

Evaluating GPA and Satisfaction Rates for Veteran Populations Transitioning from Combat to College Classroom

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Abstract

Over the next couple of years, tens of thousands of veterans will return home, and some will return with the expectation of using their Montgomery G.I. Bill and Post 911 benefits. Their choices may include various educational and professional options such as 4-year institutions, community or 2-year colleges, or direct entry into the workplace. Information on the educational benefits earned by transitioning from full-time military service to civilian life may be limited or profoundly impacted by many barriers. Colleges and universities are tasked with limiting or eliminating hurdles that may keep veterans from being successful college students. With known and unknown limitations, the task of ensuring academic success can be daunting to the institution and the transitioning veteran. The sample population for this study was student veterans who had transitioned from combat and combat-training operations to part- or full-time student status at a regional university.

The issues affecting veterans at regional universities are vast and as unique as each veteran; however, some issues are more transparent. Transitioning veterans create an ideal business opportunity as they consist of a large group of paying customers with significant access to funds. Currently, veteran student transitions are occurring en masse with available federal funding to accommodate these transitions. Therefore, it is worth inquiring how well prepared universities are for the current and anticipated influx of veterans to their campuses. It is also worth inquiring as to whether these institutions have available services in place to assist former military students in their transition from “combat to the classroom.” Ackerman, DiRamio, and Garza (2009) examined veteran student perceptions of creating veteran-friendly campuses. One student indicated, “It would be great to not feel thrown into college. All the paperwork, I have to go through, or they could offer a little more help and veteran’s programs” (Ackerman et al., 2009, p. 8). While the issues affecting colleges, universities, and veterans are vast, simple modifications and minimal financial resources can make services more available.

Many veterans return home and expect to use local educational resources that are cost effective and integrate student support services while ensuring academic success. Still, difficulties and unforeseen barriers to veteran's academic success exist. Therefore, thought needs to be given to the responsibilities assigned to representatives who work with veterans to ensure that specialized attention is given to orient students, and provide updated policies, resources, and programs without alienating veterans (Ackerman et al., 2009). While the majority of veterans have financial benefits, they may not be prepared for the fast paced, unstructured, and limited resource issues that affect colleges and universities. As such, veterans may deal with various issues on their own (e.g., the ambiguity of securing the educational benefits promised by the military). Many veterans are disillusioned by the complexity of rules that govern the G.I. Bill, which exacerbates the process of transitioning to college (Zinger & Cohen 2010). However, aware institutions can combat this complexity by creating task forces or committees that are dedicated to assisting veteran student transitions and becoming or going beyond the "military-friendly" indicator that researchers have suggested.

Ackerman et al., 2009 report that most transitioning veterans agree that their respective military branches provided little to no assistance regarding educational information when they transitioned out of the military. They also reported that the military offers debriefing opportunities at the end of deployments; yet, many transitioning veterans do not participate. One report from the National Guard indicated that 80% of transitioning veterans did not participate in any of the many available sessions (Ackerman et al.). These researchers found that many veterans recalled a brief presentation about education benefits during the military's weeklong transition program; however, the sessions focused more on how to get care at a VA hospital, write a resume, or dress for an interview. Veterans report that these sessions do little to help them choose a college under the most generous G.I. Bill in six decades (Sander, 2012). This lack of information is often given as the reason members elect to bypass using their earned educational benefits. For this reason, implementing educational mentoring services and fostering mentoring relationships that are vital to the success of large cohorts of former military members is even more important.

As military service members transition from "combat to classroom" settings, such as 4-year institutions, the preparation work necessary to educate these men and women must already be in place. Whether educating cohorts of war veterans using traditional face-to-face methods or evolutionary online teaching approaches, higher education administrators must recognize that veterans seek effective and time relevant services. Students' perceived dreams of attending college may be hindered by bureaucratic red tape, feelings of rejection by classmates and faculty members, or physical and cognitive limitations (DiRamio & Spires, 2009). Colleges will be required to invest significant time and financial resources to assist these unique students in using their educational benefits and facilitate opportunities for success, while implementing mentoring and orientations programs. However, a comprehensive approach with the occasional "check in" on student progress and access to their educational benefits will have a lasting impact.

The task of implementing military-friendly services can be daunting for institutions and administrators; however, the veterans who benefit from this assistance could be enough to positively change the landscape of education for generations, just as their forefathers did with the original G.I. Bill benefits. Further, the role that administrators play in the development of transitioning veterans is equally as vital as that of recruiters and college admissions officers in assisting traditional students in their decisions on classes and degrees of study.

Statement of the Problem

The history of military veterans transitioning to institutions of higher education has been documented since our nation's first battles. Since the passage of the first Morrill Act in 1862, federal provisions have directed or enabled colleges and universities to prepare and educate armed forces personnel and, or more recently, to educate veterans (Rumann & Hamrick, 2010). As one of the fastest growing segments in the United States, military service members transitioning from active duty tours in combat zones in Iraq and Afghanistan are now entering college classrooms nationwide. The college setting has become the new front line for many of these returning veterans (Zinger & Cohen 2010). This academic front line is not accidental, as regional universities and colleges have a history of focusing on students' needs and strategies to assist nontraditional students. However, there is a notable gap in services during the transition period from military to civilian life. Additionally, it is unknown whether transitional services are at all beneficial to veterans. This study examined the impact of transitional programming available at one regional university based on GPA and perceived satisfaction success rates for military personnel who leave the military and enter college classrooms.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose for conducting this research study was to examine transitional programming services made available to student veterans leaving combat and entering a regional university. The study sought to determine academic satisfaction rates of transitional services for undergraduate student veterans at a regional university. The study also sought to determine academic satisfaction rates of transitional services for graduate student veterans at a regional university. The study examined whether transitional programming for student veterans at colleges assist in the cumulative GPAs of undergraduate-level student veterans. Finally, the study examined whether transitional programming for student veterans in college assists in the cumulative GPAs of graduate-level student veterans.

Significance of the Study

To date, almost two million veterans who were eligible for Post-911 G.I. Bill funding, which covers full tuition and expenses, have returned from Iraq and Afghanistan. In 2010, as estimated 150,000 of these veterans enrolled in college, which was a 25% increase from the previous year (Myers, 2011). With so many troops transitioning out of the military during a recession era, education is a viable option, particularly degree programs that are not time restraining such as vocational and online education. Traditionally, institutions of higher education have not been particularly responsive to the needs of student veterans (Cook & Kim, 2009). However, colleges and universities are increasingly becoming aware of the need to evolve their services for transitioning student veterans. Understanding veterans' perceived and actual barriers and successes associated with transitioning from combat operations to navigating higher education is paramount in evaluating GPA and perceived educational satisfaction rates.

Research Questions

The following research questions formed the basis for this investigation:

1. Do student veterans' ratings of transitional integration, academic satisfaction, and veteran services predict GPA?
2. When combined with student veterans' ratings of transitional integration, academic satisfaction, and veteran services, does degree status contribute to the prediction of GPA for undergraduate and graduate students?
3. Do student veterans' ratings of transitional integration, academic satisfaction, and veteran services acceptance predict perceived educational success?
4. When combined with student veterans' ratings of transitional integration, academic satisfaction, and veteran services, does degree status contribute to the prediction of perceived educational success for undergraduate and graduate students?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses guided this study; each was tested at the .05 level of significance:

Hypothesis 1

- Ho1. Student veterans' ratings of transitional integration, academic satisfaction, and veteran services do not contribute significantly to the prediction of GPA.
- Ha1. Student veterans' ratings of transitional integration, academic satisfaction, and veteran services contribute significantly to the prediction of GPA.

Hypothesis 2

- Ho2. When combined with student veterans' ratings of transitional integration, academic satisfaction, and veteran services, degree status does not contribute significantly to the prediction of GPA for undergraduate and graduate students.
- Ha2. When combined with student veterans' ratings of transitional integration, academic satisfaction, and veteran services, degree status contributes significantly to the prediction of GPA for undergraduate and graduate students.

Hypothesis 3

- Ho3. Student veterans' ratings of transitional integration, academic satisfaction, and veteran services do not contribute significantly to the prediction of perceived educational success.
- Ha3. Student veterans' ratings of transitional integration, academic satisfaction, and veteran services contribute significantly to the prediction of perceived educational success.

Hypothesis 4

- Ho4. When combined with student veterans' ratings transitional integration, academic satisfaction, and veteran services, degree status does not contribute significantly to the prediction of perceived educational success for undergraduate and graduate students.
- Ha4. When combined with student veterans' ratings of transitional integration, academic satisfaction, and veteran services, degree status contributes significantly to the prediction of perceived educational success for undergraduate and graduate students.

Method of Procedure

This study used an interpretive theoretical perspective grounded in constructionist epistemology (Rumann & Hamrick, 2009). This study conducted an examination of the factors that determine cumulative GPAs for veterans transitioning from combat to college classrooms at a northeastern Texas institution, with a total enrollment of 11,200 graduate and undergraduate students. As the time of this study, the university had over 500 veterans and veteran family members, roughly 4% of the total population. Data were analyzed using a multiple regression to determine whether degree status, in combination with student veterans' ratings of transitional integration, academic satisfaction, and veteran services, contributed to the prediction of GPA and perceived educational success for undergraduate and graduate students.

Perceived success rates and GPAs were used as dependent variables based on a review of the literature that revealed their relevance in determining successful transitional services. The study used descriptive statistics on veterans who transitioned from their respective military branches and entered a northeastern Texas institution. Dependent variables related to a regional university were identified from the literature (Astin, Korn, & Riggs, 1993; Galbraith & Cohen, 1995; Orndorff & Herr, 1996; Rumann & Hamrick, 2009; Ryan, Carlstrom, Hughey, & Harris, 2011) and organized into the following three constructs for multiple regression statistical analysis: (a) transitional integration, (b) academic satisfaction, (c) and veterans' services. The dependent variables were represented as (d) cumulative GPAs for student veterans, and (e) educational success. Multiple regression was used to analyze each dependent variable to determine whether a statistically significant difference existed between undergraduate and graduate students.

Limitations

The following limitations apply to this study:

1. This study did not examine other issues affecting the GPA and satisfaction of undergraduate and graduate student veterans.
2. The study is limited in the generalizability of the research findings beyond institutions similar in size, scope, and geographical location of a regional university.

Delimitations

The following delimitations apply to this study:

1. Participants included student veterans enrolled from Fall 2011 to Spring 2013 at one regional university.
2. Only student veterans at one regional university in northeastern Texas were recruited to participate in the study.

Research Question 1

The first research question examined whether student veterans' ratings of transitional integration, academic satisfaction, and use of veterans services could predict GPA. The null hypothesis accompanying Research Question 1 was as follows: There is no relationship between student veterans' ratings of transitional integration, academic satisfaction, veteran services, and GPA.

Forty-six respondents reported their GPA; of these, the mean was 3.43 ($N = 46$, $SD = .47$). The mean ratings for the constructs were as follows: transitional integration 3.20 ($SD = .58$), academic satisfaction 3.58 ($SD = .62$), and veteran services 3.64 ($SD = .52$). Ratings for transitional implementation and academic satisfaction were both significantly correlated with the criterion variable (see Table 1).

Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations for GPA, Academic Satisfaction, Veterans Services and Transitional Acceptance (N = 46)

Variable	Mean	SD	Predictor Variables		
			1	2	3
GPA	3.43	0.47	.445**	.343*	-.125
Predictor variables					
1. Transitional integration	3.20	0.58		.348**	.133
2. Academic satisfaction	3.58	0.62			.254*
3. Veterans services	3.64	0.52			

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

The regression procedure showed that the model significantly predicted GPA, $F(3, 42) = 5.93$, $p = .002$. The adjusted R^2 of .247 indicates that, of the total variability that existed in GPA, 24.7% was associated with variability of the construct ratings. The only statistically significant standardized beta coefficient was transitional integration (see Table 2). Tolerance values indicate that multicollinearity was not a problem in this analysis.

Table 2

Multiple Regression Analysis Summary for Variables Predicting GPAs (N = 46)

Variable	<i>B</i>	Standard Error of <i>B</i>	β
Transitional integration	.308	.111	.382**
Academic satisfaction	.210	.107	.280
Veterans services	-.225	.120	-.252
Constant	2.511	.532	

Note. $R^2 = F(3,42) = 5.93, p = .002, p < .001$. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Research Question 2

The second research question examined whether degree status contributes to the prediction of GPA for undergraduate and graduate student veterans when combined with ratings of transitional integration, academic satisfaction, and veteran services. The null hypothesis accompanying Research Question 2 was as follows: There is no relationship between student veterans' ratings of transitional integration, academic satisfaction, veteran services, and degree level.

The mean GPA was 3.43 ($N = 46, SD = .47$). The mean ratings for the constructs were as follows: transitional integration 3.2 ($SD = .58$), academic satisfaction 3.58 ($SD = .62$), and veteran services 3.64 ($SD = .52$). Ratings for transitional implementation, academic satisfaction, and degree level were significantly correlated with the criterion variable (see Table 3).

Table 3

Means, Standard Deviations and Intercorrelations for GPA, Transitional Integration, Academic Satisfaction, Veteran Services, and Degree Level (N = 46)

Variable	Mean	SD	Predictor Variables			
			1	2	3	4
GPA	3.43	0.47	.445**	.343*	-.125	.476***
Predictor variables						
1. Transitional integration	3.20	0.58		.348**	.133	.241
2. Academic satisfaction	3.58	0.62			.274*	.103
3. Veterans services	3.64	0.52				-.139
4. Degree level ^a						

^aDegree level is a nominal variable. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

The regression procedure showed that the model significantly predicted GPA, $F(4, 41) = 7.13, p < .001$. The adjusted R^2 of .353 indicates that, of the total variability that existed in GPA, 35.3% was associated with variability of the construct ratings and degree level. The only statistically significant standardized beta coefficients were transitional integration and degree level (see Table 4). Tolerance values indicate that multicollinearity was not a problem in this analysis.

Table 4

Multiple Regression Analysis Summary for Variables Predicting GPAs (N = 46)

Variable	B	Standard Error of B	β
Transitional integration	.239	.106	.297*
Academic satisfaction	.191	.099	.254
Veterans services	-.165	.113	-.185
Degree level	.327	.117	.352**
Constant	2.104	.514	

Note. $R^2 = .353, F(4, 41) = 7.13, p < .001$. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Research Question 3

The third research question examined whether student veterans' ratings of transitional integration, academic satisfaction, and veteran services predicted perceived educational success. The null hypothesis accompanying Research Question 3 was as follows: There is no relationship between student veterans' ratings of transitional integration, academic satisfaction, and veteran services.

The mean GPA was 3.37 ($N = 49$, $SD = .43$). The mean ratings for the constructs were as follows: transitional integration 3.17 ($SD = .58$), academic satisfaction 3.56 ($SD = .61$), and veteran services 3.63 ($SD = .52$). Ratings for transitional implementation and academic satisfaction were significantly correlated with the criterion variable (see Table 5).

Table 5

Means, Standard Deviations and Intercorrelations for Perceived Educational Success, Transitional Integration, Academic Satisfaction, and Veteran Services ($N = 49$)

Variable	Mean	SD	Predictor Variables		
			1	2	3
Educational Success	3.43	0.47	.220	.356**	.232
Predictor variables					
1. Transitional integration	3.20	0.58		.368**	.098
2. Academic satisfaction	3.58	0.62			.235
3. Veterans services	3.64	0.52			
4. Degree level ^a					

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

The regression procedure showed that the model significantly predicted GPA, $F(3,45) = 2.84$, $p = .048$. The adjusted R^2 of .103 indicates that, of the total variability that existed in GPA, 10.3% was associated with variability of the construct ratings. None of the standardized beta coefficients was statistically significant contributors on their own to the model (see Table 6). Tolerance values indicate that multicollinearity was not a problem in this analysis.

Table 6

Multiple Regression Analysis Summary for Variables Predicting Educational Success (N = 49)

Variable	<i>B</i>	Standard Error of <i>B</i>	β
Transitional integration	.075	.109	.101
Academic satisfaction	.199	.106	.282
Veterans' services	.129	.117	.156
Constant	1.955	.529	

Note. $R^2 = .103$; $F(3, 45) = 2.840$, $p = .048$. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Research Question 4

The fourth research question examined whether degree status contributes to the prediction of perceived educational success for undergraduate and graduate veteran students in combination with ratings of transitional integration, academic satisfaction, and veteran services. The null hypothesis accompanying Research Question 4 was as follows: There is no relationship between student veterans' rating of transitional integration, academic satisfaction, veteran services, and degree level.

The mean GPA was 3.37 ($N = 49$, $SD = .43$). The mean ratings for the constructs were as follows: transitional integration 3.17 ($SD = .58$), academic satisfaction 3.56 ($SD = .61$), and veteran services 3.63 ($SD = .52$). Only academic satisfaction was significantly correlated with the criterion variable (see Table 7).

Table 7

Means, Standard Deviations and Intercorrelations for Perceived Educational Success, Transitional Integration, Academic Satisfaction, and Veteran Services (N = 49)

Variable	Mean	SD	Predictor Variables			
			1	2	3	4
Educational Success	3.37	0.43	.220	.356**	.232	.108
Predictor variables						
1. Transitional integration	3.17	0.58		.368**	.098	.231
2. Academic satisfaction	3.56	0.61			.235	.124
3. Veterans services	3.63					-.185
4. Degree level ^a						

^aDegree level is a nominal variable. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

The regression procedure showed that the model did not significantly predict perceived educational success, $F(4,44) = 2.19$, $p = .086$. The adjusted R^2 of .090 indicates that, of the total variability that existed in GPA, 9.0% was associated with variability of the construct ratings and degree level. None of the standardized beta coefficients was statistically significant (see Table 8). Tolerance values indicate that multicollinearity was not a problem in this analysis.

Table 8

Multiple Regression Analysis Summary for Variables Predicting Educational Success (N = 49)

Variable	B	Standard Error of B	β
Transitional integration	.061	.112	.082
Academic satisfaction	.193	.108	.274
Veterans' services	.146	.121	.176
Degree level	.075	.125	.088
Constant	1.850	.560	

Note. $R^2 = .090$; $F(4, 44) = 2.19$, $p = .086$. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Summary of Findings

Based upon this study, several conclusions may be drawn from the findings. First, student veterans' ratings of academic satisfaction and veteran services did not contribute significantly to the prediction of perceived educational success and GPA for undergraduate and graduate students. However, student veterans' ratings of transitional integration did consistently contribute significantly to the prediction of perceived educational success and GPA rates for undergraduate and graduate students. Ratings of academic satisfaction and the availability of veteran services are important, as are countless many other variables, even if they did not have a significant influence in this study. These variables may have not predicted GPA rates and perceived educational success as they may not, individually, stand alone as impactful variables. Rather, they are part of a collective strategy that works together to ensure a successful transition for the veteran. Research has shown that certain student organizations and extracurricular activities not only promote student achievement, but also increase general satisfaction with the academic experience (Yin & Lei, 2007). When students experience satisfaction with their programs, the university is likely to experience higher retention rates, which benefit both the students and the university community. In order to have a high GPA, veteran students must first transition, and during the transitional process, they are building and reinforcing their GPA and building up feelings of elation in association with their educational achievements. The feeling of integration into the local university, in this case, is the variable that determines success. Therefore, as with most groups, when people feel like they are "part of something" bigger than themselves, they do better, they buy in, and are, in turn, successful.

Among the implementations included in the third independent variable, veterans' services and resources, were the integration of programming such as a student led Student Veteran Association (SVA). The SVA has proven to be a focal point for transitioning veterans to find others who share or understanding their experience. Increasingly, with more and more veterans indicating combat experience and combat support, a location on a college campus where men and women can exchange stories, feel safe and communicate with other veterans is a key component to creating a welcoming atmosphere. Instituting veteran mentoring from a more experienced veteran who encourages personal developmental relationships and has experienced the challenges of transitioning from the military and successfully adapting to the college environment is most beneficial (DiRamio & Spires, 2009).

In line with the student led SVA, the university's services components provide counseling geared towards addressing specific needs that student veterans and their families may be experiencing. The regional university also has an office staffed with a full time employee and veteran student workers who work diligently to provide comprehensive services for the diverse group of veterans that attend the university, both as full time and part time graduate and undergraduate students.

While these factors did not predict a reported higher GPA or perceived educational success, these services are still important as they likely reflect a student veteran who is more likely to still be retained and graduate as a result of his balanced understanding of feeling connected to a university, feeling connecting to an empowering group such as the Student Veterans Association and the collective feeling of having an office that can answer veteran specific questions, such as the Veterans Office. Facilitating successful transitional programming is multi-faceted in that these programs benefit students and universities on various levels. The combat to classroom transition could be, because of their previous time in the military, a difficult

task for some. Some veterans may even benefit from programs targeted at this population, such as transitional programming that assists in the development of successful college student veterans. Virtually all service members who separate from the military experience major life transitions (VA, 2007b).

Kupczynski, Mundy, and Jones (2001) provided research that indicated a trend towards academic satisfaction when students anticipate increased GPA ratings. As the researchers stated, “implications for practice might include counseling incoming freshmen and perhaps including initial student instruction designed to positively impact student self-efficacy and belief in self.” When practices are implemented, students’ feeling of satisfaction with their performance and with their instruction may increase.

Combining existing research in the areas of services marketing and student satisfaction creates an appropriate foundation for the development of a conceptual framework that can be used to investigate the potential impact of service-based activities on course satisfaction among adult students, particularly the student veteran population (Howell & Buck, 2011). The importance of participation and engagement of nontraditional students is seen in the current demographics of this population on college and university campuses throughout the United States (Wyatt, 2011). Providing transitional services for military veterans goes beyond “the right thing to do” and lends itself to the creation of a culture of accessibility and success.

Implications for Practice

Universities and colleges benefit from having student veterans on campus. They are among the most mature, self-paced students that often engage with faculty and staff in ways that other students do not. Veterans benefit from the interactions from their professors, and they are used to engaging in positive conversations that include setting and attaining goals. The various university stakeholders such as counseling centers, campus recreational facilities, dining halls, housing and career services are also paramount to the success of the student veteran as they each play a role as success agents.

As indicated in the research (Brenner, et al, 2008; Doenges, 2011), the military instills a sense of connectedness, meaning and purpose during the enlistment. Therefore, veterans regard their military service as important and meaningful, and previous qualitative research has found similar themes. These themes provided the student veteran with valuable lessons in the development of discipline, personal character, confidence and commitment to hard work. Understanding these factors, can be beneficial to the institution and may facilitate engagement not previously considered, resulting in student veterans who feel connected to their educational institutions.

Overall, as the implementation of transitional integration continues to develop in coordination with the large amount of expected veterans becoming student veterans, colleges and universities can be successful by implementing programming services that keep the newly formed non-traditional group connected and involved. Whether that means the creation or continued support of a student led veterans’ group, or counselors trained to better serve military veterans and their families, the support must come from administration. Since 9/11, transitioning veterans previously attended colleges and universities that were “responding” to their needs and educational services. Now, in a new era, veterans are being welcomed as a transitioning, well-funded, student led group of students. The support of the administration is key to the success of

this transitioning group of men and women who deserve an enhanced, streamline process to success. The support will result in a student veterans' group that is content, resulting in a higher retention rate and, presumably, higher GPA rates. The opportunity to feel "connected" to the institution is hugely successful for any group, and particularly beneficial for student veterans who have completed tours and enlistments in which being connected may have been the only resource that helped them endure. While college is not an enemy fighting force, it is foreign to some and can feel like another significant life hurdle, therefore the facilitation of transitional programming would result in a higher quality, more memorable experience and as a result, a graduated alumnus.

Recommendations for Further Research

Future research may consider conducting a study in each major region of the United States to determine if each region is represented differently. The student veteran population will continue to evolve, and may experience spurts of significant growth and decline based on political appointments and political party representation in national offices. At the university where the research was conducted, they reported 164 student veterans on campus in 2006 and 644 student veterans on campus six years later, resulting in a 393% increase in this population. The student veterans, who were once 1.8% of the total population in the last six years, are now representative with a 5.8% total population, a significant 320% increase. Therefore, results from this study may prove to be different upon the change in leadership at national levels, though it is increasingly important that the university's administration is aware of significant changes to an often overlooked student body population, particularly one with complete access to federal education funds and benefits. When an institution experiences over 50% increase in any population, it is worth meeting with members of that group and establishing long-term strategic plans to ensure that services are being rendered to assist in creating an ambiance of successful students. An institution will want to be recognized as a veteran-friendly campus; therefore, a satisfaction survey should be constructed to measure the satisfaction of veterans on campus to determine the effectiveness of implementing transitional services to the college's student veteran population.

The study encouraged student veterans to respond to questions regarding specific areas of satisfaction and GPA. An examination into student veterans' perceived satisfaction with their academic progress in comparison to their college peers could be an area of future study and would assist in providing additional data, both quantitative and qualitative in strategies to better serve this evolving population. A study conducted by Doenges (2011) found the information gathered about the challenges that student veterans face with their transition to college provides a way to prioritize services, though this must be completed without assuming that these challenges are unique to veterans, as data from non-veteran college students were not collected.

White male students made up a majority of the study's respondents, as indicative with the area that the regional university is located. The prominent demographics of the participant group were White (74%), male (72%), and between the ages of 26-50 (82%). While the average age of traditional university students ranges from 18-24 years, the research for this institution reflected that not one veteran student between the ages of 18-25 completed the survey; therefore, this age group was not represented. This is particularly significant as this group remains the heart of the

military forces, and is also among the highest casualty rates of similarly aged peers. Still, 52% of the respondents were undergraduate students, reflecting a significant age difference in their non-traditional status. While the traditional college student is aged 18-24 years old, the nontraditional college student, aged 25 and older and represents students returning to college campuses, which speaks to a need for colleges and universities to examine the various factors and attributes of this population and determine what needs to be done to serve these students (Wyatt, 2011). Future research may be conducted on the influence of race and ethnicity on perceived educational success and GPA rates as well as the limited data available for men and women who are fighting America's wars while their peers are attending college classes or are in the workforce. Also noted in the research, and an area of implication, is the data reflecting that 67% had served less than 11 years and 22% had retired from the military. These data are similar to studies conducted during recent war period, particularly the Vietnam conflict.

Implementing programming that serves the student veteran who is transitioning from the military to college is a task that must have "buy in" from the administration, faculty and staff, while including the considerations of their veterans on campus. Each veteran is unique, as each campus is, therefore, surveying the group to determine a collective understanding of services needed could be extremely beneficial in adopting services that transfer to accessibility and success. Rumann and Hamrick (2010) found that virtually all of the veteran survey respondents reported "practical transition concerns," most of which were related to universities' policies that inadvertently created barriers to reenrollment. Some of minor grievances included closed email accounts, temporary loss of technology, and access to facilities. Among the more serious issues were concerns relative to student health insurance, cancellation of financial aid, and infrequently offered courses, thereby extending the time to earn a degree and dislodging veterans from their path to accomplishing their set goals. Aware colleges and universities will limit these oversights and counter them with implementations of programs that assist in developing student veteran success. As Rumann, Rivera, and Hernandez (2011) reported, campuses that provide proactive efforts to facilitate veterans connecting and interacting with each other are ones that other veterans share with their friends; word of mouth is still an effective strategy as it provides firsthand knowledge of student veterans' contentions.

Conclusion

The results of this study showed a statistically significant advantage to transitional services at the regional university in Northeast Texas. The study found a significant relationship between the implementation of programming and transitional integration, recognized as the student veterans' feelings about his or her transition. The transitional integration was referred to as feelings about the integration in student led groups, counseling, campus recreation, academic and professional development services such as communicating with their peers and their university recognized as a "veteran friendly" institution alongside their perceived success rates and Grade Point Averages (GPAs). Although there has been much research done in general in the academic advising field related to student perceptions of and satisfaction with academic advising, there has been significantly less research conducted and reported in the current studies to replicate the findings from previous studies, whether in engineering education or other advising practices (Sutton & Sankar, 2011). Cook and Kim (2009) reported that colleges and

universities were, historically, not responsive to the needs of veterans but had recently begun developing programs to meet the needs of student veterans. The factors developed to address the needs of this population were intended to acknowledge and enhance campus culture, academic learning environments, student body size and composition, and location, and to play a role in what programs and services characterize a veteran friendly institution.

The research indicated that colleges and universities are implementing programs, and or are developing programs to strategically meet the needs of this large transitioning student body. Still, it is possible to surmise that the lack of services that Cook and Kim (2009) discussed may still be an ongoing barrier for transitioning veterans to colleges throughout the United States. As indicated in Doenges' (2001) research, common themes kept student veterans from successful transitions, and therefore, from perceived student success, including the perception that student veterans services were instrumental in a successful transition from military operations to the college classroom. The results suggest that this regional university, and institutions around the United States, could benefit from developing streamlined processes for approving transfer credits, financial aid, student recognition, student veterans groups and focal points, be that, a person or an office that can assist student veterans with their unique questions. In the research, Doenges (2011) found that post deployment social support is a significant positive predictor of meaning in life, positive relationships and life satisfaction. The administration's support of Student veteran groups were represented as being a significant variable to success. Research indicates that having a liaison between incoming, transitioning students and the higher education institution as beneficial to both the institution and the student veteran population. Over the next couple of years, tens of thousands of veterans will return home, and some will return with the expectation of using their Montgomery G.I. Bill and Post 9/11 benefits. The university's administration, and interested leaders, may be interested in playing a significant role in expanded or implementing services that better serve the student veteran population, among our nation's most diverse, and as a result of the Post 9/11 benefits, the most financially funded groups on college campuses.

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