theory

- Servicemembers who join military to serve their country more likely to report positive overall experience of national service.
- Respondents who join to earn GI Bill ed. benefits are more likely to use those benefits—but benefits use does not influence the overall military experience.
- Military experience influences ed. motivations: those who joined to earn education benefits more likely to pursue education to help society.
- Those with service-connected injuries are more likely to pursue education to help society.
- Underrepresented groups (African American, Latino) are more likely to pursue education to help society.
- Veterans Preference dramatically increases likelihood of selecting a public sector job
6. Survey Two, Higher Education Perspectives
Survey 2: Campus Policies & Programs for Student Veterans’ Success Survey

Overview: Institutional profile & self-assessment of how schools manage their military students—active duty, veterans, family members.

- Targets campus-based Veterans Program Administrators & Certifying Officials.
- Given institution-wide scope of survey, multiple admin. staff in different roles & offices (i.e., registrar, bursars, research) will contribute to survey.
- Findings capture schools’ challenges, innovations, best practices in vets educational attainment; inform our recommendations; build national dialogue.

Approach:

- Sample: Developed database of academic administrators (2,335 campuses) that serve servicemembers across U.S. using Dept. of Education IPEDS data (1437 four years; 898 community colleges); and VA’s Web Enabled Approval Management System (WEAMS).
- Each POC received our email (10/1/2014) with link to online Qualtrics survey & fillable PDF survey response form; Reminder emails sent 2-weeks later (10/15)
- As of June 2015: Number of responses 451; Completed 79; Percentage that completed the survey is 18%
- Of the 2,335 campuses that received Survey 2, only 19% had responded (n=451) and 3% completed the survey (n=79)
Survey 2: Preliminary Findings (cont.)

Multiple extensions were given for Survey 2: Oct 2014, Dec 2014, Feb 2015.

**Disappointing** Response Rates → Colleges/Universities not participating in survey have identified main reasons due to:
- No data collection mechanisms/means
- No staff support or time available to complete survey
- No significant veterans population
- Programs is in development/transition
- “Not ready yet”

College/University administrators want to talk with us: email correspondence is being tracked for survey response—these emails are *qualitative data.*

- Received various emails from universities and colleges requesting more time for survey
- Low response rate was another reason for extension.
Preliminary Results:

### Demographics

**Types of Institutions**

- Public college or university (e.g., West Point, California) - 40%
- Private non-profit college or university (e.g., Dartmouth) - 33%
- Private for-profit college or university (e.g., American) - 2%
- Technical Institute or trade school (e.g., ITT Tech) - 4%
- Community college - 35%
- Certificate, Training, or Licensing Program - 9%

### Leadership

**Current or Former Servicemembers in Senior Leadership at School?**

- Yes - 27%
- No - 56%
- Do not know - 17%

**Is there a central place for veterans’ leadership and high achievement?**

- Yes in both - 46%
- Yes in leadership - 10%
- Yes in achievement - 4%
- No - 40%

### Military Friendly Campus

**Do you believe that your institution is military friendly?**

- Strongly Agree - 36%
- Agree - 47%
- Neutral - 13%
- Disagree - 1%
- Strongly disagree - 3%

### Data and Program Assessments

**Conduct assessments, reviews, or elicit feedback from servicemembers on their educational experience?**

- Yes - 50%
- No - 19%
- Do not know - 9%

---

Note: 0% indicated “Negative”
Preliminary Results:

**Student Veterans Challenges**

In your opinion, what are the most significant challenges for student veterans in higher education as compared to nonveterans students?

- Working full time job: 60% (57%)
- Lack of financial resources: 49% (49%)
- Available veterans resources on campus: 49% (47%)
- Conflict or discomfort with other students: 46% (46%)
- Lack of understanding or support from faculty about: 43% (46%)
- Inadequate academic preparation: 41% (41%)
- Career uncertainty: 40% (39%)
- Being a commuter student: 30% (37%)
- Poor supports in administering veterans benefits: 27% (27%)
- Lack of opportunity to connect with other veterans: 26% (24%)
- Taking classes that are not directly related to major: 20% (19%)
- Class size larger than expected: 17% (14%)
- Registering for classes: 10% (9%)

(From 451 Institutions) (Note few institutions answered every question)
Survey 2: Servicemember to Student Survey (cont.)

(From 451 Institutions)
(Note few institutions answered every question)

Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements:

Veterans help to improve diversity on campus
- Agree: 96%
- Neither: 3%
- Disagree: 7%

Veterans play an important role on campus
- Agree: 85%
- Neither: 12%
- Disagree: 3%

Veterans support is pervasive and robust on campus
- Agree: 55%
- Neither: 35%
- Disagree: 10%

Student veterans fit in on campus and in classrooms
- Agree: 85%
- Neither: 15%
- Disagree: 0%

Academic leadership is actively involved in veterans'
- Agree: 54%
- Neither: 29%
- Disagree: 21%

Faculty understand veterans issues and needs
- Agree: 56%
- Neither: 29%
- Disagree: 15%

Different units share information and support
- Agree: 79%
- Neither: 13%
- Disagree: 7%

Veterans in the classroom help sensitize faculty and
- Agree: 68%
- Neither: 29%
- Disagree: 3%

Veterans policies and initiatives are visible across
- Agree: 58%
- Neither: 20%
- Disagree: 23%

Student veterans are given opportunities to succeed
- Agree: 91%
- Neither: 7%
- Disagree: 0%

Student veterans have a "go to" person on campus
- Agree: 97%
- Neither: 6%
- Disagree: 2%

Student veterans have accessible health & mental
- Agree: 85%
- Neither: 9%
- Disagree: 6%

We are known as a veteran-friendly campus in the
- Agree: 83%
- Neither: 17%
- Disagree: 0%

We are known as a veteran-friendly campus in the

- Agree: 83%
- Neither: 17%
- Disagree: 0%
Interview Instrument 3: Stakeholders & Thought Leaders for Inclusive Higher Education

- 78 universities selected for site visits based on innovative practices, servicemember population & commitment to serving student veterans.
- Email invitations for research team campus visit to conduct focus group/qualitative interviews on veterans & programs.
- To date, we have completed 12 site visits (15% of sample).
- Site visits: October 2014 through June 2015.
- **Deliverable**: Semi-structured open-ended interview questions that probe school’s policies, programs, challenges, best practices from administrators’ perspective. Interview protocol questions designed to encourage organic discussion among respondents with limited intervention from the moderators.
- **Training**: Research Team trained on focus group interviewing.
Instrument 3: College/University Site Visits (cont.)

Research Question 1: What do campus administrators say about their policies, practices and programs to help student veterans succeed and excel?

Bringing Rigorous Research to the Subject of Veterans Education:

Calling the question: Which universities have the most effective and innovative policies supporting the success of student veterans?

Who can provide knowledge/experience with this issue? Marry up data from survey 1, survey 2, and National Student Clearinghouse, using a uniquely developed selection criteria, to identify top 20-25 institutions, and interview key staff members and thought leaders to capture the specifics of their approach in supporting student veterans.

How do we amplify the message?

Best practices and innovative initiatives gleaned from the site visits will be published on a publicly accessible online toolkit.
Research Question 2: What are veterans program leaders and administrators’ perceptions of student veterans’ needs, challenges & supports in the higher education domain?

As of June 2015:
- Number of campuses contacted for site visits: 78
- Number of site visits: 12
- Percentage of completion: 15%
Google Research Partners: Awardee

Institute for Veterans and Military Families

Google

Student Veterans of America

Veterans of Foreign Wars

The Posse Foundation