BENEDICTINE UNIVERSITY

STUDENT-SOLDIERS EVALUATE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE POST-9/11 GI BILL AT TWO INSTITUTIONS: A CRITICAL EXAMINATION.

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

IN

EDUCATION AND HEALTH SERVICES

BY

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Without the support of my family and close friends during this adventure, none of this would have been possible. Thank you for being there when I needed you – through the good days and the bad – always faithful!
I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America,

and to the republic for which it stands,

one nation under God, indivisible,

with liberty and justice for all.
DEDICATION

To my father and mother who sacrificed their futures to invest in my education, and provided me the opportunity to excel and experience the American Dream. Thank you!

To the brave veterans for protecting our great country and maintaining our freedom to conduct a quantitative methodology like these and share the results within the academic and military communities alike.
PSALM 23 (A psalm of David)

Soldier’s Prayer

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

He makes me lie down in green pastures,

He leads me beside quiet waters, He restores my soul.

He guides me in paths of righteousness for His name’s sake.

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I will fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.

You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life,

and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Amen
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GLOSSARY

ACE – American Council on Education

AASCU – American Association of State Colleges and Universities

AVF – All Volunteer Force

CLEP – College Level Equivalency Programs

DoD – U. S. Department of Defense

DCoE – Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury

FY – Fiscal Year

GAO – U. S. Government and Accountability Office

IHEP – Institute for Higher Education Policy

MOS – Military Occupational Specialties

NAPSA – National Association of Pupil Services Administrators

NAS – National Academy of Sciences

OEF – Operation Enduring Freedom

OIF – Operation Iraqi Freedom

PL – Public Law

PTSD – Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

SOC – Service-members Opportunities Colleges

SRA – Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944

SVA – Student Veterans of America
TBI – Traumatic Brain Injury

U. S. Armed Forces – Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marines, and Navy

U.S.VA – U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs

VFW – Veterans of Foreign War
ABSTRACT

This quantitative study explores the factors that contribute to the academic success of soldier-students using the Post-9/11 GI Bill for undergraduate programs. The perspective of military members transitioning from military to civilian life is examined through educational benefits offered by the Post-9/11 GI Bill. The development and implementation of the GI Bill gives qualified military veterans the opportunity to receive a college education and provide a higher standard of living for their families. The GI Bill helped remove the national stigma of a college education being available only to those who could afford it, and assured reinvestment of an economic value to military veterans for generations to come. This study offers common conclusions on how institutions for higher education are addressing the needs of returning veterans during their transitioning process. It also suggests the responsibility of these institutions to go beyond the education of returning military members and address the social, mental, and physical elements of the soldier-student’s overall well-being.
CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

_Born of Controversy: It has been heralded as one of the most significant pieces of legislation ever produced by the federal government—one that impacted the United States socially, economically and politically._

*But it almost never came to pass.* (GI Bill History, 2009, p. 1)

At 24 years of age, a soldier, on average, has moved from home, family, and friends; has resided in two other states; has traveled the world (deployed); has been promoted four times; has bought a new car and wrecked it; has married and had children; has had relationship and financial problems; has seen death; has been responsible for dozens of soldiers; has maintained millions of dollars’ worth of equipment; and now is paid less than $40,000 a year. (General Peter Chiarelli, as cited in Murphy, 2012, p. 19).

Since its inception in 1944, the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act (SRA) of 1944 was designed and reconfigured several times because of the social and political demand for college-educated students in the workplace and the competitive global environment. “The fears no longer involved bullets and bleedings and death, but professors and textbooks and midterms…but about envisioning a new century, building a career, a life, a country” (Humes, 2006, p. 3). According to Thomas, (2009, p. 12, as cited in Officer & Williamson, 2009) military personnel who served during World War II were entitled to $500 a year toward their college tuition. This is comparable to 2008 college tuition of $6,117. The higher payment a veteran received allowed for greater access to better known institutions around the country. According to Plunkett (personal communication, January 20, 2011), what most people don’t know is that the most expensive university in the U. S. in 1944 was Harvard; their tuition was $500 per year.
The world of higher education, as we know it, is constantly changing and the demographics of college bound students are beginning to mirror that phenomenon. The United States is experiencing an influx of separated military members—including active, retired, reserves, National Guard, and veteran status personnel—enrolling in college related classes, certificate programs, on-the-job training, professional licensing/certifications, and nontraditional programs at a faster rate than ever imaginable. According to the American Council on Education (ACE, 2008), campuses across the country are on the cusp of serving more than 2 million military veterans as they return from the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq (p. 1).

Military members bring with them a magnitude of real world experiences that can provide quality to the higher education environment. However, these military personnel members are diverse from their traditional classmates, and some require different services from their institutions, professors, and classmates alike. “Part of the problem could simply be a slightly older service-member trying to relate to a room full of 18 year olds” (Plunkett, 2008, p. 28). At the same time, veterans feel as if their normal day-to-day previous lifestyle has changed and they may have difficulty explaining their experiences and needs.

Steltenpohl and Shipton (1986) found that campus personnel who are indifferent to the issues of the students who are returning from military service may also be unprepared to address the needs of other returning adult students. “This support has to be more than a passive welcome. It must also be an active invitation to pursue higher education and a commitment to support those who do” (Wright, 2008, p. 20). According to ACE (2010b), the return of our nation’s veterans from a combat environment places
higher education institutions in a challenging position as they work to ensure the success of this new group of students.

As a subpopulation of adult learners, military and veteran students also have unique challenges that other nontraditional students do not face. Veterans who served in combat may experience social and cognitive dissonance as they transition and assimilate to the civilian college environment. (Cook & Kim, 2009, p. 1)

The learning process occurs when a previously held idea is challenged with a new concept, providing the opportunity for changing the learner’s perspective. “Adults have acquired a coherent body of experience, assumptions, concepts, values, feelings, conditioned responses, a frame of reference that defined the world” (Mezirow, 1997, p. 5).

Malcolm Knowles is not only recognized as the father of andragogy, but also made significant contributions to the field of adult education. He published and wrote heavily on the needs and changing descriptions of adult learners. According to Knowles (1973), the andragogical theory is based on four key assumptions (pp. 45-49).

1. Changes in self-concept: As a person grows and matures, his self-concept moves from one of total dependency to one of increasing self-directedness.

2. The role of experience: As an individual matures, he accumulates an expanding reservoir of experiences that cause him to become an increasingly rich resource for learning, and at the same time provides him with a broadening base to which to relate new things.

3. Readiness to learn: As an individual matures, his readiness to learn is increasingly the product of his biological development and academic pressure, and is increasingly the product of the developmental tasks required for the performance of his evolving social roles.

4. Orientation to learning: Adults tend to have a problem-centered orientation to learning. He wants to apply tomorrow what he learns today, so his time perspective is one of immediacy of application.
Students must take on the responsibility of learning, but “in adult education and training, it seems to me, we have an obligation to help our students learn other proactive ways of learning. For in adult life, learning will take place, for most part, only if the learner takes the initiative” (Knowles, 1973, p. 173).

The world has changed radically in the past 25 years. Information technology, knowledge work, open systems, and large-scale changes are just a few of the lexicons of the past quarter century. Combine these with increases in medical science and human longevity, and adults have necessarily become viewed as dynamic and growing organisms. Adult development is a focus of concern on many fronts. From the perspective of learning, adults who are willing and able to learn are prized members of society. (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 1998, p. 180)

Higher education experiences will help change the overall individual over time. Learning and human behavior are connected because it is the life experience that provides a reference in that moment in time. “Our frame of reference often represents learning that is unintentionally assimilated from culture or derived from our primary caretakers. These frames of references represent who we are and our belief systems” (Tovar, 2002, p. 54). No matter what, “becoming critically reflective of one’s own assumptions is the key to transforming one’s taken-for-granted frame of reference, an indispensible dimension of learning for adapting to change” (Mezirow, 1997, p. 9). Simply stated, the learner may need to change his or her frame of reference to fully understand, appreciate, and value the experience in question.

Additional transition literature proposed by Schlossberg, Waters, and Goodman (1995), described transition as “Any event or nonevent that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions and roles” (p. 27). “This theory was developed to help frame and provide understanding and interventions for helping professionals who work with adults in transition” (Summers, 2002, p. 1). It can further be understood as
“adulthood is marked by a number of developmental tasks and transitions” (Powers, 2010, p. 78). You must listen and understand where the person’s point of view is coming from.

In order to fully appreciate the process, the learner “Is to make a backward and forward connection between what we do to things and what we enjoy or suffer from things in consequence” (Merriam & Clark, 1993, p. 130). This will allow for a greater appreciation of life experiences with endless opportunities for growth and development.

Today’s military composition is one of the most assorted the government has witnessed in more than a half a century. Males, females, and minorities are fighting the war side-by-side, and play a vital role in keeping America safe, both domestically and internationally. They have made the decision to volunteer for a good greater than their own.

And representativeness can take a whole host of forms - race, education, social status, income, region and so on. When you look at all of those, you find that the force is really quite representative of the country. (Garamone, 2005, p. 1)

Military members have different reasons why they volunteered and the influences that persuaded their decision. For many, it is a family tradition; for others it is a way out of a small town atmosphere, or to void criminal prosecution, learn more discipline, the signing bonuses, free world travel, education reimbursement, in a time of skyrocketing college tuition, or simply to honorably serve their country after the terrible events of September 11, 2001.

**Statement of the Problem**

Because of the significant number of veterans returning from both the Afghanistan and Iraq Wars, more than 2 million veterans are projected to be eligible for
the Post-9/11 GI Bill (ACE, 2008). The need to connect the veterans from the combat fields to the classrooms is vital for the stability of higher education.

Adult and continuing education has three basic functions in the military: To facilitate recruitment and retention of well-qualified personnel; to complement and supplement military training, providing the critical thinking skills and broader sociopolitical comprehension required of modern servicemembers; and to fulfill personal aspirations for education. (Anderson & Kime, 1990, p. vii)

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this quantitative study is to explore the factors that contribute to academic success of soldier-students using the Post-9/11 GI Bill for undergraduate programs. The perspective of military members transitioning from military to civilian life will be examined through educational benefits offered by the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

When soldiers leave the military, they can disassemble weapons, and they understand basic tactics, but what they lack are the skills that will make them relevant in the job market. Higher education gives them the type of civilian mission they can apply themselves to, and that’s very important in allowing these people to re-assimilate. (Callaghan, 2008, p. 2)

How are higher education institutions addressing the educational, social, and physical needs of returning veterans? One of the major concerns is institutions not having qualified faculty and staff members or the resources “for helping those who have been in combat cope with the effects of PTSD, concentration problems, or special tutoring needs” (Plunkett, 2008, p. 28). A unique problem for veterans is being re-called to active duty. This disrupts their academic programs.

Disruptive deployments for military members are similar to the phenomenon of “stopping out” for the civilian college student. The term stopping out is used to refer to students who do not complete their plan of study within the normal time schedule, having skipped a term or more and then having returned to college. (Hoyt & Winn, 2004, p. 397)
Research Questions

The following questions will guide this research:

1. What are the various factors that influenced military members to enter into higher education programs after separating from military service?
2. What adjustments did these veterans encounter when transitioning from military service to higher education?
3. What college support services are available to these veterans, and how satisfied are they with the quality of these services?
4. What are the veterans’ perceptions of essential support services?

The following areas will be studied in helping to answer the study research questions:

1. Historical perspective.
2. Adjusting to academic life.
   a. Transitioning from a paramilitary organization with direct supervision to little or no support.
   b. Education barriers
3. Faculty dealing with the complexity of returning military members with possible special needs.
4. Stopping out.
5. Adult learning theories.
6. Transition theories.

Research Hypotheses

H₁ The soldier student will report that access to GI Bill benefits was a primary factor in the decision to enlist in the U.S. military.

H₂ The soldier student at a higher education institution will report the importance of military-specific student services in their transition from military-to-civilian life.

H₃ The greatest percentage of soldier students will report they are older than traditional college students.
Limitations of the Study

There is very limited published material on the subject of veterans and their use of the Post-9/11 GI Bill since 2009. Only the education and training benefits available under the GI Bill to qualified military veterans will be examined.

Even though the concepts are relevant to the soldier-students and their transitions, the written literature and educational theories were written well before the passage of the Post-9/11 GI Bill. In addition, the study examined the period of the Post-9/11 GI Bill from 2008 – 2011 at a Community College and For-Profit University.

The terms hope and spirituality are important to discuss because of the association with trauma. This study mentions, but does not describe in full detail the terms spirituality and traumatic events that soldier-students may experience. A future study can be developed for future investigation because soldier-student development will consist of “vocational, professional, intellectual, cognitive, social, civic, political, moral, ethical, spiritual, and religious dimensions, and focus on values clarification and character development” (Trautvetter, 2007, pp.238-239). The questions that concerns soldier-students include:

Who am I? What is my purpose? What is the meaning of life? What kind of person do I want to become? What sort of world do I want to help create? When we speak of students’ “spiritual quest,” we are essentially speaking of their efforts to seek answers to such questions. (Lindholm, et al., 2011, p.3)

According to Webster’s dictionary hope is defined as “a desire accompanied by expectation of or belief in fulfillment” (2012, p. 1). In addition Lopez et al., (2004) continues the rich meaning of hope as

Individuals’ perceptions of their capabilities to (a) clarify conceptualize goals; (b) develop the specific strategies to reach those goals (pathways
thinking); and (c) initiate and sustain the motivation for using those strategies (agency thinking). The pathways and agency components are both necessary, but neither by itself is sufficient to sustain successful goal pursuit. As such, pathways and agency thoughts are additive, reciprocal, and positively related, but they are not synonymous (p. 388).

The use of spirituality to deal with traumatic events is not a new phenomenon to researcher. Previous studies conducted by (Levin & Taylor, 1997; Poloma & Gallup, 1991; Princeton Religion Research Center 1984, 1994, Veroff, Kukla, & Douvan 1981) focus on “the use of religion or spirituality to help cope is common among Americans” (Ali, Peterson, & Huang, 2003, p. 30). Another explanation by Tovar (2002) states “people often become more spiritual as they search for solace during difficult times. Spirituality is more than just comfort; there is strong evidence that it plays a key role in maintaining good health” (p. 99). Maintaining good health includes, but is not limited o physical and emotional well-being. “The components of spirituality include beliefs about nonmaterial aspects of experience, about meaning and hope, about connection with something beyond oneself, and about awareness of all aspects of life” (Pearlman & Saakvitne, 1995, p. 287).

Veterans Affected

The GI Bill covers five distinct periods in U. S. history in which the bill was enacted for socioeconomical growth and development. They include (a) World War II, (b) the Korean War, (c) the Vietnam War, Montgomery GI Bill, (d) Desert Storm/Persian Gulf War, and (e) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF)/Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). Only members from OEF/OIF will be surveyed.
Significance of the Study

This study is designed to make veterans aware of their educational opportunities for their sacrifice and commitment to the U. S. Armed Forces. At the same time, higher education institutions can gain significant insight into some of the current barriers affecting returning veterans and what colleges and universities are doing to assist soldiers as they make the transition.

As a subpopulation of adult learners, military and veteran students also have unique challenges that other nontraditional students do not face. Veterans who served in combat may experience social and cognitive dissonance as they transition and assimilate to the civilian college environment. Some veterans will return from combat with physical and psychological readjustment challenges and will require academic and disability accommodations to successfully reintegrate. (Cook & Kim, 2009, p. 1)

Government leaders can use the findings of this study to determine the strengths and weaknesses of educational programs, gain valuable insight into current issues regarding the Post-9/11 GI Bill, the transition from soldier to student, and how to help military personnel reintegrate into society through the use of adult education.

U. S. higher education is at a pivotal point within American history. Currently the world of education is experiencing a growing trend in academic fields such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. These fields—coupled with the growing demand for intelligence, real world experiences, cultural diversity, and global competition—are the driving factors for successful professions. “Americans who once competed among themselves for good jobs and economic supremacy are now vying against competitors from China, India, Pakistan, the Ukraine and other distant points” (Friedman, 2006, p. 6).
Differences Between a Community College and a For-Profit University

This study is significant to the community college and for-profit sectors of higher education to better understand the similarities and differences between the two as they are described in further detail.

A community college and for-profit university do in fact provide a variety of learning opportunities. “Comparisons made between the community colleges and for-profit institutions are more limited than some may suggest” (Mullin, 2010, p. 4). Community colleges are, by their definition, public institutions that receive local, state, and federal funds to help operate their campuses that “ensure they are responding to educational, workforce, and community needs” (Mullin, 2010, p. 4). They, in fact, help to enroll the largest number of students in higher education because of the open-admission policy, lower tuition costs, and transferability to a 4-year, degree-granting institutions.

Community colleges are creations of their local publics and were established to respond to that public’s needs. A variety of funding and governance structures have been created to ensure that there is a tight fit between community and institutional priorities. It could be said that community colleges do not choose to offer programs but rather that needed programs essentially choose the colleges. (Mullin, 2010, p. 7)

For this study, a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) was selected next to a large metropolitan area. “Tuition, the availability of financial aid, and proximity to home are the most important factors for Hispanic students in the college choice process (Benitez, 1998).

For-profit institutions are described as being “owned and operated by people or corporations” (Mullin, 2010, p. 4). They have a different organizational structure, higher tuition costs, operate around a business model, and are publicly traded.
For-profit institutions utilize a strategic business model that focuses upon a flexible curriculum. For example, for-profit institutions will concentrate on block scheduling throughout the day. According to Wilson (2010), classes are grouped into three sessions per day. These groupings help accommodate a variety of students. In addition, the institution will add more classes if the demand calls for it. Student enrollment is constantly on-going throughout the semester and calendar year. “Decision should not be based on the needs and desires of the agents [institutional managers] but rather on the interests of those individuals whom the agent represents [shareholders]” (Halloran & Lanser, 1985, p. 5):

For-profit institutions have no public mandate to meet a defined set of articulated needs and therefore can offer programs as they like, with an eye on the bottom line. They have the advantage of being more specialized than community colleges, although there are some comprehensive for-profit institutions. Ideally, market forces work to ensure that these programs provide needed opportunities, but many observers believe there is erratic public oversight to ensure that this is the case. The phenomenal increase in the growth of the for-profit industry has been driven by online education. To an increasing extent, for-profit higher education is distance education. (Mullin, 2010, p. 7)

For this study, one individual suburban for-profit campus was surveyed, but this campus is still part of the entire system.

A community college and for-profit institution often complement one another.

With the increase in demands for new academic programs and flexible program format options, for-profit institutions have capitalized on veterans as potential students.

According to (Kishner, 2007, pp. 137-140; as cited in Bentley 2011), some of the features distinguishing the for-profit from a traditional institution have to do more with governance than money:
1. Challenge traditional universal model where principles of shared governance and academic freedom exist.

2. Decisions are made by governing boards and CEO’s not department chairs and faculty.

3. Top-down approach defines what is taught, how it is taught, to whom it is taught, and who will teach.

4. Organizational structure allows them to respond nimbly to new markets and changing conditions – adding and deleting programs as needed.

5. To be successful, for-profits must match programs to labor market demands.

6. State and federal regulations and accreditation policies require them to match students’ skills and interests to programs where they can graduate and find a job.

Additionally, Bentley (2011), it is estimated that for-profit institutions will spend as much as one third of expenses geared toward creative marketing strategies, recruiting, and other institutional incentives. The for-profit institutions can be described as experiencing a growth in student enrollment and degree plans. By 2010 there were 3,000 for-profit institutions with 40 % owned by one of the 15 large, publically traded companies (Bennett, et al., 2010).

The 15 largest for-profits institutions as cited include:

1. Apollo Group (Including University of Phoenix)
2. Education Management Corporation
3. Career Education Corporation
4. Corinthian Colleges
5. DeVry
6. Kaplan Education
7. ITT Educational Services
8. Strayer Education
9. Laureate
10. Bridgepoint Education
11. Capella Education
12. Lincoln Educational Services
13. Grand Canyon Education
14. American Public Education
Definitions of Key Terms

Active Duty: The time a service-member is working full-time in a military occupational capacity within the U. S. or abroad.

Armed Forces: “Would be comprised of a small professionalized component and, in an emergency, a larger group of citizen-soldiers…armed and ready to defend the state against attacks from abroad or usurpations of power from within” (Bicksler, Gilroy, & Warner, 2004, p. 206).

GI Bill: The educational sections under Public Law (PL) and also of the Post-9/11 GI Bill for active or retired eligible military members. The references to the GI Bill in this study apply to the educational components from WWII and all subsequent versions including the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

Guard: Military trained personnel who are “under the jurisdiction of the state governor for peacetime tasks such as hurricanes and floods; and under federal jurisdiction for missions such as war or conflict” (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2010, p. 3).

Recruiting incentive: A program that rewards newly hired personnel to join one of the branches within the Armed Forces. “In fact, if you enlist in the military, you may be eligible for huge cash bonuses. Your actual bonus will depend on the service branch, specific job specialty—also known as a rating (Navy), AFCS (Air Force), or MOS (Army and Marine Corps)—and length of enlistment contract” (military.com).

Reserves: Are understood as having a specific purpose within the military. “To support the Commander in Chief” (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2010, p. 3). The citizen-
soldier concept provides specialty trained and equipped reservists to protect life and property anywhere there is U.S. interest (Guard, 2010, p. 1).

Student-Soldier/student veteran: Any student currently enrolled in a higher education program, receiving on-the-job training or college credits, and is eligible to receive an honorable discharge from the U. S. Armed Forces for service to their country. This term applies to National Guard or Reserve members for the purpose of this study.

Tuition: Monetary payments, fees, and other costs associated with academic work both on and off the institution’s campus grounds.

U. S. Code (USC): The essential source of all federal laws is the U. S. Constitution and its related components; however, the primary source “of authority and jurisdiction for federal agencies is federal statutes” (DHS, 2007, p. 3). Contained within the federal statutes, or U. S. Code (USC), is the authority of specific agencies to use regulations during the course of the implementation to establish specific authority and regulatory oversight in specific statutes. The USC is organized around various topics and subcategorized under 51 titles. These titles are reviewed, approved, and “published by the Office of the Law Revision Counsel of the U.S. House of Representatives” (U. S. Government Printing Office, 2010, para. 1). The U.S. Code is published every six years since 1934.

Veteran: A service-member who received an honorable discharge or medical discharge certificate.
CHAPTER 2 – REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

Historical Perspective: Early Form of GI Benefits

In the calling for brave men and women to join the Armed Forces since as early as the Revolutionary War, “it had been the policy of the Congress to reward the civilian-soldiers of our wars—the veterans—with certain benefits” (Bradley, 1983, p. 446). It is estimated that more than 39 million veterans have served our great country in some military capacity. These veterans have sacrificed substantial time away from family, friends, religious activities, work, school, and regular day-to-day activities in defending freedom for America. At the same time, many military members have paid the ultimate sacrifice and received accolades posthumously; a sacrifice that is deeper and rooted in tradition more than any other sector of our society.

Obviously, the real world is one of blends, irrationalities, and incongruities: actual personalities, institutions, and beliefs do not fit into neat logical categories. Yet neat logical categories are necessary if man is to think profitably about the real world in which he lives and derive from its lessons for broader application and use. (Huntington, 1957, p. 7)

No matter what war or conflict our soldiers participated in, they were rewarded with some form of compensation. “In the aftermath of major wars, invariably a long series of laws sprang up, each adding to, subtracting from, or in other ways modifying the benefits created by its predecessors” (Altschuler & Blumin, 2009, p. 13).

It has traditionally been the accepted practices for U. S. soldiers to follow the military tradition of the price of war. “The government estimates that 39 million Americans have served us in wartime since 1776. In the face of their sheer numbers and
the enormity of the debt we owe them, why have we ignored such people, scorned them,
and wanted to forget about them” (Severo & Milford, 1989, p. 15). By simple
understanding, war in and of itself, created a sense of reliance not only on the soldier’s
family, but on the community as a whole to help aid their livelihood affected by one’s
service to his or her country. However, regardless of the political attitude toward
veterans, many leaders have called for more attention to those who protect the nation’s
interests and global security. During President Theodore Roosevelt’s tenure he was often
heard mentioning benefits for veterans. This is exactly what the GI Bill sought to
accomplish by including early benefits for war related injuries, disabilities, pensions,
hardship circumstances, and other spouse/child dependant awards. American soldiers did
not go to war for the benefit of monetary gains.

The U. S. Government recognized an early version of the GI Bill and its related
legislation as seen in 1925 with the World War Adjusted Compensation Act or a
Soldier’s Bonus. According to mygibill.org, the law provided a bonus to veterans based
on the number of days they had served. However, there was a catch: Most veterans would
not receive a penny of the bonus until 20 years later. Service-members were given $1.00
per day for time spent within the continental United States and a $1.25 for time spent
overseas or commonly referred to as temporary duty assignment (TDY) for a maximum
of $1,500 per year. However the negative aspect of the initial legislation was that it was
not payable for almost 20 years and veterans could not collect their benefits until 1945.
The American economy was dealt a severe blow in 1929 with the Great Depression.
Veterans, like every other person in society, needed to survive and could not wait for the
government to issue their military funds. While many veterans found work, the majority
were abandoned and found themselves separated and in some instances deserted, from the normal civilian life they had before.

Veterans came to depend on the future investment plans, but needed immediate financial relief to continue supporting their families. As a result, in 1932, in the heart of the Great Depression, veterans marched the streets of the nation’s capital to protest their disapproval of their very own government and commander-in-chief. The turmoil and tension was so great that people got injured and, in some instances, killed. It was military soldiers turning on their comrades for official dispersal. Martial law was declared and the veterans did not get the bonuses they were looking for. Instead the veterans turned on members of Congress and “the despair they produced hung like a dust cloud that would not abate until, on December 7, 1941, a different crisis emerged” (Mettler, 2005, p. 15).

**The United States in the 1940s**

It is well known that many veterans wanted a quick return to the normal way of life after World War II (1939–1945). This meant spending time with family, friends, coworkers, and doing the ordinary things they did before they left for the war. The veterans were categorized as average Americans and lived a moderate lifestyle. Once the veterans returned home they needed immediate employment to support their families; the same families they had left behind for so long now needed them more than ever. The original intention of the GI Bill was to help balance the economy because of the large number of unemployed returning veterans and the fear that the economy would suffer reoccurring financial damage. The economy was just recovering from the Great Depression (1929 - early 1940s). The Great Depression had left an indelible image in the minds of millions of bankrupt Americans standing in lines for food and panhandling to
survive. The very fabric of the American culture was on the verge of collapse. At the same time, the government made a terrible mistake by not assisting returning World War I veterans; a problem which most people associate with the beginnings of the Great Depression. There could not be a mistake like this again with a larger unseen forecast and millions of demobilized veterans.

According to Ford and Miller (1995), President Roosevelt began to evaluate the ways in which he could aid the veterans in their postwar transitional process and allow the young military members to continue with their education and career training once they returned home. The original version of the GI Bill was reviewed extensively in both the oval office and in secrecy. President Roosevelt developed the Post War Readjustment Manpower Conference (PMC) with the help of his cousin, Frederick Delano. The committee had a unique composition which included representatives from the Labor, Education, War Departments, and a former administrative official of Harvard’s Graduate School of Education. After much debate and reflection with the veteran implementation plans after World War I, President Roosevelt redesigned the committee to include postwar plans. The initial report contained more than 96 suggestions, and at the heart of them was education and continued training for job placement. Under the direction of Brigadier General Osborn of the Army Services Forces, a template was redeveloped in which President Roosevelt could expand a comprehensive program. Members of Congress did not produce the immediate results that President Roosevelt was looking for and the American Legion “played a decisive role, initiating a campaign to make the bill more comprehensive” (Ford & Miller, 1995, p. 28). The American Legion was responsible for the lobbying efforts on Capitol Hill and creation of the bill’s original
language. The American Legion did an all-out campaign to inform every citizen, registered voter, and military family about the importance of the bill, and which members of Congress were in favor of it and which members opposed it. In a heated battle to save the future of the bill, the House committee was tied three to three. Schupp stated (personal communication, March 22, 2011) that this was one of the big reasons why the GI Bill almost did not pass. “Labeled the master plan, the GI Bill of Rights…short and graphic, the name easily caught the imagination of Congressman, servicemen, and the public and conveyed the right touch of emotion” (Olson, 1974, p. 16).

**Value of Higher Education and the Impact on the Economy**

No matter what type of academic institution the soldier-student decides to attend, the purpose of higher education is to:

Teach students how to think effectively. As they interact with the course content, students must learn general intellectual skills, such as observing, classifying, analyzing, and synthesizing. Such skills once acquired, can transfer to other situations. In this way, students gain intellectual autonomy…Education should provide students with knowledge and skills that enable them to earn a living and contribute to society’s production. (Lattuca & Stark, 2009, p. 8)

The purpose behind the GI Bill legislation focuses on men and women serving in one of the branches of the U. S. Military. If you invest your life for the freedom of America, America owes it to you to reinvest in your educational dreams. According to Schupp (personal communication, March 22, 2011) the GI Bill was the very first civil rights legislation; it did not say “only white men can go to college” or “only men can go to college,” it stated that all service-members who served can go to college.

Higher education institutions are preparing for the next generation of leaders in private and public sectors, competing for the global future, and providing the opportunity
for a lifelong learning process. “As the United States has moved from an industrial economy to a postindustrial, knowledge-based economy, higher education has emerged as the premier system for preparing the highly skilled workers our nation requires” (Desrochers, 2008, p. 1). The United States economy during the twentieth century relied primarily on an agricultural and manufacturing platform. However, there has been a shift toward an economy which requires workers with a set of diverse and talented work-place skills that include some form of higher education. The work structure as we know it has changed.

There are some who believe that we must try to turn back the clock on this new world; that the only chance to maintain our living standards is to build a fortress around America to stop trading with other countries, shut down immigration, and rely on old industries. I disagree. Not only is it impossible to turn back the tide of globalization, but efforts to do so can make us worse off. (Obama, 2008, para. 8)

In his 1821 autobiography, Thomas Jefferson wrote of the importance of education. In his memoirs, he described how such education would influence the nation’s democratic values, while simultaneously preserving individual liberties (IHEP, 1998, p. 8). More than 125 years later, authors such as John Dewey (as cited in IHEP, 1998) believed that education is vital for an economy’s welfare.

Thus, when the GI Bill was passed near the end of WWII, the law was justified in part as a way of ensuring that veterans would return to the workforce as productive, contributing citizens. This was thought to be a good way to avoid large-scale unemployment for returning veterans, which would have had serious negative impact on the nation’s economic and social stability. (IHEP, 1998, p. 8)

According to the Institute for Higher Education and Policy (IHEP, 1998), the array of higher education benefits includes a combination of individual and societal interests:
1. Economic
   a. Greater productivity
   b. Increased workforce flexibility
   c. Decreased reliance on government support
   d. Higher salaries
   e. Higher savings levels
   f. Improved working conditions
   g. Personal and professional mobility

2. Social
   a. Reduced crime rates
   b. Increased community service/contributions
   c. Appreciation for diversity
   d. Improved technology
   e. Improved health/life expectancy
   f. Better decision making
   g. More hobbies/leisure time activities (IHEP, 1998)

The benefits are exactly what the GI Bill has done for veterans, their families, and the U. S. economy. “Discussion of the benefits of higher education has its roots in the earliest days of American higher education” (IHEP, 1998, p. 7). The values of experiences service-members will gain as a result of their higher educational opportunities will help to “Add conspicuously to your career opportunities and modify your avocational interests... education is a social glue beyond income” (Malveaux, 2003, p. 5). “The experiences you encounter, the diverse persons you meet, all will have an impact in the kinds of friends and types of relationships you enjoy” (Chickering & Schlossberg, 1995, p.4). Today we are revisiting this same concept discussed several years ago and providing the opportunity for service-members to realize their own American Dreams.

**Servicemembers Opportunity College (SOC)**

A higher education organization that continues to maximize service-members’ unique learning experiences and provide college level credit for real world experience is
known as Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (SOC). SOC is defined as a consortium of 1,800 higher education institutions that provide educational opportunities for service-members and their families.

SOC operates with higher education institutions, the Department of Defense, and Active and Reserve Components of the Military Services to expand and improve postsecondary education opportunities (Servicemembers Opportunity College, 2010). These unique learning opportunities provides the service-member and their family members with flexible learning options as well as credit for previous training, life experiences, and increased mobility deployment.

SOC was developed and operates on three main principles: (a) Military personnel should share and be allowed the same educational opportunities as nonmilitary members of society; (b) educational programs and courses should be approved by a variety of educational institutions, not just colleges and universities; and (c) military personnel should receive some flexibility with respect to their programs and receive credit for prior learning. According to Plunkett (personal communication, February 20, 2011) never before was this educational incentive given to veterans for doing their job and also receiving credit. As a result the streamlining of college credits helps to reduce the amount of unnecessary and repetitive coursework.

American Council on Education (ACE) continues to work with the U.S. DoD and various higher education institutions by evaluating their military training and certificates for appropriate college credit equivalencies. In order to receive college credits, the following must be demonstrated: A thorough review of the academic material by subject-matter experts to analyze the content determines the appropriate level academic credit
that should be awarded. The transfer of credit is further described as vocational, lower
division, upper division, and graduate school (ACE, 2011). The U.S. DoD works with
higher education institutions to ensure that a variety of institutions recognize these credits
through the use of military registries. Each branch of the Armed Forces has its own or
shared organization that “validates a service-member’s military occupational experience
and training along with the corresponding ACE college credit recommendations” (Sailor
& Marine, 2010, p. 1). The organizations with this responsibility—Armed Forces
Transcript Organizations—are:

1. Army/American Council on Education Registry Transcript System (AARTS)
2. Sailor/Marine ACE Registry Transcript (SMART)
3. The Community College of the Air Force (CGAF)
4. Coast Guard Institution (CGI)

Providing maximum college credit offerings and designing unique degree
programs, allows service-members the ability to earn a college degree. Adult higher
education provides the opportunity for service-members to transition to the civilian
lifestyle. Academic instruction and an educational environment provide the opportunity
for service-members to make the transition from soldier to student.

The three great federal policy initiatives include the land-grant movement
of the 1860s, the decision to rely on universities for basic and applied
research during World War II, and the GI Bill of Rights following World
War II. These three initiatives taken together, more than all other policy
initiatives, have impacted the development of the American “system” of
higher education… (Kerr, 1994, p. 27)

Literature by Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research (as cited in
Chickering & Kuh, 2005), further suggests that service-members should be awarded
academic credit for prior learning with real world experiences:
The objective is to have them recognize and document their strengths instead of simply focusing on whatever academic limitations they may have. Focusing on the positive boosts self-esteem and provides a platform on which they can build additional strengths and competencies as they take advantage of whatever assistance they may need to perform at the desired levels. (Chickering & Kuh, 2005, p. 3)

College and university presidents would agree that the purpose of higher education is to prepare students to succeed in a society that is comprised of a variety of social and economic factors that make America so great.

Stated in the 1999 President’s Fourth of July Declaration on the Civic Responsibility of Higher Education, This country cannot afford to educate a generation that acquires knowledge without ever understanding how that knowledge can benefit society or how to influence democratic decision making. We must teach these skills and values of democracy, creating innumerable opportunities for our students to practice and reap the results of the real, hard work of citizenship. (Chickering & Stamm, 2002, p. 30)

Since 1972, thousands of military personnel and their family members have taken advantage of the opportunity of the higher education institutions that are a part of the consortium to advance their careers.

**The Veterans Readjustment Act or the Korean GI Bill**

The Veterans Readjustment Act, better known as the Korean GI Bill, was officially signed into law in 1952. Public Law 82-550 defines the bill as intentionally designed to benefit the veterans of the Korean War. According to Plunkett (personal communication, April 10, 2011) the Korean War is also known as the “Forgotten War” which lasted approximately from 1950 to 1953. Military personnel who (a) entered the war prior to February 1, 1955; (b) served a minimal of 90 days after June 27, 1950; and (c) received other than dishonorable discharges were eligible to receive benefits under the revised GI Bill (Ford & Miller, 1995, p. 13). Those benefits included a monthly fixed
income of $110 for a period not to exceed three years to cover the cost of school, books, and other associated fees.

It was believed that requiring the veteran to contribute to the costs of his/her education would encourage more careful spending. In addition, partially in response to alleged incidents of fraud and abuse by for-profit (proprietary) institutions of higher education (IHEs), each veteran received a lump sum payment from the VA instead of the VA making direct payments to IHEs. The program ended January 31, 1965. (Smole & Loane, 2008, p. 7)

According to All the Benefits of Service retrieved from military.com (2010), by 1965 approximately 1.2 million Korean veterans had taken advantage of and used the GI Bill for higher education with others using the bill for other educational programs, including specialty and occupational/vocational training. Educational benefits were made available to those veterans who served their country in an “active duty” status during war-time operations. The original purpose of the bill was to reward the civilian-soldiers of our wars—the veterans—with certain benefits and help balance their socioeconomic status to the civilian population once they returned home. “Thus by identifying their interests, planners have a clear standard by which to make these judgments if they are to play a progressive role in creating a more equal and humane society” (Cervero & Wilson, 1994, p. 21).

Veterans Readjustment Benefits Act or Vietnam Era Bill

The Veterans Readjustment Benefits Act, or Vietnam Era Bill, was officially signed into law in 1966 under the direction of President Lyndon Johnson Public Law 89-358 was intentionally designed to provide benefits retroactively to post-Korean War veterans and active Vietnam War veterans, giving them the opportunity to receive benefits while on active status. These veterans had to serve a minimum of 180 continuous
days after January 31, 1955 and receive anything other than a dishonorable discharge. This was much different than the previous requirements of 90 days. In order to be considered eligible for full benefits, a veteran had to serve 36 months (Thomas, 2009).

The bill itself allowed for a starting monthly benefit of $100 and would increase shortly thereafter. One of the biggest differences between Vietnam era veterans and those of the previous wars was the average age of service-members. According to Rumer (1990), the average age of combatants in World War II was 27, the Korean War was 23, and the Vietnam War was 19. As a result, the Vietnam Era GI Bill was not that successful. However the bill’s original intent was to attract more members into the armed forces. Military scholars will argue that the Vietnam Era GI Bill was unsuccessful because the government did a poor job on postwar demobilization and professional/mental health services that previous veterans received and benefited from.

Not until nearly 10 years after the state-by-state examination of the GI Bill and its usage, was it discovered that the changes from the Korean War bill to the Vietnam War bill payment plans were different. The government moved from a two payment system into a one payment system and unwrapped certain geographical patterns. “Public college costs were, on the average, very low; while private college costs had begun their rise, which outpaced the general inflation” (Feldman, 1974, p. 6). Many veterans found that the cost of a college education in the Midwest was more than the cost on the West Coast. **The Veterans’ Education and Employment Assistance Act.**

Under Public Law 94-502, The Veterans’ Education and Employment Assistance Act (VEAP) was established by the termination of the Vietnam Era GI Bill and was in effect from 1976 through 1985. The VEAP applied to those service-members who
(a) entered the armed forces after 1976, (b) participated in a monetary contribution matching of $2 for $1, (c) completed one year of service, and (d) received anything other than a dishonorable discharge.

VEAP is available if you first entered active duty between January 1, 1977 and June 30, 1985 and you elected to make contributions from your military pay to participate in this education benefit program. Your contributions are matched on a $2 for $1 basis by the Government. This benefit may be used for degree and certificate programs, flight training, apprenticeship/on-the-job training, and correspondence courses. Remedial, deficiency, and refresher courses may be approved under certain circumstances. (U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2010a, p. 1)

These funds were then placed into various military accounts for future use. According to All the Benefits of Service retrieved from military.com (2010), the maximum individual contribution was $2,700 and maximum government matching of $5,400. During this time, the military was experiencing recruitment difficulties and failed to meet their determined standards. “By fiscal year 1980, only 54% of Army recruits were high school graduates, and 55.5% were in Mental Category IV….read at approximately a fifth-grade level” (Montgomery, 1994, p. 50). Eligible veterans were able to receive monthly payments between 1 and 36 months, depending on the veteran’s total number of contributions. However, a 10-year timeframe was imposed for active duty status and funds left over were refunded to veterans. According to All the Benefits of Service retrieved from military.com (2010), it is estimated that some 700,000 veterans took advantage of higher education opportunities and other on-the-job self-improvement as a result of the VEAP.

New GI Bill / Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB)

Mississippi Congressman Montgomery—a former Chairman of the House of Veterans Affairs Committee, World War II veteran, Korean War veteran, Presidential
Medal of Freedom recipient, and advocate for youth education—was instrumental in developing the language for the initial peacetime GI Bill. Gillespie V. “Sonny” Montgomery believed that the combination of military experiences and higher education would make military members more marketable, not only to their country, but also to perspective employers. If you increase the veterans’ education and the opportunities to attend colleges, universities, and trade school their education will pay back society many times over again and again.

According to Mercer (2008), Public Law 100-48 recognized the All-Volunteer Force (AVF) Educational Assistance Program. The foundation was set for the beginning of the first peacetime New GI Bill that became effective in 1985, in which participants voluntarily had their salary reduced by $100 each month for 12 months. In return, the military would provide $400 a month for 36 months of college-related training and skill acquisition programs. The Montgomery GI Bill requires a 2-year period of service before any claim may be provided. This 2-year service requirement was much different than the 90 day service requirements of World War II and Korean War GI Bills and the 180 day service requirement for the Vietnam War GI Bill.

The money deducted each month from active duty service-members was voluntary and reserve members were not required to make payments. “The military pay is not refundable, eligibility expires 10 years after the veteran’s discharge, but the VA can extend this period in the case of a disability, or because he or she was held by a foreign government or power” (Montgomery, 1994, p. 53).

The financial requirement of the $1,200 annual MGIB monetary contributions caused economic struggles for some military members and their families. For many it
was seen as the chance of a lifetime for a better education. The primary purpose of the MGIB is to help active status service-members readjust to their previous civilian environment once they separate from military service.

On June 1, 1987, President Ronald Reagan renamed the New GI Bill and re-categorized its importance from temporary three-year legislation to an everlasting fixture of the military as a result of the countless efforts of Congressman Montgomery for his hard work, sacrifice, and commitment to veterans around the world.

The MGIB was known as a very resourceful instrument of successful recruiting and retention for many branches of the U. S. military. In 1992 the DoD estimated that the percentage of high school graduates almost doubled after implementation of the MGIB. Some professionals categorize the MGIB as a reward for military service. “I believe they are even more appropriately described as tributes to those whose lives have been disrupted, and too often threatened, so that the rest of us can enjoy the security and prosperity…” (Montgomery, 1994, p. 54).

The Montgomery GI Bill Selected Reserve (MGIB-SR) is comprised of the Army, Air Force, Coast Guard, Marines, Navy, and Air National Guard Reserves. MGIB-SR is defined by the VA (2012a) as:

Selected Reserve program may be available to you if you are a member of the Selected Reserve. The Selected Reserve includes the Army Reserve, Navy Reserve, Air Force Reserve, Marine Corps Reserve and Coast Guard Reserve, and the Army National Guard and the Air National Guard. You may use this education assistance program for degree programs, certificate or correspondence courses, cooperative training, independent study programs, apprenticeship/on-the-job training, and vocational flight training programs. Remedial, refresher and deficiency training are available under certain circumstances. (U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2012a, p. 1)
In order to collect the benefits while enlisted in a Reserve component unit, eligible members must (a) have been a member in good standing for six years, (b) have remained active, and (c) have met the time-in-grade requirements. The time-in-grade requirements include: If eligibility to the program begins on or after 1992, eligibility ends 14 years after termination from the military; if eligibility within the program begins before 1992; eligibility ends 10 years after termination from the military. However, if a reserve unit member is actively deployed, the military will add 4 months of extra credit to the minimum 36 months for each deployment.

**Montgomery GI Bill–Active Duty (MGIB-AD)**

Title 38, Chapter 30 of the USC describes the All-Volunteer Force (AVF) Educational Assistance Program. According to Montgomery GI Bill-Active Duty retrieved from militaryconnections.com (2012), (MGIB-AD) is defined as “a program of education benefits that may be used while on active duty or after separation from active duty. Veterans must receive a fully honorable military discharge for the period of service on which MGIB eligibility is based” (militaryconnections.com, 2012, para. 1).

Program eligibility requirements under Chapter 30 are unique and situational-dependent because of the various factors and categories. The VA references Categories I through IV to determine educational benefits for veterans (U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2009; see Appendix A).

Chapter 1606 of Title 10 deals specifically with general military law and education and training. The educational assistance for members of the Selected Reserves is to be used as both the educational assistance component and a recruiting tool for
qualified potential service-members. The MGIB-SR is responsible for providing educational benefits to Reserve members of the various military branches. The benefits cover certificate and other on-the-job programs not normally provided at a traditional academic institution.

Chapter 1607 of Title 10 deals specifically with Reserve Educational Assistance Program (REAP):

is a new benefit providing educational assistance to members of the reserve components - Selected Reserve (Sel Res) and Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) - who are called or ordered to active service in response to a war or national emergency, as declared by the President or Congress The act provides educational assistance to Reserve service-members who are called into active duty. (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2005, p. 2)

Reserve members who were activated for at least 90 days after September 11th, 2001 were eligible for educational benefits. Military members received a prorated portion percentage for active members based on the number of days served in an active status.

The Kicker or College Fund is found under Chapter 30; under certain conditions, the DoD can add a supplement “bonus” for certain military categories. These categories are described as special skills and abilities which allow the extra incentives. The GI Bill Kicker increased the service-member’s educational benefits from $38,000 to $71,000. These monies can be used for a variety of on-the-job training, certificate programs, and other forms of educational opportunities.

Post-9/11 GI Bill

On July 1, 2008 President George W. Bush signed the latest version of the GI Bill into law. The bill was defined under Public Law 110-252, the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act—or better known as the Post-9/11 GI Bill. This latest version of the GI Bill is described as being the most comprehensive since its original conception
in 1944. The bill, however, did not take effect until August, 2009. The Post-9/11 GI Bill offers comprehensive benefits to service-members after September 1, 2001 and these benefits are not retroactive in nature.

The Post-9/11 GI Bill provides military command units (i.e. active, reserve, inactive, National Guard, etc…) specific directions as how their benefits are dispersed. The maximum total number of months is 36 for 100% coverage and the minimum is 90 days or a medical discharge related injury for 40% coverage. Included in the new program is the opportunity to save your coverage benefits and roll them over to family members. Military personnel members that meet the 10-year service requirement, may transfer for their spouse the unused portion or if he or she has never used the education benefit; the 36 month allocation. The spouse member will then have 15 years after their spouses’ separation. Dependents and children can use the benefits after the service-member has met the 10-year service requirement, is at least 18 years of age, but less than 26 years of age.

The Secretary of Defense is responsible for determining the following conditions: (a) Does the military member qualify for the benefits? (b) Did the member serve a minimum of six years of active duty? (c) Did the member sign up for four additional years of service? and (d) Did a family member enroll in the program? The spouse has 10 years after the member’s retirement from the military to take advantage of this benefit; the dependent(s) have until the birth age of 26 to use the educational benefits allotted for them. Without a doubt, this is a great way to include the family and provide a means to an end. Never before have we seen such an investment in the military members and their
families. These options are available at trade/vocational institutes, community colleges, major colleges and universities (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2012b).

Payment is calculated based on the total number of classes in which the military student enrolls. For example, the military student who has 12 semester hours for the first semester receives a 100% reimbursement, while the military student enrolled part time, from six to eight semester hours, would receive a 50% reimbursement. At the same time, the Post-9/11 GI Bill authorizes military members to enroll at concurrent institutions. For example, if a student needs to satisfy a prerequisite, he or she can attend a community college and then transfer the credits to the primary institution as long as it is relevant to degree granting (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2010b).

**Yellow Ribbon Program**

The Post-9/11 GI Bill is one comprehensive piece of new legislation that makes higher education for all members of the military family a possibility. Military students are not bound by the “traditional” schools and programs; new and enriched programs at most community colleges are now covered through reimbursement and include vehicle driving, first aid, and cosmetology courses.

Chapter 33 of Title 38, U. S. Code states that tuition payments will be equivalent to the most expensive cost of an undergraduate degree for the most expensive public institution within their respective state. The maximum total number of months is 36 for 100% coverage and the minimum is 90 days or a medical discharge related injury for 40% coverage.

According to the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs (2011, p.1):

The Yellow Ribbon GI Education Enhancement Program (Yellow Ribbon Program) is a provision of the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance
Act of 2008. This program allows institutions of higher learning (degree granting institutions) in the United States to voluntarily enter into an agreement with VA to fund tuition expenses that exceed the highest public in-state undergraduate tuition rate:

1. Provide contributions to eligible individuals who apply for the Yellow Ribbon Program on a first-come first-served basis, regardless of the rate at which the individual is pursuing training in any given academic year;

2. Provide contributions during the current academic year and all subsequent academic years in which the IHL is participating in the Yellow Ribbon Program and the student maintains satisfactory progress, conduct, and attendance;

3. Make contributions toward the program on behalf of the individual in the form of a grant, scholarship, etc.;

4. State the dollar amount that will be contributed for each participant during the academic year;

5. State the maximum number of individuals for whom contributions will be made in any given academic year.

**Research Question One**

*What are the various factors that influenced military members to enter into higher education programs after separating from military service?*

The various factors that influenced military members to enter into higher education programs after separating from military service are diverse and multifaceted.

Research by Houle of the *Inquiring Mind* (1961) lead to a discovery of adult learners.

The now-famous typology consists of goal-orientated learners, who use education as a means of achieving some other goal; activity-orientated learners, who participate for the sake of the activity itself and the social interaction; and learning-orientated participants, who seek knowledge for its own sake. (Merriam, et al., 2007, p.64)
In addition, Boshier’s Education Participation Scale (1991) helps to verify what Houle originally discovered. The original items were reduced from forty-eight to forty-two

Suggests the following seven factors, each containing six items: communication improvement of verbal and written skills; social contact, meaning meeting people and making friends, educational preparation, the remediation of past educational deficiencies; professional advancement, concerned with improving job status or moving to a better one; family togetherness, concerned with bridging generation gaps and improving relationships in families; social stimulation, meaning escaping boredom; and cognitive interest, seeking knowledge for its own sake. (Boshier, 1991 as cited in Merriam, et al., 2007, p.64)

Soldier-students have experienced a wide range of cultural events that have shaped their frame of reference. This change of reference provides the opportunity to better understand “the social experiences that have shaped their lives” (Merriam et al., 2007, p.78). Future studies can help “educators and administrators in identifying and meeting the needs of a wide spectrum of learners relative to program content, as well as time, duration, and location of related activities” (Fujita-Starck, 1996, p.39).

**Characteristics of Veterans**

Military members possess a unique set of characteristics not found in most traditional college students. According to Plunkett (personal communication, April 14, 2012) student-soldiers are described as non-traditional, dedicated, motivated, on time for class, leaders, and highly disciplined. They learn how to develop maturity, real world experiences, and live with unfamiliar cultures and practices in a very short timeframe. Another rich definition by O’Herrin (2011) states “they are typically older and many are technically considered transfer students because they often bring with them credit earned through college courses they completed while in the military” (p. 2). In addition, student-
soldiers welcome the opportunity to combine their military experiences with formal education (Plunkett, 2008). Combined, these factors not only accolade one another, but add to the individual, to the greater good of society, and to the military by being a better well-rounded student-soldier.

Nunes (personal communication, January 20, 2011) stressed the importance of higher education having a responsibility we owe our veterans something in return for their service and sacrifice to our great country. “The fact that adults engage in an educational activity because of some innate desire for developing new skills, acquiring new knowledge, improving already assimilated competencies, or sharpening powers of self-insight has enormous implications for what facilitators can do” (Brookfield, 1988, p.100). According to (Brookfield, 1991, p. 38 as cited in James, 1983, p. 132) these factors can be classified as:

1. Adults maintain the ability to learn.

2. Adults are a highly diversified group of individuals with widely differing preferences, needs, backgrounds, and skills.

3. Adults experience a gradual decline in physical/sensory capabilities.

4. Experience of the learner is a major resource in learning situations.

5. Self-concept moves from dependency to independency as individual grow in responsibilities, experience, and confidence.

6. Adults tend to be life-centered in their orientation to learning.

7. Adults are motivated to learn by a variety of factors.

8. Active learner participation in the learning process contributes to learning.

9. A comfortable supportive environment is a key to successful learning.
The Post-9/11 GI Bill (Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, 2010) is defined as “covering the full cost of undergraduate education at any public university or college in the country and many private schools for our nation’s newest generation of veterans” (p. 1). The Post-9/11 GI Bill covers the military members’ tuition, books, supplemental materials, living stipends, and the like. Each category has a limit and is dependent upon the number of months enlisted and the state of residence. The VA lists the fees associated with the most expensive in-state public institution of higher education (U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2010b).

The GI Bill has had an unimaginable impact on society, higher education, and the global environment as we know it. Since its original conception —in 1944 through 2007— countless numbers of military service-members have benefited from an education that was made available to them in return for their sacrifice and devotion to duty. It is estimated that more than 21 million military members have used some form of the educational benefits allotted to them.

It is appropriate to ascribe this growth to the major legacy of the GI Bill: the opening of the academy to all classes of people and turning what had been a limited privilege to a generalized public expectation. If there is a negative side to the story, it may simply be that, prompted by the GI Bill, higher education became a hot commodity without much agreement on just what the commodity was and covering almost any form of postsecondary education or training. (Greenberg, 2004, p. 3)

**Research Question Two**

*What adjustments did these veterans encounter when transitioning from military service to higher education?*

**Challenges and Barriers of Higher Education**

The role of higher education has changed here in the United States over the past several years. Never before has society witnessed an increase in lifelong learning
programs at such a variety of levels. Students are trying to increase their overall marketability, transitioning, and future economic opportunities. It is not surprising that, as fast as the educational boom is, many obstacles are still present for current and future students. “The current goal no longer involves selecting students to fit the colleges we happen to have, but creating colleges that fit the needs of the students who are walking through the open doors” (Cross, 1973, p. 255). Higher education institutions need to assure that the proverbial front doors are open and accessible to all students who have a desire to learn and grow. There are many challenges facing students as they enter higher education for the first time or reintegrate back into the collegiate system. Higher education institutions are beginning to realize that the transition of veterans back to college and university campuses often presents unique, difficult, and unanticipated challenges for faculty, administrators, and staff, and for veterans themselves. Following their return from service, the veterans are likely to require additional support services for nonacademic problems. These problems include, but are not limited to, financial aid/GI Bill paperwork, housing, admission requirements, lack of veteran centers, ADA accommodations, transfer of credits/DD-295 forms, specific degree program requirements, mental health care, prior exposure to repeated trauma, classroom settings, depression, substance abuse, physical disfigurements, loss of family, and friends. According to Thomas Warfield, a certifying official at Harper College in Palatine, Illinois, “The paperwork necessary to process these students is significantly higher than for nonveterans” (Carr, 2010, p. 30).

Colleges and universities will only have limited professional experience dealing with predominant disabilities related to the current wars (Branker, 2009; Monroe, 2008).
Student services coupled with mental health counselors plays a vital role in helping returning veterans transition. “College enrollment has been a revolving door for too many students with disabilities. Needed support may involve clubs, organizations . . . that allow them to develop a range of skills and to participate as a valued member of the campus community” (Komives, et al., 2003, p. 52). Mental health experts must rely on relationship building as described by Goodman et al. (2006) and Hackney and Cormier (2005) because of the developmental process and building a bond with the veterans.

Goodman, 2006, et al., described this process in five steps:

1. Relationship building: Takes place when the counselor develops rapport with his or her client. This stage requires the counselor to demonstrate what have been called the “core conditions” of empathy, genuineness, and unconditional positive regard. Respect should be given; trust must be earned. (p. 180)

2. Assessment: The use of open-ended and closed questions. Some of the information that one might want to acquire in an intake interview includes identifying data, range of problems, current lifestyle, family history, and personal history—medical, educational, military, vocational, sexual, and marital. (p. 181)

3. Goal setting: The response to counselors’ and clients’ need to know where they are heading. Goals have motivational, educational, and evaluative functions. (p. 182)

4. Interventions: Requires flexibility in choosing interventions, basing choices on the client’s needs as well as the counselor’s predilections, and considering the client’s learning style and the characteristics of the problem as well as experience and comfort level of the counselor. (p. 182)

5. Termination and follow-up: A process that begins when either the counselor or the counselee decides that the counseling relationship will end soon. Reasons for terminations vary widely, but follow-up should be planned and should include referral, if necessary. (p. 183)

The challenges highly relevant to veterans trying to upgrade skills, earn needed credentials, and advance to further education and/or in the labor market can be grouped into three categories:
1. Program structure and duration that make access and persistence difficult.

2. Pedagogy and supports that do not meet adult learner needs.

3. Alignment of institutions and of courses and transferability of credits that slow progress to credentials (U. S. Department of Labor, 2007, p. 16).

The array of programs offered to new and returning students in higher education has changed. No longer are programs designed specifically for day or evening convenience, but rather for optimal learning in an array of options. These options include day, evening, weekend, on-line, blended, credit for prior learning, financial aid, convenient locations, access to academic advisors, accelerated programs, childcare, and flexible policy of readmission into a program.

Adult learners have many more responsibilities today than in years past and trying to find a balance between work, school, family responsibilities, and social obligations is often difficult. The lack of proper instruction, guidance, and feedback is challenging because the instructor is trying to find an average for all students in the class. This type of instructional style for adult learners is demeaning because instructors do not acknowledge the real-life experiences and knowledge that the students bring to the classroom. Adult learners benefit from active engagement and other methods that tap their experience base as workers and in other aspects of life (Knowles, 1970). At the same time military members require additional instructional support to transition between military life, high school, and college preparation. Military members want to receive credit for prior learning and “within comparable segments of higher education, transferability of credits earned from one institution to another is uncertain” (U. S. Department of Labor, 2007, p. 17). The transferability of academic credits is not special to soldier-student, but all students of higher education.
By removing the barriers associated with higher education, student veterans can have a chance to receive a quality education for the 21st century. This type of education does not stop at the front steps, but continues for a lifelong lesson. “Before lifelong learning becomes a reality, however, we have hurdles to clear—both to enable institutions to offer attractive programs and to enable people to participate. Adults who say they are interested in learning find many obstacles hindering further education” (Cross, 1973, p. 260). Furthermore, Cross (1973), describes additional barriers which exist and prevent veterans from beginning or continuing their education:

1. Cost
2. Time
3. Perceived notion of adult learners as part-time students
4. Childcare
5. Program flexibility
6. Transfer of credits
7. Program instruction
8. Location
9. Lack of support services
10. Admission counselors with little or no veteran training
11. Cultural insensitivity
12. The transition from soldier to student itself

Cost continues to rank as the number one educational barrier for both students and academic institutions. The gap between those who can afford higher education and those who cannot is very obvious, and it is important to monitor this barrier. “If we are not careful, we may find that we are catering solely to those who can afford it and thus establishing a white, upper socioeconomic, male dominated system of continuing education” (Cross, 1973, p. 260). The challenge is trying to expand what Cross refers to as traditional education to all students who value education, including veterans.

Higher education institutions are witnessing a new arrival of returning military personnel members who have experienced and are currently affected by “unrelenting
operational demands and recurring deployments in combat zones” (APA, 2007, p. 4).

Veterans are no different and

Academic institutions will need to help students achieve the knowledge, competence, and personal characteristics required for career success, generative parenting and family relationships, and responsible citizenship. To generate such outcomes, they will need to create alternatives which embody fundamental educational conditions and processes that have characterized the ideal twentieth century college. (Chickering & Kytle, 1999, p. 114)

The reintegration back into a “normal” way of life is one of the mechanisms to assist with the healing process and often one of the most challenging. The stress of being called upon at any time to pick up and leave your former life is very stressful, and the added stress of combat exposure can lead to psychological injury in the weeks, months, or years following their return home.

The development of organizations for returning soldier-students such as Student Veterans of America (SVA) helps veterans achieve their educational dreams.

Today’s veterans face tremendous obstacles in their path of attaining a college degree. These challenges range from a missing sense of camaraderie to a lack of understanding by university faculty and peers. When coupled with the visible and invisible wounds of war, a college degree seems to be an elusive goal for men and women returning from military service. Student Veterans of America (SVA) makes that goal a reality. (SVA, 2011b, para. 3)

SVA provides chapter representatives, based on geographical zip codes, who have experienced similar military challenges and achieved higher education goals, and acts as a link between the veteran and the institution. According to a recent survey conducted by the National Survey of Student Engagement and described in the Washington Post on Thursday, November 4, 2010, entitled Veterans Who Go Back to School Want More Support, the importance of an organization like SVA is:
They [the veteran students] don't feel supported and understood . . . The veterans reported interacting less with their instructors than did classmates who had not enlisted, and they were less likely to partake in educational opportunities such as internships or study abroad. (Johnson, 2010, p. 1)

The academic transition process, according to SVA, is similar to the entry period of initial military boot camp. This transition varies from individual to individual, but students often feel as if they are in a never-ending machine with little direction. “But the thing to remember is that this process is just part of the higher educational curriculum to prepare you to eventually be a leader in the civilian world” (SVA, 2011a, p. 7).

Having veterans’ on any campus adds to the diversity of the student population and will enhance the institution’s overall culture. The concept of transition is best understood by Schlossberg’s established theory.

**Schlossberg’s Transition Theory**

The *Transition Theory* proposed by Nancy Schlossberg was originally developed in the early 1980’s and revisited several times thereafter because of its “useful and practical model for working with college students”(Summers, 2002, p. 6). Student development plays an important part in identifying and dealing with the needs of college students (Evans, et al., 1998), especially returning veterans. The ability to understand the unique needs of returning veterans as a subpopulation is as important as the identification of traditional college students and nontraditional students. “There exists a difference in levels of maturity that comes from wartime military service” (DiRamio, et al., 2008, p. 87).

Connecting soldier to student educational opportunities will (a) help ease the transition process, (b) provide a sense of community, (c) increase student success rates, (d) identify the individual experiences, and (e) formally recognize a unique and different
adult population of students (Schlossberg, Lynch, & Chickering, 1989). “Adults have acquired a coherent body of experience, assumptions, concepts, values, feelings, conditioned responses, a frame of reference that defined the world” (Mezirow, 1997, p. 5). Learning and human behavior are connected because it is the life experience that provides a reference in that moment in time. “A unique aspect of the adult experience is that it is controlled by social clocks” (Sargent & Schlossberg, 1988, p. 58). Additional literature written by Chickering and Schlossberg (1995) stated that examining your own prior history, prior knowledge, preconceptions, attitudes and values, and emotional reflexes is critical for significant learning (p. 68). What we think about is already engrained in our biological composition and preconceived notions. The brain has innate capacities for learning, for the environments it encounters, and for situational experiences defining people throughout their lives (Chickering & Schlossberg, 1995).

“Nancy Schlossberg’s Transition Theory provides insights into factors related to the transition, the individual, and the environment that are likely to determine the degree of impact a given transition will have at a particular point in time” (Evans et al., 1998, p. 107). The soldier-student will transform worrying about the transition to accepting the transition. This will not occur overnight and will depend on each person individually; however, the “transition may lead to growth, but decline is also a possible outcome, and many transitions may be viewed with ambivalence by the individuals experiencing them” (Evans et al., 1998, p. 112).

According to Schlossberg (as cited in Evans et al., 1998), developing the notion of operationalizing variability as a primary goal of her Transition Theory, she felt the need for a framework that would facilitate an understanding of adults in transition and lead
them to the help they needed (Evans et al., 1998, p. 108). Transitions can be defined as how the individual recognizes the incident and responds to it. “Transitions are the events or nonevents that alter adult lives. The more the event or nonevent alters an adult’s roles, routines, assumptions, and relationships, the more he or she will be affected by the transition” (Sargent & Schlossberg, 1988, p. 58).

Schlossberg’s Transition Theory (as cited in Powers, 2010 and Goodman et al., 2006, pp. 33-39) is defined as:

1. Transition: Any event or nonevent that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles.

2. Anticipated transition: Transitions that are predictable.

3. Unanticipated transition: Transitions that are not predicted.

4. Nonevents: Transitions that are expected, but do not happen.

5. Role of perception: A transition exists only if it is defined by the individual experiencing it.

6. Impact: Determined by the degree to which transition alters one’s daily life.

Additional literature proposed by Schlossberg, Waters, and Goodman (1995) described the transition as “any event, or nonevent, that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions and roles” (p. 27). “This theory was developed to help frame and provide understanding and interventions for helping professionals who work with adults in transition” (Summers, 2002, p. 1). It can further be understood as “adulthood is marked by a number of developmental tasks and transitions” (Powers, 2010, p. 78). You must listen and understand where the person’s point of view is coming from.
According to Schlossberg (as cited in Powers, 2010) the manner in which an individual adapts to the transition involves several factors: “(a) perception of the event, (b) characteristics of the environment, and (c) characteristics of the individual” (pp. 79-82).

Perception or duration of the transition, as well as the degree of stress that the individual perceives the transition to have. Characteristics of the environment include support from family, support from the institution, or physical setting. Characteristics of the individual included areas such as psychological competence, age, race, ethnicity, social-economic status, values or experience (Robertson, 2010, p. 22).

The type of transition discovered and researched helps to guide military members into a state of mind for change. According to Sargent & Schlossberg (1988), people bring a combination of assets and deficits to each transition. Additional research from
Schlossberg, Lynch, & Chickering (1989) helps to illustrate this example: “The only certainty in the transition process is that people’s reactions to an event or nonevent, such as returning to school or not returning to school, will change over time for better or worse” (p. 16).

**WHAT DO WE NEED TO KNOW?**

**MOVING IN**
New Roles, Relationships, Routines, Assumptions
Learning the Ropes; Socialization
Hang-over Identity

**MOVING OUT**
Separation or Endings
Role Exit
Disengagement from Roles, Relationships, Routines, Assumptions

**MOVING THROUGH: BETWIXT OR BETWEEN**
Period of Liminality
Groping for New: Roles, Relationships, Routines, Assumptions
Neutral Zone: Period of Emptiness and Confusion
Cycle of Renewal
Hope and Spirituality


**Moving in (Military).** This component will occur when “an individual is transitioning through the ‘moving in’ process. She or he will need to ‘learn the ropes’ and become familiar with the rules, regulations, norms, and expectations of the new system”
(Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 1997, p. 167). The new routines in the lives of the service-members will include changes in their ordinary schedules. The balancing of reading, studying, completing written assignments, personal and household tasks, and maintaining some form of normal life is difficult (Chickering & Schlossberg, 1995). Here the choice of picking a college major is important because you will begin to prepare for the program of study, requirements, electives, and completing the total number of credit hours. “Although your major defines your academic program and the range of course electives open to you, it does not have to define your total college experience” (Chickering & Schlossberg, 1995, p. 89).

**Moving through (Military).** This component “requires letting go of aspects of self, letting go of former roles, and learning new ones” (Goodman et al., 1997, p. 23). College is primarily focused on learning and appreciating a new set of beliefs and cultural norms. “Your larger learning for career success—cognitive skills, interpersonal competence, motivation—will rest on those decisions. So will your larger learning for a good life—amplifying emotional intelligence, moving through autonomy toward interdependence, developing integrity” (Chickering & Schlossberg, 1995, p. 67).

**Moving out (Military).** This component is the theme for returning home and getting ready for the next journey in the service-member’s career, which may include collegiate studies. “Each branch has its own transition program and the emphasis on mental health, educational benefits, and other topics vary widely” (DiRamio et al., 2008, p. 85). The preparatory skills that many returning veterans possess before returning to or starting college studies for the first time are minimal. Goodman et al. (1997) “noted that even when the “moving out” is voluntarily, there is likely to be a process of mourning for
the old ways” (p. 169). “Another transition stressor exists because most student-veterans reported military educational benefits do not provide enough resources to attend college full-time. Therefore, many in this population must face the prospect of somehow balancing work and school” (DiRamio et al., 2008, p. 85).

It is important to discuss that Schlossberg’s Transition Theory Moving Out (Military) is leaving the military behind and beginning collegiate studies and/or civilian life. In fact Moving Out (Military) should be the first item of the integrative model process. This model can be re-adjusted for use in higher education. Then and only then will the model be most useful for future studies.

Schlossberg’s Transition Theory is developed on the Four S’s or better known as “a system designed to assist individuals in understanding change. This system is often referred to as ‘taking stock’ (Chickering & Schlossberg, 1995, p. 49 and Evans et al., 1998, p. 111). “The basic idea of this systematic process of mastering change includes taking stock and taking charge” (Sargent & Schlossberg, 1988, p. 60). The Four S’s are described as follows:

1. **Situation:** Asks the questions: What kind of transition is it? Does the person see the transition as positive, negative, expected, unexpected, desired or dreaded? Did the transition come at the worst or best possible time? Is it ‘on time’ or ‘off schedule’? Is it voluntary or imposed? Is the person at the beginning, middle, or end of the transition. (Sargent & Schlossberg, 1988, p. 60)

2. **Self:** Identifies what kinds of strengths and weaknesses the individual brings to the situation. What is the person’s previous experience in making a similar transition? Does he or she believe there are options? Is he or she basically optimistic and able to deal with ambiguity. (Sargent & Schlossberg, 1988, p. 60)

   a. Personal and demographic characteristics (described as affecting how an individual views life).
      1) Socioeconomic status
2) Gender
3) Age
4) Status of life
5) Ethnicity (Evans et al., 1998, p. 113)

b. Psychological Resources
   1) Aids to coping
   2) Ego development
   3) Outlook
   4) Particular optimism
   5) Self-efficacy
   6) Commitment and values (Evans et al., 1998, p. 113)

3. Support: Illustrates available source of people who are likely to help or hinder the person getting through the transition. Does the person have support from family, friends, co-workers, and supervisors? Other important questions will include: In what ways do those people give support? In what ways do they hinder the person’s efforts to change. (Sargent & Schlossberg, 1988, p. 60)

4. Strategies: Once ownership has been given, questions asked include a plan of action for boosting net strengths and skills to cope with the particular transition. Does the person use several coping strategies or just one? Can the person creatively cope by changing the situation, changing the meaning of the situation, shifting the blame, or managing reactions to stress. (Sargent & Schlossberg, 1988, p. 60)

The importance of the Four S’s is to identify whether or not the veteran’s situation is positive or negative. According to Schlossberg (1984), additional questions to consider during the process include, “Is my situation good at this time? Do I have lots of coping strategies?” If all the S’s are positive, a move might be a good decision, but if the situation is problematic, it might be best to hold off until a new community of support is built according to Schlossberg (personal communication, January 17, 2011).

According to Chickering & Schlossberg (as cited in Powers, 2010), the Four S’s—not one factor by itself—are required in order to cope with adjustment. We all possess some balance of resources, tools, and “the time it takes for a person to process their way through a transition varies” (Summers, 2002, p. 3). Without a doubt the
transition process from military life to civilian life is difficult and adjustment to this change can take several months.

**Mezirow’s Theory of Transformative Learning**

The Theory of Transformative Learning was originally introduced in 1978 and has been re-examined several times thereafter (1990, 1991, 1994, 1996) to help generate adult education discussions (Narushima, 1999). The fundamental principle behind transformative learning is that it requires “the broad set of psychocultural assumptions that frame our worldview. This constant revision of these meaning structures through experience and learning can lead us toward a more liberated viewpoint” (Narushima, 1999, p. 3). Another definition by Taylor (1998) describes transformative learning as providing “a theory of learning that is uniquely adult, abstract, idealized, and grounded in human communication” (p. 12). Simply stated transformative learning challenges our previous held beliefs and what influences the social-cultural world might play in altering those belief systems.

Mezirow summarizes the theory as engaging in activities that provide an enhanced level of awareness of the context of one’s beliefs and feelings, a critique of their assumptions and particular premises, an assessment of alternative perspectives, a decision to negate an old perspective in favor of a new one or to make a synthesis of old and new, an ability to take action based upon the new perspective, and a desire to fit new perspectives into the broader context of one’s life, beliefs, and feelings. Perspective transformation involves (a) an empowered sense of self, (b) more critical understanding of how one’s social relationships and culture have shaped one’s beliefs and feelings, (c) more functional strategies and resources for taking action. (1991, p. 161)
Mezirow’s Transformation Theory first begins with a critical self-reflection of emotions and relationships to help make sense of one’s life. The transformative learning theory is not independent of other researchers and, in fact

Taylor finds broad support for Mezirow’s theory, but at the same time suggests that it should be re-conceptualized within a more holistic and contextually-grounded framework (i.e. one which pays more attention to the roles of emotions, alternate ways of knowing besides rational thinking, collaborative and supportive relationships with others, compassion and ultimately, transcendence). (Narushima, 1999, p. 5)

Meaning structures are frames of reference that include both schemes and perspectives (Taylor, 1998). The phrase “meaning perspectives” is described as the ability to examine how our assumptions have directed our lives. These assumptions are a result of our experiences with family, friends, religious institutions, educational opportunities, and society as we know it. A meaning perspective refers “to the structure and cultural assumptions within which new experience is assimilated to and transformed by one’s past experience” (Mezirow, 1978, p. 101). Another description proposes that a meaning perspective “selectively shapes and delimits perception, cognition, feelings and disposition by predisposing our intentions, expectations, and purpose. It provides the context for making meaning within which we choose what and how a sensory experience is to be constructed and/or appropriated” (Mezirow, 2000, p. 16).

Over time, in conjunction with numerous congruent experiences, these perspectives become more ingrained into our psyche and changing them is less frequent. In essence, they provide a rationalization for an often irrational world, and we become dependent upon them. These meaning perspectives support us by providing an explanation of the happenings in our daily lives but at the same time they are a reflection of our cultural and psychological assumptions. These assumptions constrain us, making our view of the world subjective, often distorting our thoughts and perceptions. They are like a “double-edged sword” whereby they give meaning (validation) to our experiences, but at the same time skew our reality. (Taylor, 1998, pp. 13-14)
The purpose of meaning perspectives is to act as a buffer between the occurrences in our daily lives. When an individual, and for this study a soldier-student, comes across a new experience, “our meaning perspectives act as a sieve through each new experience is interpreted and given meaning. As the new experience is assimilated into these structures, it either reinforces the perspective or gradually stretches its boundaries, depending on the degree of congruency” (Taylor, 1998, p. 14). However, one must ask the question what happens to the soldier-student when an experience does not fit within their belief systems? “When a radically different and incongruent experience cannot be assimilated into the meaning perspective, it is either rejected or the meaning perspective is transformed to accommodate the new experience” (Taylor, 1998, p. 14). This transformation allows for a shift in views.

The three premises associated with Mezirow’s theory include experiences, reflection, and discourse. First, centrality of experiences in this study deals with the soldier-student’s experiences that will be the center of each subject. These experiences are rich and unique to each veteran because “experience is seen as socially constructed, so that it can be deconstructed and acted upon. It is experience that proves the grist for critical reflection” (Taylor, 1998, p. 15). In addition, Tennant (1991) provides another rich meaning of learner experiences to help frame the discussion:

[Shared] learning experiences establish a common base from which each learner constructs meaning through personal reflection and group discussion...The meanings that learners attach to their experiences may be subjected to critical scrutiny. The teacher may consciously try to disrupt the learner’s world view and stimulate uncertainty, ambiguity, and doubt in learners about previously taken-for-granted interpretations of experience. (p. 197)
Second, critical reflection is derived from the notion that adults question what Mezirow believed to be integrity of beliefs. Critical reflection “based on Haberman’s view of rationality and analysis is considered by Mezirow the distinguishing characteristics of adult learning...” (Taylor, 1998, p. 16). The critical reflection process will occur when the soldier-student can describe “what you hoped to gain, how it helped you achieve your goals, what you learned, and how you will use whatever you gained” (Chickering & Schlossberg, 1995, p. 142). The third, the final component of transformative learning is what is referred to as rational discourse. “Rational discourse is the essential medium through which transformation is promoted and developed” (Taylor, 1998, p. 17). Rational discourse is utilized when one might question the validity of the individual making the statement. This form of dialogue is best utilized when:

1. It is rational only as long it meets the conditions necessary to create understanding with another,
2. It is to be driven by objectivity,
3. All actions and statements are open to question and discussion,
4. Understanding is arrived through weighing of evidence and measuring the insight and strength of supporting arguments, and
5. The primary goal is to promote mutual understanding among others (Taylor, 1998, p. 17).

These essential five discourse components help to ensure that individual occurrences coupled with reflection are present. “Discourse becomes the medium for critical reflection to be put into action, where experience is reflected upon and assumptions and beliefs are questioned, and where meaning schemes and meaning structures are ultimately transformed” (Taylor, 1998, pp. 17-18). The goal of adult
educators is to truly understand the meaning of transformative learning by providing the environment that will test belief systems.

**Perspective transformation: The model.** Perspective transformation can be described as the ability to change your world view. According to Mezirow (1991) a more detailed description includes

the process of becoming critically aware of how and why our assumptions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand, and feel about our world; changing these structures of habitual expectation to make possible a more inclusive, discriminating, and integrative perspective, and finally making choices or otherwise acting on these new understandings. (p. 162)

Mezirow begins his development of perspective transformation based upon women returning to higher education. A rich description of perspective transformation is “beginning with a disorientating dilemma followed by a self-examination of feelings, critical reflection, exploration, and planning of new roles, negotiating relationships, building confidence, and developing a more inclusive and discriminating perspective…” (Taylor, 1998, p. 45). Perspective Transformation first appeared in *Adult Education Quarterly* 1978 and has been re-examined several times since. First, the disorientating dilemma is described as an internal/external emergency (Taylor, 1998). According to Mezirow (1995) there are 10 phases of perspective transformation. They include:

1. A disorientating dilemma;
2. Self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame;
3. A critical assessment of assumptions;
4. Recognition that one’s discontent and process of transformation are shared and that others have negotiated a similar change;
5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions;
6. Planning a course of action;
7. Acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one’s plans;
8. Provisionally trying new roles;
9. Building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships;
10. A reintegration into one’s new life on the basis of conditions dictated by one’s new perspective. (p. 50)

“Despite this more in-depth research into the catalysts of transformative learning, there is little understanding of why some disorientating dilemmas lead to perspective transformation and others do not” (Taylor, 1998, p. 48). Sometimes it is not that easy to have a simple answer. According to Mezirow (1996) a perspective transformation is “a more fully developed (more functional) frame of reference…one that is more (a) inclusive, (b) differentiating, (c) permeable, (d) critically reflective, and (e) integrative of experience” (p. 163). Perspective transformation provides the framework for adult learning by describing the intricate procedures of how personal viewpoints develop based upon factors and will continue throughout one’s adult life. “In essence, it offers an explanation for adult development, that of developing a greater adaptive capacity to capitalize and act on prior knowledge and experience through critical reflection” (Taylor, 1998, p. 18). Adult development will require the soldier-students to accept other points of view as described by Mezirow. “Anything that moves the individual towards a more inclusive…and differentiated preamble and integrated meaning perspective, the validity of which has been established through rational discourse…” (Mezirow, 1991, p. 7).

“There is always some danger in recognizing just one theorist as the major contributor to the development of a particular concept or idea. In transformative learning, Mezirow has been the primary spokesperson and writer…” (Taylor, 1998, pp. 19-20).
However, other transformative models of education are present. Mezirow’s Theory was only utilized for this study. There is much debate about Mezirow’s interpretation and various scholars’ writings on perspective transformation. “Mezirow is described as viewing the individual as having a choice and controls over his or her environment... They do not see the individual separate from society; instead, they are one and the same” (Taylor, 1998, p. 51). Taylor provides a richer portrayal and higher level of awareness.

**Tinto’s Student Integration Model**

Vincent Tinto’s (1987) Student Integration Model helps to explain the relationship between the student and the academic institution. “A student’s motivation to succeed and his or her academic ability, and the institution’s academic and social culture, has a strong influence on the student’s decision whether or not to remain at his or her current institution” (Van Dusen, 2011, p. 36). The model examined what Wylie (2004) described as the collection of attributes, skills, abilities, commitment, and value orientation of entering students (p. 2). Tinto (1982) further explained the model as “the impact that the institution itself has, in both its formal and informal manifestations, on the withdrawal behaviors of its own students” (p. 688). This model assumed that the relationship between the student and the institution, along with the changes in the students’ viewpoints within their first year, help determine their willingness to stay.

The significance of student engagement, both inside and outside the classroom, is a major factor in the overall development of student success and the development of an educational community. As we know, the classroom that is the center of the community.

The college classroom lies at the center of the educational activity structure of the institutions of higher education; the educational encounters that occur therein are a major feature of student educational experience. Indeed, for students who commute to college...the classroom may be the
only place where students and faculty meet, where education in the formal sense is experienced. For those students, in particular, the classroom is the crossroads where the social and the academic meet. If academic and social involvement or integration is to occur, it must occur in the classroom. (Tinto, 1997, p. 599)

The most important time in a student’s academic career is within the first year. Many students will enter college with little or no stated goals or possible degree plan, which places them at a higher risk for taking extra classes, increased financial burdens, and drop-out rates.

A range of both two-year and four-year colleges, have sought to redefine students’ learning experience by restricting the classroom, altering faculty practice, and linking courses one to another so that students encounter learning as a shared rather than isolated experience. (Tinto, 1997, p. 602)

This concept helps to illustrate the idea of a learning community; a community based on shared knowledge and shared knowing. Tinto (1998) defined shared knowledge as

By requiring students to take courses together and organizing those courses around a theme, learning communities seek to construct a shared, coherent educational experience that is not just an unconnected array of courses. In doing so, they seek to promote higher levels of cognitive complexity that cannot easily be obtained through participation in unrelated courses. (p. 171)

Tinto (1998) explained shared knowing in this way

By asking student to construct knowledge together—to share the experience of learning as a community of learners—learning communities seek to involve students both socially and intellectually in ways that promote intellectual development as well as an appreciation for the many ways in which one’s own knowing is enhanced when other voices are part of that knowing. (p. 171)

A learning community will exhibit itself in both 2-year and 4-year degree-granting institutions. These communities, “Sought to redefine students’ learning experience by restricting the classroom, altering faculty practice, and linking courses to
one another…” (Tinto, 1997, p. 602). Furthermore, it is the integration into a community of their peers that helps form the group of students. Bean and Metzner (1985, as cited in Van Dusen, 2011), further examined variables that influenced institutional satisfaction and retention as follows:

Organizational, personal, and environmental. Each of these variables may impact a student’s perception of an institution of higher education and can influence the student in the decision of whether or not to remain enrolled, transfer, or withdraw. (p. 36)

Their commitment to invest in the education of the students is a must to help students succeed.

Those decisions moved higher education away from a ‘meritocratic orientation’—educating only the best and the brightest—to an ‘egalitarian orientation,’ making higher education accessible to everyone. This policy decision has enabled access to higher education for a wide range of students formerly excluded. (Levine & Cureton, 1998, p. 118)

**Adult Education Theories**

“It should perhaps not surprise anyone that the discipline that has contributed most to learning theory on the basis of work with adults has been psychotherapy” (Knowles, 1973, p. 29). Today—with the assistance of increased technology, social networks, support systems, and the ability to connect to a virtual classroom anywhere in the world—education is achievable. Today, adults are faced with increasing leisure time, greater socioeconomic demands, and a continued passion for wanting to learn more and grow with an ever changing society. Carl Rogers (1961) believed that the learner controlled the environment in which he or she was placed. “I should like to point out one final characteristic of these individuals as they strive to discover and become themselves. It is that the individual seems to become more content to be a process rather than a product” (p. 122). Maslow explained growth as:
The next step forward is subjectively more delightful, more joyous, more intrinsically satisfying than the previous gratification in which we have become familiar and even bored; that the only way we can ever know that it is right for us is that it feels better subjectively than any alternative. The new experience validates itself rather than by outside criterion. (Maslow, 1972, p. 43)

The term “andragogy” was originally developed in 1833 by German lecturer Alexander Kapp and did not truly make its way onto the American higher education landscape until approximately the late 1960s when Malcolm Knowles expanded the term. Malcolm Knowles is referred to as the “Father of Adult Learning” and provided significant advancements in how adults learn. Knowles is best known for describing how the adult learning process is different than the methods used with children to facilitate learning. However, adult learning was something not specific to only Malcolm Knowles.

During the 1950s, at the University of Chicago, Cyril Houle conducted a study in which 22 adult participants were examined to find out why adults participate in higher education. Throughout the study, Houle noticed a trend in how adults learn and labeled them as goal, activity, and learning orientated. “Through an involved process of the analysis of the characteristics uncovered in the interviews, he found . . . these are not pure types; the best way to represent them pictorially would be by three circles which overlap at their edges” (Houle, 1961, p. 16). The decisive factor placing adult learners into groups is to discover the purpose of their educational journeys.

1. Goal orientated: These learners can be described as those who use education as a means to finish a predetermined objective, such as graduating from college before they turn 30. “There is no even, steady, continuous flow to the learning of such people, though it is an ever-recurring characteristic of their lives. Nor do they restrict their activities to any one institution or method of learning” (Houle, 1961, p. 18).
2. Activity orientated: These learners can be described as those who participate because of an interaction with others. “But it was the social contact that they sought and their selection of any activity was essentially based on the amount and kind of human relationships” (Houle, 1961, pp. 22-24).

3. Learning oriented: These learners can be described as wanting to gain knowledge independently. “For the most part, they are avid readers and have been since childhood; they join groups and classes and organizations for educational reasons; they select the serious programs on television and radio” (Houle, 1961, pp. 24-25).

As a result of the various contributors to the education community, several developments have shaped what adult learning was, is, and where it may lead to in the very near future. Cross (1981) recognized Knowles as starting the debate on adult learning and its related processes by “setting forth a plan for critique and test in an otherwise barren field” (p. 225). Adult learning focuses on how adults learn through the use of their experiences, assumptions, and life processes to help reinforce the learning environment. Knowles believed that adult education must be a lifelong process—to continue throughout the adult’s life and is formally described as:

Being changed to the art and science of helping maturing human beings learn. Since most adults are part-time learners, learning opportunities must be made available to them at times and places that are convenient to them and that provide easy entry and exit. (Knowles, 1975, p. 85)

Further research conducted by Faure et, al. under the UNESCO Report entitled Learning To Be (1972) discovered that “accelerating pace of change that will characterize the world of the future will require that education no longer be concerned primarily with transmitting what is known, but with engaging human beings in a process of inquiry throughout their lives” (Faure et al., 1972, p. 182). Adult education, in essence, is being able to provide the foundation for lifelong learning. “Lifelong learning education requires a new theory that takes into account physical, mental, emotional, social, spiritual, and
occupational development through the life span” (Knowles, 1975, p. 87). The process of inquiry helps illustrate the process of interaction. “Judging by the number of journal articles, dissertations, and studies devoted to it, the topic of participation in adult learning is probably the most enduring research concern since investigations of the field began” (Brookfield, 1991, p. 3). It can be said that adults have a psychological need—a need to develop and learn. We are extremely distant in having a general understanding of adult learning (Brookfield, 1991). Adult learning is most effective when the environment in which individuals are placed is supportive.

Before we continue to describe the process of learning, a clearer definition of what it means to be an adult is required. An adult can be defined as “The point at which his concept of himself changes from one of dependency to one of autonomy... To be adult means to be self-directing” (Knowles, 1968, p. 351); an adult "perceives herself or himself to be essentially responsible for her or his own life" (Knowles, 1980, p. 24). Adults have different learning styles and needs than children do. “And I am certainly not saying that pedagogy is bad and andragogy is good; each is appropriate given the relevant assumptions” (Knowles, 1979, p. 53). Using the andragogical approach, the instructor’s role is to create a learning environment that is supportive and students ask and answer their own questions; in contrast to a pedagogical approach, where the instructor’s role is to ask and answer questions raised by the students.

Additionally, Cross (1981) continues to relate the importance by describing the moment in time. “The current position seems to be that andragogy consists of a different set of assumptions from pedagogy, but that it is neither uniquely suited to adults nor superior to more traditional education” (p. 225). To become an adult does not occur
overnight, but rather is a series of connected processes that develop over time. “Adult development theories have a profound influence on thinking about adult learning because adults’ learning behavior varies considerably due to developmental influences. What is not clear is exactly how it changes . . . adult development theory is still mostly . . . untested models” (Knowles et al., 1998, p. 170).

**Andragogy**

Malcolm Knowles’ (1978) definition of andragogy is derived from two sets of thought. First, it is a theory of how adults are described as self-directing and different types of learners compared to children. Second, representations of sorts which help organize educational activities for adult learners. The essential of adult learning is, simply stated, that by using andragogical methods adult learners exhibit more productive learning results.

The term andragogy can be described as “the art and science of helping adults learn and contrast it with pedagogy, which is concerned with helping children learn” (Knowles, 1970, p. 39). Knowles is recognized as making the distinction between the two. “So I am not saying that pedagogy is for children and andragogy for adults, since some pedagogical assumptions are realistic for adults in some situations and some andragogical assumptions are realistic for children in some situations” (Knowles, 1979, p. 53). The four assumptions of andragogy, according to Knowles (1980, pp. 43-44) include:

1. Adults both desire and enact a tendency toward self-directedness as they mature, though they may be dependent in certain situations.

2. Adults’ experiences are a rich resource for learning. Adults learn more effectively through experimental techniques of education such as discussion or problem solving.
3. Adults are aware of specific learning needs generated by real life tasks or problems. Adult education programs, therefore, should be organized around “life application” categories and sequenced according to learners’ readiness to learn.

4. Adults are competency-based learners in that they wish to apply newly acquired skills or knowledge to their immediate circumstances. Adults are, therefore, “performance centered” in their orientation to learning.

“The concept of andragogy can be interpreted in several ways. To some it is an empirical descriptor of adult learning styles, to others it is a conceptual anchor from which a set of appropriately ‘adult’ teaching behaviors can be derived” (Brookfield, 1991, p. 90). According to Knowles et al, (1998) the three rings of andragogy in practice include: (a) goals and purposes, (b) individual and situational differences, and (c) core adult learning principles.

The goals and purpose (outer concentric ring) can be identified as “the traditional view among scholars and practitioners of learning is to think exclusively of individual growth” (p. 181). The center ring, individual and situational differences, can be recognized as “variables grouped into these categories of individual learner differences, subject matter differences, and situational differences” (p. 181). The third ring, core adult learning principles can be described as “summarizes andragogical principles” (p. 181) of decision making.

Knowles, et al. (1998, p. 182) defined andragogy’s core learning principles to include the following:

1. Learner’s need to know
   a. Why
   b. What
   c. How

2. Self-concept of the learner
The core adult learning principles examine the learning process and each principle is important during the process. However, each principle must be viewed as “a system of elements that can be adopted in whole or in part. It is not an ideology that must be applied totally without modification. In fact, an essential feature of andragogy is flexibility” (Knowles, 1984, p. 418).

When adults participate in an open society with the transmission of ideas, this helps predict the health of society (Brookfield, 1991). This form of health allows adults to “teach and learn in one another’s company . . . the creation and alteration of our beliefs, values, actions, relationships—and social forms that result from this—are ways in which we realize our humanity” (Brookfield, 1991, p. 1). Adults want to implement their own meanings of life and personal experiences. This adds to the recipe called life.

Adult learning will challenge previously conditioned skill sets such as dependent learning.
The learning society is growing because it must. It would be difficult to think of some way to live in a society changing as rapidly as ours without constantly learning new things. When life was simpler, one generation could pass along to the next generation what it needed to know to get along in the world; tomorrow was simply a repeat of yesterday. Now, however, the world changes faster than the generations, and individuals must live in several different worlds during their lifetimes. (Cross, 1981, p. 1)

The U.S. higher education economy is at a pivotal point within history. The changes that are coming and the educational demands placed on students are so severe that a traditional level of education is not enough. “The reality should change the way schools and colleges prepare upcoming generation for their future as lifelong learners, and it should change the way societies think about education and learning” (Cross, 1981, p. 2). According to Cross (1981), the three influences for adult education and lifelong learning include:

1. Increase in the total number of adults in the population.

2. Increase in the educational level of the populace, the changing roles of women, early retirement, civil rights, increased leisure time, changing lifestyles, and so forth.

3. Increase in technological change and the knowledge explosion.

Lifelong learning will soon become a necessity for all members of the global world because “Those who lack basic skills and the motivation for lifelong learning will be severely handicapped in obtaining the necessities of life and in adding any measure of personal satisfaction and enjoyment to the quality of their lives” (Cross, 1981, p. 49).

Adult learners possess four essential characteristics as originally defined by Smith (1982) and discussed by Brookfield (1991, p. 30):

1. Adult learners have multiple roles and responsibilities, and this results in a different orientation to learning from that of children and adolescents.
2. Adults have accumulated many life experiences, and these result in distinct preferences for modes of learning and learning environments, such modes and environments comprising the essentials of individual learning styles.

3. Adults pass through a number of developmental phases in the physical, psychological, or social spheres, and the transitions from one phase to another provide for the reinterpretation and rearrangement of past experience.

4. Adults experience anxiety and ambivalence in their orientation to learning.

Based on these four characteristics, Smith (1982) and Brookfield (1991) both agreed that adults learn best when there is a need to learn something and “when they have a sense of responsibility for what, why, and how they learn” (Brookfield, 1991, p. 30).

Educators have found that adult learners will be more successful when they are placed in an environment that is neutral and provides support to alternative styles for all learners.

We want you to experience the advantages that come from taking or creating learning activities that suit your style and help you learn . . . The ability to design and pursue learning will serve you well at work, at home, at play—in all the various roles you will assume in the years ahead. (Chickering & Schlossberg, 1995, p. 119)

**When They Return Home**

After the hero’s welcome home celebration at the local airport, a VFW Post party, a Warrior’s Watch motorcycle ride escort through the community, United Service Organization (USO) gathering, and American flags hanging on every house in the neighborhood, veterans do not get all the help they need when they return home. They need assistance in a much more focused way. “Many may experience emotional and cognitive impairments that ‘interfere with their ability to study, concentrate and perform academically” (Church, 2009, p. 43). According to the Rand Corporation (2008) as many
as 25% of the returning veterans will have hidden disabilities such as traumatic brain injury (TBI), posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and depression. Other veterans will return with additional disabilities such as physical and sensory impairments.

When a soldier returns from an active deployment, a “life plan” is vital to help reduce the possibility of physical, mental, and relationship-associated problems with post deployment recovery. “Just as in the years after World War II and during the Vietnam War, for many veterans, the opportunity to return to school is an important part of their transition back to civilian life” (Wasley, 2008). The studies of military members and the cluster of emotions, feelings, and health issues written before did not accurately identify or place a face on a soldier’s trauma until WWI.

Practical ways to accomplish these life plan outcomes include observing and applying the benefits of existing learning models to reeducate veterans with disabilities returning to civilian work. Engaged learning, transformational practices, and andragogy provides soldier-students with a multidisciplinary educational experience (Brill & Park, 2008).

Our returning veterans need not only a hero’s homecoming, but also services to identify, accommodate, and treat war related injuries. These injuries can result from physical and emotional demands, readjusting to a new way of life, and the affects of the war zones. “Many of these injuries will not be visible and will include physical wounds, PTSD, depression, and TBI requiring accessible campuses and classroom accommodations” (Church, 2009, p. 43). The Post-9/11 GI Bill, “places America’s colleges and universities in the path of a ‘perfect storm’—a series of crises resulting from a new failure to recognize
what is unique to the needs of the veterans with disabilities. ‘Business as usual’ will not work” (Grossman, 2008, p. 4).

According to Friedman (2006), the current military operations in both Iraq and Afghanistan can be characterized as similar to the severe ground fighting associated with previous wars—Vietnam and Operation Desert Storm—with increased behavioral and mental health issues. As a result, the need to cope and readjust to the way life was before the war is especially difficult for many veterans. Literature from the American Journal of Nursing (as cited by Gabney & Shellenbarger, 2010) indicated that with deployments, military members must make quick decisions. These decisions will stay with the military member long after he or she has deployed and will affect the family structure and network of support.

“Reports have suggested high rates of mental health disorders, including posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and alcohol use disorders among active duty military personnel and veterans” (Kang & Hyams, 2005, p. 289). According to the National Academy of Science (NAS; 2007, pp. 1-2), PTSD is characterized by:

1. Re-experiencing: Intrusive recollections of a traumatic event, often through flashbacks or nightmares.

2. Avoidance or numbing: Efforts to avoid anything associated with the trauma and numbing of the emotions.

3. Hyperarousal: Often manifested by difficulty in sleeping and concentrating and by irritability.

**Difficulties Veterans Suffer**

According to the VA (2007), PTSD can be understood and traced back to its original description as:
In 1980, the American Psychiatric Association added PTSD to the third edition of its Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III) nosologic classification scheme. Although controversial when first introduced, the PTSD diagnosis has filled an important gap in psychiatric theory and practice. From an historical perspective, the significant change ushered in by the PTSD concept was the stipulation that the etiological agent was outside the individual (i.e., a traumatic event) rather than an inherent individual weakness (i.e., a traumatic neurosis). The key to understanding the scientific basis and clinical expression of PTSD is the concept of “trauma.”

In its initial DSM-III formulation, a traumatic event was conceptualized as a catastrophic stressor that was outside the range of usual human experience. The framers of the original PTSD diagnosis had in mind events such as war, torture, rape, the Nazi Holocaust, the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, natural disasters (such as earthquakes, hurricanes, and volcano eruptions), and human-made disasters (such as factory explosions, airplane crashes, and automobile accidents). They considered traumatic events to be clearly different from the very painful stressors that constitute the normal vicissitudes of life such as divorce, failure, rejection, serious illness, financial reverses, and the like. (By this logic, adverse psychological responses to such "ordinary stressors" would, in DSM-III terms, be characterized as Adjustment Disorders rather than PTSD.) This dichotomization between traumatic and other stressors was based on the assumption that, although most individuals have the ability to cope with ordinary stress, their adaptive capacities are likely to be overwhelmed when confronted by a traumatic stressor. (U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2007, p. 1)

According to the National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and the Walter Reed Army Medical Center (2004), in the two wars the United States is presently fighting, military personnel experience high intensity guerrilla warfare and the chronic threat of roadside bombs and improvised explosive devices. It is not uncommon for soldiers to experience several tours of duty during the current military operations (Hoge et al. 2004). Military personnel on active deployment in hostile war zones become aware of the increased risk of trauma in their professional (military) and personal (family/social) lives. “Other professionals do not realize or recognize now that what they see, hear, smell, taste, and feel affects them on a daily basis” (Tovar, 2002, p. 30).
According to the Rand Corporation (2008), at least one third of the veterans will return from OIF and OEF with PTSD, TBI, or major depression. The re-occurring episodes of PTSD and TBI can happen at any time, without any forewarning, without reason, and can last a lifetime. “Trauma disrupts the self in specific ways, disrupting the frame of reference, which is an individual’s sense of identity, central beliefs in the world, and spirituality” (Tovar, 2002, p. 43). As a result of the repeated exposure to negative events within the soldier’s environment, veterans sometimes become guarded with their emotions, feelings, thoughts, and actions. “Victims of PTSD can become extremely restricted, fearing to be together with others or go out of their homes” (Rothschild, 1998). Furthermore, they tend to surround themselves within a close-knit environment with other military members who may have had similar experiences.

Based on life experiences, people develop beliefs founded in these needs and their ability to meet them, which in turn, shape their perceptions of new life experiences. When, as a result of trauma, an individual believes certain basic needs cannot and will not ever be met (e.g. “I am never safe. People are not trustworthy. I am not worthy of being loved.”), these beliefs shape relationships, identity, and access to hope or despair. (Pearlman & Saakvitne, 1995, p. 162)

Many service-members enter the military family because of a rich tradition engraved in their families, friends, sense of duty, and after the horrific events of September 11, 2001. “This sense of patriotism is consistent with Strauss and Howe’s (1991) description of the millennial ‘peer personality,’ including a propensity to emulate the elder generation, that of their grandparents” (DiRamio et al., 2008, p. 81).

Soldiers hold a preconceived notion of good human nature, but they may have that belief system tainted and changed after repeated exposure to some of the most disturbing images we can only imagine. Service-members “often identify who they are by
what they do. When that begins to unravel, it shakes them to the core, and when that happens, they begin to wonder if anything matters anymore” (Tovar, 2002, p. 30).

Military authorities and published literature on head trauma rehabilitation suggest that when traumas occur, symptom presentation and perception affect how the disorder is identified and treated (Young & Rosen, 2004).

Education on removing the stigma attached with seeking mental health counseling only helps service-members, not hurts them.

“Obviously, we're more aware of post-traumatic stress disorder, and we're doing the best that we can,” one woman said, “but I don’t think we're doing enough. We're not only failing our soldiers, but we're failing our families because we don't really know what we're looking for. Often, soldiers don't want to deal with it,” she said, “and while there are programs out there to help, there is a stigma attached to seeking help. In some cases, they're told to ‘just suck it up’.”(Thompson, 2007, p. 2)

“Untreated psychological difficulties may only get worse and could have a major impact on a soldier’s ability to perform in combat or at home when they return” (Tull, 2009, p. 1). The DoD, in conjunction with the Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury (DCoE), has witnessed the increase of veterans suffering from PTSD and has developed a program entitled Real Warriors Campaign. The purpose of the program is to remove the stigma associated with affected veterans “to promote the processes of building resilience, facilitating recovery and supporting reintegration of returning service-members, veterans and their families” (Real, n.d., p. 1). According to RESPECT-Mil, Primary Care Clinician’s Manual (2008), the gap between need for treatment and receiving it deserves urgent attention.

Researchers agree, generally, that people-oriented occupations are more stressful than occupations that require persons to work alone or in small groups.” (Matthew & Casteel,
1987 as cited in Tovar, 2002, p. 34). The following letter was written by Noah Pierce of the U. S. Army’s Bravo Troop, Fifth Battalion, Seventh Cavalry Regiment to his mother in Gilbert, Minnesota.

Noah scrawled a suicide note on the back of an NRA pistol-safety certificate, and then started drinking. Time’s finally up, he wrote, I am not a good person, I have done bad things. I have taken lives, now it’s time to take mine. (Gilbertson, 2008, p. 52)

It was written shortly before he took his own life because of the sense of hopelessness, anger, and believing that no one would understand his battle with PTSD. Noah’s letter is an example of veterans not being able to express their feelings about the traumatic events they have experienced while overseas. “Persons with PTSD usually do not want to talk about their traumatic experiences. It is very upsetting for them to do so” (RESPECT-Mil, 2008, p. 47). The type of deep pain and isolation Noah and other veterans feel and face is not unusual. According to Gilbertson (2008) a psychiatrist from Newton, Massachusetts and contributor to the Noah Pierce article, “It’s titanic pain that these men live with (p. 6). It is the same type of pain veterans feel because of the loss of friends, family, repeated exposures to grotesque killings/bombings, serious physical/emotional trauma, and the frightening nightmares associated with war zone activity. It is a combination of factors such as deployment family stress, war zone location, frequency and duration of firefights/intensity, depression, substance abuse, self-conscious social skills, and other gaps within the process itself. The physical description of the returning veterans is that he or she has a lost soul.” Noah Pierce’s mother Cheryl stated that “You’re not the same after. He didn’t laugh anymore, he didn’t smile anymore, and if he did, it was phony and it never went to the eyes. He had absolutely no time, tolerance, no patience for…ANYTHING” (Gilbertson, 2008, p. 7). Noah and other
members of the U. S. military possess “a significant risk of mental health problems and the subjects report important barriers to receiving mental health services, particularly the perception of stigma among those most in need of such care” (Hoge et al., 2004, p. 13). Receiving mental health care is perceived as a stigmatism; “however, the consequences of not seeking out treatment can be dire” (Tull, 2009, p. 1).

Furthermore, it is well documented in a variety of published sources, especially in the New England Journal of Medicine, that a relationship exists “between combat experiences, such as being shot at, handling dead bodies, knowing someone who was killed, or killing enemy combatants, and the prevalence of PTSD” (Hoge et al., 2004, p. 16). As teachers of higher education, it is our responsibility to help address the problem of shame and “other barriers to seeking mental health care in the military and we should take into consideration outreach, education, and changes in the models of health care delivery, such as increases in the allocation of mental health services” (Hoge et al., 2004, p. 21).

Within the world of higher education, the American with Disabilities Act (ADA), and other ethical and legal obligations mental health providers face, help guide the veteran’s treatment.

Student affairs professionals are faced with (a) humanitarian issues related to making sure that students get the medical or psychological services they need, (b) professional obligations to safeguard the academic integrity of the institution and all students’ learning environments, (c) legal and ethic issues related to assuring fair and equitable treatment of students while also respecting their personal autonomy and due process and privacy rights. (Komives et al., 2003, p. 497)

According to Komives et al., (2003) the increases in the number of veterans who enter colleges with serious mental health problems sometimes require additional services
from professional counselors, psychologists, or psychiatrists. Often this can include immediate services provided on campus, or relocation to a nearby facility such as experienced with Stony Brook University and described in a recent article from *The New York Times*. According to Gabriel (2010):

Stony Brook is typical of American colleges and universities these days, where national surveys show that nearly half of the students who visit counseling centers are coping with serious mental illness, more than double the rate a decade ago. More students take psychiatric medication, and there are more emergencies requiring immediate action. (pp. 1-2.)

Another article, written by Clemetson (2006), reported the increasing concerns over college students and mental illness awareness:

Standard struggles with class schedules, roommates, and sexual and social freedom are complicated by decisions about if or when to use campus counseling services, whether or not to take medication, and whether to disclose an illness to friends or professors. Keeping a psychiatric disorder under control in an environment often fueled by all-night cram sessions, junk food, and heavy drinking is a challenge for even the most motivated students. In addition, the normal separation that goes along with college requires new roles and boundaries with parents, the people who best know the history and contours of their illness. (Clemetson, 2006, p. 1)

We must continue to advocate for removing the stigma associated with mental health services so that veterans can become successful students with increased educational awareness. “One college administrator pointed out that he had encountered many veterans who had noncombat-related injuries and were very reluctant to discuss them—not painting all veterans with the same broad brush” (ACE, 2010a, p. 25).

Institutional counselors and mental health professionals cannot always connect with veterans because of the stigma of being an outsider or not understanding their unique situations. “Counseling personnel should be educated in military terminology, as well as both military and veteran culture which are different” (ACE, 2010a, p. 26). Effective
higher education institutional training on both PTSD and TBI is a good place to begin with “recognizing a potential barrier in the classroom” (ACE, 2010a, p. 26). Increased teacher knowledge and understanding can help reduce additional classroom stress to the veterans which will help reduce the likelihood of activating a spontaneous episode of a traumatic event.

**Traumatic Brain Injury**

Imagine you are sitting in a large 200-student college classroom, listening to a lecture in a history course at 4:00 in the afternoon. You struggle to take notes at the same time as keeping up with the lecture because of trouble in sustaining attention; all the while you are experiencing a severe tension headache and low back pain. Your frustration levels rise. You are startled by a book that a fellow student accidently dropped on the floor, and now you are distracted, nervous about how you are going to handle the rush of students in the hallway after the lecture…Imagine these implied problems with attention, memory, chronic pain, and post-traumatic stress occurring daily across situations and settings, and this has gone on for more than a year. What is described in this scenario is a marked disruption in daily life activities with restricted participation in the community. This is not an uncommon experience of many military personnel and veterans who have served in Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), and who have sustained multiple injuries during their service. (Uomoto, 2010, p. 14)

TBI is a type of head injury where sudden trauma disrupts the brain’s normal functions. TBI can be described as a disturbance when the brain makes contact with another object or suffers a tear to the tissues. It is important to accurately diagnose TBI and associated symptoms in order to improve the overall well-being of patients (Martin, et al., 2008).

This type of head trauma has been referred to as “the signature wound of U. S. troops serving in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq” (Martin et al., 2008, p. 40). Males are about 1.5 times as likely as females to sustain a TBI. Military duties increase the risk of sustaining a TBI (Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center, 2009).
More than 27,862 service-members have suffered TBI occurrences. Many of our soldiers are surviving what used to be catastrophic, life threatening injuries, but they are often left with difficult recoveries, the majority of which are mild TBIs and post-traumatic stress disorder. (Van Dillen, 2010, p. 8)

“The use of more protective equipment—such as body armor and advances in battlefield care, such as the establishment of combat surgical hospitals—have reduced the incidents of penetrating head injuries and death” (Martin et al., 2008, p. 40). Literature indicates that TBI is also referred to as a hidden injury because symptoms can become masked and delayed preventing immediate treatment (Tanielian & Jaycox, 2008). These symptoms can be described as changes in the day-to-day functions of service-members and their declining military performance.

TBI can be described as brain injury caused by explosions. “In the Long War Against Terrorism” Carafano (2003) depicted the Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) as a preferred weapon of terrorists activities, and TBI is without a doubt a common outcome among those wounded by these devices. The IEDs are homemade weapons commonly used against military members and civilians serving in Iraq, Afghanistan, and surrounding geographical locations.

TBI, is a life-changing phenomenon that affects the service-member and his or her immediate family, caregivers, and academic community members.

The U. S. military is continuing to monitor TBI experiences, treatment modalities, and other forms of condition management. One thing is certain though:

Individuals afflicted with these conditions face higher risks for other psychological problems and for attempting suicide. They have higher rates of unhealthy behaviors—such as smoking, overeating, and unsafe sex—and higher rates of physical health problems and mortality. Individuals with these conditions also tend to miss more work or report being less productive. There is also a link between these conditions and
homelessness. The damaging consequences from lack of treatment or under treatment suggest that those afflicted, as well as society at large, stand to gain substantially if more have access to effective care. (RAND, 2008, p. 3)

With the discussion from PTSD/TBI literature, it is vital to continue providing educational awareness for service-members coming back from the combat fields and connecting them to the classrooms. As educators, it is our responsibility to provide learning environments that provide sound critical thinking capabilities for all returning members. The ability to help service-members with specific counseling and other support services is essential. Assistant U. S. Secretary of Education Martha Kanter strongly believes in student affairs because “strengthening student affairs on college campuses is vital in the 21st century. Student affairs is ever more important to achieving the national goals that President Obama has set for America’s economic growth, social prosperity, and international competitiveness” (Kanter, 2010, p. 17).

**Research Question Three**

*What college support services are available to these veterans and how satisfied are they with the quality of these services?*

As a result of the increased media attention and service-member’s overall well-being, there has been a growing concern regarding their ability to transition into a civilian academic environment. “Colleges appreciate the fact that the more equipped they are to handle the influx of veterans, the more likely the veterans are to choose their institution, and the veterans come with federal dollars” (Persky, 2010, p. 33). The return to civilian life maybe difficult and require additional assistance in dealing with deployment and repeated trauma experiences. Repeated trauma and other mild symptoms of emotional and psychological effects can interfere with their day-to-day functions. This interruption
can be explained as “their attention span, short and long term memory, and the ability to concentrate” (Carr, 2010, p. 29).

Research indicates that to be successful “it is important to educate those who interact with veterans about the key issues they face so they can develop a process to address these issues and access any necessary resources and assistance early on” (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2010, p. 14). Authors of mental health literature wrote heavily on military service-members’ current mental health from prewar to postwar deployments. “Soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan aren’t getting all the help they need from the government that sent them off to fight…when we go overseas into combat, we know when we’re in trouble” (Thompson, 2007, p. 2).

Despite the long history of veteran students on campus, little research has been conducted about campus programs and services that aid veterans in their college transition. As a subpopulation of adult learners, military and veteran students also often have unique challenges that other nontraditional students do not face. Veterans who served in combat may experience social and cognitive dissonance as they transition and assimilate to the civilian and college environment. (ACE, 2009, p. 15)

There needs to be additional awareness of acceptance. According to Nunes (personal communication, January 20, 2011), when the soldier-student uses the GI Bill, and when the institution accepts the students based on the GI Bill, academic institutions must begin to customize specific support services for affected soldier-students.

As educators and student affairs professionals, having the ability to interact, build relationships, and provide unique opportunities to connect combat experiences to the classroom is vital. “Going to college changes your life. Some are working adults with family responsibilities, and are involved in diverse community activities. Others have their own special individual, cultural, and family circumstances” (Chickering &
Schlossberg, 1995, p. 3). For returning service-members, their day-to-day lives will change with a new set of challenges placed on them and additional stressors in their lives. According to Mezirow (1978) the learner becomes more aware of his/her perspective and is exposed to alternatives and the option to change that perspective becomes a reality. The physical environment that the soldier returns to often helps to ease the transition process following the post-deployment process. Activities should be simple and include routines with supportive family and friends and participating in fun activities. “War zone veterans, their families, and their communities benefit when everyone gets involved and creates a welcoming, thoughtful, and helpful environment. This is one of the most critical strategies to adopt if your transition program is to be successful” (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2010, p. 12). Some places of comfort for service-members include the availability and tolerance at “military readiness and support programs, churches, synagogues, mosques, and community meeting places.” (Gabney & Shellenbarger, 2010, p. 40). This type of environment provides the opportunity for family and friends to share similar experiences and help with the service-member’s adjustment process.

The purpose of higher education professionals must include helping veteran students “of any background benefit from their college experiences to the fullest extent possible” (Komives et al., 2003, p. 53). Stated more than 70 years ago, and still true in today’s society: Each higher education institution—whether private, public, for-profit, or non-profit—enrolls a variety of student demographics that have problems and personal concerns that the institution should help them address (Williamson, 1939). According to Nunes (personal communication, January 20, 2011) academic institutions have a legal, moral, and ethical responsibility to veterans who need support services—either in mental
health centers on campus, or on line—but what is available is often not sufficient. There must be some form of referral service to someone more qualified when necessary. The National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) published an article written by Fisher (2005) which describes what each institution should strive for with their students:

We must be strong student advocates, neutral mediators, moral role models, and conscientious staff representatives. These roles require us to develop and practice ethical decision-making skills. Institutions must provide advisors with the resources necessary to enhance and update our ethical decision-making skills if we are to build and maintain student trust.

(Fisher, 2005, p. 3)

To the learning community, this is not just a buzz phrase which is posted on the bulletin boards or the classroom walls. It is a way of life for soldier-students, support staff members, and college staff to create a community of opportunity. To promote success, (Tinto, 2005) recommended that six conditions be met by both the institution and the soldier-students. They are (a) leadership/commitment, (b) expectations, (c) support, (d) assessment/feedback, (e) involvement, and (f) connected learning (p. 5).

The commitment from the institution is more than a creative marketing strategy. “It is the willingness to invest the resources and provide the incentives and rewards needed to enhance student success” (Tinto, 2005, p. 5). It reflects a commitment on the part of the faculty, as well as the staff of student affairs, to see themselves responsible for the success of their students (Muraskin & Lee, 2004).

An institutional support services model approach as demonstrated by Texas A & M University describes their process as “a holistic approach and input from numerous veterans support organizations and universities…” (Davis, 2012, p. 1). This type of support system provides soldier-students the ability to receive a foundation to help
support their new academic careers. According to Davis (2012), the following should be established by the academic institution:

1. **Campus veterans success center** - the center will perform on-site VA and Hazlewood certification and administrative services, utilizing a real-time administrative core cluster or a virtual connection to related university areas impacting student veterans such as financial aid, registration, admissions, advising, counseling, family-support, on or off-campus housing and jobs.

2. **Top-down support** - presidents should designate a high-level administrator or senior faculty member as director (or manager or coordinator) of veterans support services. A veteran, preferably with prior military service that included leadership assignments, is strongly recommended.

3. **Data tracking** – accurate data collection to track the matriculation, level of involvement in student life and progress of veterans, dependents and military personnel attending universities is essential to favorable student outcomes. While the VA provides no macro-data on VA expenditures and enrollments, and the state reports Hazlewood data, it is the responsibility of each university president’s office to measure the success of the veteran population on campus.

4. **Engagement of student veterans** – success of student veterans is heavily influenced by their sense of well-being, involvement, vet-to-vet camaraderie, and also inclusion, acceptance and participation in general university life. Peer-to-peer counseling networks are highly recommended. Student veteran-community building initiatives may include social activities such as formal receptions and get-togethers, dinners or luncheons for guest speakers or campus awards, fundraising events or community service projects, and vet-community media engagement.

5. **Engagement of faculty** – orientation programs for faculty and staff regarding the issues facing military and veteran students should be developed and offered each semester where feasible or annually at a minimum. Faculty mentoring programs should be created and supported.

6. **Commitment to veteran academic success** – universities should consider establishing and supporting a permanent Veteran Success Committee, consisting of faculty, staff, and students, to advance student veteran academic and co-curricular progress. Areas of particular interest to military and veteran students include but are not
limited to: preferred track admission and early admission for veterans; priority registration; expanded service-for-credit acceptance (such as in criminal justice and health care programs); maximum flexibility for students who are deployed, in training, or otherwise assigned military duties during the academic year.

7. Health and counseling services – while the VA is often the major care provider through its regional health networks, hospitals and clinics, support at the campus is vital. Universities should designate a veteran-orientated mental health counselor in the campus counseling or health center to respond to student veterans as needed. Crisis hot-line numbers for veterans should be clearly and prominently posted in campus facilities and online. Campus clinic should create and maintain active contacts with external counseling services available to veterans, to specifically include crisis, family, and marital counseling.

8. Transition services – smooth transition into higher education and then post-graduation entry into the job market are benchmarks of success for student veterans. If possible, universities should offer a one-hour, for-credit veterans transition class amplifying the initial orientation. These have been successful at many campuses. Pairing a mentor and student throughout the student’s full academic experience is suggested where feasible. As graduation approaches, student veterans should be advised regarding the status of final degree requirements, and be referred to outplacement services and recruiting venues from the public and private sectors.

9. External connections – interaction with external veteran organization allows feedback and interactivity between campus and community, and promotes awareness of veterans on and off campus. Major external groups that can provide support include but are not limited to the VFW, American Legion, Disabled Veterans of America, Wounded Warriors Project, IAVA, Lone Star Veterans Association.

10. Communications – modes of communication cover virtually all aspects of the student experience, from interpersonal contact with faculty, staff, and other students to use of email and social media. In all endeavors, the communications mission is to actively share information and promote the success of enrolled veterans, dependents and the military community. (Davis, 2012, pp. 2-6)

Another institutional support services model is the continued financial campaigning for worthy veteran programs. The development of veteran resource centers on campus is dependent upon extra funds to help support and operate such an endeavor.
Currently, many institutions are feeling the economic hurdles with decreased revenues from government agencies. Therefore, institutions have to turn to the private individuals and industry for assistance. This type of increased community effort has required major organizations to help provide for veterans. “One such organization is the Wal-Mart Foundation which donated $3.6 million to support successful veteran assistance programs on colleges and university campuses…” (Snead & Baridon, 2010, p. 79). The goal of the community partnerships is to increase awareness, resources, and services that the soldier-students or their family member may require. When combined, this joint venture will help ensure that support services are provided both on and off campus.

**Research Question Four**

*What are the veterans’ perceptions of essential support services?*

Soldier-students are no different than their colleagues on campuses across the country. All students have problems and personal concerns that the academic institutions can help them with (Williamson, 1939). “In the past decade, there have been substantial increases in the number of students who enter college with serious mental health problems and illnesses that require ongoing attention from professional counselors, psychologists, or psychiatrists’ (Komives, et al., 2003, p.485).

Essential support services for soldier-students is being able to help veterans including, but not limited to college transitions, academic majors/degrees, career transitions, emotional and spiritual support. The role of support services is to help the soldier-student learn from their experiences into a more meaningful opportunity.
Helping is a process of encouraging the helpee to learn how to learn. In the helping process helpees learn more effective ways of coping with their present feelings and environmental demands, as well as techniques for solving problems, methods of planning, and techniques for discriminating among value choices. (Brammer & McDonald, 1999, p.21).

There are three characteristics of support services that are essential to help the soldier-student.

1. Genuineness is the extent or degree to which the helper is nondefensive and authentic in interacting with the helpee. Genuine helpers do not play roles, do not attempt to change or conceal their values from the helpee, and are “real.”

2. Unconditional positive regard, also known as nonpossessive warmth, refers to the extent that helpers communicate an attitude of nonevaluative caring and respect for the helpee as a person.

3. Empathy refers to the degree to which helpers can successfully communicate their awareness and understanding of another person’s frame of reference and feelings in language attuned to that individual (Komives, et al., 2003, p.486).

To further help illustrate services to support soldier-students two higher education institutions were examined. First, Santa Barbara City College located in Santa Barbara California provides soldier-students with a physical office to help explain and describe the transition process, provide off-campus mental health professionals, and serves as a one-stop office for all of their needs. Their overall student services support strategy is described as:

1. Enrollment information to prospective students
2. Veterans and Dependents Work Study (on and off campus)
3. Processing of Veterans Educational Assistance Benefits
4. Veterans Tutorial Assistance
5. Unit and course verification and certification
6. Veterans off-campus referrals
7. Follow-up academic counseling
8. Referrals to off-campus services (Veterans Support, 2012, p. 1)

Second, veterans’ student life at Cleveland State University (CSU) located in Cleveland Ohio provides soldier-students with the transition from the combat field to the
classroom. CSU has full-time staff that is identified as veterans and also has a VA counselor on campus. This is a rare exception to many higher education institutions throughout the U.S. CSU operates its services to support soldier-students through the implementation of Principles of Excellence for Veteran’s Education.

1. CSU will provide you with information detailing the total cost of your education including tuition and fees, how much will be covered by your GI Bill, other financial aid for which you may be qualified, estimated student loan debt upon graduation and information on student outcomes. Tuition information including fees and GI Bill information is included in this package. Additional GI Bill counseling and financial counseling are provided by the VA VetSuccess Counselor and the Veterans Certifying Officer.

2. CSU will inform veterans of the availability of federal financial aid and will do so before packaging or arranging private student loans of alternative financing programs.

3. CSU will not use fraudulent and unduly aggressive recruiting techniques nor misrepresent its program.

4. Prior to offering a new course or program, CSU will ensure the standards set forth by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools and program specific accrediting agencies have been met. As a fully accredited institution of higher learning, Cleveland State University is in full compliance with this principle to the benefit of all students, including veterans, attending CSU.

5. Cleveland State University will allow service members including Guard & Reserve to be readmitted to a program when they have to suspend their studies for military service.

6. Cleveland State University has an institutional refund policy aligned with Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965. This is concerned with refunds for reasons other than withdrawals for military service.

7. Cleveland State University will provide veterans with an education plan detailing how they will fulfill all the requirements necessary to graduate and the expected timeline of completion. All academic requirements including general education and program/major specific requirements are provided through a well established on-line tool, the Degree Audit, available to the student, advisor and Coordinator of the Veteran Student Success Program.
8. Cleveland State University will designate a point of contact for academic and financial advising, including access to disability services, to assist veterans with successful completion of their studies and with their job searches (Principles of Excellence, 2012, p. 1).

Student services described by Santa Barbara City College and CSU are often referred to as one-stop shops for soldier-students. These dedicated professionals bridge together the necessary resources, i.e. academic, social, medical, and other social programs from within the institution and surrounding community to help each soldier-student as he or she transitions from the combat field to the classroom.
CHAPTER 3 – METHODOLOGY

Rationale for the Quantitative Design

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine soldier-students using the Post-9/11 GI Bill for undergraduate and graduate programs. A quantitative design was selected because the researcher wanted to describe the “testing of hypothesis and the generation of models and theories that explain behavior” (Hoy, 2010, p. 1). In addition, the data analysis interpretation will describe the similarities and differences among soldier-students at a community college and for-profit university in the Midwest. Veterans who served during OIF and OEF were surveyed to determine their utilization of the educational benefits offered by the Post-9/11 GI Bill in their transitioning from military life to civilian life.

The value that veterans bring to the institution is reciprocal to the value the institution places on its student population of veterans. Veterans will seek institutions that are veteran friendly, and veteran-friendly community colleges will benefit from the veterans who choose their institution. (Persky & Oliver, 2011, p. 118)

This research project used e-mail invitations to participate in a secure online survey to question soldier-students attending a community college and a for-profit university located in the Midwest. It is expected that each participant is familiar with the basic functions of using a computer and completing an online survey. Each participant should have access to a computer at their institution, public library, or at their residence. An extensive literature search was conducted to help build an understanding of how the original bill evolved over time from offering undergraduate college programs to veterans to its current state of
providing graduate degrees for soldiers as well as their families. Secondary data sources included legislation passed by the United States Congress and enacted into law under Title 10 and Title 38 of the U. S. Code, as well as statistical data compiled by the Department of Defense and the Veterans Administration. (Thomas, 2009, p. 69)

For this study, a quantitative design was chosen to determine whether if connections between Schlossberg’s *Transition Theory* (1981), *Moving In, Moving Through, and Moving Out Model* (1989), Mezirow’s *Perspective Transformation Theory* (1978), and Tinto’s *Student Integration Model* (1987) could explain the relationship between soldier-students and their transitions into higher education.

**Research Design**

The quantitative method utilized an online survey through surveymonkey.com to gather soldier-students responses. There were forty-three questions in total that were written from communication with higher education leaders, military members, and current issues affecting soldier-students. A quantitative method was selected because it is the scientific investigation that includes both experiments and other systematic methods that emphasize control and quantified measures of performance (Proctor & Capaldi, 2006). A more descriptive definition was explained by Hoy (2010) as the combination of measurement and statistics playing an important role in quantitative research because of the relationships between statistical expressions. Quantitative research has a very rich and unique history. “The initial ideas for quantitative research came from the physical sciences, such as physics and chemistry” (Creswell, 2008, p. 46). Researchers began to look at patterns examining data, “When compared with research designs today, the early approaches were simple and uncomplicated. By the early 20th century, researchers were conducting educational experiments, drawing on lessons learned from psychology”
(Creswell, 2008, p. 48). The development of educational research expanded. “Researchers soon developed these early models of design into more complicated designs involving multiple groups and multiple tests” (Creswell, 2008, p. 48).

As a result of the educational developments in the field of quantitative research, the educational platform, as we know it, has flourished into a sector that dissects all spectrums of society. According to (Creswell, 2008, p. 48) these advancements have:

1. An emphasis on collecting and analyzing information.
2. An emphasis on collecting scores that measure distinct attributes of individuals and organizations.
3. An emphasis on the procedures of comparing groups or relating factors about groups in experiments, correlational studies, and surveys.

Quantitative researchers are more focused upon “the development and testing of hypotheses and the generation of models and theories that explain behavior” (Hoy, 2010, p. 1). Furthermore, Hoy (2010), described the nature of science as “to understand the world in which we live and work. Scientists try to describe what they observe and develop theories” (pp. 4-5). These theories are referred to as explanations and it is the association between good research and investigation that helps formulate conclusions. However, “no theory (explanation) is ever taken as final because a better one may be devised at any time as new data becomes available” (Hoy, 2010, p. 5).

“Researchers seek facts and causes of human behavior and want to know a lot about a few variables so differences can be identified” (Roberts, 2010, p. 142). The dependant variables will include GPA, attendance in program, degree received, student services, positive relationships, and Armed Force recruitment. The independent variable is the GI Bill. In addition, “research designs are the specific procedures involved in the
last three steps of the research process: data collection, data analysis, and report writing” (Creswell, 2008, p. 59). In selecting soldier-students at a community college and a for-profit university in the Midwest, the goal is to “explain the population” (Creswell, 2008, p. 213).

Quantitative research examines the relationship between variables and “use mathematical models, statistical tables, and graphs, and they usually write about their research in impersonal, third-person prose” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 17). Another definition by Field (2009), helped to describe the relationship as “inferring evidence for a theory through measurement of variables that produce numeric outcomes” (p. 792). Sometimes quantitative research is described as being more concerned about large samples of numbers instead of rich descriptive occurrences, as seen with qualitative research designs. “Researchers are deliberately unconcerned with rich descriptions because such detail interrupts the process of developing generalization” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 16). Furthermore, Thompson (2006), described variables as

when we conduct research, usually there is one independent variable from among all the variables in which we are most interested. This variable is called the dependent variable…Within the researcher’s theory of causation, dependent variables always occur after or at the same time as independent variables. (p. 5)

**Population and Sample**

This study focused on soldier-students who are enrolled at a community college and a for-profit university in the Midwest. For this study, soldier-students have all received some form of educational benefits under the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

Institution A is a 2-year, degree-granting institution founded in 1924, located in a suburban, public setting. During Fall 2011, approximately 5,000 students were enrolled
either on a full-time or part-time basis. Approximately, 110 students on campus were identified as “veteran enrolled.” This institution offers six Associate degree programs and more than 28 certificate options. The majority of students transfer to 4-year, degree-granting institutions within two years after completing their general education requirements. Currently, the institution is developing a student veteran’s office to become an extension of the registrar’s office for potential applicants.

Institution B is an Associate, Bachelor, and Master’s degree-granting institution founded in 1931, located in a suburb. This institution has numerous campus locations within the U. S., with nine campuses located in the state in which the research is being conducted. During fall 2011, approximately 10,000 students statewide were enrolled either on a full-time or part-time basis. Approximately 10,000 students attend Institution B in a combination of blended instructional techniques. Approximately, 450 students on one campus were identified as “veteran enrolled.” The campus of my study has five colleges, each with their own degree programs. In all, more than 120 degree programs are offered. The majority of students arrive from an assortment of traditional and nontraditional programs.

These two institutions were chosen because of the differences between the community colleges and the for-profit sector. In addition, according to the IHEP (as cited in Couturier & Cunningham, 2006, p. 8) “students considered ‘non-traditional’ were more likely to enroll in either public 2-year or private for-profit institutions”.

**Data Collection Procedures**

The survey design used in this study was created to collect data from a large audience of soldier-students via the use of surveymonkey.com. Each soldier-student
received a predistribution email from their respective institutional senders two days before the opening of the survey explaining the importance and the value of participation in the investigation, nature of the research, and informed consent. Each institutional sender only had access to the soldier-students email addresses and distributed the survey link. Both institutional senders are full-time staff members. The sender for Institution A is the veterans certifying official and the sender for Institution B is the assistant director of admissions and the military liaison representative.

SurveyMonkey.com is a website that offers help in designing surveys regarding information the investigator seeks. In addition, there are four different types of survey subscriptions offered. They include BASIC, SELECT, GOLD, and PLATINUM. For this study, the GOLD Option was selected for $300 because of the cross-tabulation features. SurveyMonkey.com is very user friendly and “respondents will need to access it via a link (URL)” (Survey, 2011, p. 27). This unique feature allows the soldier-students the ability to click on the URL provided from the institutional sender’s email invitation and enter the survey, read the consent form, and begin to answer the questions.

The predistribution email described the procedures for accessing the survey and reminded the soldier-students to check their junk or spam folders. The soldier-student, if interested in participating, would move forward to the next page which gave them access to the actual survey. A nominal measurement scale was used for the first question in a (yes/no) format and asked the soldier-student if he or she read and understood the consent form. The survey remained open for one month.

The second email notification was sent out during the half-way point as a friendly reminder to all participants. A third and final email notification was sent out two days
before the survey closed, notifying all soldier-students that the survey was about to close and no further access would be allowed. The use of email notifications, according to Soloman (2001), helps to improve the response rates.

The data were gathered after the responses were submitted online. Each participant had read and understood the terms of the study by participating in the survey. The researcher described that there were no known risks or benefits to the participants associated with the survey and that participation was voluntarily. At any time the participant could stop and from the study without negative consequences. Participants were provided with full contact information from the investigator, senior faculty member, and Benedictine University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chair. Benedictine University’s IRB chair provided written permission for the study in an email dated May 11, 2012. On September 4, 2012 a telephone call was placed to the (IRB Chair) for clarification regarding changing the prospectus methodological approach from SPSS analysis to a cross-tabulation method with percentages only. The Chair informed the researcher that since no changes were made to the survey structure or respondents that permission was granted without any further IRB documentation.

The IRB helped to ensure that “appropriate procedures are not unduly harmful to participants, that appropriate procedures will be followed to obtain participants’ informed consent, and that participants’ privacy and anonymity are assured” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005, p. 102).

The surveys remained anonymous as a result of the privacy feature from Survey Monkey. Survey Monkey uses Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) which is another form of an advanced encryption method. This unique feature allows participants to send their
responses in a secure manner similar to on-line bill payment methods. This additional level of security ensured that Survey Monkey did not collect and store IP addresses from the respondents. To ensure accurate data collection, once the soldier-student submitted their survey, they did not have access to return to the site.

This method of survey circulation was utilized because the researcher believes that to target younger higher education learners, it is necessary to speak their technology language. The Internet is a part of our lives and “with each passing year it becomes an increasingly ubiquitous and essential…” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010, p. 9). Second, “it reduces the costs… the time to distribute, gather, and process data…the respondents can complete the questionnaire…in self-chosen and familiar settings” (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, pp. 229-230). Third, the survey will not seem as long as a traditional paper survey with multiple pages. Fourth, the respondent does not have to write anything into the survey, rather it takes a click of a mouse to record their answers. “The ultimate goal was to learn about a large population by surveying a sample of that population” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005, p. 183). A more descriptive explanation of the survey process is given by Leedy & Ormrod (2005) as “capturing a fleeting moment in time, much as a camera takes a single-frame photograph of an ongoing activity” (p. 184). Finally, the responses are automatically recorded and can be analyzed at any time under the advanced survey features. Davis (personal communication, April 14, 2012) a response rate of 3% is acceptable. Response rates to an Internet-based survey are lower than the traditional 10% response rate of traditional mail surveys (Soloman, 2001). This is due to the fact that soldier-students might not be that comfortable with online surveys. To help improve the response rate, the three email reminders were set in place.
The survey consisted of forty-three questions and was designed in two separate sections. Section one consisted of twenty questions and was labeled as demographic questions. This section helped the researcher understand the soldier-students attitudes, experiences, and beliefs regarding their military experiences. Nominal variables are “those designed to elicit responses that take categorical form. For example, if you respond ‘male’ to the question…then you have provided a response to a nominal rating scale” (Balnaves & Caputi, 2010, p. 77). An additional definition of nominal variables by Urdan (2010), is “one in which the labels that are used to identify the different levels of the variable have no weight, or numeric value” (p. 4).

Section two consisted of twenty-three questions and was labeled as Post-9/11 GI Bill questions. This section helped elicit specific information from the soldier-student’s familiarity, use, and perception of student services, relating to the research questions. The questions asked are described as ordinal variables. “With ordinal variables, the values do have weight” (Urdan, 2010, p. 4). An additional operational definition by Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007), “not only classifies but also introduces an order into the data…One could not say, for example, that, in a 5-point rating scale point 4 is twice as much agreement as point 2, or that point 1 is in five times more disagreement than point five” (p. 502).

For this survey design, the response options were: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, and Strongly Agree, in accordance with the requirement: “The categories need to be discrete and to exhaust the range of possible responses which respondents may wish to give” (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p. 326). Furthermore, this helps develop the levels of measurement for future study. During the creation of the survey on Survey
Monkey, the option of forced response was selected, which means that respondents would only be able to pick their best answer. This is “an important feature of an attitude scaling instrument, namely the assumption of unidimensionality in the scale; the scale should be measuring only one thing at a time” (Oppenheim, 1992, p. 187). The importance here is that a variable is “pretty much anything that can be codified and has more than a single value . . . a quantitative variable is one that is scored in such a way that the numbers, or values, indicate some sort of amount” (Urdan, 2010, p. 4).

According to DeVaus (1985) a checklist is needed to help ensure validity throughout the survey (p. 83):

1. Is the language simple?
2. Can the question be shortened?
3. Is the question double-barreled?
4. Is the question leading?
5. Is the question negative?
6. Does the respondent have the necessary knowledge?
7. Will the words have the same meaning for everyone?
8. Is there prestige bias in the questions?
9. Is the question ambiguous?
10. Is the frame of reference for the question clear?
11. Does the question artificially create opinions?
12. Is personal or impersonal wording preferable?

In order to ensure its validity, the survey instrument was reviewed by selected members of the higher education community with knowledge of the relationship between solider-students and higher education. The first reviewer was a member of the dissertation committee, holds a doctoral degree, and is familiar with quantitative research methods. The second reviewer is a student affairs professional and has personal experiences with the U. S. Military before retiring in 2004. The third reviewer is a statistician for a psychiatry department at a research institution in the Midwest and could provide feedback for additional validity of the survey instrument used.
Demographic Attributes and Data Analysis

The data collection instrument created on surveymonkey.com captured many demographic elements of the respondent population. The survey design was intended to “force” a response to questions although it was possible to “skip” a question without a response. The survey instrument is contained in Appendix C. The cross-tabulation option (in surveymonkey.com) was selected as the framework for analysis. Results of cross-tabulations are expressed as percentages. Surveymonkey.com permits the researcher to elect up to five responses to any given question to be cross-tabulated with up to five responses to any other question. As there may be more than five possible responses to any given question, the options for data representation in the cross-tabulation are not all-inclusive. The researcher, however, does select—and thus control—which categories/responses (again, up to five) will be cross-tabulated.

The survey instrument was designed to collect basic demographic information (e.g., gender, age group, ethnicity, branch of service, enrollment status) as well as participant views in relation to the research questions (e.g., knowledge of Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits, factors influencing the decision to pursue higher education, adjustments experienced in the transition from military-to-civilian-to-student life, perception and importance/availability of support services on campus). Cross-tabulations were selected and performed to aid the analysis of the information collected.

Cross Tabulation

To help interpret the results, a cross-tabulation method was utilized to express a relationship via percentages excluding, standard deviation, and pie square results. A cross-tabulation technique is very common among surveys when the researcher is
correlating two variables. “Cross-tabulation is simply a presentational device, whereby one variable is presented in relation to another, with the relevant data inserted into each cell” (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p. 508). A cross-tabulation table reveals the frequency of respondents as explained in each cells. This process uses a contingency table to describe the variables. Cross tabulations are used to view any form of data side-by-side and/or to compare two or more survey questions and understand their correlation. The cross-tabulations are identified after all the data were gathered. Survey Monkey only permits the researcher to elect up to five responses in any given question to be cross-tabulated. This limits the researcher in multiple options for data representation. The researcher selects which categories (up to five) will be cross-tabulated. This limits additional category responses to the question from consideration.

**Similarities Between Police Work and the Armed Forces**

During my time in law enforcement, I have come into contact with law enforcement officers, citizens, and military members from around the world. Law enforcement personnel and its organizations mirror a quasi-military chain of command structure. It is common to see military personnel enter law enforcement organizations after their discharge because of the parallel way of life to which they are accustomed. Both law enforcement officers and military members “Have seen and heard things that most people have not. They know things that many do not” (Tovar, 2002, Preface). This knowledge is valuable and allows for a commonality and bond between the two.

According to the U. S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics (LEMAS) data, 23% of the approximately 18,000 law enforcement departments in the United States have Guard and Reserve citizen-service members in their ranks who were called to active duty under the provisions of the United States Code (USC) Title 10. The nation’s strategy of combating terrorism
around the globe implies that military activations of sworn and unsworn personnel throughout the United States will continue well beyond 2010. (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2010, p. 2)

Even though I am not a U.S. veteran, I have experienced similarities including, but not limited to high threat international security travel, national events, extensive training, time spent away from home, death of colleagues, and higher education occurrences.

**Limitations**

There is always concern when designing a survey study. Limitations can be defined as “potential weaknesses or problems with the study identified by the researcher…These limitations are useful to other potential researchers who may choose to conduct a similar or replication study” (Creswell, 2008, p. 207).

For this study, the following limitations are considered: First, the participants may have negative feelings associated with their military service and experiences with the academic institutions. Participants may provide false information which can alter the results. Second, there is some concern over the use of electronic surveys because “masses of data do not necessarily guarantee meaningful results” (Balnaves & Caputi, 2010, p. 76). Simply stated, the respondent is portraying a digital blueprint of his or her responses. These responses could be embellished either positively or negatively and affect the data. Third, the soldier-students can have an outdated or wrong email address on file and/or are no longer affiliated with the institution. Therefore, the respondent might not have received the email link, which would have resulted in a lower percentage of respondents completing the survey. Fourth, soldier-students might be worried about completing a survey for a researcher whom they do not know. Fifth, there might be some
participation bias. This can occur when the participants try to select an answer to the question that makes them look good versus answering the question(s) truthfully. Sixth, the soldier-student might not fully understand the questions being asked and/or the choice options. Seventh, the original institutional sender at Institution A abruptly resigned their position and as a result, the veteran certifying official became the new institutional sender for this survey. Eighth, the survey questions did not ask the respondents which program(s) were available at their specific institutions. These can include, but are not limited to, mental health counseling, substance abuse, PTSD/TBI, day-to-day life concerns, and transitions. Next, Survey Monkey only permits the researcher to elect up to five responses in any given question to be cross-tabulated. This limits the researcher in multiple options for data representation. Finally, as a result of the survey distribution over the summer break, there might be soldier-students who did not check their school email accounts on a regular basis and/or did not attend classes during the summer semester for both institutions.
CHAPTER 4 – ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

This study focused on soldier-students who used the Post-9/11 GI Bill for undergraduate and graduate programs at a community college and at a for-profit university in the Midwest. The research established how soldier-students who served in OIF and OEF utilized educational benefits offered by the Post-9/11 GI Bill in the transition from military life to civilian life.

This chapter presents the data results achieved through the use of surveymonkey.com. The information collected from the surveys was both demographic and Post-9/11 GI Bill specific. The responses were developed to examine whether Schlossberg’s *Transition Theory* (1981), *Moving In, Moving Through, and Moving Out Model* (1989), Mezirow’s *Perspective Transformation Theory* (1978), and Tinto’s *Student Integration Model* (1987) could explain elements of the relationship between soldier-students and higher education institutions. The topics discussed in this chapter include a description of the survey procedures, demographic characteristics of the respondents, analysis of the data, summary of findings related to the four research questions, and conclusions with suggestions for further study.

**Survey Procedures**

A total of 300 participants, referred to also as soldier-students, completed the survey instrument from two institutions:
1. Institution A: A community college with a total enrollment of 5,000 students at the time of the survey; 110 students identified as veteran-enrolled received the survey; 50 respondents (45%) completed the survey.

2. Institution B: A for-profit university with an enrollment of 10,000 students statewide at the time of the survey; 450 students identified as veteran-enrolled at a single campus in the Midwest received the survey; 246 respondents (54%) completed the survey.

3. Institution not specified: Four respondents (1%) completed the survey but skipped the question requesting institution-type; their responses are included.

The surveymonkey.com questionnaire is included as Appendix C of this document. Each soldier-student received a predistribution email from their respective institutional senders two days before the opening of the survey explaining the importance and value of participating in the investigation, the nature of the research, and description of informed consent. The institutional senders had access only to the soldier-students’ email addresses, and not to the individual survey replies. A second email then followed containing the survey link. Institutional senders at both Institution A and Institution B were full-time staff members. The sender for Institution A was the veterans certifying official for that institution, and the sender for Institution B was the assistant director of admissions and the military liaison representative.

The data were gathered after the responses were submitted online. Respondents indicated that 100% had read and understood the consent statement which assured that there were no known risks or benefits to the participants associated with the survey and that participation was voluntary. The respondent could stop and withdraw from the
research study at any time without negative consequences. Respondents were provided with contact information for the investigator, senior faculty member, and the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Benedictine University.

Survey respondents were assured of anonymity as the privacy feature from surveymonkey.com uses Secure Sockets Layer (SSL), an advanced encryption method. This feature allowed respondents to submit their responses in a secure manner similar to on-line bill payment methods. Further, the additional level of security ensured that surveymonkey.com neither collected nor stored IP addresses from the respondents. To ensure accurate data collection, once the soldier-student submitted the questionnaire, access to return to the survey was not permitted.

The researcher was delighted to receive the high levels of response rates from both institutions. Three hundred survey questionnaires were completed. Participants were presented with forty-three questions: 1 item seeking consent to participate, 18 items seeking demographic information, and 24 items seeking opinions on topics of interest to the study. Table 1 presents a summary of the general demographic characteristics of the respondent population.

Respondents were overwhelmingly male (68%), as expected, because more men serve in the U. S. Armed Forces than women. According to the U. S. Census Bureau (2008), 14% of the total U. S. Armed Forces were women. Nonetheless, “A soldier's demographic characteristics are of little importance in the military, which values honor, leadership, self-sacrifice, courage, and integrity—qualities that cannot be quantified” (Watkins & Sherk, 2008, p. 1). With a 16% increase in the total women respondents, the
researcher was unable to determine what branch of service they served in for the two institutions surveyed.

Table 1

*Selected Demographic Attributes of Respondents*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Service Branch</th>
<th>Combat Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>68.0% Male</td>
<td>6.3% 17-21</td>
<td>17.0% Black</td>
<td>12.0% Air Force</td>
<td>75.0% Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30.3% Female</td>
<td>9.3% 22-26</td>
<td>7.0% Amer Ind</td>
<td>26.3% Army</td>
<td>25.0% No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.7% Transgender</td>
<td>20.0% 27-31</td>
<td>15.0% Asian</td>
<td>20.3% Coast Guard</td>
<td>0.003% NR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.0% NR</td>
<td>25.7% 32-36</td>
<td>29.7% Hispanic</td>
<td>22.3% Marines</td>
<td>100.003%*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100%</td>
<td>18.7% 37-41</td>
<td>27.0% White</td>
<td>19.3% Navy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8.0% 42-46</td>
<td>6.7% NaHw/PI</td>
<td></td>
<td>100.2%*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.3% 47-51</td>
<td>102.4%*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.3% 52-56</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.3% 57+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>99.9%*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. NR = no response to question;  * = rounding error*

A majority of respondents (64.4%) were between 27 and 41 years of age. All respondents (100%) specified their ethnicity. Hispanic respondents were the largest response group (29.7%), followed by Caucasian (27%), African American (17%), Asians (15%), and around 7% each for American Indians and Native Hawaiians/Pacific Islanders. That a higher number of Hispanic respondents would be reflected in the general population was expected because the community college where the soldier-students were surveyed was classified as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). The for-profit university where the soldier-students were surveyed was characterized as “having a disproportionate number of low-income and minority students, as well as students who
are older than the traditional college age, working, raising families and paying for college without parents’ help” (Jacobs, 2010, p. 1).

Respondents were asked to identify their service branch. More than one forced option selection was allowed because it is not uncommon for soldier-students to enter into one branch and be discharged from another. The representation of soldier-students by branch was consistent with all members from the U. S. Armed Forces. The total respondents for the Army were 79 (26%), the total respondents for the U. S. Marines were 67 (22%), and the total respondents for the U. S. Coast Guard were 61 (20%). This total percentage of U. S. Army respondents was significant because the literature from 2004 stated that there are approximately 675,000 soldiers in the U. S. Army (Army, 2004).

Table 2

Cross-Tabulations Performed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Subject</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Gender and Ethnicity</td>
<td>7*</td>
<td>Ethnicity and Service Branch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Gender and Institution Type</td>
<td>8*</td>
<td>Ethnicity and GPA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3*</td>
<td>Gender and Combat Experience</td>
<td>9*</td>
<td>GI Bill Chapter and Institution Type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Combat Experience and Institution Type</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>GI Bill Chapter and Gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Ethnicity and Institution Type</td>
<td>11*</td>
<td>GI Bill Chapter and Service Branch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Ethnicity and Age Group (32-36 years old)</td>
<td>12*</td>
<td>Attitude re Control of Future and Gender</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: 12 cross-tabulations were performed; the six marked by asterisks [*] are discussed in detail.
Table 3

Cross Tabulation 3: Gender and Combat Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Experience Percentage</th>
<th>Gender/Combat Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>158</td>
<td>52.7%</td>
<td>Men – Experienced Combat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
<td>Men – Did Not Experience Combat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
<td>Women – Experienced Combat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>Women – Did Not Experience Combat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>Other – No Response</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The cross-tabulation analysis in Table 3 shows the total number of students at both the community college and for-profit university that have experienced combat during their military service. The analysis revealed that 74% of both males and females did experience combat (n=223). It is important to discuss that the soldier-student who returns to the classroom environment may suffer from mental health disorders associated with traumatic combat-related events. This can include, but is not limited to PTSD and TBI.

Students who have physical or other disabilities that affect their learning represent another growing campus constituency...needed support may involve a range of services, such as helping students with disabilities become involved with clubs, organizations, internships, and leadership opportunities that allow them to develop a range of skills and to participate as valued members of the campus community. (Komives, et al., 2003, p. 53)

This is very important to understand and help clarify because Henderson (1999) stated that first year students comprised almost half of the campus population with disabilities. Many soldier-students will return to the higher education environment after being away for several months to several years. Additional literature from Altbach et al.,
(2005) describes the importance of tailoring campus programs to meet the new needs of non-traditional students.

Striking changes in the general composition of college entrants demand a reconception of the traditional college student…These changing characteristics of America’s college students are the result of a combination of demographic growth, changing social views, government policies, and institutional initiatives to recruit students from all potential populations. (Altbach et al., 2005, pp. 320-321)

The soldier-student may not immediately experience signs and symptoms associated with mental health disorders until the advanced stages of their academic careers. Having safeguards in place to help identify and understand the process is vital.

Table 4

Cross Tabulation 7: Ethnicity and Branch of Service

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Highest Percentage of ethnicity</th>
<th>Ethnicity/Race</th>
<th>Branch of Service Selected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12 of 51</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Air Force (n=36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 of 89</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>Army (n=79)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 of 89</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>Coast Guard (n=61)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 of 81</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Marines (n = 67)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 of 89</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>Navy (n=58)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total (n = 301)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: A respondent could have listed more than one ethnicity or branch of service.

This cross-tabulation analysis in Table 4 presents soldier-students based on the highest percentage of reported ethnicity by branch of service. As stated earlier the cross-tabulation analysis expressed the relationship between two questions with a maximum of the five highest responses within any given question. The analysis contrasts with Kane’s (2005) report summarizing the demographic characteristics of the U.S. Military. “We
found that Whites are one of the most proportionally represented groups … of all recruits whereas other racial categories are often represented in noticeably higher and lower proportions than the general population” (Kane, 2005, p. 9). In this study, one of the institutions was a HSI, which resulted in a greater majority in several branches of service. A total of 66 respondents were Hispanic and the three branches of service indicate that Hispanics represented the greatest proportion of ethnicity within the Army, Coast Guard, and Navy. At the same time, the report recognizes the importance of a variety of factors that a soldier-student considers before enlisting. This was asked of the respondents in Survey Question # 12 (Which of the following was a decision to enlist). “Put simply, the current makeup of the all-voluntary military looks like America” (Kane, 2005, p. 15).

The data analyzed is important to mention because:

Contrary to conventional wisdom, minorities are not overrepresented in military service. Enlisted troops are somewhat more likely to be White or Black than their non-military peers. Whites are proportionately represented in the officer corps, and Blacks are overrepresented, but their rate of overrepresentation has declined each year from 2004 to 2007. New recruits are also disproportionately likely to come from the South, which is in line with the history of Southern military tradition. (Watkins & Sherk, 2008, p. 1)

Table 5

**Cross Tabulation 8: Ethnicity and GPA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GPA</th>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.9-1.9</td>
<td>2 African American, 2 American Indian; 2 Hispanic; 2 Caucasian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.0-2.9</td>
<td>26 Hispanic, 16 African American, 15 Asian, 13 Caucasian, and 6 American Indian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.0-3.9</td>
<td>48 Hispanics, 47 Caucasian, 26 African American, 24 Asian, and 12 American Indian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.0-4.9</td>
<td>19 Caucasian, 13 Hispanic, 7 African American, 5 Asian, and 1 American Indian</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: 14 were excluded from analysis (Cross tabulations reflect a maximum of 5 categories and respondents could select more than one ethnicity).*
The cross-tabulation analysis in Table 5 presents the total number of soldier-students based on ethnicity and GPA.

Since the 1950’s there have been numerous studies correlating the relationships between grade point average and many diverse indicators of postcollege success: income level, career success, graduate school performance, happiness, personal adjustment, and mental health…all of these summaries say that grades are poor indicators of whether someone will be successful in work and living a good life…We emphasize these points about grades because we want to help you maximize your learning and personal development, acquire knowledge, develop skills, and build personal characteristics that will serve you well throughout life, across a wide range of situations. (Chickering & Stamm, 2002, p. 106)

The analysis of ethnicity and GPA is important to discuss because Hispanics had the highest percentage for 2.0-2.9 GPA and 3.0-3.9 GPA. A higher number of Hispanic respondents would be reflected in the general population as a result of the community college surveyed identified as a HSI. It is a known fact that soldier-students utilizing the Post-9/11 GI Bill must maintain a 2.0 or higher GPA in order to continue receiving GI Bill benefits.

A recent study conducted by Operation College Promise and the Pat Tillman Foundation suggests that student-veterans thrive in supportive schools. It analyzed the academic progress of 200 veterans attending colleges with “robust” services, like mentoring programs. Participants maintained a 3.04 grade point average and 94% stayed in school from fall 2010 to spring 2011, surpassing national rates (Wallis, 2012, p. 3).
**Table 6**

*Cross Tabulation 9: GI Bill Chapter and Institution Type*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GI Bill Chapter*</th>
<th>Community College</th>
<th>For-Profit University</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total Responses</td>
<td>Institution Responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1606</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1607</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Represents Top 5 GI Bill Chapters; Total Population sample size n = 300

*Note:* Two respondents skipped Survey Question 2 (What chapter of the Post-9/11 GI Bill are you eligible for). GI Bill Chapter 31 had four responses and Chapter 35 had five responses that were not calculated as they exceeded the five maximum survey options eligible for cross-tabulation analysis through SurveyMonkey.com.

The analysis of the various chapters of the GI Bill is important to mention because each chapter describes specific benefits that are allowed for soldier-students and their dependents. Chapter 30, commonly referred to as the MGIB, provides service-members with educational benefits 10 years after discharge. Chapter 31, commonly referred to as Vocational Rehabilitation, is designated for service members with disabilities. Chapter 32, commonly referred to as VEAP, is different in that service members had to enter military service between 1977 and 1985. Chapter 33, commonly referred to as the Post-9/11 GI Bill, was described throughout the literature review. It is one piece of comprehensive legislation that makes higher education a possibility for all service members and their families. Soldier-students are not bound by “traditional” schools and programs; new and enriched programs at most community colleges are also covered. Chapter 35, commonly referred to as Survivor’s and Dependent’s Educational Assistance Program (DEA), covers permanent disability injuries. Chapter 1606, commonly referred...
to as MGIB-SR, was discussed in the literature review; this chapter is responsible for providing educational benefits to Reserve members from various branches of the military.

Chapter 1607, commonly referred to as REAP, was discussed in the literature review and is responsible for educational benefits for members of the reserves who are called to active duty by Presidential Order in times of war or national emergencies.

Table 7

*Cross Tabulation 11: GI Bill Chapter and Branch of Service*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GI Bill Chapter*</th>
<th>Total Responses</th>
<th>Air Force*</th>
<th>Army</th>
<th>Coast Guard</th>
<th>Marines**</th>
<th>Navy***</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>57</td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>90</td>
<td></td>
<td>23</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1606</td>
<td>37</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>27</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1607</td>
<td>101</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Air Force Respondents n=36; however subject respondents did not indicate which GI Bill they were eligible for.
** Marines Respondents n=67; however subject respondents did not indicate which GI Bill they were eligible for.
*** Navy Respondents n=58; however subject respondents did not indicate which GI Bill they were eligible for.
****Army Respondents (Chapter 1606 and Chapter 1607 not calculated).
*****Coast Guard Respondents (Chapter 30, Chapter 32, and Chapter 33 not calculated).

As more and more returning soldier-students continue to utilize their educational benefits under the Post-9/11 GI Bill academic institutions will continue to tailor their programs to meet educational demands. At the same time, the increase in soldier-students returning to the classrooms has fostered a better relationship between higher education institutions and the federal government (Altbach et al., 2005). In addition, “their enrollment challenged existing visions of
the typical student, required massive expansion of higher education, and paved
the way for future growth and student diversity in the following decades” (Lattuca

Table 8

**Cross Tabulation 12: Control of Future Through Education by Gender**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Transgender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The analysis of soldier-student views regarding control of their futures is
important to discuss because soldier-students can benefit from changes in their frame of
reference. This type of self-appreciation may provide soldier-students with the ability to
better integrate life experience with classroom studies.

These may include, for example, an ability to respond meaningfully to and
critique one’s own responses to political debates, health issues, cultural
matters, social and family relationships, works of art, diverse social
groupings and ways of the thinking, voluntary and charitable services, the
media, leisure activities and even religious experience. (Light et al., 2010,
p. 2).

Learning is defined as “the process whereby knowledge is created through the
transformation of experience” (Kolb, 1984, p. 38).

This type of learning requires soldier-students to use self-reflection to incorporate
“both personal and intellectual development and that neither the ability to think nor the
qualities of being a mature human are immutable” (Bain, 2004, p. 83).

A final lesson learned from the cross-tabulation process is a better understanding
of the importance higher education plays in connecting soldier-students as they transition
from military life to civilian life. Whether a soldier-student attends a community college
or for-profit university, one principle remains the same: Higher education institutions are “vital to maintaining our competitive position in an increasingly knowledge-dependent economy. They are important to the social fabric of the country; they are engines of social mobility as well as economic progress” (Bowen, 2011, p. 144). By definition, higher education institutions are symbols of transformation. As the respondents continue their educational journeys, their usage of the Post-9/11 GI Bill will impact the funding structure and social program offerings, and propel higher education into the next century. Government has benefited from missteps of prior administrations in the funding and access provided for qualified soldier-students and improved the social programs for veterans and their families. The vast majority of soldier-students bring a unique combination of real world experiences and cultural diversity which adds richness to their academic programs and the higher education institutions they attend.

Summary of Findings

The data were collected by utilizing an on-line survey through surveymonkey.com that was distributed to soldier-students eligible under the Post-9/11 GI Bill at a community college and one campus of a for-profit university in the Midwest.

Hypotheses and Research Questions

Hypotheses

H<sub>1</sub> – The soldier student will report that access to GI Bill benefits was a primary factor in the decision to enlist in the U.S. military.

H<sub>2</sub> – The soldier student at a higher education institution will report the importance of military-specific student services in their transition from military-to-civilian life.

H<sub>3</sub> – The greatest percentage of soldier students will report they are older than traditional college students.
**Research Question One**

*What are the various factors that influenced military members to enter into higher education programs after separating from military service?*

The first research question focused on various factors that influenced military members to enter into higher education programs after separating from military service. The options provided in Survey Question 12 (Which of the following was a decision to enlist) were derived from variables of Schlossberg’s *Transition Theory* (1981) that focused on transitions, anticipated/unanticipated, and nonevents. Additional literature included Schlossberg’s *Moving In, Moving Through, and Moving Out Model* (1989) that focused on learning new roles, beliefs, and collegiate studies. Also used in the study was Mezirow’s *Perspective Transformation Theory* (1978), with respect to the influences of the social-cultural world of soldier-students.

Based on the findings of the study, 196 (65%) of respondents overwhelmingly selected educational incentives as the primary reason in their decision making process. There were other factors that were identified on the survey for respondents to select from including VA loans, insurance benefits, multicultural learning opportunities, direction after high school, family tradition, patriotism after September 11, 2001, and a stepping stone for future job growth. The analysis identified a significant variable for soldier-students using the Post-9/11 GI Bill. Not only is the monetary gain of soldier-students receiving a stipend for attending a higher education institution a factor, but also programs that provide knowledge and build skills. Programs that are thick with human contact. Programs that meet veterans where they are and provide structure and guidance that assist them toward a clear goal. Programs that build a community while leading these young men and women back to their own communities. (Rose, 2010, p. 2)
Research Question Two

What adjustments did these veterans encounter when transitioning from military service to higher education?

The second research question focused on adjustments and transitions. The options provided in Survey Question 34 (The military clubs helps me continue the transition from soldier to student) were derived from variables of Schlossberg’s Transition Theory (1981) based on the Four S’s. The Four S’s can be described as Situation, Self, Support, and Strategies. The second component or the Self includes sections for personal and demographic characteristics as well as psychological resources.

Based on the findings of the study, 186 respondents (62%) Strongly Agreed that they enrolled in the higher education institution because of the military club at the institution and the ability to continue the transition process. Survey Question 35 asked respondents how student service staff members understand their points of view. The data revealed that 164 respondents (55%) Strongly Agreed and an additional 128 respondents (43%) Agree. In addition, Survey Question 36 asked respondents if some of the student service staff were prior members of the Armed Forces. The overwhelming majority of respondents—160 (55%)—Strongly Agreed with that statement, suggesting that the availability of staff with military identification contributes to a supportive educational environment and transformation process.

Soldier-students find it easier to express their feelings and experiences with student services staff members with prior military experiences. Having the ability to relate and provide support through common experiences from military service to the transition into educational and civilian life is especially relevant. The return to civilian life can be difficult and can require additional assistance in dealing with deployment and
repeated trauma experiences. Repeated trauma and other mild symptoms of emotional and psychological effects can interfere with day-to-day functioning for the soldier-student. This interruption can be explained as “their attention span, short and long term memory, and the ability to concentrate” (Carr, 2010, p. 29). Research indicates that to be successful “it is important to educate those who interact with veterans about the key issues they face so they can develop a process to address these issues and access any necessary resources and assistance early on” (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2010, p. 14).

**Research Question Three**

*What college support services are available to these veterans and how satisfied are they with the quality of these services?*

Research question three examined the soldier-student and his or her connections on campus. The options provided in Survey Question 38 (*I feel connected to the campus community both inside and outside the classroom*) were derived from variables of Mezirow’s *Perspective Transformation Theory* (1978). A total of 159 (53%) respondents selected *Strongly Agree*, and 133 (44%) respondents selected *Agree*. The results of Survey Question 40 (*I enjoy taking courses with other students and sharing some of those memorable experiences*) helps to illustrate the soldier-student’s perspective at their higher education institution. Another 154 (51%) respondents *Strongly Agreed* and an additional 141 (47%) respondents *Agreed*, indicating what Mezirow originally studied with women returning to higher education. What were the respondents’ new roles and what new relationships developed? This can be described as:

The process of becoming critically aware of how and why our assumptions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand, and feel about our world; changing these structures of habitual expectation to make possible a more inclusive, discriminating, and integrative
perspective, and finally making choices or otherwise acting on these new understandings. (Mezirow, 1978, p. 162)

Perspective transformation provides the framework for adult learning by describing the intricate procedures of how personal viewpoints develop based on different factors and continue throughout one’s adult life.

**Research Question Four**

*What are the veterans’ perceptions of essential support services?*

Research question four sought awareness of support services. The options provided in Survey Question 33 (*I enrolled at the community college/university because of the military friendly atmosphere*) were derived from variables of Tinto’s *Student Integration Model* (1987). *Strongly Agree* was selected by 178 (59%) respondents followed by 115 (38%) respondents that selected *Agree*. Survey Question 43 asked respondents how they feel about their future through the use of higher education. The data revealed that 164 (55%) respondents *Strongly Agreed* and an additional 133 (44%) respondents *Agreed*. Additional literature from Texas A & M University describes institutional support services as a foundation for soldier-students to begin their new careers.

Engagement of student veterans: Success of student veterans is heavily influenced by their sense of well-being, involvement, vet-to-vet camaraderie, and also inclusion, acceptance and participation in general university life. Peer-to-peer counseling networks are highly recommended. Student veteran community building initiatives may include social activities such as formal receptions and get-togethers, dinners or luncheons for guest speakers or campus awards, fundraising events or community service projects, and vet-community media engagement. (Davis, 2012, p. 3)
Furthermore, support is defined by Tinto (2005) as both academic and social and best achieved when the learning environments are connected to a current class to help increase the chance for success.

Simply, the more students are academically and socially involved, the more likely they are to persist and graduate. This is especially true during the first year of university study when student member is so tenuous, yet critical to subsequent learning and persistence. (Tinto, 2005, p. 7)

It is, therefore, essential to build an educational community.

Hypothesis 1

_The soldier student will report that access to GI Bill benefits was a primary factor in the decision to enlist in the U.S. military._

The results collected from the survey revealed that educational benefits were an overwhelming factor in soldier-students pursuing higher education. A total of (196) respondents or (65%) cited educational incentives as a sole factor in the decision to enlist; supporting what Kane (2005) discovered when he stated that today’s soldier-students are much more aware of their compensation for enlisting in the U.S. military. This is characterized as “we find that, on average, recruits tend to be much more educated than the general public and that this education disparity increased after the war on terrorism began…” (p. 7). Therefore, hypothesis number one is accepted.

Hypothesis 2

_The soldier student at a higher education institution will report the importance of military-specific student services in their transition from military-to-civilian life._

Survey Question 34 _The military club helps me continue the transition from soldier to student_ reveals that 186 respondents (62%) reported that the military-specific student services helped in the transition. Muraskin and Lee (2004) and ACE (2010a) describe supporting the needs of returning soldier-students compared to “traditional”
college students is important. Faculty and staff members substantially can facilitate the success of the soldier-students through acknowledgment of their specific needs. Therefore, hypothesis number two is accepted.

**Hypothesis 3**

*The greatest percentage of soldier students will report they are older than traditional college students.*

The results collected from the survey reveal that 137 respondents (45%) were between 27-36 years of age. According to ACE (2008) and Plunkett (2008) the GI Bill has changed the image of a traditional college student from that of a recent high school graduate. The soldier-students represent a more diversified cohort—potentially married with children, culturally and ethnically diverse, have extensive foreign travel experience, and are older. Therefore, hypothesis number three is accepted.

**Conclusions**

After examining the data results of the soldier-student study through the use of surveymonkey.com, several conclusions are offered. First, the research questions could be expanded from four-to-six to help increase the data collected and the questions asked. Second, to better understand soldier-students, a qualitative study might be conducted. Only veterans who served during OIF and OEF were surveyed to determine their utilization of the educational benefits offered by the Post-9/11 GI Bill in their transition from military to civilian life.

Qualitative research is a type of educational research in which the researcher relies on the views of the participants, asks broad general questions, collects data consisting largely of words (or text) from participants, describes and analyzes theses words for themes… (Creswell, 2008, p. 46)
Third, if the institutions participating in the survey were expanded to either all community colleges, for-profit universities, or a combination of community colleges, for-profit/non-profit universities, and technical schools, the data responses could be increased. Fourth, surveying student-soldiers as they immediately transition from military to civilian life may have changed the data results. Finally, the lack of current educational theories to describe soldier-students and/or their usage of the Post-9/11 GI Bill may have limited the focus of this research. Connections between theories and models from the 1970s–1980s were utilized because of their relevance and strength to the phenomenon under way.
CHAPTER 5 – DISCUSSION

This study examined the historical evolution of the GI Bill from 1944–2009. The study is important because more than 2 million veterans are projected to be eligible for the Post-9/11 GI Bill (ACE, 2008). The need to connect the veteran from the combat field to the classroom is vital for both the stability of higher education and the soldier reintegrating into society. The study was designed to make soldier-students aware of their educational opportunities under the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

This chapter is organized by a summary of the study, discussion of the findings, limitations of the study, and recommendations for future soldier-student studies.

Summary

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine soldier-students using the Post-9/11 GI Bill for undergraduate and graduate programs. Veterans who served during OIF and OEF were surveyed to determine their utilization of the educational benefits offered by the Post-9/11 GI Bill in their transitioning from military life to civilian life.

The value that veterans bring to the institution is reciprocal to the value the institution places on its student population of veterans. Veterans will seek institutions that are veteran friendly, and veteran-friendly community colleges will benefit from the veterans who choose their institution.

(Persky & Oliver, 2011, p. 118)

This research project used invitations to participate in a secure online survey via email to question soldier-students attending a community college and a for-profit university located in the Midwest. An extensive literature search was conducted to help build an understanding of how the original bill evolved over time from offering undergraduate college programs to veterans to its current state of
providing graduate degrees for soldiers as well as their families. Secondary data sources included legislation passed by the United States Congress and enacted into law under Title 10 and Title 38 of the U. S. Code, as well as statistical data compiled by the Department of Defense and the Veterans Administration. (Thomas, 2009, p. 69)

**Discussion of the Findings**

**Research Question One**

*What are the various factors that influenced military members to enter into higher education programs after separating from military service?*

The analysis identified that a total 196 (65%) respondents overwhelmingly selected educational incentives as the reason for their enlistment decision making process.

It is evident that the passing of the Post-9/11 GI Bill forever changed how soldier-students viewed their educational benefits. The United States is experiencing an influx of separated military members—including active, retired, reserves, National Guard, and veteran status personnel who are enrolling in college related classes, certificate programs, on-the-job training, professional licensing, certification programs, and nontraditional programs. These benefits not only include the traditional higher education institutional monies, including tuition and fees, but a housing allowance, additional supplies income, and the possibility of a one-time relocation stipend. “Also spouses and dependent children may also enjoy education benefits as part of the military’s retention efforts” (Thomas, 2009, p. 115).

The GI Bill has been referred to as one of the most important pieces of federal legislation. Following WWI, the GI Bill helped provide a foundation to frame America’s educational and social-economic platform for generations to come. The GI Bill changed the image of the traditional college student forever. No longer is it the traditional single
white male; now the soldier-student’s face resembles a married man or woman, ethnically
diverse, with children, a home, and a set of renewed responsibilities. The world of higher
education, as we know it, is constantly changing and the demographics of college-bound
students are beginning to mirror that phenomenon.

**Research Question Two**

*What adjustments did these veterans encounter when transitioning from military service to higher education?*

The analysis identified that a total of 186 (62%) respondents overwhelmingly
agreed that he or she enrolled in the higher education institution because of the military
club and the ability to continue the transition process. There are many challenges facing
students as they enter higher education institutions for the first time or reintegrate into the
collegiate system. Higher education institutions are beginning to realize that the transition
of veterans back to college and university campuses often presents unique, difficult, and
unanticipated challenges for faculty, administrators, staff, and veterans themselves. “The
current goal no longer involves selecting students to fit the colleges we happen to have,
but creating colleges that fit the needs of students who are walking through the open
doors” (Cross, 1973, p. 255). Colleges and universities will have only limited
professional experience dealing with the disabilities of the soldier-students returning from
the current wars in both Iraq and Afghanistan, and providing services to meet the needs
of these students (Branker, 2009; Monroe, 2008). The role of student services coupled
with mental health counselors plays a vital role in helping returning veterans transition
from the role of soldier to the role of student.
Research Question Three

What college support services are available to these veterans and how satisfied are they with the quality of these services?

Survey Question 37 identified that a total of 192 (64%) respondents Strongly Agreed that more student services need to be offered on campus. However, the survey questions did not ask the respondents which program(s) were available at their specific institutions. These can include, but are not limited to, mental health counseling, substance abuse, PTSD/TBI, day-to-day life concerns, and transitions. A recommendation would be what the ACE calls a Toolkit for Veteran-Friendly Institutions. “Among the ‘best practices’ it highlights are: orientation sessions for veterans, on-campus veterans service centers, faculty training and counseling, and psychological services for student veterans” (Sobota, 2012, p. 1). By providing these services, institution can be designed as veteran-friendly. According to ACE (2010a):

The mental health services offered by your institution and community, and the communication of these services, are of critical importance. The good news is that there has been more media attention paid to asking for help, and more and more troops (combat and non-combat) and their families are starting to recognize the need for potential behavioral health services as part of a broader transition. Still, getting them to take advantage of the services (which means admitting they might need help) is often an uphill battle. When offering mental health services, be sure that a variety of options, methods, and services are considered and offered to students. Some veterans will find support groups very helpful, but others may feel overwhelmed. And some may enjoy a one-on-one environment, while others would find this type of intervention off-putting. (p. 1)

As a result of the increased media attention and service-members’ overall well-being, there has been a growing concern regarding their ability to transition into a civilian academic environment. The return to civilian life may be difficult and require additional assistance in dealing with multiple deployments and repeated traumatic experiences.
Repeated trauma and other mild symptoms of emotional and psychological effects can interfere with their day-to-day functions. This interruption can be explained as “their attention span, short and long term memory, and the ability to concentrate” (Carr, 2010, p. 29). The physical environment that the soldier returns to often helps to ease the transition process following the postdeployment process. Activities should be simple and include routines with supportive family and friends, and participating in fun activities. The purpose of higher education professionals must include helping veteran-students “of any background benefit from their college experiences to the fullest extent possible” (Komives et al., 2003, p. 53). Stated more than 70 years ago, and still true in today’s society: Each higher education institution—whether private, public, for-profit, or non-profit—enrolls a variety of student demographics that have problems and personal concerns that the institution should have them address (Williamson, 1939).

**Research Question Four**

*What are the veterans’ perceptions of essential support services?*

The cross-tabulation analysis identified that 192 (64%) respondents selected *Strongly Agree* that higher education support services are essential. In addition, another 107 (35%) respondents selected *Agree* with the same statement.

Tinto (2005) helped to describe some of the factors that promote student success. They include, but are not limited to, leadership/commitment and success. First, leadership/commitment can be described as a top-down approach whereby senior institutional leaders express their support to helping soldier-students.

But institutional commitment, especially from the leadership of the institution, is more than just words, more than just mission statements issued in elaborate brochures; it is the willingness to invest the resources
and provide the incentives and rewards needed to enhance student success. (Tinto, 2005, p. 6)

Furthermore, Muraskin and Lee (2004) agree with Tinto’s (2005) statement and add a commitment on the part of the faculty as well as the staff of student affairs to see themselves as responsible for the success of their students. Second, having the opportunity to promote success through support is essential for soldier-students.

So also is the availability of social support in the form of counseling, mentoring, and ethnic student centers. Such centers provide much needed support for individual students and a safe haven for groups of students who might otherwise find themselves out of place in a setting where they are a distinct minority. For new students, these centers can serve as secure, knowable ports of entry that enable students to safely navigate the unfamiliar terrain of the university. (Tinto, 2005, p. 7)

To further illustrate this example, a model approach was discovered in Texas A & M University’s support model:

Health and counseling services – While the VA is often the major care provider through its regional health networks, hospitals and clinics, support at the campus is vital. Universities should designate a veteran-oriented mental health counselor in the campus counseling or health center to respond to student veterans as needed. Crisis hot-line numbers for veterans should be clearly and prominently posted in campus facilities and online. Campus clinics should create and maintain active contacts with external counseling services available to veterans, to specifically include crisis, family, and marital counseling (Davis, 2012, pp. 2-6).

**Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, additional research is suggested to help improve future studies:

1. Utilize a larger sample of soldier-students at a combination of a community college/for-profit university/non-profit university.

2. Replicate the study at higher education institutions that are not within the Midwest to determine if the results are similar or different.
3. Conduct a cohort-based study that follows soldier-students and non soldier-students from enrollment through matriculation. It is important to mention that each subpopulation possess unique characteristics.

4. Soldier-students should continue to advocate for increased support services on-campus and off-campus to help with the overall transition process from the combat fields to the classrooms.

5. Perform qualitative research to answer questions from the soldier-students point of view. Qualitative research will allow the researcher to seek explanation through a rich informative observation and interview holistic process. The soldier-student’s narratives will provide data to further explain the complexity of their transition.

**Personal Learning Experiences**

I would argue that the dissertation journey has been an experience of a lifetime. Having the ability to read, write, and explain an important piece of federal legislation such as the Post-9/11 GI Bill and its significant influence on the American economy and members of the U. S. Armed Forces is amazing.

When I originally started to think about a dissertation topic, I knew that it was going to focus around the Post-9/11 GI Bill; however, in 2009 I did not know what direction it might take. Several discussions with committee members and many rough drafts later, I had the framework for a concrete vision. For me, “writing a dissertation is very much like being in a long-term relationship: there are likely to be some very good times and some perfectly dreadful ones…” (Bolker, 1998, p. 9). I was not certain, though, if it would be more of a historical dissertation or one that would provide rich insight and data for future studies.

The process of writing this dissertation and completing academic courses simultaneously was challenging, but not as challenging as serving your country and being away from your family and loved ones for months on end—it was this strength that
helped me utilize my experiences and walk in the soldier-students shoes for a day. I am happy with the data generated from the survey and cannot wait for future research and studies to only strengthen such an important topic. As of today, there is very limited peer reviewed material regarding the Post-9/11 GI Bill, given its infancy stages of development, usage, and the on-going war. In addition, there is a scarcity of veteran-only studies and explanations of soldier-students transitioning into U. S. higher education.

According to Leedy & Ormrod (2005), several key take-a-ways should be implemented:

1. Look around you
2. Read the literature
3. Attend professional conferences
4. Seek the advice of experts
5. Choose a topic that intrigues and motivates you
6. Choose a topic that others will find interesting and worthy of attention.

(PP. 5‒46)

As time moves forward, these studies will increase and help the academic community as we know it. Finally to help complete the dissertation, two dissertation self-help handbooks were utilized along with several doctoral dissertations to help make this dream a reality.
As we consider the role that unfolds before us, we remember with humble gratitude those brave Americans who at this very hour patrol the far-off deserts and distant mountains. They have something to tell us, just as the fallen heroes who lie in Arlington whisper through the ages. We honor them not only because they are the guardians of our liberty, but because they embody the spirit of service; a willingness to find meaning in something greater than themselves.

President Barack Obama
Inaugural Address January 20, 2009
APPENDIX A

VETERANS’ EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS CATEGORIES
APPENDIX A. VETERANS’ EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS CATEGORIES

CATEGORY I

2. Had military pay reduced by $100 a month for first 12 months.
3. Continuously served for 3 years, OR 2 years if that is what you first enlisted for, OR 2 years if you entered the Selected Reserve within a year of leaving active duty and served 4 years (“2 by 4” Program).

CATEGORY II

2. Served at least 1 day between 10/19/84 and 6/30/85, and stayed on active duty through 6/30/88, (or 6/30/87 if you entered the Selected Reserve within 1 year of leaving active duty and served 4 years).
3. On 12/31/89, you had entitlement left from Vietnam-Era GI Bill

CATEGORY III

1. Not eligible for MGIB under Category I or II,
2. On active duty on 9/30/90 AND separated involuntarily after 2/2/91,
3. OR involuntarily separated on or after 11/30/93,
4. OR voluntarily separated under either the Voluntary Separation Incentive (VSI) or Special Separation Benefit (SSB) program.
5. Before separation, you had military pay reduced by $1200

CATEGORY IV

1. On active duty on 10/9/96 AND you had money remaining in a VEAP account on that date AND you elected MGIB by 10/9/97,
2. OR entered full-time National Guard duty under title 32, USC, between 7/1/85, and 11/28/89 AND you elected MGIB during the period 10/9/96, through 7/8/97.
3. Had military pay reduced by $100 a month for 12 months or made a $1200 lump-sum contribution.

APPENDIX B

IRB FORMS

Proposal and Candidacy Approval

Statement of Exemption

Certification of Completion

Approval of Requested Changes
APPENDIX B. IRB FORMS

Benedictine University
In giving today — Transforming tomorrow

Dissertation Proposal and Candidacy Approval Form

Post - 9/11 GI Bill: A Critical Examination of the Five Versions From 1944-2008 and the Law That Provides a New Generation of Qualified Veterans the Opportunity to Transition From Soldier to Student at Two-Year Colleges and Four-Year Universities

Dissertation Proposal

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of Doctor of Education in the College of Education and Health Services

Jason Paul Santiago

Doctor of Education in Higher Education and Organizational Change

Approved:

[Signatures with dates]

[Please print name]

Date

Date

Date
Benedictine University--Institutional Review Board
Statement of Exemption Form

Version 4-29-05

Principal (Faculty) Investigator: Dr. Gary Davis
Title of Investigator: Dissertation Chair & Adjunct Instructor
Department or Program: Higher Education & Organizational Change
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Phone: 217-737-3359

Student and/or Other Investigator Advisor, Reader:
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Phone: 
E-Mail address: 

Other Student and/or Other Investigator Advisor, Reader:
Address: 
Phone: 
E-Mail address: 

Check all that apply: student project x 
faculty project 
joint faculty/student project 
Other 
Specify: 
grant research 
Specify: 

Title of Project
Post-9/11 GI Bill: A critical examination of the Five Versions from 1944-2008 and the law that provides a new generation of qualified veterans the opportunity to transition from soldier to student at two-year colleges and four-year universities.

HIPAA: Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act
x Yes x No Will health information be obtained from the covered entity (a health care provider who bills health insurers)?

x Yes x No Will the study involve the provision of healthcare in a covered entity, such as Benedictine's student health center?

x Yes x No If the study involves the provision of healthcare, will a health insurer or billing agency be contacted for billing or eligibility?

If you answered "NO" to all three questions, you are not subject to HIPAA and do not need to address Page 4 of this form. If you answered "YES" to any of the questions above, you are subject to HIPAA and must attach the HIPAA Worksheet.

Citation of Exempt Category (definitions below): 

1 2 3 4 5 6
EXEMPTION CATEGORIES (45 CFR 46.101(b)): Research activities in which the only involvement of human subjects will be in one or more of the following categories:

1. Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices, such as (i) research on regular and special education instructional strategies, or (ii) research on the effectiveness of or the comparison among instructional techniques, curricular or classroom management methods.

2. Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: (i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employment, or reputation. Research which deals with sensitive aspects of the subject's own behavior such as illegal conduct, drug use, sexual behavior, or use of alcohol, cannot be exempt from review.

3. Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior that is not exempt under paragraph (b)(2) of this section if (i) the human subjects are elected or appointed public officials or candidates for public office, or (ii) federal statute(s) require(s) without exception that the confidentiality of the personally identifiable information will be maintained throughout the research and thereafter. Research which deals with sensitive aspects of the subject's own behavior such as illegal conduct, drug use, sexual behavior, or use of alcohol, cannot be exempt from review.

4. Research involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens or diagnostic specimens, if these sources are publicly available or if the information is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly, or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

5. Research and demonstration projects which are conducted by or subject to the approval of federal department or agency heads and which are designed to study, evaluate, or otherwise examine: (i) public benefit or service programs; (ii) procedures for obtaining benefits or services under those programs; (iii) possible changes in or alternatives to those programs or procedures; or (iv) possible changes in methods or levels of payment for benefits or services under those programs.

6. Taste and food quality evaluation and consumer acceptance studies, (i) if wholesome foods without additives are consumed or (ii) if a food is consumed that contains a food ingredient at or below the level and for a use found to be safe, or agricultural chemical or environmental contaminant at or below the level found to be safe, by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration or approved by the Environmental Protection Agency or the Food and Safety and Inspection Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

CONTINUING STUDIES:

Is this a continuation of an existing IRB approved study? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please indicate when the IRB approved the study: ________________________________

and attach a copy of last year's approved exempt study.

Description of the Proposed Project: Please give a description of the proposed project on a separate page. In addition, indicate how subjects will be recruited, from where, and when. Also address the critical elements of your exemption category as indicated below:

Category 1: Specify whether 1.i or 1.ii applies and briefly explain.

Category 2: Assure that condition 2.i will be met and briefly explain how; and assure that condition 2.ii applies; and confirm that copies of test/survey/interview questions or items are attached.

Category 3: Explain why conditions 2.i and 2.ii cannot be met; and attach copy of test/survey/interview questions or items; and either assure and briefly explain that condition 3.ii applies, or explain subject's public office and how it precludes anonymity (i.e., 3.i).

Category 4: Briefly explain the nature of the existing data/documents; and briefly explain either their public availability or the procedures to ensure anonymity and confidentiality.
Category 5: Briefly explain method by which the project is reviewed and approved by a federal department/agency head; and identify and describe which of the 5.i - 5.iv categories apply.
Category 6: Assure that condition 6.i will be met; and assure via documentation regarding approved safety levels that condition 6.ii will be met.

Include attachments that are needed to conduct this study (e.g., Informed Consent Forms, instruments to be used). If necessary, use additional pages to fully describe the project.

CERTIFICATION: I certify that this research has been reviewed by my Department Chair or Unit Head and meets the requirements for exemption from review by the IRB. I also certify that I have the appropriate credentials and privileges to review this study and that the facilities are adequate.

Department Chair or Unit Head

Signature: [Signature]

Date 4/14/2012

Principal Investigator (faculty or staff member)

Date

Faculty Advisor (if student is Principal Investigator)

Signature: [Signature]

Date 4/14/12

IRB Use Only: IRB REVIEW AND APPROVAL:

IRB Chair

Approval Date

Exemption Category #
Certificate of Completion

The NIH Office of Human Subjects Research certifies that Jason Santiago completed the computer-based training course for NIH IRB members.

Date: 09/28/2009
Certification Number: 1254230093

APPENDIX C

SURVEY QUESTIONS
APPENDIX C. SURVEY QUESTIONS

Demographic Information

Dear Honorable U.S. Veteran:

My name is Jason Santiago, a doctoral student at Benedictine University in Lisle, Illinois. I would like you to participate in a research project entitled: "Student-soldiers evaluate the effectiveness of the Post-9/11 GI Bill at two institutions: A critical examination".

The purpose of this survey is to discover how soldier-students transition with the use of U.S. higher education programs. The following survey was developed to ask you a few questions regarding your military training, experiences, educational achievements, etc... The research will be of the utmost professionalism with regard to ethical, legal, moral, and scholarly work within the field of higher education.

It is my intention that this valuable information can improve access to all Post-9/11 veterans as they transition into higher education. Please complete the survey at your earliest convenience. I fully understand that there are no known risks or benefits involved in my participation. I have been instructed that my responses, personal thoughts, and the results will be kept strictly confidential.

I fully understand that I may withdraw my consent to participate and discontinue in this project at any time with no negative consequences. I have been given the right to ask questions concerning the procedure and any other relevant questions pertaining to the Primary Investigator, dissertation member, and Benedictine University.

I fully understand that if I want further information about this project I can contact Primary Investigator Jason Santiago at jasonpaul80@yahoo.com or 773-909-8078, Dr. Randy Plunkett, Retired SMSgt, U.S. Air Force at profrandyp@yahoo.com or 612-214-5487, and/or Dr. Alandra Weller-Clark, Associate Professor of Education & Institutional Review Board Chair, Benedictine University at aclarke@ben.edu or 630-829-6295.

I have explained and defined in sufficient detail the purpose in which the participant has agreed to participate and have offered a copy of this informed consent form for his/her records.

Thank you for participating in my research study. Your help is greatly appreciated.

* 1. 1. I have read and understood the consent form
   - Yes
   - No

2. What Chapter of the Post-9/11 GI Bill are you eligible for:
   - Chapter 30
   - Chapter 31
   - Chapter 32
   - Chapter 33
   - Chapter 35
   - Chapter 1606
   - Chapter 1607
3. What is your gender

☐ Male
☐ Female
☐ Transgender

4. What is your age group

☐ 17 - 21
☐ 22 - 26
☐ 27 - 31
☐ 32 - 36
☐ 37 - 41
☐ 42 - 46
☐ 47 - 51
☐ 52 - 56
☐ 57 - +

5. What is your ethnicity

☐ Black
☐ American Indian
☐ Asian
☐ Hispanic
☐ White
☐ Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander

6. Are you involved in any military organization or club outside of school

☐ Yes
☐ No

7. What branch of the Armed Forces did you serve in (more than one may apply)

☐ Air Force
☐ Army
☐ Coast Guard
☐ Marines
☐ Navy
8. What is the highest pay grade you achieved

- [ ] E-1
- [ ] E-2
- [ ] E-3
- [ ] E-4
- [ ] E-5
- [ ] E-6
- [ ] E-7
- [ ] E-8
- [ ] E-9
- [ ] O-1
- [ ] O-2
- [ ] O-3
- [ ] O-4
- [ ] O-5
- [ ] O-6
- [ ] O-7
- [ ] O-8
- [ ] O-9

9. Have you been deployed to a combat zone

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

10. Have you experienced combat

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

11. What is your current duty status

- [ ] Active
- [ ] National Guard
- [ ] Reserve
- [ ] Retired
- [ ] Veteran
12. Which of the following was a decision to enlist (check all that may apply)

- Educational incentives
- VA loans (school/home)
- Insurance benefits (family)
- Multicultural learning opportunities
- Direction after high school
- Family tradition (grandparents, parents, siblings, relatives)
- Patriotism after 09/11/2011
- Used as a stepping stone for future job placement/growth

13. Did you graduate from high school or obtain a GED equivalency before joining the Armed Forces

- Yes
- No

14. What is your enrollment status

- Full-time
- Part-time

15. What type of an institution do you attend

- Community College
- University

16. What specific degree program are you in

- Associate's
- Bachelor's
- Master's

17. What year are you

- Freshman
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior
- Graduate
18. Are you currently working

☐ Full-time
☐ Part-time
☐ Seasonal
☐ Laid-off
☐ Work Study
☐ None

19. The admissions representative was familiar with my paperwork including military transcripts, GI Bill, VA, etc...

☐ Yes
☐ No

20. My GPA is categorized as

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0.9 - 1.9</th>
<th>2.0 - 2.9</th>
<th>3.0 - 3.9</th>
<th>4.0 - 4.9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
21. I attend class(es) on a regular basis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Check the answer that corresponds to your opinion.

22. I am on schedule to graduate on time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>○</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Check the answer that corresponds to your opinion.

23. I knew about the GI Bill benefits before I entered the Armed Forces

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>○</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Check the answer that corresponds to your opinion.

24. Obtaining the GI Bill benefits during/after service was the sole reason I entered the Armed Forces

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Check the answer that corresponds to your opinion.

25. I learned more about the GI Bill as soon as I entered from a recruiter

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Check the answer that corresponds to your opinion.

26. I knew about the Post 9/11 – GI Bill after I exited from the military

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Check the answer that corresponds to your opinion.

27. I earned college credit for my military service

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Check the answer that corresponds to your opinion.

28. I used the GI Bill 6 months after separation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Check the answer that corresponds to your opinion.

29. I used the GI Bill 12 months after separation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Check the answer that corresponds to your opinion.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30. I cannot afford college if not for the GI Bill benefits</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. I plan on continuing my educational education, i.e. graduate school, law school, or medical school</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. I entered into some form of college setting during my time in the military to continue developing my educational skills</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. I enrolled at the community college/university because of the military friendly atmosphere?</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. The military club helps me continue the transition from soldier to student</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. I feel that the student services staff understand my points of view</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. Some of the student service staff are prior Armed Forces members</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. Their needs to be more discrete services offered with the students services office (mental health counselors, substance abuse, PTSD/TBI, day-to-day life concerns, and transitions)</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
38. I feel connected to the campus community both inside and outside the classroom

Check the answer that corresponds to your opinion

39. I am able to turn for help on campus when I feel lost and confused

Check the answer that corresponds to your opinion

40. I enjoy taking courses with other students and sharing some of those memorable experiences

Check the answer that corresponds to your opinion

41. I feel that my classmates are interested in my military and real world experiences

Check the answer that corresponds to your opinion

42. I feel that my instructors are interested in my military and real world experiences

43. I feel that I am in control of my future through the use of higher education
APPENDIX D

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REFERENCES


Bentley, N. (2011, March 1). A look at proprietary/for-profit higher education in the U.S.A. Lecture presented for higher education and organizational change doctoral students, Benedictine University, Lisle, IL.


Cook, B. J., & Kim, Y. (2009). From soldier to student: Easing the transition of service members on campus. Indianapolis, IN: Lumina Foundation for Education.


*Transformative Learning Theory in Practice, 74*, 3-35.


Doctoral Dissertation Approval Form

Student-soldiers evaluate the effectiveness of the Post-9/11 GI Bill at two institutions: A critical examination.

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of Doctor of Education in the College of Education and Health Services

Jason Paul Santiago

Doctor of Education in Higher Education and Organizational Change

Approved:

Dissertation Committee Director Signature  (Please print name)  Date

Dissertation Committee Chair Signature  (Please print name)  Date

Dissertation Committee Reader  (Please print name)  Date

Dissertation Committee Technical Advisor  (Please print name)  Date

Dean, College of Education and Health Services  (Please print name)  Date