Securing Tennessee’s Future

A Study of the Best Practices of Colleges and Universities for Veteran Recruitment and Retention
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Lipscomb University

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A Study of the Best Practices of Colleges and Universities for Veteran Recruitment and Retention

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First and foremost, we recognize the opportunities and freedoms we are afforded in America are largely because of the service of our United States Armed Forces. These men and women have bravely placed themselves in harm’s way for each of us, and for these sacrifices we are forever grateful. It is our hope that this study will help institutions of higher education as they consider ways to improve assistance for those who have served so selflessly on our behalf.

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In closing, it is our hope that this study will help institutions of higher education as they consider ways to assist those who have served our nation. We are appreciative to all who read our work and sincerely hope it will inform and inspire you.
Abstract

This mixed methods study examined the factors that contribute to the recruitment and retention of veteran students at institutions of higher education. Specifically, the researchers examined veterans’ use of the Post 9/11 G. I. Bill and other educational benefits awarded to veterans including Yellow Ribbon funding. This study used both quantitative and qualitative analyses to determine which factors influenced a student veteran’s recruitment and retention objectives. Both institutional and student perceptions surrounding viewpoints about what makes a campus military friendly were examined.

The Tennessee Independent College and University Association (TICUA) leadership and member institutions were seeking information on whether the military and veteran student population were appropriately served in private universities and colleges. TICUA sought to identify effective strategies to recruit, retain, and graduate an increased number of the veteran population with the goal of sharing the best practices with their member institutions. The initial qualitative results of the study indicated that seven of the 31 TICUA member institutions were revealed to be particularly effective at demonstrating a high level of service when considering military friendliness. The quantitative portion of the study confirmed that certain factors exist at institutions of higher education which can be predictors in veteran enrollment and retention. Furthermore, the qualitative focus group interviews produced specific practices and actions that have an impact on veteran student decision making. The final chapter reflects upon the value of the research in regard to assisting institutions of higher education with developing a strategic plan to improve recruitment and retention of veteran students to their campuses.
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Chapter I: Introduction

Topic, History, and Background

Tennessee Independent Colleges and Universities Association (TICUA) was established in 1956 to promote cooperation among private higher education institutions throughout the state of Tennessee. TICUA’s organizational network consists of 34 member institutions, comprised of 31 four year colleges and universities and three professional colleges.

According to the Newsroom & Media Center (2014), Haslam announced Tennessee is home to 521,267 veterans who receive $1.9 billion a year in tax-free federal benefits to include $237 million in educational benefits. Approximately 8% of the veterans are between the ages of 18 and 34 years old with another 27% between the ages of 25 and 54 years old (p. 4). The state of Tennessee is experiencing a sharp increase, noted at 195% total for all institutions from 2008 to 2013, in the number of veterans attending public, private, not for profit and for profit institutions (p. 5). Given these numbers, TICUA leadership and member institutions are seeking information on whether the military and veteran student population are appropriately served in private universities and colleges. TICUA sought to identify effective strategies to recruit, retain, and graduate an increased number of the veteran population with the goal of sharing the best practices with their member institutions. Recognizing this situation, TICUA felt it was critical to evaluate best practices used by universities with veteran and military student populations. The objectives were to identify the common challenges for transitioning veterans and/or military students, evaluate effective recruitment and retention strategies, and make recommendations on how TICUA institutions could become more appealing to the veteran and/or military student population.
On August 1, 2009, all American military personnel who served after the terrorist attack on September 11, 2001, became eligible for the Post 9/11 G. I. Bill. The intent of this newly created legislation was to encourage veterans to earn a college degree by fully funding tuition, books, and offsetting the cost of housing. The legislation was proposed and adopted to assist veterans who volunteered to fight for the United States. Additionally, a new population of potential students was created for institutions of higher education. It was assumed that recruitment and retention practices pertaining to these students would be more complicated than simply gaining their enrollment and accessing the accompanying funding. Identifying and addressing the needs of the veteran and military students needed to be a part of a college or university’s strategic plan.

Veteran educational funding originally began in 1944; the United States government made a commitment to all veterans to honor their service by establishing an educational fund. According to Field, Hebel, and Smallwood (2008), when Senator Jim Webb introduced his "21st-Century G.I. Bill," he projected that the bill would provide many of the same educational opportunities as the original G.I. Bill of Rights, post-World War II (p. 1). However, there are stark differences between the educational benefits provided during the post-World War II era and the benefits that are currently being provided. The modernized G.I. Bill has caused some questioning of the sincerity relating to cost and full benefits package for a veteran. The original G.I. Bill of 1944 covered the cost of attending any college in the country. According to the Congressional Research Service, the benefits available under the current version of the bill could only pay 73% of the average tuition, fees, room, and board at a four-year, public institution and 31% of those costs at a four-year, private college (p. 2). Field et al. additionally noted, “The only institutions which the benefits would pay one hundred percent of the cost are a
Some veterans were interested in attending a community college or vocational program when the cost of tuition and fees at a four year university were not fully covered.

Funding for veterans’ educational goals has continued to change over the decades. There were a variety of offerings that existed in benefits for which veterans and their dependents were eligible. Educational assistance dollars available for veteran students has fluctuated based upon variables such as institution location, the years of active duty service, service-connected disabilities, combat zone, and grant assistance. Each of the variables mentioned has entitled the veteran to a different compensation for educational tuition and associated fees.

TICUA member institutions have cause to question existing recruitment techniques for veteran and military students. For a private institution to appeal to the veteran and military student population, campuses would need to address the following points: develop an effective recruitment and marketing strategy; increase student veteran services beyond the current offerings; and train university personnel to identify and meet the needs of veteran and military students through specialized and veteran specific support.

**Statement of the Problem**

Both veterans and higher education institutions encountered challenges when veterans were presented the opportunity to further their education following World War II and Vietnam. The transition from a military environment to a new and different academic environment could sometimes be difficult. The struggles veterans encountered during these transitions ranged from a feeling of discomfort in the educational environment to not having sufficient personal funds needed to supplement the school
related costs that were not covered by the military benefit funding. Similarly, veterans today experience similar struggles. With the 2009 Post 9/11 G. I. Bill, many veterans were again unfamiliar with the academic environment and hesitant to take advantage of the educational opportunities.

Subsequently, TICUA was seeking to determine whether their member institutions are appropriately serving the veteran population. They proposed that in order to successfully recruit and retain the veteran and military student population they needed to have effective strategies within their member institutions of higher education. The researchers were tasked to evaluate TICUA member institution’s recruitment and retention practices and identify policies, practices, and services used at both public and private institution that were successfully serving the veteran population.

**Purpose of the Study**

Tennessee Independent Colleges and Universities Association (TICUA) is committed to providing Tennessee’s private colleges and universities with opportunities to work collaboratively in the areas of public policy, cost containment, and professional development. TICUA represents a large portion of the independent colleges and universities in Tennessee and collects a broad range of data surrounding private post-secondary education. Two significant factors that are tracked by TICUA are enrollment and completion data from each of the member institutions. While this data collection assists private colleges and universities in the state to understand the enrollment characteristics of the students attending and graduating from their institutions, there is a desire to recruit and advance the student population of veterans who receive educational funding within TICUA institutions. The purpose of this study was to identify the common challenges for transitioning veterans and/or military students, evaluate effective
recruitment and retention strategies, and make recommendations on how TICUA institutions could become more appealing to the veteran and/or military student population.

**Theoretical Framework**

Veteran and military students are unique and present specific needs as adult learners. The adult learning theory derived by Knowles (1950) and Bean and Metzner’s (1985) conceptual model of nontraditional undergraduate student attrition were discussed as guiding principles for this study. Tinto’s (1998) student retention theory highlighted several key components that play into the significance of student retention, including faculty-student interaction. This particular component has proven to be important to veteran and military students for their decision to persist. In addition, research conducted by DiRamio and Jarvis (2011) and Dulchinos (2014) highlighted the significance of an institution’s military friendliness, which had direct implications on how the student’s transition process developed over time.

**Andragogy theory.** Veteran and military students are unique and deserve exceptional recruitment and retention efforts from post-secondary institutions. The following statement, made by Knowles (1950), is applicable to veteran and military students:

The society of our age, as Robert Maynard Hutchins warns us, cannot wait for the next generation to solve its problems. Time is running out too fast. Our fate rests with the intelligence, skill, and good will of those who are now the citizen-rulers. The instrument by which their abilities as citizen-rulers can be improved is adult education. This is our problem. This is our challenge. (Knowles, 1950, pp. 9-10)
The problem and challenges are varied because the needs of veteran and military students are diverse. The key to ensuring their future success is critical and best understood using Malcolm Knowles’s andragogy theory.

Knowles’s conception of andragogy was an attempt to build a comprehensive theory of adult learning anchored on the characteristics of adult learners. Smith (2002) said Knowles “was convinced that adults learned differently than children – and this premise provided the basis for a distinctive field of inquiry” (n.p.). His earlier work was focused on informal adult education that highlighted some elements of process and goal setting. He charted the development of the adult education movement in the United States. Crucial assumptions about the characteristics of adult learners that differ from the assumptions of child learners were gleaned from his research. The original assumptions were as follows:

1. Concept of the learner: As a person matures, his self-concept moves from one of being a dependent personality toward one of being a self-directed human being.
2. Role of learner’s experience: As a person matures, he accumulates a growing reservoir of experience that becomes an increasing resource for learning.
3. Readiness to learn: As a person matures, his readiness to learn becomes oriented increasingly to the developmental tasks of his social roles.
4. Orientation to learning: As a person matures, his time perspective changes from one of postponed application of knowledge to immediacy of application, and accordingly his orientation toward learning shifts from one of subject-centeredness to one of problem centeredness. (Smith, 2002)

**Student retention theory.** Tinto (1998) determined that in order to enhance the student experience, students must be connected and engaged in the academic and social
aspects of the college. These factors played a significant role in the retention rate on a college campus. Tinto maintained, “If we wish to build colleges as communities that enable students to engage in shared learning experiences that span subjects and discipline, we must also remove barriers which constrain faculty collaboration” (p. 174). Faculty-student contacts outside of the classroom also aided in the connection for students to persist. Tinto (2006) also stated, “We learned that involvement does make a difference and it matters most during the critical first year of college” (p. 3). Tinto’s (2006) research showed that incorporating military veterans into the college culture and forming proper faculty-student bonds should, in theory, be effective for successful retention and intentions to persist. It is imperative that administrators establish relationships with military and veterans students at their point of enrollment and continue to foster such relationships as they matriculate through college.

**Student attrition.** Bean and Metzner’s (1985) nontraditional student model was derived after several other adult theories previously surfaced. Like Knowles’s andragogy theory, their adult theory also embraced the notion of self-directed learning. According to Alhassan (2012), “Learning from experience is certainly something the adult learner brings to the table. Adults tend to connect what they are learning to previous experiences and possible future situations” (p. 154). These characteristics reinforce the ideology that adult learners are pragmatic. As new knowledge is acquired, adult learners are eager to apply that knowledge to the everyday parallels of life.

Alhassan stated, “Tinto’s model is perhaps the most empirically tested model, and has become accepted as the most useful for explaining the causes of student departure from higher education” (p. 155). Bean and Metzner exhausted previous research and literature before developing their nontraditional student model. The
difference between their theory and what others created previously related to the lack of social integration needed by adults. “They perceived student attrition as analogous to workplace turnover, and they stressed the importance of behavioral interventions and intent to stay, as significant predictors of retention” (p. 156). They found that attrition decisions were based on four key variables: poor academic performance, intent to leave, background, and environment (p. 156).

The researchers recognized that veteran and military students are not only non-traditional students, but are unique in their experiences as adult learners. The andragogy theory provided important assumptions for higher education institutions to consider. The problem and challenges encountered at the institutional level are varied because the needs of veteran and military students are diverse. This population has experienced very different life experiences when compared to the typical, non-traditional student on campus. These students may present with physical and non-visible disabilities (i.e. Post-traumatic Stress Disorder, depression, anxiety, etc…) that require support services unique to the veteran and military student population.

The retention theory as presented by Tinto (1998) revealed that in order to enhance the student experience, students must be connected and engaged in the academic and social aspects of the college. Institutions who have sought to serve the veteran and military student population were equally engaged, looked beyond the Post G.I. Benefit fund, and became informed consumers of what was important to veteran and military students and were often deemed military friendly. The researchers looked to institutions outside Tennessee that have been recognized as military friendly. The research efforts included data to support what is meant by the term military friendly. Survey instruments highlighted essential information that pertained to what veteran and military students
have deemed as important for both recruitment and retention effort that related to military friendly. Institutions that were willing to explore creative solutions to better serve those who have served our country have seen improved retention and matriculation of the veteran and military student populations.

**Research Questions**

The three research questions that guided this study are listed below.

1. What are the perceived best practice(s) used by colleges and universities when comparing those that have been classified as TICUA Yellow Ribbon to those that self-classify as “military friendly”?

2. What practice(s) are appealing from a veteran or military student’s point of view when making his or her selection of a university?

3. What factor(s) contribute to the veteran student’s decision to persist at an institution of higher education?

**Scope and Bounds**

The study focused on the 34 TICUA member institutions that served over 80,000 students within Tennessee during the 2013-2015 academic years. Tennessee is home to 521,267 veterans who receive $1.9 billion a year in tax-free federal benefits to include $237 million in educational benefits. The study narrowed its focus on the experiences of currently enrolled veteran students and past graduates who attended TICUA member institutions and one Tennessee public university. The study investigated the recruitment and retention best practices of TICUA member institutions, a public institution in Tennessee, and additional institutions outside of Tennessee. Private and public post-secondary institutions outside of Tennessee were evaluated based upon personal
communication and literature found that was used to compare and contrast data from the TICUA member institutions.

**Significance of the Study**

TICUA member institutions recognized that the veteran population could be underserved within private higher education institutions of Tennessee. They understood the value of having veteran and military students represented within the higher education population. TICUA sought to identify effective strategies to recruit, retain, and graduate the veteran and/or military student population within their institutions of higher education. The significance of this study was to evaluate effective recruitment and retention strategies related to the veteran and military student population, identify the common challenges for transitioning veteran and military students, and make recommendations on how TICUA institutions could become more appealing to veterans. Enrollment characteristics of the students attending and graduating from post-secondary institutions were studied and researched. Additionally, the researchers identified factors that could contribute and deter the recruitment and retention of veteran and military students from attending private institutions. Best practices actively used at TICUA member institutions and public institutions were reviewed and compared.

**Definitions**

To maintain clarity, the following terms and phrases were defined for this research study using both connotative and denotative definitions listed in alphabetical order.

*Active duty:* defines a full-time member in the armed forces with regular duties and pay and subject to appropriate regulations. For the purpose of this study, this term was used in the questionnaire instrument from Active Duty (n.d.).
Andragogy: the art or science of teaching adults. Malcolm Knowles, as defined by Smith (2002), premised adult learning on six crucial assumptions about the characteristics of adult learners that differ from the assumptions about child learners and the difference between how adults learn compared to children. The six assumptions (e.g. self-concept, experience, readiness to learn, orientation to learning, motivation to learn, and need to know) must be considered with the veteran student population (Andragogy, n.d.).

Best practices: strategies, activities, or approaches that have been shown through research and evaluation to be effective and/or efficient (Florida Department of Education, 2015). Perceived best practices can be new or refined programs relevant to academic or student affairs, technology and innovation.

Green Zone training: the program designed to educate faculty, staff, and student participants about the challenges faced by veteran students transitioning from the military to civilian and school life. Green Zone training programs may be a campus-wide voluntary initiative where faculty, staff, and student volunteers are able to identify themselves as one who is knowledgeable and aware of the challenges faced by veterans and able to provide student veteran assistance. A “Green Zone” may also be a specific location recognized by student veterans as a safe place.

Military friendly: Griffin and Gilbert (2012) use military or veteran friendly as a descriptive term used for an institution of higher education that has “programs and people in place to assist with the transitions between college and military” (p. 5). The researchers used the Environmental Evaluation for Veterans Index (EEVI) instrument to calculate a mean score that was used to compare and contrast participating institutions military
friendliness scores. A more thorough definition of military friendliness will be highlighted in Chapter 4.

Military student: a student with appropriate identification proving active duty service or dependent relationship.

Persist: to continue to exist especially past a usual, expected, or normal time. For the purpose of this study, the researchers often use “persist” as a measure for students who continuously progress toward graduation. (Persist, n.d.)

Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) credit: an option through post-secondary institutions where students can demonstrate they have met learning objectives through out-of-classroom learning from a job or the military. Up to 30 hours of credit can be earned through the Integrated Studies program, where students may combine two focus areas, as well as a transcript evaluation as part of the admissions process.

Recruitment: the action or process of attracting, selecting, and appointing suitable applicants into a post-secondary institution or position. (Recruitment, n.d.)

Retention: the act of retaining. For the purpose of this study, the researchers refer to “retention” as an institutional measure to determine continuous re-enrollment from semester to semester, year to year (Retention, n.d.).

Service Learning program: an academic program providing students with the chance to enhance academic understanding by applying knowledge and skills in service projects that benefit the community. It typically is a comprehensive plan to integrate service-learning into the educational experience of traditional undergraduate students.
Participating students must engage in innovative and rigorous academic experiences. Such experiences contribute to the student’s development academically, personally/spiritually and civically.

_Tennessee Higher Education Commission_ (THEC): an organization established in 1967 by the Tennessee General Assembly in an effort to coordinate unity with regard to higher education. The commission currently coordinates two systems of higher education: the University of Tennessee institutions governed by the University of Tennessee Board of Trustees, and the state universities, community colleges, and the technology centers governed by the Tennessee Board of Regents. THEC’s (2014) website highlights their mission which is to promote the states completion agenda for post-secondary education (p. 1).

_Tennessee Independent Colleges and Universities Association_ (TICUA): an organization established in 1956 to promote cooperation among 34 private higher education institutions throughout East, West, and Middle Tennessee. TICUA (2014) boasts that it “engages Tennessee’s private colleges and universities to work collaboratively in areas of public policy, cost containment, and professional development to better serve the state and its citizens” (p. 1).

_Veteran:_ a current or former member of the armed forces. For the purpose of this study, the term veteran will refer to any current or former “service-member”. A service-member is a person who served within the "uniformed services", consisting of the armed forces (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard), the Commissioned Corps of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the
Commissioned Corps of the Public Health Services. National Guard and Reserve members with active service may qualify for a variety of VA benefits. Additionally, Traditional and Technician National Guard and Reserve members, who typically serve one weekend a month and two weeks a year, are eligible for some VA benefits (US Department of Veterans Affairs, 2014; Veteran, n.d.)

*Yellow Ribbon G.I. Education Enhancement Program* (Yellow Ribbon Program): a provision of the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008. The Yellow Ribbon Program allows degree granting institutions to enter into an agreement with the Veterans Administration (VA) to fund tuition expenses that exceed either the annual maximum cap for private institutions or the resident tuition and fees for a public institution. According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (2014) website, the VA can match the institutions contribution up to 50% of those expenses.

**Summary**

TICUA member institutions recognized the veteran population could be underserved and sought to identify effective strategies to recruit, retain, and graduate the veterans within their institutions of higher education. TICUA acknowledged Tennessee has experienced a 195% increase in military and veteran student enrollment within both public and/or private post-secondary institutions. TICUA was interested in the best practices implemented within each of their member institutions and externally. The continued effort to recruit and enroll veterans in record numbers at post-secondary institutions as a result of their G.I. Bill funds has been questioned. As veterans are enrolled, responsible institutions have incorporated student services that are both creative and flexible to help veteran students persist and matriculate. The researchers sought to
identify and provide recommendations for TICUA to address the unique needs of the veteran and military student population to aid in both retention and matriculation efforts.

Recruitment and retention practices that pertained to veteran and military students are more complicated than securing the G.I. Bill educational funds. TICUA realized recruitment and focused retention efforts should be at the forefront of each member institution’s strategic plan to ensure veteran and military students will persist and graduate. The significance of this study was to evaluate effective recruitment and retention strategies related to the veteran and military student population; identify the common challenges for transitioning veteran and military students; and make recommendations on how TICUA institutions could become more appealing to veteran and military students.
Chapter II: Literature Review

Introduction

The review of the literature established the historical and theoretical framework that was important to this study. The review presented prior research for examining the recruitment and retention challenges veteran and military students experienced when they transitioned to college after serving or while serving in the military. The researchers investigated many factors that have contributed to the recruitment and retention of veteran and military students. The factors that were discussed in this review include: history of the G.I. Bill, military and veteran demographics, veteran and military student perceptions of military friendliness, best practices for recruitment and retention of veteran and military students, qualitative observational online review of TICUA schools, description of nontraditional students, andragogy theory, college recruitment practices, retention theory, and veteran and military student transition issues and factors.

History of the G. I. Bill

Providing a benefit as a reward for military service was not an original concept developed by the United States. Granting pensions and other rewards for service to a country can be traced to ancient Rome and Greece. Mosch (1975) noted that military veterans in Rome and Greece were presented food, housing, and even tracts of land. The concept for benefits being awarded to American soldiers for their service originated from England. Mosch (1975) found pension laws existed as early as 1592; veterans who lost limbs while defending their country received gifts of appreciation. The English government declared veterans should “…at their return be relieved and rewarded to the end that they may reap the fruit of their good deserving’s” (p. 108).
The relationship between military service and pensions continued but expanded to connect military service with higher education. Abrams (1989) stated the Union army was in dire need of additional officers after the southern Confederate states seceded, and this shortage of officers remained a problem at the outbreak of World War I. At this point the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) were established as a combination of military training and college program to entice young men to join and serve the nation.

When the United States declared her intent to participate in World War II, connection between service to the country and education grew beyond the established training of ROTC. The U.S. military provided funds as an incentive to enlist. Both men and women could enlist, serve according to their contract, and upon discharge from service be eligible to receive educational funding. The military adopted this method to recruit Army, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard, and Marine enlistees. The receipt of an educational stipend was believed not only to be an incentive but also to provide assistance to help personnel transition into the work force.

In 1943, the Armed Forces Committee on Postwar Educational Opportunities composed a list of suggestions for the nation. The list included the following: provide educational funding for all veterans for at least one year, veterans who performed at high levels should receive four years of benefits; all veterans should be given guidance on how to take advantage of educational opportunities (Mosch, 1975, p. 29). The program was approved by President Roosevelt and called the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act. This legislation paved the way for additional proposals that would impact veterans and their service to the nation in relation to college education.
Military and Veteran Demographics

The veteran and military population played a significant role in the makeup of higher education demographics. Radford (2011), in her work for the National Center of Education Statistics, found that during the 2007-2008 academic year, 38% of veterans used their G.I. Bill educational benefits in post-secondary education (p. 4). Specifically, 4% of the veterans and active service members contributed to the undergraduate and graduate population. Those individuals shared the following three reasons as to how they selected a school of choice: location, affordability, and program of study. These characteristics are critical indicators as to what appealed and attracted this potential pool of military and veteran students in Tennessee. According to Radford, the undergraduate military population was more inclined to enroll at private non-profit institutions more often than their non-military peers (p. 3). These statistics warranted the urgency for private institutions to actively recruit and retain this demographic of students. Furthermore, this demographic was predominantly enrolled as part-time, 62% were married and/or had dependents, 84% were non-traditional students, and over 70% were male (Radford, 2011).

According to the United States Department of Veteran Affairs (VA), over time the projected total of the veteran population was expected to decline despite an increase in the percentage of female and minority veterans (VA, 2012). Regardless of these demographics, institutions of higher education can still anticipate an increase in educational benefits being used by veterans and/or their dependents. In addition, the traditional mode of instruction has been questioned by the 31% of military students who preferred to enroll in online courses (Radford, 2011, p. 10). Approximately 139,000 service members are still active duty and require faculty to adopt an unconventional method of instruction because of their unusual schedules and placement (p. 4).
evidenced by information listed above, the military population does not fit the traditional educational model. Post-secondary institutions may need to re-evaluate their recruitment strategies for this population improve both recruitment and retention efforts.

**First National Snapshot and Quantitative Comparisons**

DiRamio and Jarvis (2011) provided best-known theories and research on institutional responses to an emerging population of veteran and military students. Of importance, DiRamio and Jarvis (2011) used inferential statistics from a 2009 report by Cook, Kim, and King titled, *From Soldier to Student*, published by the American Council on Education (ACE). Cook, Kim, and King (2009) estimated in the coming decade over 2 million students with military experience will take advantage of their G.I. Bill education benefits and attend institutions in all sectors of higher education. The 2009 *From Soldier to Student* report provided the first national snapshot of programs, services, and policies that colleges and universities had in place to serve veterans and military personnel. Cook et al. (2009) sought to answer “what sorts of programs, types of services, and forms of supports were being offered by colleges and universities in response to the needs of students with military experience” (p. 95). DiRamio and Jarvis (2011) asked if there were empirical evidence available to better inform campus administrators and policymakers who prefer to make data-driven decisions about the programs and services offered to veteran and military students.

DiRamio and Jarvis (2011) completed a secondary data analysis based on data collected from 723 institutions of higher learning from the 2009 ACE report. The authors included an inferential investigation and exploratory factor analysis (EFA) that showed how the survey items grouped and clustered together to represent relationships within the survey responses. DiRamio and Jarvis (2011) research yielded five factors that they
named 1) Financial Matters, 2) Administrative and Strategic Planning, 3) Advising and Career Services, 4) Psychological Counseling Services, and 5) Veterans Office on Campus (p. 96). These five factors can be used by institutional decision makers for policy considerations in response to an emerging population of veteran and military students.

DiRamio and Jarvis (2011) made sure to note that before moving forward with a closer inspection of these five factors, “it is important to establish the statistical impact that the percentage of total student body enrollment of military veterans has on the From Soldier to Student survey response” (p. 97). The outcome revealed that schools with very low or no enrollment of veteran and military students did not offer special programs or services. The correlation between percentage enrollment of student veterans and the number of affirmative answers to the survey regarding services and/or programs showed there was statistically significant and a positive relationship (p. 100). The data also showed higher education institutions need to include future planning efforts take account of the veteran and military student population.

According to DiRamio and Jarvis (2011), their initial sample size identified N=723 participants, excluded the outliers, and used an n=576 sample. The research method included the use of two grouping variables from the survey (e.g. educational sector and percentage enrollment of veterans and military students). The authors delineated three groups within the educational sector: public four year colleges/universities (n= 211), private four year colleges and universities (n= 167), and two year colleges (n= 198) (p. 101).

Factor 1, Financial Matters, and Factor 2, Administrative and Strategic Planning, were comprised of five different questions that were differentiated by educational sector and by percent enrollment of military/veterans. Based upon the statistics used, private
four year schools were less likely to accept credits, offer tuition refunds due to deployment, offer in-state tuition, or offer tuition for veteran or military student dependents. In addition, DiRamio and Jarvis’s (2011) study showed statistical significance that “four year private schools are doing less strategic planning in anticipation of providing programs and service for students with military experience” (p. 105).

The following three factors, Advising & Career Service, Psychological Counseling Services, and Veteran Office on Campus, were evaluated. The statistics used showed differences of practical significance that were differentiated by the percentage of enrollment of military/veterans and by educational sector. Schools with 0.5 to 1% were less likely to provide advising. Private four year schools with 0.5 to 1% were highly unlikely to provide employment assistance. DiRamio and Jarvis (2011) also found that private four year schools were significantly less likely to have disabilities specialists let alone have a veteran’s office to support veterans, military students, and/or their families (p. 111).

McBain, Kim, Cook, and Snead (2012) published the *From Soldier to Student II* report. They compared data received in the winter of 2011 and spring of 2012 to data from Cook et al. (2009) report. Both reports were published by the American Council on Education (ACE). The 2012 ACE report offered updated data from the 2009 ACE edition. McBain et al. (2012) report used a revised survey from the 2009 ACE study to examine possible changes in institutional policies based upon 2010 legislative modifications to the Post 9/11 G.I. Bill and increased veteran enrollment in higher education since 2009 (p. 11). McBain et al. (2012) hoped this new report “will assist colleges and universities to continue evaluating their own programs and services,
benchmarking them against data presented here” to make further data-driven decisions about the programs and services offered to help those who have done so much to serve our country (p. 5). Additionally, McBain et al. (2012) designed their study and survey to help campus leaders understand attributes of the most military friendly campuses; recognize factors that appeared to influence the level of service campuses provide; and identify gaps in their own offerings (p. 12).

DiRamio and Jarvis (2011) included the 2009 ACE survey items in their exploratory factor analysis (EFA). The data collected in the 2012 ACE report presented data that encompassed indicators of institutional commitment such as: administrative structures, academic support, financial aid, VA benefits counseling, psychological counseling, orientation and other assistance with the transition to campus life (McBain et al., 2012, p. 11). However, the questions that were asked within the 2012 ACE survey revealed data that was not comparable to the 2009 ACE survey because of bias and an unequal distribution related to the overrepresentation of public higher-education institutions.

DiRamio conducted a secondary quantitative and qualitative data analysis derived from the 2009 ACE From Soldier to Student report. DiRamio’s (2011) inferential statistical analysis included a method to assign points to gauge the level of support and services offered to veteran and military students. This allowed him to create a composite score for what he called “Veteran Friendly (VF)” institutions. He based this score on 16 questions, with the total possible points tallying 113. DiRamio (2011) cautioned that when one chooses to use such an approach, it may be best to work with an expert panel that can check for validity. Given the number of questions used on the survey instrument, the need to collapse the data into workable constructs and assign points was subjective.
The 2012 ACE report highlighted that public institutions continued to enroll more veteran and military students because those institutions typically offered more veteran friendly services, programs, and had offices already in place. The data from the 2009 report compared to the 2012 ACE report revealed the information in 2012 ACE report was significantly skewed because of the unequal distribution of public versus private responses.

**Yellow Ribbon Programs**

The Yellow Ribbon Program was an incentive program which allowed degree granting institutions to enter into an agreement with the Veterans Administration (VA) to fund tuition expenses that exceed either the annual maximum cap for private institutions or the resident tuition and fees for a public institution. According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (2014) website, “the institution can contribute up to 50% of those expenses and the VA will match the same amount as the institution.” In order to be eligible for the program and receive benefits, recipients must have served a combined total of 36 months post September 2001, must be eligible for the Post 9/11 G.I. Bill, and must be honorably discharged (2014).

Institutional funds are awarded annually and students must reapply for Yellow Ribbon funds each academic school year. The Department of Veteran Affairs has seen tremendous success since the establishment of the Yellow Ribbon program. “Approximately 700 colleges and universities have signed up for the program which allows colleges to enter into dollar-for-dollar matching agreements with the federal government to pay veterans' educational costs above those covered by the base G.I. Bill benefit” (Redden, 2009, p. 1). According to Redden (2009), “the majority of those participating are private, non-profit colleges, although proprietary institutions are also
well-represented on the list – and they historically attract the greatest numbers of veterans attending college on G.I. Bill benefits (p. 1).”

**Veteran Student Perceptions of Military Friendliness**

Dulchinos (2014) was able to identify and categorize factors contributing to military friendliness perception: cost, culture, collaboration, convenience, and caring characteristics (p. 4). He then reviewed what constituted as military friendly cost related to Post-911 G.I. Bill, and how the Yellow Ribbon Program can provide assistance deemed as being military friendly (p. 19 – 20). Dulchinos (2014) explored other aspects of what constituted a military friendly institution, such as those institutions that extend benefits to dependents, offer tuition assistance, and those institutions that may offer either VA vocational rehabilitation and employment or VA retraining assistance programs (p. 21 – 23).

Dulchinos (2014) highlighted New England post-secondary institutions that were identified as military friendly with supportive faculty that collaborated with the veteran and military students. The institutions identified within Dulchinos’s (2014) research efforts provided concurrent admissions programs and joint cooperative degree programs that aided the convenience and caring factors (p. 27 – 30). Institutions who offered centralized military and veterans’ affairs office ranked high in the convenience and caring factor category. Dulchinos (2014) summarized the factors that contributed to military friendliness along the dimensions of cost, culture, collaboration, convenience, and caring characteristics (p. 34). Previous studies had not correlated these variables with veteran perceptions of friendliness.

Dulchinos (2014) used a quantitative correlational research design to measure the prevalence and strength of military friendliness by rating 18 military friendly variables
that he aligned with military friendly dimensions (p. 35). Dulchinos (2014) was able to provide detailed explanations on what services should be considered for recruitment and retention of veteran and military students. The 18 military friendly factors that were perceived as important to veteran and military students in determining military friendliness (p. 127) gave post-secondary educational leaders critical insights on how to develop and prioritize military friendly programs. His research also identified perceptions about the friendliness of higher education and current institutions differed significantly based upon the demographics: marital status, institution type, the effect of children, academic status, college residency, military status, and federal military aid eligibility (p. 128).

Dulchinos’s (2014) research showed the needs of veteran and military students were as diverse as the demographics and complex as the geographic factors that affect enrollment. He highlighted that not all veteran and military students were entitled to the same educational benefits and this had to be considered for the current study. Dulchinos (2014) also said, “depending on age and length of service, the military veteran student exhibits developmental behavior aligned with traditional or nontraditional students” (p. 129). Because of these differences, it can be difficult for institutions to prioritize and implement specific veteran and military student services.

Dulchinos (2014) suggested that university and college leaders might be able to improve their veteran and military student support programs by reviewing some of the best practices that are being employed elsewhere. His research efforts did not include looking outside the New England higher education institutions, and he noted as recommendation for future research to look beyond the geographical area for best practices on recruitment and retention. Dulchinos (2014) noted “from 2009 to 2011, for
profit schools garnered 37% of the post 9-11 G.I. Bill’s total outlays equating to $1.6 billion of the total $4.3 billion dispersed” (p. 129). He went further to add:

For-profit schools also represented eight of the top 10 schools receiving Post 9-11 G.I. Bill funding and these same institutions collected 50% of all Department of Defense (DOD) tuition assistance benefits paid on behalf of military students attending college while still serving. Although only 12.4% of 129 undergraduate military and veteran students attended for-profit institutions in 2008, this was 4.1% higher than the general undergraduate population for the same timeframe.

(Dulchinos, 2014, p. 130)

**Best Practices for Recruitment and Retention of Veterans**

President Barack Obama wants the U.S. to become the world’s leader in college completion rates by 2020. In addition, Tennessee Governor Haslam’s “Drive to 55” initiative required post-secondary institutions to address both the needs and concerns of a growing veteran population. According to Griffin and Gilbert (2012), the development of strategies that increase the likelihood of veteran and military students completing their studies and earning their degrees will contribute positively to President Obama’s and Governor Haslam’s goals (p. 2).

**Environmental Evaluation Veteran Index.** Griffin and Gilbert (2012) developed, in conjunction with the Center for American Progress, workable strategies in the form of an Environmental Evaluation for Veterans Index (EEVI) tool for post-secondary institutions and policymakers to use (Appendix B). The EEVI was an assessment tool designed to allow institutions to “measure whether they have the services, policies, and sources of support necessary to assist returning veterans transition into higher education” (p. 2). The index allowed institutions to assess its environment by
identifying areas in which the campus were lacking in meeting the needs of the veterans before turning to the already published American Council of Education “Veteran Friendly Toolkit”, a resource found within the U.S. Department of Affairs website.

The quality of an institution’s environment as it related to student veterans can be based within three dimensions when considering recruitment and retention strategies. According to Griffin and Gilbert (2012), the three areas of primary concern for recruitment and retention that emerged related to: 1) personnel and support services offered, 2) institutional structures, and 3) social and cultural support (p. 6). These three themes were also expounded upon later in research efforts by Dulchinos (2014) who summarized the factors into cost, culture, collaboration, convenience, and caring characteristics (p. 34).

Personnel and support services offered at institutions related to the existence of offices, services, and professionals that can meet and understand the unique issues and concerns of student veterans had helped with recruitment and retention. Cass (2014) wrote, “We go to war as a team; there are no singular acts in the military” and stated “teamwork and mentorship are built in military training but they are largely absent in the university setting” (p. 2). Post-secondary institutions reportedly able to recruit and retain had a team, or network, to support veteran and/or military students and more importantly, had institutional collaboration. Cass (2014) reported the use of internet technology that connects veteran and military students to a team of veteran mentors who are “constantly accessible” (p. 3). Griffin and Gilbert (2012) explained such initiatives, similar to what Cass (2014) had shared, were the result of institution wide committees, student groups, trainings for faculty and staff, mentoring programs, and technical standards for coursework that recognized and took into account the needs of veterans (p. 8).
Institutional structures with flexible policies and procedures clearly articulated to veteran and military students helped institutions in recruitment and retention efforts. Griffin and Gilbert (2012) referenced three specific areas repeatedly addressed in the National Science Foundation study and previous research as being the most important to veteran and military students: credit transfer with veterans wanting to receive credit for military training and service; deployment relating to clear institutional processes; and the receipt of timely G.I. Bill benefits process (p. 11). In addition, the research has suggested institutions should provide diverse types of course options such as on-base education, evening and weekend courses, online courses, and veteran-only courses.

The research efforts of Dulchinos (2014) and Griffin and Gilbert (2012) both spoke to the importance of the social and cultural factors, or military friendliness, related to post-secondary institutions. Cass (2014) explained that veterans “leaving team centric military culture and finding success in the solo environment of college is often viewed as an instrumentally challenge” (p. 2). Institutions that were able to recruit and retain veteran and military students reportedly tailored services specifically to the veteran and military student populations and focused on recruitment strategies tailored toward military friendly dimensions.

Gomes (2014) conducted a special report pertaining to the most effective recruitment and retention strategies for veteran students that supported Cass’s (2014) and Griffin and Gilbert’s (2012) findings. Gomes (2014) polled nearly 150 institutions throughout the country to share their best strategies. Gomes’s (2014) top picks for supporting veterans, military students, and their families were:

- Have a one-stop shop for veterans creating one office where student-vets can receive assistance.
• Designate military friendly staffers across the service units. This may include instructors who are veterans that can serve as a mentor.

• Create a peer support group. Involve veteran and military students in focus groups.

• Offer military students preliminary review before they are admitted.

• Offer small perks that show military students the institution cares. Some examples were free parking, priority registration.

• Build relationships with outside agencies to create a collaborative network of support. (Gomes, 2014, p. 5)

**Van Dusen, research.** Texas Tech has demonstrated many of the aforementioned practice(s) and programs. According to Van Dusen, director of the Military Veterans Program (MVP) at Texas Tech, the university has more than tripled its enrollment of veterans and military dependents within four years. Blending unique programs at the university with support from the governor of Texas has enabled the university to establish itself as one of the nation’s strongest military friendly universities. Programs such as the Green Zone, which provide faculty and staff training on the needs of the veteran population, only reiterate the importance of advocating for success of veterans on campus. (R. Van Dusen, personal communication, September 4, 2014).

It is important to note the success of Texas Tech was purposeful. Van Dusen (2011) analyzed transition issues experienced by veteran and military students who used the Post 9/11 G.I. Bill at three public research universities in Texas deemed to be similar based upon specific criteria (i.e. designated Tier 1 institutions, spend $45 million dollars per year on research, have $400 million endowment, 200 + Ph. D.’s awarded per year, high academic achievement, etc.). The purpose of the study was to identify and analyze
correlational factors that contributed to veteran and military students’ intent to persist at their current university. In addition, Van Dusen (2011) wanted to compare the veteran and military student populations between the three Texas public research universities to determine environmental and cultural campus similarities or differences. He chose a correlational research design combined with a comparative study to help answer his research questions.

Van Dusen (2011) asked two research questions.

RQ1: Do the six variables in the Integrated Model of Student Retention (IMSR) (e.g. 1. encouragement of family and friends, 2. finance attitudes, 3. academic integration, 4. social integration, 5. institutional commitment, and 6. goal commitment) significantly affect a student veteran’s intent to persist at his or her current institution of higher education?

RQ2: Do the three tenets of the Student Veterans Academic and Social Transition Model (SVASTM) (e.g. 1. cornerstones, 2. auxiliary aid, and 3. environment) significantly affect a student veteran’s intent to persist at his or her current institution of higher education? (Van Dusen, 2011, p. 75)

Using these models, Van Dusen created survey instruments specifically to collect quantitative data that related to the transition of veteran and military students into higher education to answer his two research questions. He also collected demographic information (i.e. gender, age, living arrangement, branch of service, pay grade, time in service, current duty, etc.) to gain further insight on the veteran and military student population.

Three research universities in Texas were selected for this study because of demographic similarities, convenience, and geographic accessibility. Van Dusen (2011)
noted a “researcher can generalize his or her findings from the experimentally accessible population for subjects in the institution being studied” (p. 74). As a result, the primary component of this study was based upon correlational research followed by a comparative study design. The correlational component allowed Van Dusen to collect data to discover the relationships between the six variables in the Integrated Model of Student Retention as it related to the veteran and/or military student’s intent to persist at his or her current institution. He turned to the SVASTM to complete the comparative study where he sought to group students from each institution to determine if the three tenets (i.e. cornerstones, auxiliary aid, and environment) significantly affected a veteran and/or military student’s intent to persist. In addition, Van Dusen (2011) wanted to also compare any issues veteran students experienced while enrolled within their institution.

Van Dusen (2011) speculated that the six variables in the IMSR significantly affected a student veteran’s intent to persist. The IMSR had six independent variables where Van Dusen conducted a multiple regression analysis to determine the relationships. He used the six independent variables (i.e. 1. encouragement of family and friends, 2. finance attitudes, 3. academic integration, 4. social integration, 5. institutional commitment, 6. goal commitment) and compared them to the dependent variable (i.e. intent to persist). Van Dusen (2011) determined that none of the six variables within the IMSR were significant predictors of a student veteran’s intent to persist at his or her current institution. Van Dusen (2011) provided a detailed table of the total regression matrix that helped illustrate that only 7.9% of the variance in intent to persist was associated with the variance of the six variables in the IMSR (p.105).

Van Dusen’s (2011) analysis of his first research question found no statistically significant predictor variables for a student veteran’s intent to persist. He provided
straightforward explanations as to why each of the six variables within the Integrated Model of Student Retention did not contribute to the rejection of the null hypothesis. He noted that one reason his results differed could have related to the fact that the original IMSR study focused on a sample population of traditionally-aged students (p. 110). Based upon the literature and research conducted, veteran and military students should be considered non-traditional students and have diverse needs that cannot just be categorized into a specific age bracket or genre.

Van Dusen’s (2011) analysis of his second research question identified the only variable of significance from the SVASTM related to the environment (i.e. overall campus climate). Based upon this one finding, when a veteran perceives the campus culture to be receptive to the unique needs of student veterans (i.e. military friendly), such an individual will more likely persist. Both the cornerstones and auxiliary aid variables were not statistically significant and Van Dusen (2011) provided a brief explanation as to why it was difficult to quantify these variables (p. 114).

**Veteran Education Transition Support (VETS) Program**

Tennessee Veteran Education Transition Support (VETS) program was passed into law in 2014 in an effort to provide adequate support for veterans leaving the military and transitioning into post-secondary education. The requisites to qualify for the VETS campus designation included:

1. Conduct annual campus survey to identify views, needs, issues, and suggestions of veterans;

2. Provide information to faculty and staff regarding military and veteran culture, include combat related mental or physical disabilities, or other challenges;
3. Administer an orientation program for veteran students;
4. Facilitate mentoring and support programs for veteran students;
5. Develop outreach and communication strategies for military bases near the campus, for the purpose of assessing veterans education goals, and meeting their identified needs;
6. Create and maintain a process for assessment of prior learning that grants academic credit to veterans for transferrable training and experience attained through military service;
7. Provide an on campus website, information on the availability of prior learning assessment and potential program credit for skills, training, or education obtained during military service. (THEC, 2014, p. 1)

**Qualitative Observational Online Review of TICUA Schools**

The researchers completed a qualitative observational online website review to determine which TICUA member institutions were perceived to be military friendly. Within Tennessee there were several TICUA member institutions that were perceived as military friendly. The following five military friendly characteristics were used to help the researchers identify which institutions appeared military friendly from an initial website search:

1. Military friendly website (i.e. obvious links designated to assist the military and/or veteran population)
2. Veterans affairs office on campus
3. Veterans affairs coordinator
4. “Yellow Ribbon” designation
5. Veteran student organization on campus
West Tennessee. There were 10 TICUA member institutions within West Tennessee with only seven of the 10 schools involved in the Yellow Ribbon Program as mentioned in the TN State Yellow Ribbon Program Information 2013 – 2014 link (U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, 2014). Of the 10 TICUA member institutions, four were Yellow Ribbon schools that provided some help on the respective websites for potential veteran or military students. There was information found within the aforementioned school websites that indicated Yellow Ribbon status, a veterans affairs office or veterans affairs coordinator available to provide assistance, and/or campus veteran student organizations.

University G. Within West Tennessee, University G appeared to have the most military friendly characteristics. The researchers were interested in the recruitment and retention strategies of this institution, a private, accredited university that was noted to have the same accreditation as other prominent institutions in Tennessee. This institution offered a military and veteran discount to combine with the educational benefit. Their website highlighted the availability of a military friendly staff that was always ready to assist with questions related to the use of Post 9/11 G.I. Bill Education Benefits and/or Military Tuition Assistance.

This university was also listed as a TICUA member institution that military and veteran students preferred because of the numerous programs offered. The criminal justice degree was one of the many programs offered and was listed among the top schools in Tennessee for this degree. The website’s statistics showed that over half of those enrolled in the criminal justice program used military tuition or veteran education benefits (p. 2). One of the veteran recruiters for this university who serves in the National Guard said, “The length of classes, combined with scholarship opportunities makes this
institution particularly attractive for military students” (p. 1). Classes were listed as only five weeks in length, which was preferable for those who were faced with training schedules or deployments. The course work was presented as a hybrid and provided students with the flexibility to complete assignments online when in training or deployed. The website boasted the numerous satellite locations throughout the state.

**Middle Tennessee.** There were 13 TICUA member institutions in Middle Tennessee. The top three TICUA member institutions, University A – C, presented characteristics of military friendliness. According to the TN State Yellow Ribbon Program Information 2013 – 2014 website link, two schools, had no limit on their veteran enrollment because of adequate supporting scholarship dollars. The third listed veteran enrollment as limited.

**University A.** This university is a Yellow Ribbon program institution ranked within the top 10 in the “Regional Universities South” category and named as one of the top "Up-and-Comer" universities by *U.S. News & World Report.* The website highlighted its commitment to being a leader among teaching universities. The website shared the university brings together the best of liberal arts and professional education in a Christian community of learning and service. Its veterans affairs website combined with an on campus veteran affairs coordinator provided useful information. Of interest and similar to another military friendly institution was the fact that the university does provide on campus veteran student organizations and a ‘Leave of Absence Policy’ for active duty military.

**University B.** This university is ranked in the top 10% of all liberal arts institutions in the nation. It ranked in the top 20% of 650 higher education institutions and as one of the highest on *Forbes "2013 Top Colleges List." The Princeton Review's*
"Best Southeastern Colleges" publication has included this university in its rankings for 21 consecutive years. Of the 1,400 liberal arts institutions ranked by *U.S. News and World Report*. Their Masters-to-PhD program awarded six students the Ph.D. in Physics and related disciplines during 2012-2013. This university does have a veteran affairs website and coordinator available to assist potential veteran and military students.

**University C.** This university is a Yellow Ribbon program institution. The website provided accolades for being a Christian based learning community where excellence in leading and learning was emphasized. The website explained the university’s principle is carried out in the classroom and in the broader community through the service-learning program and numerous humanitarian trips in the U.S. and abroad. It offers a veteran service center with coordinators available to assist potential veteran and military students. A unique opportunity was mentioned on the website that related to a veteran specific scholarship award. The award provides up to $3,000 annually to veteran students who do not qualify for 100% of the Post-9/11 and Yellow Ribbon Enhancement.

Of potential interest, this university recently received the Veteran Reconnect Grant in August 2015. The plan is to use the award to hire an additional “highly knowledgeable staff member” to support the military and veteran student population. There are plans to work with the current information technology department to enhance how information is tracked and analyze trends among this population. There was also discussion of implementing a veteran’s orientation and Green Zone training.

**East Tennessee.** There were 11 TICUA member institutions in the East Tennessee region. Several of the TICUA member institutions reflected military friendly attributes when perusing the websites.
**College D.** This college was one of the oldest in the nation. It had satellite offices for Graduate and Professional Studies Programs, in addition to other class sites across East Tennessee. The website directed potential veteran and military students to the veteran affairs website and provided the names of specific veteran affairs coordinators and student organizations. The website boasted that this college has offered a special event every Veterans Day and provides a “Leave of Absence Policy” for active duty military students.

**College E.** This college is a nationally ranked institution of higher learning, offers the Yellow Ribbon program, and has maintained an affiliation with the church. This college is known for offering its students a rigorous and highly personal experience. The website listed a veterans affairs office on their homepage.

In an effort for many institutions to align with the Governor Haslam’s “Drive to 55” initiative, several institutions applied for the Veteran Reconnect grant that was available in the summer of 2015. This college was fortunate to become one of those recipients, which will allow additional support to institutional infrastructures and programming. The institution was able to pinpoint gaps within its current structure by administering the Tennessee Veteran Education Academy Institutional evaluation, which identified some areas of weakness.

The institution has also outlined measurable objectives and metrics which addressed the issues mentioned above, along with a timeline that projected the expected date of completion. Because the institution is taking a direct and proactive approach to address the support structures needed for veterans to succeed, this college is expected to continue an increased enrollment trend of military and veteran students.
University F. This university is a Yellow Ribbon school. The university is emerging as a leader in higher education in the southeastern region and noted in its website a consistent ranking the "Top Tier" in the South within U.S. News & World Report’s “Comprehensive Medium-Size Universities”. The university website also highlighted that Princeton Review's “Best Colleges” rank this institution as one of the 141 colleges named “Best in the Southeast”. The website indicated the university does have an Office of Veteran Affairs.

Military Friendly Public University in Middle Tennessee

The state of Tennessee has recently made significant strides in post-secondary higher education efforts and the veteran and military population has been targeted for increased recruitment effort toward higher education. Approximately 29,500 active duty military members and 53,000 family members are affiliated with the Fort Campbell military post. Additionally, over 65,000 retired military members currently reside in the Middle Tennessee region; making this area one of the largest military and veteran populations in the U.S. The researchers identified a well-known military friendly public institution that has been recognized for their exemplary efforts in serving military students, veterans, and their dependents (Fodel, 2015).

When the researchers reviewed the online web presence, there were significant marketing efforts and visible institutional policies directed toward military students and their dependents. Through online social media, website presence, radio, and billboards, this public institution has maximized its marketing and advertisement presence. The university highlights its campus Military Student Center, veteran affairs office, veteran success office, and military taskforce designated to improve the needs of the military and veteran constituents. Additionally, this institution has implemented Green Zone training,
a program for the faculty and staff. The first Green Zone training occurred during the summer of 2015 and there will continue to be ongoing scheduled Green Zone training. When looking at the resources offered at the public institution, it is evident that a significant amount of resources have been allocated toward the veteran and military population.

This university takes great pride in the recognition of those who have served our country. A special military coin and cords ceremony has occurred for the past 10 years for graduating veteran and military students. This initiative has been both appreciated and supported by the individuals receiving the cord and coin as a way to show support to the students and their families. In addition to the ceremony, the university hosts numerous workshops and events throughout the year to aid military and veteran student transitions. The family integration plays an integral part in the transition. The institution embraces the family unit and often invites family members to participate in all veteran sponsored activities.

**Andragogy Theory**

Andragogy, as defined by Knowles (1950), was premised on his crucial assumptions about the characteristics of adult learners that differ from the assumptions about child learners and the difference between how adults learn compared to children. The first four original assumptions, with the fifth assumption added in 1984, were as follows:

1. Concept of the learner: As a person matures, self-concept moves from one of being a dependent personality toward one of being a self-directed human being.

2. Role of learner’s experience: As a person matures, an accumulation of growing reservoir of experience becomes an increasing resource for learning.
3. Readiness to learn: As a person matures, readiness to learn becomes oriented increasingly to the developmental tasks of social roles.

4. Orientation to learning: As a person matures, perspective changes from one of postponed application of knowledge to immediacy of application, and accordingly an orientation toward learning shifts from one of subject-centeredness to one of problem-centeredness.

5. Motivation to learn: As a person matures, the motivation to learn is internal. (Smith, 2002, p. 6)

Knowles (1950) theorized that adults typically want to choose what they want to learn, when they want to learn it, and how they want to learn. Adults are able to contribute richness to class discussions and are considered valuable resources for learning from and with each other. Tapping into whether or not an adult is ready to learn depends on what he or she needs to know in order to deal with life situations is key for veteran and military students. Adult learners seek learning opportunities due to some external motivators, but the best motivators are intrinsic. Post-secondary institutions need to know what the motivators are for the veteran and military student population.

**College Recruitment Practice(s)**

The role and responsibility of admission and enrollment personnel in higher education has become increasingly critical to the success of the institutions and the experience of the student. According to Grandillo (n.d.), “there have been historical and demographic influences that have allowed admission and recruitment practices to evolve and develop over the past 400 years of American higher education” (p. 1.). From the Civil War to World War II, America witnessed an increase in the number and variety of colleges. Modern recruitment practices originated in the expansion of higher education
that started with World War II and resulted with the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 and the baby boom that followed. As the article explained further,

The prospects of declining enrollments prompted colleges and universities to adopt marketing practices used in business that centered around Phillip Kotler's emphasis on product, price, place, and promotion.

College recruiting practices became reliant on market principles for success and matured into providing more information and increased attention to the prospective student (Grandillo, n.d., p.1)

Many post-secondary institutions that have experienced growth since the late 1970s have expanded their markets to include adult, international, and transfer students. The institutions recognized the growing importance of the transfer student market.

Grandillo (n.d.) explained some institutions have targeted adult and non-traditional students by presenting the campus from the nontraditional student vantage point. Effective institutional recruiting activities aimed at attracting students indicated that academic reputation and costs are the most influential factors in choosing to apply and enroll.

The National Association of College Admission Counseling (NACAC) Statement of Principles of Good Practice included accuracy in the articulation of information and admission requirements and financial aid opportunities. Financial aid has been increasingly used as a recruiting and marketing tool, especially for private institutions forced to compete with public institutions. According to Grandillo (n.d.), “enrollment managers are interested in net tuition income as well as in the number of students, and the use of leveraging financial aid awards has become an important tool to increase
enrollments” (p. 2). Some private colleges incorrectly advertised financial aid awards to their students and listed their online resources and books with the price of tuition.

Retention Theory

In higher education, the recruitment of students was only the starting point for improved graduation rates. Once students were accepted and agreed to enroll at the chosen institution, students had to be retained until graduation. Retention was a different challenge from recruitment. The challenge for TICUA institutions was to understand each of the theories and develop and implement strategies that would work best for each of the 34 member institutions. Since there was an expected increase in the number of military and veteran students in the foreseeable future, it was imperative that TICUA institutions evaluated their current practices and determined ways to improve not only recruitment efforts but also retention of the military and veteran students.

According to Braxton, Hirschy, and McClendon, (2004), referencing Tinto’s (1975) interactionist theory was a definitive perspective for most studies of student retention. According to Tinto, “Students enter college with characteristics that help or hinder their retention. Some of those characteristics include family background, individual traits, and pre-college schooling experiences” (p. 2). These characteristics both influenced the commitment to enroll and to persist. In a later study in 1993, Tinto added the “commitment to the institution, commitment to goals, and integration with the campus environment would be the best predictors of student retention” (p. 25).

Much like Dulchinos’s (2014) research showed, Tinto asserted that students would need to integrate academically and socially into the institution in order to fully commit. Braxton et al. stated (2004), the “initial commitment to an institution and to the goal of graduation in turn affects the student’s degree of integration into the academic
and social systems of the college or university” (p. 2). Braxton et al. (2004) suggested “students are the primary, if not only factor, in pursuing an undergraduate degree” (p. 25). The researchers within this study were seeking to provide TICUA member institutions with best practices for both recruitment and retention of veteran and military students. Tinto’s model continues to be referenced and used as a foundational cornerstone regardless of the critiques received over the years.

**Improving Student Retention**

Improving student retention on college campuses was an important discussion topic among institutions of higher education. Therefore, the subject of student retention has been the focus of many research projects. Townsend (2006) centered his study on retention with a concentration on black students who attended historically black universities. Like other higher education arenas, he found that student involvement on campus had a strong influence on retention. Townsend wrote that socialization and interaction could be answers to the question of how to keep students enrolled in college.

In Townsend’s (2007) article he provided an informative overview on the influences related to campus student involvement and retention in African-American students. Townsend (2007) shared information and data that supported his assertion that the retention problem is evident everywhere and specifically increased for black students whether they attended predominately black institutions or predominately white institutions. Townsend cited reports and facts from several authorities on retention theory. Swail, Redd, and Perna (2003), as cited by Townsend (2007) found “half of all students entering higher education will drop out before earning a degree”. Tinto said (as cited in Townsend, 2007), “approximately 57% of college dropouts leave college before the start of the second year”.

Townsend considered the theories of Astin and Tinto, who both shared the belief that social integration or social involvement was very important in regards to student retention. Astin’s (1984) theory verified that increased social engagement on campus improved the odds that non-traditional students will persist and graduate. Tinto (1996) supported this finding but references that developing a sense of belonging and becoming a part of campus life during the first year was extremely critical for retention. Social integration on campus during the first year increases retention in all collegiate settings.

**Veteran Transition Issues and Factors**

Since the Post 9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008 (Post-9/11 G.I. Bill) went into effect August 1, 2009, the number of veterans who received Veterans Administration (VA) educational benefits has almost doubled. As a result, the United States Government Accountability Office (GAO) completed a study based upon fiscal year 2013 and examined that over $12 billion was spent by the VA on veterans’ postsecondary education benefits. Senators Patty Murray, Bernie Sanders, and Jay Rockefeller reported “the use of these benefits will continue to grow as the number of post 9/11 veterans is expected to increase to more than 5 million by 2020” (GAO, 2014, p. 1). For-profit colleges and universities have added incentives to enroll veterans who qualify for the Post 9/11 G.I. Bill.

According to the GAO (2014) chairmen report, President Obama issued Executive Order 13607, which “calls on VA and other agencies to strengthen enforcement mechanisms to ensure that schools are not engaged in deceptive or aggressive recruiting practices toward veteran and military students” (p. 2). Congressional hearings and negative press accounts related to veterans who had experienced an onset of determined recruiters with misleading school information were
the impetus of Order 13607. As a result of the order and continued negative press, institutions of higher education were asked to examine issues related to recruitment practices and strategies used to entice veterans. The GAO (2014) reported the objectives which were to highlight the following questions: 1.) how the nine selected schools and 30 different schools’ websites attracted and recruited veterans, including identification of inappropriate recruitment practices; 2.) veterans’ school search and recruiting experiences; and 3.) the VA’s actions to help veterans make informed decisions (p. 44).

The GAO (2014) performance audit report conducted from February 2013 to May 2014 included interviews, surveys, and visits to respective agencies (p. 44). To answer how schools recruit veterans, the investigators interviewed officials from nine schools selected based upon degrees offered and the amount of funds received (e.g. > $2 million dollars per year) from the VA under the Post 9/11 G.I. Bill program. A national survey that used a probability procedure based upon random selection was administered to student veterans to answer veterans’ school search and recruiting experiences. VA, Department of Education, Department of Defense, Department of Justice, and Consumer Financial Protection Bureau officials were interviewed and pertinent federal laws, regulations, and requirements were examined to answer what VA actions help veterans make informed decisions.

The interviews, surveys, and documents used by the GAO (2014) investigators allowed them to review and reflect on emergent themes and trends. The GAO (2014) investigators were able to compare data from various schools and websites, surveys, and interviews that permitted analysis using a triangulation method. The investigators were purposeful with schools and website choices. They were mindful of who they
interviewed. They carefully chose participants based upon a probability procedure of random selection for survey distribution.

The GAO (2014) investigators found “a sizeable number of veterans reported experiencing problems with school recruiting and obtaining accurate information from their schools” (p. 40). The investigators added, “When generalized to the entire student veteran population, our survey results indicated that tens of thousands of veterans are affected” (p. 40). This report clearly articulated the fact there is a requisite to better educate student veterans on their benefits. There was also a need for the VA to inform and protect student veterans from the overly aggressive recruiters advertising which could potentially be false goods. While the VA has been taking steps to create a climate of awareness for student veterans, as per the law, its effort to expand awareness and ease application processes has been limited (p.1). The GAO (2014) investigators reported almost half of the veterans surveyed were not aware of the VA’s counseling services or knew how to report a complaint when an individual felt he or she was being harassed by aggressive recruiters (p. 1). Based upon the data, the GAO (2014) investigators recommended the Secretary of VA take the following actions:

1. Take additional steps to improve the outreach efforts, accessibility, and usefulness of educational counseling services. This would involve updating resources used for prospective veteran students. Veteran students would be better served if they could apply for educational counseling online. In addition, there should be a more cost-effective approach to gather more useful data on applicants to better identify gaps.

2. The VA needs to be more consistent in its project planning endeavors. The VA needs to develop, document, and communicate realistic timelines and
implementation goals for VA initiatives based upon federal requirements. The VA needs to learn how to set specific, measurable, and timely objectives that include the necessary resources to execute the goals (p. 41).

**Governor Haslam Task Force on Veteran Education Report**

Governor Bill Haslam of Tennessee formed a task force in November of 2013 to study and determine how to best serve Tennessee’s veterans seeking a certification or degree in post-secondary education (Tennessee Higher Education Commission, 2014). The task force was part of his “Drive to 55” initiative to increase the number of Tennesseans with a certificate or degree beyond high school from the current standing rate of 32% to 55% by the year 2025 (p. 1). According to the State of Tennessee official website, the task force was charged with the following:

- To identify common educational hurdles for transitioning veterans
- To research best practices to serve student veterans
- To make recommendations on improving opportunities for veterans to earn a certificate or degree beyond high school. (Tennessee Higher Education Commission, 2014, p. 1)

Governor Haslam stated, “…enrollment of veterans in Tennessee colleges and universities has more than doubled. While cost was often a barrier for many students to continue with post-secondary education, that isn’t usually the case for veterans” (2014, p. 1). For improvement in Tennessee, the government believed there should be a stronger understanding of the barriers that were keeping veterans from maximizing the use of their veteran’s benefits. The goal of increasing the usage is two-fold. First, the veterans would receive a strong education for no cost or a minor percentage of the regular tuition. Second, Tennessee would then have a larger, more educated work force pool to draw
employees from. The increased holdings of citizens with certifications or college degrees were the final outcome that Governor Haslam desired.

In March of 2014, the State of Tennessee sponsored a “Drive to 55” Tennessee Veteran Education Task Force Summit (2014). Attendees for this conference included university presidents, state commissioners, United States Army representatives, and veterans along with many other special guests. The purpose of this conference was to announce the outcomes of the Veteran Education Task Force's (VETF) work. The announcement included nine “ideas” that were calls to action. The following ideas are highlighted below:

1. Base outreach. Develop education coordinator to truncate Tennessee educational opportunities and request placement into Transition Assistance Programs

2. Campus space for veterans. Development of a designated space that is suited for the unique campus populations needs to compliment the societal need of the transitioning demographic on campus

3. Establish Student Veteran Organizations (SVO) on every campus. To ensure proper success of a SVO the school must look at crafting a task force to ensure their unique situation on campus as well as Military Affairs Director into administration

4. Make institutional leadership aware of deadlines, needs, and resources. Support should be top-down to begin the commitment and be translated into policies and procedures mandated to become “a Veteran preferred” campus
5. Centralize training for campus staff. Coordinate through state level education training sessions once per year for teams from campuses to learn new and adaptive practices.

6. Build statewide, industry alliance to discuss veteran employment and business buy-ins. With active chapters of the SVO on campuses, student veteran organizations could bring partners of the SVO into the campus community as well.

7. Establish a one million dollar grant to incentivize campuses to deploy veteran support. Competitive grants would allow for creative practices to be developed and promoted statewide as means of developing a veteran preferred campus and successful programs for long term sustainment.

8. Waive out-of-state tuition for all veterans. As noted in the VETF Binder, the state is not retaining veterans 25 years and under. In an effort to ensure the state does deliver on its commitment and minimize financial hardship, all veterans will receive in-state tuition that will help bridge previous funding gaps. Additional efforts from the Veterans to Succeed Task Force Report included veteran implementation programs that were designed to facilitate the financial transition of VA rear payments and financial aid dispersal dates to build a more stable platform for students.

9. Create a comprehensive veteran web portal, or one stop shop approach, to provide quick and easy ways to connect veterans with educational programs, jobs, and business resources all in one location. Under the education prong, veterans who are seeking to pursue a college degree in Tennessee would click on the ‘Education’ option and the visitor connect
BEST PRACTICES FOR RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

to a step by step checklist, starting with determining what type of school, public, private, and not for profit (Governor’s Veterans Education Task Force, 2014)

**Tennessee Student Veterans Organization (SVO) Summit**

The First Annual Tennessee Student Veterans Organization Summit was hosted at Lipscomb University in Nashville, Tennessee in May, 2015. The goal for the Summit was to bring together Student Veterans Organizations (SVO) from across the state to facilitate the sharing of best practices to increase support for veteran students in Tennessee. The Summit was able to come to fruition with the support of Commissioner Grinder from the Tennessee Department of Veteran Services. The Student Veteran Organization President at Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU) was the facilitator of the event. He was able to speak about his experiences and how he has been able to make an impact at the administration and student level, on campus. He attributed much of his success to Commissioner Grinder and the tremendous support and willingness to be an advocate for the veterans across the state.

Commissioner Grinder hosted the inaugural Tennessee Veteran Taskforce meeting in 2015. One of the many recommendations made by the taskforce was to bring together a host of student veterans from across the state to help support the initiatives at various institutions. In addition, the taskforce presented the following recommendations: identify funding sources to recruit and retain veteran students to college campuses and establish an online portal or listserv through the state in an effort to establish effective communication and tracking mechanisms. The commissioner also addressed the specific demographics of veterans in the state which would impact higher education institutions and the way this population is served; the Governor’s “Drive to 55” initiative and how
this can be accomplished by recruiting veterans; and the challenges and barriers that veterans are facing today.

The Summit continued to highlight various resources available through several guest speakers from across the state. Mike Krause, Executive Director of the Governor’s “Drive to 55” initiative, spoke on the “Veteran Reconnect” grant which was developed in order to provide institutions with additional resources to aid veterans in the education process. The grant is estimated to award 10-12 schools with $75,000-100,000 in grant funds with the expectation that the institution will be able to sustain the services provided to veteran students. Several of the institutions present were interested in applying for the funds as a way to increase the resources available to this population. Many representatives from various institutions were intrigued by organizations such as: Team Rubicon, a disaster response team that hosted service projects across the world; IAVA, veteran empowerment organization which hosted community service events as well as group activities for veterans; and Wounded Warrior Project, which served veterans who were wounded in combat through educational programming, community and engagement support, and transitional support for veterans. These programs could also be used as a resource to aid in the transition process often faced by veterans.

The program ended with groups discussing the best practices for student veteran organizations and how they could work well within higher education institutions. The group identified three key areas of improvement for veteran student leaders and institutions of higher education. First, institution administration support in the form of policy was an essential part of the retention process for veterans. It was important to have the voice of the veteran and military population on the faculty/senate or the president’s advisory board involved in policy decisions. Second, communication between the non-
traditional student population and the institution was important. Many of the students wanted to feel their opinions were valued and that there were clear lines of communication with knowledgeable support staff available. The third and last suggested area for improvement involved resource allocation. The ability for an institution to provide adequate resources in the form of counseling, academic support or social space was very significant. To conclude, it was noted that many of the students were optimistic about the future of veteran and military support across the state because of the recognition from key constituents, like Commissioner Grinder and others.

Military Advanced Education

The Military Advanced Education magazine published its annual list entitled The Guide, which detailed the information compiled from results of questionnaires on military-supportive polices from over 600 colleges and universities. The Guide served as a tool for educational leaders, and military transition officers, who advise veterans and their families about post-secondary education.

The Guide enabled interested parties to access the information that Military Advanced Education used to score and designate the top schools. Schools may then be searched by name, state, and campus style. The results of the six areas of consideration are then displayed for the viewer to evaluate. The areas of review included: Military Culture, Financial Assistance, Flexibility, General Support, Online Support, and On Campus Support.

A Public University was noted as the state’s largest provider of higher education to soldiers, with more than 20% of the students having a military connection (Fodel, 2015). The university has implemented an assistance and services program for these individuals, produced a civic publication for assistance, and partnered with the U. S.
Department of Veterans Affairs. Additional programs that have been established which include veteran graduation recognition and reception, a cord award ceremony prior to graduation, and a coin presentation to honor the graduates.

**Summary**

This chapter contained a review of literature relevant to the relationship between military veterans and higher education. The researchers considered the historical importance of the initial G.I. Bill through the Post 9/11 educational benefits that veteran and military students are now eligible to use. Looking to history to predict the future, it was important for the researchers to consider the past, present, and future demographics related to both veteran and military students.

After careful consideration of the historical significance of the G.I. Bill combined with the current Post 9/11 G.I. benefit now offered, learning more about how higher education institutions were attracting potential veteran and military members was an essential factor for this study. The researchers had to determine what military friendliness meant since many higher-education institutions professed to be military friendly. Specifically, research efforts went into seeking both quantitative and qualitative data to support veteran and military members’ perceptions of military-friendliness. After establishing how military friendly was defined, the researchers completed a qualitative observational online document review of TICUA member institutions. The researchers also looked beyond TICUA and Tennessee for examples of exemplary military friendly institutions.

The data presented in the 2012 ACE report combined with prior research and the DiRamio (2011) presentation were useful tools for consideration of military friendliness. The statistics provided from the 2009 ACE report combined with the visuals obtained
from DiRamio’s (2011) presentation were both significant and useful in the TICUA research project. The literature and combined data continued to point to the need for higher education institutions to be mindful of the financial matters that were important to veteran and military students. This included the need for higher education institutions to implement policies related to transcript evaluation and tuition refunds due to deployment. Academic advising, career service, and psychological/counseling services should be considered by higher education institutions to provide on-going support that veteran and military students both need and deserve. But moreover, the data showed that it was the four year private institutions who needed to evaluate their infrastructures, services, and policies to include strategies on enrolling and retaining veteran and military students. Private institutions could learn from the public two and four year institutions.

Because veteran and military students were both unique and considered non-traditional students, the researchers explored theoretical constructs such as andragogy, recruitment, and retention theories. The combined theories provided insight that helped the researchers synthesizes the recommendations on best practices that would help institutions recruit, retain, and aid in retention. In conclusion, after careful consideration of the history, demographics, and the unique needs of the veteran and military student population, the researchers were able to extrapolate successful recruitment and retention practices employed at various higher education institutions inside and outside of Tennessee.
Chapter III: Methodology

Introduction

This mixed methods study adds to the existing research on recruitment and retention practices for veteran students at institutions of higher education. Included in this chapter is an explanation of the research design, an overview of population and participants, and description of the instrumentation. In addition, the methods for data collection were discussed as well as the method of data analysis and data storage. The chapter concludes with a summary of the methodology.

Purpose of the Study

TICUA was committed to assisting independent private higher education institutions with advancing and improving their recruitment and retention effort. Because enrollment was a vital part of the formula for a successful private institution and veterans of military service were a potential pool of enrollees, TICUA was strongly interested in identifying effective strategies for attracting veterans. There were several contributing factors that impacted the veterans’ decision-making process to use their veteran education benefits. TICUA desired confirmation through the use of quantitative and qualitative data to determine the best practices for recruiting and retaining veterans. The purpose of this study was to identify the common challenges for transitioning veterans and/or military students, evaluate effective recruitment and retention strategies, and make recommendations on how TICUA institutions could become more appealing to the veteran and/or military student population. The researchers also identified the factors that enhanced and deterred the recruitment and retention of veteran and military students.
Research Questions

These three questions guided the research.

1. What are the perceived best practice(s) used by colleges and universities when comparing those that have been classified as TICUA Yellow Ribbon to those that self-classify as military friendly?

2. What practice(s) are appealing from a veteran or military student’s point of view when making his or her selection of a university?

3. What factor(s) contribute to the veteran student’s decision to persist at an institution of higher education?

Null Hypotheses

Null hypotheses for Research Question 1.

1. There is no statistically significant difference between Yellow Ribbon TICUA institutions and non-Yellow Ribbon TICUA institutions on their total Environmental Evaluation for Veterans Index (EEVI) score.

2. There is no statistically significant difference between military friendly Van Dusen student responses to non-military friendly Van Dusen student responses.

Null hypotheses for Research Question 2.

3. There is no statistically significant difference between military friendly TICUA institutions and non-military friendly TICUA institutions on their total Van Dusen Institutional Responses.

4. There is no statistically significant relationship between Van Dusen Institutional responses to veteran Van Dusen student responses.
Research Design

The study used both quantitative and qualitative methods. The researchers used a descriptive research design and comparative case study for their research. The premise of the case study was to research statewide private institutions recruitment and retention practices of veteran students and used descriptive design when organizing and summarizing the quantitative data (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007, p. 132). The case study design was chosen because the researchers gathered information about the veteran student population in order to effectively understand how the students operate within post-secondary education (Berg & Lune, 2012, p. 325).

The researchers began by conducting a qualitative observational online document review to determine which TICUA member institutions were perceived to be military friendly. The research focused on whether universities and colleges were creating an accurate online representation of their military resources and services. TICUA has 10 member institutions within the Western region, 13 within the Middle region, and 11 within the Eastern region of the state. The researchers used the following five military friendly characteristics to help identify which institutions appeared to be military friendly from an initial website search and electronic presence perspective (Dulchinos, 2014):

1. Military friendly website
2. Veterans affairs office on campus
3. Veterans affairs coordinator
4. Yellow Ribbon designation
5. Veteran student organization on campus

The researchers began their review by evaluating the home page of the institutions’ websites. They checked for relevant and useful information relating to
veteran students on the home page. Positive promotion of veteran students on the website was another measurement used for evaluation. The researchers considered how easily and useful information was populated and how quickly the pages loaded to ensure that interested prospects would not give up and exit the site prematurely. The researchers also checked the website to determine if the institution listed a veterans affairs office on campus, a veterans affairs coordinator, Yellow Ribbon designation and if there was a Veteran Student Organization on campus. These designations were measured by a “yes” or “no” response. The researchers ranked the institutions according to how many of the five military friendly characteristics were identified.

After completing the preliminary observational online review, the researchers used a process of triangulation to determine the factors that contribute or deter from the recruitment and retention of veteran and military students from attending private institutions. The triangulation process included observational online review, surveys, and veteran student interviews. The individual interviews were useful for the researchers to understand the story behind the participant’s experiences. The researchers were provided a rich description of the lived experiences that went beyond the survey responses and the observational online review. The researchers chose a mixed methods approach by using both qualitative and quantitative methods and determined the best practices actively used at TICUA member institutions and public institutions who are successfully recruiting and retaining the veteran student population.

**Description of Population**

The researchers considered the following criteria for veteran and military students in the study. First, the student had to be active duty or a veteran of the United States Armed Forces. Second, the student had to be receiving educational benefits including but
not limited to Post 9/11 G.I. Bill educational funds. Third, participants had to be in pursuit of an undergraduate degree and enrolled at one of the 31 four year TICUA institutions or an outside four year non-TICUA institution. Fourth, students had to be attending 50% percent of classes on campus.

The population for this study initially consisted of the 34 TICUA member institutions across the state of Tennessee. Twelve military friendly TICUA institutions were identified as having the Yellow Ribbon designations within their network. The researchers evaluated all 34 institutions which consisted of 31 four year colleges and three professional colleges by reviewing TICUA archival data on their website. Only the 31 four year member institutions were evaluated, and the researchers excluded the three professional TICUA colleges.

The targeted students enrolled in TICUA member institutions were diverse in age, race/ethnicity, religious affiliations, and life experiences. TICUA had not collected data relating to the number of veteran and/or military students who were qualified for the Post 9/11 G.I. Bill education funds. Therefore the researchers began by targeting the entire veteran undergraduate population of students enrolled part-time or full time with their primary mode of instruction being in a face to face environment. Once the data was collected, the population narrowed to 84 veteran students who were attendees at 17 of the TICUA institutions. Three of the 84 students failed to complete the survey and 10 students did not identify their institution. The researchers were able to utilize data from all of the veteran student surveys received.

A sample of the target population received the online survey instrument. Key administrative leaders from the participating institutions who serve military students were invited to complete the online questionnaire. Out of the 31 TICUA institutions, the
researchers had 17 administrative responses. Those 17 administrators were emailed the student veteran survey invitations to send out to their veteran student population for voluntary participation.

**Focus group participants.** The focus group participants were recruited by key administrative leaders from each of the institutions. The TICUA institutions represented in this study are those institutions that rose to the top based upon the total military friendly score that was obtained during the data analysis of the EEVI and Van Dusen survey instrument. The researchers received focus group participation from one TICUA institution and one public university recognized as military friendly based upon its online qualitative review. The TICUA private university and the public university were used as comparative case studies. There was minimal risk associated with this study, and confidentiality and anonymity was provided. It is important to note that all participants remained in the study, and there were no requests for removal either during or after the focus groups. Both focus groups were conducted at the institutions attended by the veteran students.

The focus groups were conducted with six male veteran students at a Middle Tennessee TICUA university who rated as military friendly and with five male veteran students from a Middle Tennessee public university recognized as military friendly. The combined ethnicities represented were six Caucasian, two African American, one Hispanic, and one Romanian. There was minimal risk associated with this study, and confidentiality and anonymity was provided. It is important to note that all participants remained in the study, and there were no requests for removal either during or after the focus groups.
Phone interview participants. The researchers also conducted three phone interviews with two female and one male participant from a TICUA East Tennessee college. These individuals were recruited by a key administrative leader from one of the seven institutions who rated as military friendly. The phone interviews were conducted because the participant’s varied schedules did not allow for a mutually agreed upon focus group session to be held at the institution. All of the participants self-identified as Caucasian. There was minimal risk associated with this study, and confidentiality and anonymity was provided. It is important to note that all participants remained in the study, and there were no requests for removal either during or after the phone interviews.

Middle Tennessee TICUA university focus group population. There were six participants who volunteered to contribute within the focus group. The participant mean age was 37, and the median age was 33. The range of participant age was from 20 to 57 years of age. There were no apparent differences in the age demographics of the participants from the institution. All of the participants were male and five identified as Caucasian and one identified as Hispanic.

Public university focus group population. The public institution focus group participants were recruited by emailing an invitation, which was sent from a key administrator to the entire undergraduate veteran student population at an exemplary public institution. Eight veteran and military students accepted the invitation, and only five participated in the study. The participant mean age was 36, and the median age was 34 with the range of participant ages from 27 to 46 years old. There were no apparent differences in the age demographics of the participants from the institution. However, 100% of the participants were male. There were two African American males, two Caucasian males, and one Romanian male who participated. The focus groups interviews
occurred on campus during regular business hours. Participants were reminded that the research study was voluntary.

East Tennessee college phone interview population. Only one institution opted for phone interviews. Participants were selected by the institution’s administrative leaders. The researchers desired to obtain a rich description from the interviewees about their experiences as veteran students. By conducting individual interviews, the researchers were able to gather more information about the lives and their related experiences. The student participants were two female and one male veteran all attending the same institution. The two females were between the age of 25-35 years old and the one male participant identified as being under 30. The three participants were all Caucasian. All of the participants resided in the same city as the institution. The first interviewee indicated that she used her Chapter 31: Vocational Rehabilitation funding to pay for school, and the other two interviewees revealed their funding sources as Yellow Ribbon.

The phone interviews were conducted at the convenience of the interviewee. The researchers used a conference room with a secure phone and speaker for each of the phone interviews. The researchers provided a five minute introduction which included reviewing the consent form that was previously provided via email. The phone interviews ranged from 30 – 60 minutes.

It is important to reiterate that all participation in the research study was voluntary. The veterans’ decision whether or not to participate would not affect their future relations with the institution in any way. Participants in both the focus groups and phone interviews were informed, participation was optional, and they were free to stop at any time.
Description of Research Instrumentation

Van Dusen institution and student questionnaires. Data were collected with questionnaires that were used to survey TICUA administration and individual veteran and/or military students. There were two different questionnaires used to obtain random data samples from TICUA institutions’ administration and a targeted population of veteran students (Appendices B and C). The questionnaire responses consisted of a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly agrees to strongly disagree. The questionnaire concluded with four open-ended questions. The questionnaires were placed on REDCap (Research Electronic Data Capture), a secure web application that allowed users to develop and manage online surveys (REDCap, 2015). The researchers inserted the URL link in a blind invitation email to recruit prospective participants.

The Van Dusen Institution questionnaire and Van Dusen Student questionnaire were created by Dr. Ryan Van Dusen. Written permission was granted for usage of both instruments on September 10, 2014 (Appendix A). Van Dusen researched military veterans and their intention to persist in college in 2011 for his doctoral dissertation at Texas Tech University. As a prior active duty service member with a strong understanding of the research and data available on this subject, he developed an interest and passion for this focus. Upon completion of his doctoral degree, Dr. Ryan Van Dusen was hired by Texas Tech University to lead its veterans programs. In the few years he has held this position, Van Dusen has introduced new initiatives and programs that have increased the military veteran student population at Texas Tech.

Both of the survey instruments used in this study was designed to collect data that relates to the programs, practices and policies relating to veterans attending institutions of higher education. The instrument responses ranged from strongly agree, agree, no
opinion, disagree, and strongly disagree. This scale is commonly used in research and the Likert scale is primarily analyzed as an interval scale.

Environmental Evaluation for Veterans Index (EEVI). The EEVI instrument (Appendix B) was created by Dr. Kimberly Griffen in conjunction with the Center for American Progress. Dr. Griffen provided written permission to use the EEVI on September 26, 2014 (Appendix H). The EEVI was deemed of value because it was used by institutions, students, and policymakers to promote better educational outcomes for veteran and military students. The instrument allowed the researchers to provide straightforward comparisons and benchmarking of peer institutions. Additionally, the EEVI has helped institutions identify areas in which they are doing satisfactory work as well as pinpoint areas for improvement. The EEVI has been used by institutions to set concrete goals, develop strategic plans to meet those goals, and determine levels of progress made.

The EEVI questionnaire was combined at the request of the client with the Van Dusen Institution questionnaire to survey 31 of the 34 TICUA member institutions. The data collected from the EEVI portion of the first instrument sent was used quantitatively to compare and contrast TICUA member institution’s military-friendliness. Each institution was ranked by total “yes” responses that reflected an institution’s military friendly status regardless of a Yellow-Ribbon designation. The 31 institutions were emailed a link to the EEVI questionnaire. The EEVI was distributed to TICUA institution offices of financial aid, enrollment management, student affairs and veteran coordinators. Seventeen completed surveys were returned. The participating institutions and their military friendly total “yes” response ranking scores were identified. The findings
highlighted in this paper were aggregated, reviewed, and carefully analyzed. The researchers used descriptive statistics for the EEVI analysis.

The EEVI instrument was also used as a starting point to answer research question two that related to what practice(s) are appealing from a veteran or military student’s point of view when making his or her selection of a university and for the comparative study. The EEVI acknowledged that veterans face unique challenges when transitioning out of the military, entering school, and persisting to earn a degree. Prior research has indicated the specific needs of veteran students that can be evaluated based on whether institutions have implemented solutions and structures. Within the EEVI, \textit{Personnel and Support Services, Institutional Structures, and Social and Cultural Support} factors serve as overarching categories.

The EEVI questionnaire was administered online and consisted of 69 measures or questions. The questionnaire consisted of three categories, \textit{Personnel and Support Services, Institutional Structures,} and \textit{Social and Cultural Support} factors. For each item in the three categories, the questions were answered with either a “yes” or a “no” based on the presence or absence of items at a specific institution. Upon completion of answering all items within a category, the “yes” responses were tallied. The possible “yes” responses, in each of the three categories, were added to the institution’s “Total Yes” responses that would provide a total score for an institution’s military-friendliness.

Within the category \textit{Personnel and Support Services} there were 23 measures that captured the extent to which an institution had the resources for the following: meeting the needs of the student veterans; collaborating with offices on and off campus that serve veteran and military students; and having a staff that is trained and knowledgeable about the unique experiences of veteran and military students. The \textit{Institutional Structures}
category included 31 measures that assessed the extent to which an institution has developed campus policies and procedures related to administering veterans’ information, benefits, and services within that category. Attention to financial aid and G.I. Bill processing, redeployment policies, transfer-credit evaluation, and flexible course-enrollment options were evaluated. The *Social and Cultural Support* category included 15 measures to assess institutional attitudes, values, and behaviors in regards to veteran students. These measures were used to account for the availability of veteran-specific support structures and the quality of interactions between veterans, faculty, and fellow students.

**Focus groups.** The researchers conducted a qualitative analysis to gain a deeper understanding of the third guiding research question: what factor(s) contribute to the veteran student’s decision to persist at an institution of higher education? The researchers conducted two focus groups with veteran students from a TICUA university and a public university. The focus group participants were veteran undergraduate students who were invited to participate by administrators from their respective institutions. The two focus groups met for approximately one hour. The TICUA Middle Tennessee university focus group session occurred at the conclusion of summer 2015 and the Middle Tennessee public university group session occurred during the fall of 2015. Three dominant categories (recruitment, retention, and resources) guided the structure of the questioning for the focus groups (Appendix G).

**Phone interviews.** The researchers also conducted phone interviews with willing participants from a TICUA East Tennessee college. The researchers provided an email that contained the relevant contact information for the respective TICUA administrator to share with veteran or military students who willingly volunteered to participate. The
researchers conducted three phone interviews that mirrored the focus group interviews; however, the interviews allowed the researchers to drill deeper into their lived experiences as veteran students. The phone interviews were completed in approximately 30 to 60 minutes. The East Tennessee TICUA college phone interviews occurred during the fall of 2015. Three dominant categories (i.e. recruitment, retention, and resources) also guided the structure of the questioning for the phone interviews (Appendix G). These three areas were the foundation of all the interview questions. The researchers collected responses from the veteran students who provided data that was used to determine if there were similar or campus unique services, programs, or personnel at their respective institutions that had an impact on their recruitment and retention decisions. Additionally, the structured questions asked within the focus groups and phone interviews helped the researchers identify the resources necessary to build an educational environment that enhanced the veteran students’ opportunity for success. After the structured focus group and phone interview questions were completed, the participants were allowed to provide additional comments that were relevant to the study.

Procedures for Data Collection

The researchers conducted a qualitative observational online review of TICUA member institutions to determine which schools were perceived to be military friendly. The research focused on whether universities and colleges were creating an accurate online representation of their military resources and services. The researchers used the following five military friendly characteristics to help identify which institutions appeared to be military friendly from an initial website search and electronic presence perspective (Dulchinos, 2014):

1. Military friendly website
2. Veterans affairs office on campus
3. Veterans affairs coordinator
4. Yellow Ribbon designation
5. Veteran student organization on campus

The researchers began their review with evaluating the home page of the institutions’ websites. The researchers reviewed the websites to determine if the institutions had a veterans affairs office on campus, a veterans affairs coordinator, Yellow Ribbon designation and a veteran student organization on campus and had apparent military friendly characteristics.

After the initial website search was conducted for each of the 34 TICUA member institutions, the researchers recorded the initial findings in relation to the five military friendly characteristics. They noted if navigation of the institutions’ website information relating to military or veteran affairs was easily accessible or if it was non-existent. Each region had numerous institutions that met the requirements of being viewed as military friendly.

The researchers surveyed 31 TICUA member institutions with an online questionnaire that was comprised of the Environmental Evaluation for Veterans Index (EEVI) and Van Dusen Institution instrument. Faculty and/or administrators from the participating TICUA institutions completed the survey questionnaire. The EEVI portion of the instrument allowed the researchers to benchmark peer institutional differences. The Van Dusen Institution portion of the questionnaire allowed the researchers to understand current member perceptions on programs, policies, and practices used to attract and retain veterans.
TICUA faculty and/or administrators who voluntarily completed the online EEVI and Van Dusen Institution questionnaire received a second online survey instrument. There were 17 participating TICUA institutions that were sent the second online Van Dusen Veteran Student questionnaire. The researchers asked for this instrument to be sent to all veteran students for voluntary completion. Eighty-one veteran and/or active duty military students completed and returned the Van Dusen Student questionnaire.

The surveys were analyzed using descriptive statistics to determine the total “yes” responses of the EEVI as compared to the total “no” responses on the EEVI. A mean was calculated and used to identify the schools that were military friendly. A mean of 35.35 was found and used as the benchmark for identification purposes. This provided the foundation of comparing military friendly institutions with non-military friendly institutions.

After conducting this analysis, the seven identified military friendly institutions were then compared to the non-military friendly institutions, first by descriptive statistics and then by utilizing independent t-tests. The researchers calculated the total institutional response scores on the Van Dusen Institution questionnaire as well as calculating the total student response scores on the Van Dusen Student questionnaire. Then the researchers completed a comparative study consisting of institutional scores, student response scores and military friendly designation.

The qualitative part of this research study used focus group interviews and phone interviews to obtain a deeper understanding of the best practices for recruitment and retention of military and veteran students. Selection of the institutions from which the participants for the private institution focus groups was limited to the TICUA colleges and universities who had been identified in the quantitative study as Yellow Ribbon
and/or military friendly. The non-TICUA Middle Tennessee public institution was selected due to its exemplary military friendly status throughout the region.

Quantitative data collection commenced following IRB approval of the study. The research sample consisted of 31 of the 34 TICUA member institutions that self-reported through two different survey instruments that were designed to assess perceptions and actual institutional attributes that related to military friendliness, recruitment, and retention efforts. The researchers selected the software program REDCap for their survey creation, distribution and collection.

The survey instruments were attached and sent via email by TICUA to the TICUA member institutions. A supportive message from TICUA and/or the respective veterans services office encouraging participation was initially sent. All survey instruments included an introductory email explaining the importance of the questionnaire. The survey instruments were electronically distributed and solicited voluntary participation. Scheduled reminder email notifications for a specified period were also incorporated into the data collection process.

TICUA administration was contacted. The researchers asked TICUA to send the EEVI and Van Dusen Institution instrument out electronically to 31 of the 34 TICUA member institutions. The EEVI portion of the instrument was used to identify the TICUA member institutions that scored the highest on military-friendliness dimensions. The Van Dusen Institution portion of the instrument was used to obtain current TICUA institution member perceived policies/programs/practices that were used to attract and retain veterans. Faculty, staff, and/or administration at the selected TICUA member institutions were asked to complete this survey.
The 17 participating institutions were sent an online Van Dusen Student survey instrument to distribute to currently enrolled veteran and/or military students. This voluntary, online survey instrument sought to understand veteran and/or military students’ perception of the institution’s policies/practices/programs including why the students chose to persist at a given institution. The information gleaned from both the EEVI and Van Dusen Institution survey instrument and the Van Dusen Student survey instrument were compared to the practices and programs which military friendly institutions already had in place.

The researchers evaluated the data from the institutions, categorized the data into constructs, and compared the information to what was gleaned from their initial qualitative observational online data review of the TICUA member institutions. Based upon the initial comparison, the researchers selected TICUA member institutions with the highest total military friendly scores from the EEVI survey instrument and contacted administration at those institutions for focus group and interview permission.

The two TICUA institutions identified by the total military friendly scores granted permission for either focus group or phone interview participation. The public institution was selected for the study as an exemplary Middle Tennessee military friendly institution based upon the online web presence and the number of enrolled military and veteran students highlighted. These sessions were dependent upon the individual institution’s student availability. Each focus group met in a conference room at the respective university. The researchers provided a 5-minute introduction, which included reviewing the consent form, provided at the start of the session. Both focus group sessions lasted approximately one hour.
The phone interviews with the TICUA college participants were conducted in a conference room at a researcher’s institution. Each participant was asked to sign, scan, and return the consent form (Appendix F). The same set of interview questions used with the focus group participants that related to recruitment, retention, and resources were used with the phone interview participants. The researchers provided a five minute introduction, which included reviewing the consent form that was emailed to the participant prior to the phone interview.

To assist with control for bias, one team member conducted all the focus group and phone interview questioning, and each session was recorded. The researchers conducted a coded analysis from the transcription and audio recordings.

**Data Analysis**

The data analysis consisted of three components. The first component used a qualitative online observational review process to identify the top military friendly institutions within each region of TICUA (East, Middle, and West). Then the researchers determined the differences between the regions in order to ascertain if the online websites were military friendly or non-military friendly. The following five military friendly characteristics were used to help the researchers identify what institutions appeared military friendly from an initial website search:

1. Military friendly website
2. Veterans affairs office on campus
3. Veterans affairs coordinator
4. Yellow Ribbon designation
5. Veteran student organization on campus
After the initial website search was conducted for each of the 34 TICUA member institutions, the researchers recorded the initial findings in relation to the five military friendly characteristics. They noted if navigation of the institution’s website information relating to military or veteran affairs was easily accessible, difficult to find material, or if it was non-existent. The researchers began their review with evaluating the landing page of the institutions website. They checked for relevant and useful information relating to veteran students on the home page. Positive promotion of veteran students on the website was another measurement used for evaluation. Ease of accessing current and useful information such as making sure pages loaded quickly and correctly so that interested prospects would not give up and exit the site prematurely. The researchers also checked the website to determine if the institution listed a veterans affairs office on campus, a veterans affairs coordinator, Yellow Ribbon designation and a veteran student organization on campus. The researchers ranked the institutions that met all five military friendly characteristics. Each region had numerous institutions that met the requirements of being viewed as military friendly.

Several institutions did not meet the initial online observational review requirements. Therefore the researchers initiated a second component to their data analysis. They ran an independent t-test for comparison of the EEVI and Van Dusen data from each school.

The online questionnaires were designed to gather feedback from participants. The information gathered included variables based upon their perception of importance, including how they perceived their own institution’s military friendliness. The comprehensive findings from past and present research specifically relating to the quantitative research was designed to give post-secondary educational leaders from
TICUA institutions critical insights on how to develop and prioritize military friendly programs. Data extrapolated from the veterans surveyed were measured both quantitatively and qualitatively. However, there were discrepancies within the questionnaire based on number of completed responses received. The JMP program aided the researchers in data analysis. JMP is a statistical software tool designed to combine statistics, graphs, and interactive visuals in a format that allowed researchers to enhance the traditional data analysis processes (JMP, 2014).

The final component allowed the researchers to look for common dominant themes and sub-themes which emerged from the feedback. The digital audio files from the focus groups and phone interviews were uploaded to the researchers’ computers and prepared for transcription. Once data were collected, the researchers assigned each school a code letter to protect its anonymity. Also, the participants’ comments were assigned a numeric identification to protect their anonymity. The process for transcription consisted of annotating the transcripts to identify common themes from each focus group and the three phone interviews. All data were coded and categorized.

One researcher read aloud the transcripts while another researcher charted key words and phrases from each question. After each transcript was completed, the researchers then categorized common themes and key words that were deemed repetitive by each institution and/or interviewee. This method allowed the researchers to use the three overarching themes based upon the participant responses.

After completing the analysis and developing the three overarching themes, the researchers continued to examine the findings and searched for patterns in order to bring clarity and depth to the already established overarching themes. This allowed the
researchers to conduct a comparative review between the literature research and the highlights of the focus group results.

**Disposition of the Data**

Any information obtained in connection with this research study that may be identified by a specific person or group will not be disclosed. In any written reports or publications, no one person will be identified or identifiable and only group data will be presented. The researchers will keep the research results in a password-protected database or a locked file cabinet in a researcher’s professional office space and only the researchers named in this study and their advisor will have access to the records. The data will be kept for two years after the date of the defense. In November of 2017, all data collected will be destroyed in all original reports and identifying information that could be linked back to participants.
Chapter IV: Findings and Analysis

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings of the study. The first section highlights the qualitative observational online review of all 34 TICUA institutions. The second section presents the quantitative responses related to Yellow Ribbon designation and military friendly TICUA institutions from the EEVI and Van Dusen Institution survey instrument. The third section provides the correlational response rankings from the Van Dusen veteran survey instrument. The final section includes emerged themes from the focus groups and phone interviews conducted with veteran and military students.

Qualitative Observational Online Review of TICUA Schools

The researchers completed a qualitative observational online website review to determine which TICUA member institutions were perceived to be military friendly. Within Tennessee there were several TICUA member institutions that exhibited a stronger military friendly web-based presence.

Based upon literature and online research, the researchers determined the five military friendly characteristics by Dulchinos (2014) who summarized the factors that contributed to military friendliness along the dimensions of cost, culture, collaboration, convenience, and caring characteristics (p. 34). The following five military friendly characteristics were selected and utilized to help the researchers identify what institutions appeared military friendly:

1. Military friendly website
2. Veterans affairs office on campus
3. Veterans affairs coordinator
4. Yellow Ribbon designation

5. Veteran student organization on campus

The TICUA member institutions were evaluated by their respective region, West, Middle, and East Tennessee. Figure 1 highlighted the geographic name and campus location for all 34 TICUA member institutions in Tennessee. The researchers categorized the institutions with the strongest perceived military friendly web presence during their qualitative online review by region. Those institutions were:

1. One university in the West

2. Three universities in the Middle

3. Three universities in the East

*Figure 1. TICUA Member Institution Names and Campus Locations (TICUA, 2014)*
**West Tennessee.** There were 10 institutions within the West Tennessee area, with only seven of the 10 schools involved in the Yellow Ribbon Program as mentioned in the TN State Yellow Ribbon Program Information 2013 – 2014 link (U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, 2014). Of the 10 TICUA member institutions, four schools were Yellow Ribbon schools that provided limited information on their respective websites for potential veteran or military students. There was also a veterans affairs office or veterans affairs coordinator information posted. There appeared to be available assistance and a campus veteran student organization.

**University G.** The initial Google search conducted for military friendly schools in west Tennessee pointed to this university. The researchers were interested in the recruitment and retention strategies of a private, accredited university. The university offered a military and veteran discount. Their website highlighted the availability of a military friendly staff that was ready to assist with questions related to the use of Post 9/11 G.I. Bill Education Benefits or Military Tuition Assistance. They have satellite campuses across the state of Tennessee.

**Middle Tennessee.** There were 13 TICUA member institutions in the Middle Tennessee region. Three institutions exhibited characteristics of military friendliness. According to the TN State Yellow Ribbon Program Information 2013 – 2014 website link, two universities had no limit on their veteran enrollment because of adequate supporting scholarship dollars.

**University A.** This university was recognized as a Yellow Ribbon program institution. Its website had a veterans affairs link and mentioned there was an on-campus veteran affairs coordinator.
**University B.** This university was listed as Yellow Ribbon program institution. It had a veterans affairs website and a coordinator available to assist potential veteran and military students.

**University C.** This university was listed a Yellow Ribbon program institution. It offered a veteran service center with coordinators available to assist potential veteran and military students. A unique opportunity was mentioned on the website that related to a veteran Scholarship that awards up to $3,000 annually to veteran students who do not qualify for 100% of the Post-9/11 and Yellow Ribbon Enhancement.

**East Tennessee.** There were 11 TICUA member institutions in East Tennessee. Several of the TICUA member institutions reflected military friendly attributes when perusing the websites. Three were all recognized as Yellow Ribbon institutions.

**College D.** The website showed it was a Yellow Ribbon school. The website provided direction to potential veteran and military students. It shared a veteran affairs link and provided the names of specific veteran affairs coordinators and student organizations leaders. The website shared the college hosted an event every Veterans Day and offered a “Leave of Absence Policy” for active duty military students.

**College E.** This college was a Yellow Ribbon school and listed its veterans affairs office on its homepage.

**University F.** This university was a Yellow Ribbon school. The website provided very limited information on veteran related programs.

**Private Middle Tennessee TICUA institution.** A focus group was conducted at a private Middle Tennessee TICUA institution that served fewer than 5,000 undergraduate students. This university has been recognized as a Christian based learning community where excellence in leading and learning is emphasized. This
university was recently awarded a Veteran Reconnect Grant, a grant designed to help institutions improve the success rate of veterans pursuing higher education. It offered a veteran service center, and trained, knowledgeable faculty and staff available to assist potential veteran and military students. This institution also offered an opportunity for military and veteran students in the form of a scholarship award.

There were six participants who voluntarily answered questions used to gather information on their perceptions about this institution. The major themes heard during the focus group related to the institutions’ reputation, web presence, military and veteran services, and financial supports offered.

Private East Tennessee TICUA institution. This small college with fewer than 2,000 undergraduate students was able to offer one-on-one advising and a supportive atmosphere. In 2014 this college was named one of 11 colleges and universities in Tennessee selected to receive the Veteran Reconnect Grant. This institution formed a College Student Veterans Association in 2013, has an admissions recruiter who focused on veteran outreach, and through university collaboration has organized Green Zone training for faculty and staff to promote a supportive environment for veterans. The college planned to use the grant to support institutional infrastructures and programming geared toward the growing number of veterans and their dependents who relocated to their area. There were three participants who voluntarily participated in phone interviews to gather information on their perceptions about this institution. The major themes heard in the interviews related to personnel, services, and the importance of faculty to student interaction.

Middle Tennessee public institution. A focus group was conducted at a four year Middle Tennessee public institution. The university was accredited by the Southern
Association of Colleges and Schools and with an undergraduate population over 10,000 students. This university offered a gamut of institutional supports and services for the military and veteran student population. Institutional supports and services were provided through the Military Student Center, veteran affairs office, veteran success office, and committed military taskforce participants. Green Zone training opportunities for faculty and staff had occurred and were routinely scheduled throughout the year. This university publically recognized active-duty military members who are often reassigned and deployed as a part of life. There were five participants who voluntarily answered questions the same questions used at the TICUA institution focus group and phone interview sessions to gather information on their perceptions about this institution.

During this focus group, two prominent themes related to cost and convenience were prevalent throughout the conversation.

One of the most enlightening findings of the study was the impact of an effective and consistent communication and branding strategy on veteran and military students. As evidenced by both qualitative and quantitative research results, the participants’ similarities outweighed their differences. Members of both groups expressed the comfort of having an existing support network in place which provided an unspoken level of reassurance. Their definition of support consisted of having student-centered institutional policies, practices, and programs as compared to the traditional students’ need for a more social network of support. An interesting point of contrast was discovered during the qualitative portion of the study. Responses from the TICUA institutions revealed the importance of maximizing their educational benefits while the public institution participants viewed their educational benefits as a revenue source that funds a degree.
Overall, there is ample evidence these key factors influence the recruitment and retention of veteran students.

**Quantitative Findings from EEVI and Van Dusen Data Collection**

The EEVI and Van Dusen Institution online survey instrument was administered to 31 of the 34 TICUA member institutions to establish military friendly characteristics indiscriminate of a Yellow Ribbon classification. Three of the TICUA member institutions were professional or graduate schools that were excluded from the population sample. The 31 institutions were emailed a link to access the EEVI and Van Dusen survey instrument through REDcap. The EEVI portion of the instrument was used to identify the TICUA member institutions that tallied the highest scores compiled from the total “yes” responses on military-friendliness. The survey instrument was distributed to the offices of financial aid, enrollment management, and student affairs. As indicated in Table 1, 17 completed surveys were returned. The researchers carefully reviewed, aggregated, and analyzed the data and used descriptive statistics, independent t-tests, and correlational, simple linear regression to compare participating TICUA institutions. Table 1 revealed the potential number of participants by the actual participating institutions within each region.

Table 1

*Response Rate by Region*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TICUA Regions</th>
<th>Potential Participants</th>
<th>Actual Participants</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>West Tennessee</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Tennessee</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Tennessee</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Question 1

The first research question was, “What are the perceived best practice(s) used by colleges and universities when comparing those that have been classified as TICUA Yellow Ribbon to those that self-classify as veteran or military friendly? The first null hypothesis was based on the differences of schools with and without Yellow Ribbon designation:

$H_0$: There is no statistically significant difference between Yellow Ribbon institutions to non-Yellow Ribbon institutions on their total EEVI score. There were 17 institutions that completed and returned the surveys and each received a total “yes” score from the EEVI. As illustrated in Table 2, the mean of the institutions was calculated to be 35.35, and the standard deviation varied with seven schools posting a score higher than the mean, therefore identifying them as military friendly.
Table 2

*One-way Analysis of Total Yes by Institutions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutions</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Total Yes EEVI Score</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University A</td>
<td>35.35</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>12.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University C</td>
<td>35.35</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>16.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College D</td>
<td>35.35</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>9.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College E</td>
<td>35.35</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>24.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University F</td>
<td>35.35</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>9.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University G</td>
<td>35.35</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>12.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College H</td>
<td>35.35</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>3.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College I</td>
<td>35.35</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>-7.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University J</td>
<td>35.35</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>-1.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University K</td>
<td>35.35</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>-16.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University L</td>
<td>35.35</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>-11.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>University M</strong></td>
<td><strong>35.35</strong></td>
<td><strong>25</strong></td>
<td><strong>-10.35</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College N</td>
<td>35.35</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>-20.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University O</td>
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<tr>
<td>College P</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Q</td>
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<td>-5.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University R</td>
<td>35.35</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>-5.35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Total Yes EEVI scores > mean of 35.35 are military friendly. University M is the only institution who did not self-identify as Yellow Ribbon and is designated as boldface.

After descriptive statistics were performed, the researchers retained the null hypothesis because there was not a statistically significant difference between the groups, as indicated by the p-value of 0.3574. The researchers compared 16 Yellow Ribbon schools to only one non-Yellow Ribbon school. The number of Yellow Ribbon designated schools was greater than the researchers expected. The survey instrument did not require an institution to validate its Yellow Ribbon designation. There was only one school that did not self-identify as Yellow Ribbon. It is important to note that institutions may choose to participate in the Yellow Ribbon program if additional funds are made available for the veterans’ education program without an additional charge to their G.I. Bill entitlement. The researchers determined each institution’s military friendliness by the mean score of 35.35. There were seven
institutions that presented military friendly characteristics with total “yes” scores higher than the mean ranging from 39-60. There were 10 schools whose total “yes” scores ranged below the mean from 15-34 with the only non-Yellow Ribbon school score of 25. Additionally, the research was highly limited based on the number that did not identify as Yellow Ribbon.

For the purpose of this study, the EEVI portion of EEVI and Van Dusen Institution instrument was used to answer the research questions that related to what practice(s) are appealing from a veteran or military student’s point of view when making selection of a university. The needs of student veterans could be evaluated based on whether institutions have implemented solutions and structures within the three categories of the EEVI: Personnel and Support Services, Institutional Structures, and Social and Cultural Factors. Each of the overarching three categories contained a range of subcategories and specific items that can be used to evaluate an institution. Each institution responded either “yes” or “no” to the questions. The total “yes” responses were tabulated and used by the researchers to determine each institution’s military friendliness score.

The EEVI portion consisted of 69 measures or questions that were divided into three categories. The first was Personnel and Support Services that highlighted 23 measures that were used to capture the extent to which an institution had resources in place to meet the needs of the student veterans. The Institutional Structures category involved 31 measures that assessed the extent to which an institution had developed campus policies and procedures related to administering veterans’ information, benefits, and services. The Social and Cultural Support category was comprised of 15 measures that assessed institutional attitudes, values, and behaviors in regards to veteran students.
These measures were used to account for the availability of veteran-specific support structures and the quality of interactions between veterans, faculty, and fellow students. Ten institutions scored below the mean score of 35.35. The TICUA institutions who scored above the 35.35 mean were University G (48), University A (48), University C (52), University F (45), College E (60), College H (39) and College D (45). The scores ranged from 39 to 60. The 35.35 mean was classified as military friendly indiscriminate of the Yellow Ribbon designation. Of interest, these seven institutions were identified as military friendly when the researchers conducted the initial qualitative observational online review of TICUA schools.

The following null hypothesis was related to the first research question and based on the perceptions of military to non-military friendly schools.

\[ H_0: \text{There is no statistically significant difference between military friendly Van Dusen student responses to non-military friendly veteran Van Dusen student responses.} \]

Table 3 highlights the statistical comparisons derived from the veteran Van Dusen student military friendly comparison to the veteran Van Dusen student non-military friendly responses.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Veteran Van Dusen Student military friendly vs. Non-military friendly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Military Friendly Score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military friendly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non- military friendly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There were 84 responses from which the researchers were able to use 70 responses. Ten of the responses were not included in the total number of responses.
because the participants did not indicate an institution. Four survey responses received were incomplete. The highest military friendly Van Dusen score possible was 250. From the veteran student responses received, 224 were the highest score and the lowest response score was 127. The normal distribution with the mean score of 182.90 for “yes” military friendly responses and a 176.18 mean related to non-military friendly. Figure 3 revealed the military and non-military friendly score from the veteran student Van Dusen questionnaire. The illustration showed the slight six point difference between military friendly responses and non-military friendly responses.

The researchers compared military friendly Van Dusen student responses to non-military friendly veteran Van Dusen student responses as displayed in Table 4. The researchers hypothesized there would not be a difference between the “yes” military friendly to the non-military friendly Van Dusen veteran responses. A t-test was used once the descriptive statistics resolved the three assumptions. The researchers noted there were normal variances, the skewness factors were low for the non-military friendly (0.2055473) and military friendly student responses (-0.595015). This null hypothesis examined the students’ perception of their schools’ military friendliness. The researchers retained (p=0.31) the null hypothesis with only a slight 6 point difference between military friendly veteran Van Dusen student responses to non-military friendly veteran Van Dusen student responses.
Table 4

Descriptive Statistics of Veteran Van Dusen Student military friendly vs. Non-military friendly responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-military friendly</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>176.18</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>0.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military friendly</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>182.90</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As displayed in Table 5, differences existed in the funding being used by the veteran students in the study. The participants were asked to indicate which form of aid they were using on the Van Dusen Student Questionnaire. Of the 84 total possible respondents, 44 used the Post 9-11 Bill. The Post 9-11 results indicated that 54% of respondents validated this aid was most frequently used by the veteran students in this study. The remaining groups were small in comparison with the Montgomery G.I. Bill having nine participants, Yellow Ribbon having eight, Vocational Rehabilitation having five, and the Montgomery G.I. Bill Reserve Educational Assistance Program having only one participant. The veteran student population shared that they had experienced minimal difficulty receiving their benefits. Twenty-four of 83 (29%) indicated they had challenges while over half of the group, 43 of 83 (52%), shared they had no difficulty with receiving their benefits.

As referenced, only eight of 67 (12%) of the population used the available Yellow Ribbon funding to supplement the education aide they were receiving. Of these eight Yellow Ribbon recipients, the majority were satisfied with the amount of financial support (grants, loans, GI Bills, scholarships, etc.) they were receiving.
Table 5

*Funding Resources Van Dusen Student Responses*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form of aid</th>
<th>Total Students using aid</th>
<th>No difficulty with G.I. Bill</th>
<th>Financial Satisfaction</th>
<th>Consider dropping out due to finances</th>
<th>Consider dropping out due to non-finances</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chap. 30</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chap. 31</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chap. 33</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chap. 1607</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yellow Rib.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>67</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* The form of aid, total number of students using the specific aid, financial satisfaction, and retention related to finances is represented.

**Research Question 2**

The second research question was, “What practice(s) are appealing from a veteran or military student’s point of view when making their selection of a university?” The null hypothesis was based on the assumption that there would be no difference between the military friendly schools and the schools that were non-military friendly.

**Ho3** There is no statistically significant difference between military friendly TICUA institutions and non-military friendly TICUA institutions on their total Van Dusen Institution responses.

The researchers ran descriptive statistics and analyzed the distribution. The Skewness was at 1.1, but the Kurtosis was below 2 at a .72. After the skewness, kurtosis, and variance were evaluated, a t-test was conducted for comparison. Unequal variances were analyzed and the Levine was below .05.

A significant difference existed between the military friendly institutions and the non-military institutions as indicated in the .0037 p-value. When the researchers
compared the seven military friendly institutions against the ten non-military friendly institutions, the significant difference was apparent. Table 6 represents the significant difference noted between the non-military friendly and the military friendly institutions that was most apparent by the observed gap between the two means and the $p$-value of .0037 based upon their total Van Dusen Institution responses.

Table 6

*Institutional Responses*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutional Responses</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non- military friendly</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>.0037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military friendly</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>176</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* $p$-value of .0037 based upon their total Van Dusen Institution responses.

Those who said they were military friendly had a significantly higher mean than those who did not. The variance intersection was small but existed. The gap between non-military friendly mean of 156 compared to the military friendly mean of 176 was significant. The results demonstrated a $p$-value greater than .0037 that represented there is a difference between military friendly TICUA institutions characteristics and non-military friendly characteristics based upon the EEVI and Van Dusen Institution instrument score. As a result, the researchers rejected the null hypothesis because of the significant difference between the military friendly institutions and the non-military friendly institutions. Therefore, a statistically significant difference existed between military friendly TICUA institutions and non-military friendly TICUA institutions on their total Van Dusen Institution responses.

$H_{o4}$ There is no statistically significant relationship between Van Dusen Institution responses to veteran Van Dusen Student responses.
A simple linear regression analysis was performed. The continuous variables were the Van Dusen Institution and veteran Van Dusen Student responses. The researchers added an additional-density ellipse (.095), the visual result of <.001 was not statistically significant. Table 7 reflects the p-value (.59) and the correlation r-value equal to (.065) which represents only a slightly positive relationship that was not enough to reject the null hypothesis. As a result, the null hypothesis was retained. Therefore, there is no statistically significant relationship between Van Dusen Institution responses to veteran Van Dusen Student responses. The veteran student perception of policies, practices and programs were aligned with the institutions views.

Table 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R2</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Veteran Student Responses</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>0.065</td>
<td>0.0042</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The table highlights * p-value .59 that does not show a statistical significant relationship.

As displayed in Table 8, the veteran students in the study group had strong opinions about their identity on campus. Ninety-four percent of the participants indicated that being a member of the armed forces was a significant part of their identity.

While the participants showed strong veteran group identity, they did not seem as strongly concerned with social integration in the higher education setting. The Van Dusen questionnaire provided insight into how the veteran students viewed socialization and student support on campus. The evidence for determining their endorsement for institutional support structures, and specifically the student veteran organizations were not always apparent. Twenty-seven of 81 participants (33%) of the
study group population indicated that they did not know about the student veteran
organization, with 17 of 81 (21%) of the participants having no opinion, followed by 37
of 81 (46%) who stated they had awareness.

There is sufficient evidence to suggest that the veteran students did not find the
social aspect of college significant. The participants indicated that making friends with
their other veteran and student peers was not easy. Sixty-seven of 83 participants (81%) indicated they had no opinion or that it was not easy to make friends on campus. Only 16
of 83 (19%) of the participants indicated that it had been easy to make veteran or non-
veteran friends at their institution.

Overall, the members of the study group had little interest in participation of extra-curricular activities on campus. As displayed in Table 8, 71 of 82 (87%) of the
students indicated they had no opinion or no involvement with extra-curricular activities other than the student veteran organization.

Forty-two of 81 (52%), of the participants shared that the non-veteran students respected their military status. Thirty-four of 81 (48%) participants indicated they did not know if others respect their military association or veteran status.

Table 8

Campus Involvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Likert Scale</th>
<th>Veterans is part of my identity</th>
<th>Awareness of SVO</th>
<th>Easy to make friends</th>
<th>Involved in Extracurricular</th>
<th>Non-vets respect me</th>
<th>Faculty respect me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Opinion</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To determine the support needs and effectiveness of services offered, the study group participants were asked if they had an awareness of disabilities services offered at their institution. Table 9 showed the number of responses and totals for the seven questions within the Student Services categories. Of interest, 31 of 84 (37%) participants were aware of disability services offered and 27 of 84 (32%) were not aware of such services. Twenty six of 84 (31%) participants did not have an opinion. The information gleaned from this section is an indication that the service for disabilities was needed on campus at the TICUA schools but increased advertisement efforts of such services may be warranted.

Table 9

*Student Services*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Likert Scale</th>
<th>Aware of acad. support</th>
<th>Used acad. support</th>
<th>Aware of disability services</th>
<th>Disability Service office meets needs</th>
<th>Aware of Univ. Counseling</th>
<th>Counseling meets needs</th>
<th>VA meets needs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>4 13</td>
<td>9 0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>5 17</td>
<td>18 1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Opinion</td>
<td>5 10</td>
<td>26 65</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>38 23</td>
<td>19 11</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>31 17</td>
<td>12 3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>83 80</td>
<td>84 80</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>80</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As displayed in the below Table 10, only 11 of the 81 (13%) students had registered with the disabilities office. Additionally, 75 of 82 (91%) of the study group participants indicated that they had not utilized the university counseling services. The researchers did not ask why such services were not used or if the services offered were
purposely avoided due to the possibility of acquiring a negatively perceived label while a student at the TICUA institutions.

Table 10

*Student Resources*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Registered for disability services</th>
<th>Used counseling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Research Question 3**

The third research question, “What factor(s) contribute to the veteran student’s decision to persist at an institution of higher education,” used both quantitative and qualitative findings. Retention and persistence results from the Student Van Dusen questionnaire indicated that the vast majority of the study group participants are likely to be retained at their current institution and persist until graduation. As displayed in Table 11, 56 of 81 (69%) of the veteran students in the study group indicated that they could handle the level of academic rigor at the TICUA institutions of higher education. Only five of 81 (6%), strongly agreed that they had struggled academically during their attendance at the institution, and 13 of 81 (16%) agreed they had struggled academically.

Additionally, the study group results confirmed they received respect from the faculty who were serving them. Sixty-six of 83 (80%) participants either agreed or strongly agreed that faculty respected their veteran status. The level of challenge that relates to academic rigor combined with the veteran students feeling that they are respected by their faculty are both factors considered by students when determining re-enrollment at their current institution. Over half of the study group supported re-
enrollment, as evidenced by the 42 of 81 (52%) respondents that said they wanted to persist at their current university toward graduation. Even stronger was the 81 of 83 (98%) of the participants indicating they agreed that acquiring a college degree was important as well as 77 of 79 (97%) giving positive indication that finishing their program of study was important.

Table 11

Retention/Persistence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Imp. to get degree</th>
<th>Finish program of study</th>
<th>Graduate from current institution</th>
<th>Belong at school</th>
<th>Struggled academically</th>
<th>VA staff treats w/ respect</th>
<th>Faculty respect me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Opinion</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question 3 was further addressed qualitatively. The research study used focus groups and phone interviews to validate the institutional quantitative findings. The topics that were discussed related to programs, practices, and strategies for the recruitment and retention of veteran and/or military students in their prospective institutions. Using the information gleaned from focus groups and phone interviews, the researchers were able to validate the three overarching themes obtained from the EEVI and Van Dusen instruments that were connected to recruitment and retention of veteran students.
Focus group themes. After completing the coding analysis and upon subsequent review, three dominant themes and several sub-themes emerged for both private and public institutions. The dominant themes obtained from the EEVI were personnel and support services offered, institutional structures, and social and cultural support. The private institutional sub-themes that emerged included: web presence, financial solutions, student veteran orientations, Green Zone training, accessibility, educational and support, and one stop shop. The public institution sub-themes included: financial solutions, convenience, collaboration and communication, veteran orientation, Green Zone training and one stop shop.

Personnel and support services. According to the literature, personnel and support services should be crafted to meet the unique concerns or issues related to veterans. Collaborations across the institution are key for effective recruitment and retention practices of this population. The following example offered support for the research findings that effective personal and support services are warranted. A key administrator from University A shared the importance of hiring a leader for the veteran services department who is informed and available to offer guidance and assistance as needed. The administrator went on to share, “Prior military experience is extremely helpful to understand the terminology and terms used by our military.” The overarching themes and emerging sub-theme gleaned from the student responses provided support for what factors contributed to veteran student recruitment and retention.

Institutional structures. One of the critical points proven for institutions of higher education in better serving military and veteran students was having a flexible policy on deployment, credit transfer, and financial matters. Multiple types of instruction were necessary for this population. According to University A administration, “A flexible class
schedule that is modeled after a non-traditional student’s schedule best serves the veteran students who attend here.”

**Social and cultural support.** Institutional wide efforts that were most recognized were those that took into consideration the needs of the veteran and military student population. Cross training has proven to be an effective retention tool in the areas of academic and military credit, VA certification, and support programs and services. In addition, the development of a tailored orientation program for military and veteran students optimized their transition process and improved retention. The reputation of military friendliness increased enrollment for both private and public institutions. Schools that offered military students perks such as priority registration and preliminary admissions reviews were deemed as military friendly. One of the veterans felt like there was support offered but on a voluntary basis.

No, but I do feel like veterans are supported and stuff. All of the things are homemade besides what a particular professor does. He is kind of a forerunner but the institution does not do anything besides the little segment after the veteran breakout session. In chapel, we do discuss things but that’s one man, that’s not the institution.

**Maximizing web presence.** Website research emerged as the primary point of contact for prospective veteran students. The observational and quantitative research supported the influence of marketing efforts of higher education institutions, which revealed the importance of a website as a decision making tool for the veterans when deciding on where to invest their military education funding. Universities who maximized their web presence and implemented an Internet marketing plan dovetailed with the veteran’s process for college selection. The various explanations for this online
college selection included making efficient use of time for research, minimal or zero monetary investment, easy elimination of schools that are not accepting or assisting with military funding, ability to access information regarding service offerings, offering specific majors, university catalog, time lines and evidence of an existing population of veteran students.

One student in Focus Group A shared his research for a school started online. When he saw that College A had the majors of interest, he said, “I shot an email and got a response back that day saying come to my office we need to talk.” He also added in his interview, “Money wasn’t an issue because I knew I had a scholarship, so money checked out.” When the researchers asked, “Was Yellow Ribbon a part of your search criteria?” responses were varied and broad. Another student responded, “It was not part of my search criteria. I was more focused on finding the right school, for me being in the right school is more important but not having it wasn’t a make or break type deal.” Other students responded, “For me Yellow Ribbon was a part of my search.” The researchers also questioned whether military friendly was an identifying phrase used during their search. A student replied,

Military friendly, I think it’s like calling a particular car a green car. I think it’s a brand. It’s a buzzword and the more you use it the less it means. I think, if you are going to be military friendly you don’t need it to be a slogan. Just be military friendly. You don’t have to say it because it is a phrase of action. It’s not like at Institution X we are military friendly. Alright, prove it.

Financial solutions. Overall, all participants appeared to have high emphasis placed on financial matters. Contributing to this focus was the veterans desire to maximize the educational benefits earned through service and minimize his or her
personal investment. As evidenced by the research, a student validated these sentiments by stating, “I knew about my G.I. bill, but they started talking about free, and I like free. I’d take that … and I decided the rest of my life I was going to school.” This desire stemmed from the perspective of the non-traditional student who had attended college as an adult with life experiences. Non-traditional and veteran students shared they often have competing commitments, including family obligations, which can make it challenging to invest into higher education.

As mentioned in the literature review, it is imperative for post-secondary institutions to know what the motivators are for their veteran and military student population. A lack of economic resources played an integral part in the institution’s recruitment practices and overall veteran and military enrollment. A participant in Focus Group A remarked, “one stood out because it was 100% Yellow Ribbon, and moreover …if they were going to pay 100 % to pursue an environmental science degree. Nobody else does that around here. That was pretty much a no brainer.”

Proactive marketing and advertisement of available resources, such as Yellow Ribbon status and university scholarship opportunities for veterans, were noted as important. Another veteran expressed appreciation for the availability of Yellow Ribbon funding.

When I was getting ready to retire I did a search pretty much because I was interested in becoming a counselor. So, I started looking at schools where I had the proper accreditation, and Yellow Ribbon was a big part of it for getting the best degree for my money. It was a combination of the VA office, the accreditation, and overall the positive people that sold me.
Additional financial support is a positive factor for both the institution and the veteran. One institutional representative mentioned,

   We receive $60,000 per year for scholarship needs at our school and each veteran student is eligible for up to $6000 in scholarship dollars. Students attending our university must show financial need to secure this funding. Having it available for these students is key in our show of support. The ability to offer it is even better. . . This is money that does not require repayment.

   Student veteran orientation. The transition process for veteran and military students to an academic setting was noted to be a challenge when support services and programs were not readily available. Therefore, effective programs and policies resembled the structure established in the military. Some of the members of the focus and interview groups appreciated having designated points of contact and programs in place to ease their transition. As one of the College B participants stated,

   In the beginning, not a lot was in place to cater to veterans but that has changed over the last 18 months. They are learning with us. The financial aid department is trying to make it easier. The first veterans’ orientation was held this past year. I think it is key to have veterans involved who already speak the veteran language universal.

   Green Zone. Faculty and Staff training referenced as Green Zone, was a phrase used to educate the faculty, staff, and community on the challenges faced by veteran students transitioning from the military to civilian life. The trainings could be administered campus wide or for specific departments. The desire was to engage faculty and staff to understand the needs of military students and established a climate where
veterans and military students had an internal support network of military friendly constituents. A participant from College B stated,

Green Zone training is huge. We discussed veterans’ issues and they even invited the campus community. I am very impressed with the faculty, they do a great job at working with veterans and have a common goal to see you be successful.

However, College A participant stated, “…that falls back to what we talked to at the beginning, advisors would have knowledge so they wouldn’t just tell you the problems with your case. They will actually know what your problems are and try to help you.”

Another participant shared,

If there were counselors on campus who were absolutely knowledgeable about those differences and what those different paths look like. And the different individual benefits that can be applied, that would be immensely helpful to a new student coming in who didn’t have any idea where his elbow was.

*Accessibility, education, and support.* Serving the needs of the veteran and military population in an educational setting was a challenge due to the broad spectrum of emerging needs within this demographic. Evidence supported the combination of one-on-one tutoring, mentoring, counseling and career advisement were areas for potential growth. When asked, “Is there a time when you want to be recognized as a college student as compared to a veteran student?” Many of the participants expressed a desire not to be labeled as a veteran. As one student stated, “The problem is we have to make that distinction in the first place. The challenge is being both we don’t need a veteran stamp on everything.” Another student echoed this sentiment by saying, “not necessarily, in most of my classes I have at least one vet but we don’t really converse…we are just
trying to get through it. We also don’t close ourselves down, we open up to the whole class.”

*One stop shop.* In several cases the veterans expressed the need for streamlined processes. Having established a centralized location where employees are cross-trained on the various needs of veteran students would reduce significant barriers for new recruits. As one of the participants stated,

> It is quite an obstacle, and it seems to me that somebody should become a little more educated on exactly what questions to ask a student. A lot of us are here in all different capacities and sometimes knowing these specific questions to ask is half the battle.

Two essential components of the enrollment management funnel are financial services and awarding of transfer credit. This was a hot topic among the veteran students and allies of this demographic as identified by College A administration. “Funding that can assist the veteran students with fees or tuition requirements that are not covered by the 9/11 G.I. Bill or another educational benefit is also important.” When discussing key factors to having veterans submit applications to attend your school, one administrator noted, “Another important point for the university is to offer flexible credits for prior education or related service.” Rethinking the traditional method of recruitment benefits both the institution and most of all the students by eliminating the risk of conflicting information, which ultimately affects retention.

*Faculty–student interaction.* When focus group participants were asked how long they have attended each institution and what factors have contributed to why they have stayed, it was evident that faculty-student interactions have tremendously impacted their decisions. One student shared,
I’ll tell you right now, based on my experience with [private institution], you couldn’t ask for a better school. From mentorship of the professors, to the VA office here, to the pro activeness of the recruiters who are going out talking to folks. I mean, we’re going to a private school that’s like $40,000 a year and our G.I. bill is going to cover half and Yellow Ribbon the other half. To me, you are not going to get that at any other school including [public institution]. I’ve been to other schools, and you’re just not going to get that kind of response like you get here. Hands down this is the best school. I think [private institution] as well as the veterans department here are the best hands down. I’ve been doing college since 1995, and it’s been a pleasurable experience.

Another student noted,

I can agree with you, I’ve been to three colleges, and [private institution] is separated from every other university I have seen so far. With the nature of the faculty and the staff, I definitely agree that we are able to focus a lot more on the academics. Yea, there are always going to be issues that you miss. Some of our military background might come into play on that, but we’re just going to steamroll over it and find the answer anyway. [Private institution] has been almost problem free for me when it comes to any issue I have come across.

When another private school’s veteran student was asked about the faculty – student interactions, she shared the following,

Something that was really important to me at [private institution] as well. I didn’t know that I could do Art and I only had been painting for three years. I’ve had amazing and incredible opportunity to where my artwork is featured on a beer can and box in store. It’s pretty exciting. But [private institution] recognized that
immediately and they wanted me to not only be recognized at the school but also at the community and they make a great, great effort in the Communication department to get the veteran, not only well known at [private institution] but also within the community and they really bring that aspect together. Not just limited to campus. That is something that is absolutely wonderful about them.

*Student veteran identities.* The private institution participants were very passionate about their veteran specific identity. When asked if there was a time when they wanted to be recognized as a college student as compared to a veteran student, one student recalled a conversation that she had recently,

> This is actually a conversation I just had with one of our veterans. She was only in for less than a year, she got injured I believe at boot camp. She showed up to our first meeting, but she didn’t show up again and I kept running into her. I asked “Why don’t you ever come?” and she said, “I don’t feel like a veteran, I don’t feel like I deserve that, I didn’t go overseas.” I brought that up at a meeting and everyone was just kind of like we need to see if there are other people out there that feel like that when people don’t want to be recognized or don’t feel like they are a veteran when they have a traumatic experience.

Another participant shared,

> For me, I am personally very proud of what I did, I absolutely loved serving and I wish I could still do it if I didn’t get injured. So, it’s not that I don’t want to be recognized just as a veteran, but that is part of who I am.

An additional participant addressed the challenge of doing both at the same time. “Being a veteran is more than just serving in combat and many of the participants felt that is was a part of who they had become.” He continued,
The problem is we have to make that distinction in the first place…we don’t need a veteran stamp on everything. This isn’t a veteran’s college, and there was a disconnection with the academic advisors. That’s critical. There’s a huge disconnect and getting credit for past courses is a DOD issue and there are vast inconsistencies that should be looked into a lot more carefully. I guess I’m torn because building these programs from the ground up is a good thing but the students who are in charge of these things and help with the development are not going to be students here indefinitely. They are not employed by the school. They do it voluntarily for nothing.

Public Institution Comparison

There were obvious similarities between the public institution and the private institutions serving veterans but there were also very distinct differences. Within the three primary themes, personnel and support services, institutional structures, and social and cultural supports, two had the greatest range of differences. These were personnel and support services and institutional structures. Cost and convenience were predominant characteristics associated with the selection of a public post-secondary institution. When these characteristics are coupled with a military rich community, traditional recruitment strategies did not appear to be as impactful. Veteran focus group participants shared word of mouth as being the most influential factor in determining which institution to select and attend.

The public institution’s quality of services rendered and the quantity of organizational supports were generally viewed as sufficient for the large veteran student population. The focus group participants shared that there were sufficient institutional supports in place. None of the participants expressed a desire to increase institutional
supports. However, they did share the importance of collaboration between the offices, streamlining the services, and having a centralized location. When asked if the institution had a designated point of contact, one participant shared the following, “Yes, there is a military student center, Office of Veteran Affairs, and a guy on post in the registrar’s office.” Another participant suggested, “It would be great to have a one stop shop set-up.”

**Personnel and support services and institutional structures.** Flexibility played a significant role in the success of veterans as they transitioned into post-secondary education. Students expressed concern regarding how transfer credits for prior professional and life experiences are evaluated. Students also shared a need for clarification on how institutions determine credit transfer. In the discussion, several of the participants compared who received the most credits transferred. One participant mentioned he received about 30 elective credits, “but only seven went to course work!” The number of credits mentioned by each participant ranged from 36, 42, 60, or more.

A blend of on-line course offerings, hybrid offerings, traditional face-to-face classes, and on post classes made enrollment an easier decision. Alternatively, having a rigid policy on class attendance and deployments would inhibit the institution in acquiring veteran students. A student expressed gratitude for having had various methods of instruction available during his tenure. This student used each of the before mentioned methods during his enrollment at the institution.

**Financial solutions.** Veterans who attended the public institution shared the significance of cost in their decision making. Ironically, when asked if Yellow Ribbon impacted their decision to attend the institution the majority of the participants asked in reply, “What is Yellow Ribbon?” One student remarked,
I work in the VA office as a student worker, so I know about this. I probably would not know if I did not work there. We only awarded Yellow Ribbon to five to six students because of funding. We are still working through this so the veterans can fully understand how to use the program. Not all of the military briefers fully understand how to advise the soldiers on how to use their benefits. I was not even fully advised.

Convenience, collaboration, and communication. One key aspect for the public institution participants was convenience. Each of the students spoke to having ease of accessibility as a tipping point in their decision-making. When asked why the participants chose this institution, four out of five participants included convenience in their response. A participant mentioned, “I am stationed at a nearby post and it’s a convenient location. Classes are available on post and main campus.” Another participant said, “The men in my unit told me about it. They said the school has a variety of offerings and a lot of class options. They also said the school would work with me if I was deployed.”

Effective collaboration and communication at the institution increased the value of the educational experience for the veteran student. The blending of these two factors has proven to increase the necessary support mechanisms for veteran and military students to be successful. According to one veteran student,

I know stories from other guys who were attending schools because of promises to graduate fast and on line options but the schools had no accreditation. This school has a great faculty and staff. I have bounced between two campuses and my paperwork has followed me without any hiccups. The people here do a great job and make miracles happen for their students.
Veteran orientation. The topic of veteran student orientation produced a wide range of responses. One student stated the following, “Freshman seminar does have a part that had veteran specific information and there were tables set up at the student information fair with information about vet success and military student center.” Another shared, “No, when I am here I just want to be known as a student.” These different experiences were reflective of the veteran student’s mixed wants in a perceived ideal orientation.

Green Zone training. Green Zone training is a new initiative. While the participant’s responses indicated faculty provided support for veteran students, there was an apparent lack of communication regarding the faculty Green Zone training initiative that was implemented in the summer 2015. Four out of five participants were not aware of the Green Zone program and that it was ongoing. A participant shared the following after being asked if the institution offered this training, “No, it might be nice to know that there had been some training.”

One stop shop. Many veterans expressed the desire to attend a public university but shared that it was difficult to navigate through the multitude of services and resources offered across campus. As evidenced in the focus group discussion, participants highlighted the need to eradicate the institutional silos that have naturally developed. A desire was expressed to have a centralized office and point of contact conveniently located for newly enrolled veterans. As mentioned previously, a participant suggested, “It would be great to have a one stop shop set-up.” The one stop shop model seemed to generate positive responses and would be helpful for this demographic.

Faculty-student interaction. The public institution participants stressed the importance of a school’s accreditation, reputation, and the connection between the faculty
and students. Often, it was the faculty who validated the students’ existing perceptions of the institution. One student specifically stated,

The school’s accreditation and reputation is very important to me. I know stories from others guys I served with who were attending schools because of promises to graduate fast and online options but the schools had no accreditation. This school has a great faculty and great staff. I have bounced between two campuses and my paper work has followed me without any hiccups. The people here do a great job and make miracles happen for their students. Another student noted, I’ve been here four years and I wanted to major in Computer Science. I have been able to add three concentrations with a data base information minor. The faculty played a big part in me getting this done.

Another student also shared his experience with a faculty member in their department during recruitment. He stated, “I researched the university by visiting campus and I asked the department chair if they were accredited. After visiting, I knew the faculty would be helpful.”

*Student veteran identities.* The public institution participants exhibited mixed emotions toward the concept of a veteran specific identity. When asked if there was a time when they wanted to be recognized as a college student as compared to a veteran student, many of the participants shared they did not feel the need to be identified as a veteran. One student stated, “I just want to be a regular student. I don’t want to have to relate to students about being a vet.” While another shared, “I only want to be recognized as a veteran when it comes to getting my benefits.” However, one student in particular noted, “I don’t really care but I noticed some professors are starting to list special accommodations for veteran students and … I feel the professors should know if nothing
else for safety concerns.” The conversation regarding identity prompted the student to discuss the importance of clarity when using military friendliness. He went on to say,

I would like to make a comment about the way people throw around military friendliness. What does this really mean? Anyone can say they are military friendly but we want to see what they are doing for veterans before being able to say you are military friendly.

**Summary**

This study was comprised of conducting a qualitative observational online review of the website content, survey instruments to key administrative leaders and veteran/military students, and conducting focus groups and phone interviews with veteran and military undergraduate students, which allowed the researchers to triangulate the data. The qualitative online review consisted of using the research from Dulchinos (2014) military friendliness characteristics to determine each schools level of friendliness through their online web presence. Each TICUA website was reviewed for the following characteristics:

1. Military friendly website
2. Veterans affairs office on campus
3. Veterans affairs coordinator
4. Yellow Ribbon designation
5. Veteran student organization on campus

Through the data collected from the EEVI and Van Dusen survey instruments, the researchers were able to determine each institutions military friendliness score. A quantitative analysis was used to compare the differences between Yellow Ribbon and non-Yellow Ribbon institutions on the total EEVI score. The military friendliness score
was then used to determine the students’ perception of a military friendly school as compared to a non-military friendly institutions from their total Van Dusen Institutional responses. The researchers were able to make a connection between each institutions’ perception of their practices and compare those perceptions to the actual views of the military and veteran students obtained through qualitative research methods.
Chapter V: Conclusions

This study used a mixed methods approach to research the best practices for recruitment and retention of military and veteran students for the Tennessee Independent Colleges and Universities Association. Three research questions were developed to provide additional insight on how the institutional practices impacted the overall college veteran educational experience. The study included both quantitative and qualitative analysis to determine if an institution’s military friendliness or Yellow Ribbon status had any lasting effect on a veteran student’s decision to enroll and persist. Chapter 5 will include a summary of the findings, review the results, connect the findings to prior research, share identified best practices, discuss the limitations of the study, and provide suggestions for further research.

Summary of the Research Study

On August 1, 2009, all American military personnel who served after the terrorist attack on September 11, 2001, became eligible for the Post 9/11 G. I. Bill. The intent of this newly created legislation was to encourage veterans to earn a college degree by fully funding tuition, books, and offsetting the cost of housing. Noting that Tennessee has experienced a 195% increase in total number of veterans attending post-secondary institutions (Newsroom & Media Center, 2014, p.5), Tennessee Independent College and University Association (TICUA) acknowledged this data. TICUA also recognized that veteran and military students are unique and have their own specific needs, as explained in the adult learning theory derived by Knowles (1950). TICUA questioned whether their member institutions were under-serving this population and anticipated recruitment and retention practices, that pertain to this demographic, may be more complicated than simply gaining the funding.
TICUA is committed to assisting independent private colleges and universities with advancing and improving their institutions. Because enrollment numbers are a vital part of the formula for a successful private institution, TICUA recognized that members of the military, veterans, and their dependents are a potential pool of enrollees. TICUA was interested in identifying effective strategies for attracting and retaining this population.

The purpose of this study was to identify the common challenges for transitioning veterans and/or military students, evaluate effective recruitment and retention strategies, and make recommendations on how TICUA institutions could become more appealing to the veteran and/or military student population. The study specifically focused on how TICUA member institutions could recruit and retain military and veteran students in their institutions throughout the state of Tennessee.

The literature review depicted several factors that made a direct correlation to the success of veteran and military students. These factors included, but were not limited to, the veteran and military student perceptions of military friendliness, best practices for recruitment and retention, andragogy theory, and veteran and military transition issues. Dulchinos (2014) identified and categorized factors contributing to military friendliness perception: cost, culture, collaboration, convenience, and caring characteristics (p. 4). He also reviewed what constituted as military friendly in relation to cost of the Post-911 G.I. Bill, and how a Yellow Ribbon Program designation can improve the perception of an institution’s military friendliness (p. 19 – 20). He explored other aspects of what constituted a military friendly institution, such as those institutions that also extend benefits to dependents and offer tuition assistance. Additionally, those institutions that offer either VA vocational rehabilitation and employment or VA retraining assistance
programs may also be deemed military friendly (Dulchinos, 2014, p. 21 – 23). These factors solidified the importance of implementing structured institutional policies and programs for this demographic.

Gomes’s (2014) research covered the most effective recruitment and retention strategies for veteran students. It supported Cass’s (2014) and Griffin and Gilbert’s (2012) findings on the same subject. Gomes (2014) polled approximately 150 institutions throughout the country to share their best strategies. Gomes’s (2014) top selections for supporting veterans, military students, and their families were:

- Have a one-stop shop for veterans by creating one office hub where student-vets can receive assistance.
- Designate military friendly staffers across the support and service units. This may include instructors who have prior military service that can serve as a mentor.
- Create a peer support group. Involve veteran and military students in focus groups.
- Offer military students a preliminary review before they are admitted.
- Offer small perks that demonstrate to the military students the institution’s commitment of caring for veterans. Some examples were free parking and priority registration.
- Build relationships with outside agencies to create a collaborative network of support. (Gomes, 2014, p. 5)

Institutions that have implemented the aforementioned practice(s) and programs have seen their enrollment of veterans and military dependents triple within a short time span. As evidenced by the practices implemented at Texas Tech, blending unique
programs and state led initiatives for veterans can position an institution to be one of the strongest military friendly universities. Therefore, it is imperative that these practices align with the characteristics of an adult learner.

Andragogy, as defined by Knowles (1950), was premised on his crucial assumptions about the characteristics of adult learners that differ from the assumptions about child learners. Knowles (1950) theorized that adults typically want to choose what they want to learn, when they want to learn it, and how they want to learn. Adults are able to contribute depth and richness to class discussions and are considered a valuable resource for peer learning and student engagement at the university level.

**Research Approach**

The researchers determined the best research approach would be a triangulation of methods. This consisted of conducting a qualitative observational online review of TICUA and a public institutions website content, sending out survey instruments to key administrative leaders and veteran/military students, and conducting focus groups and phone interviews with willing veteran and military undergraduate students.

The quantitative findings of the research were tested through conducting descriptive statistics examinations, comparative studies, and independent t-test analyses to determine the correlation between an institutions military friendliness. They also identified common challenges for transitioning veterans or military students, and effective recruitment and retention strategies.

**Research Question 1**

The research question, “What are the perceived best practices used by colleges and universities when comparing those that have been classified as TICUA Yellow Ribbon to those that self-classify as military friendly?” used two null hypotheses to
answer the question. Null Hypothesis 1 stated, “There is no statistically significant
difference between Yellow Ribbon TICUA institutions and non-Yellow Ribbon TICUA
institutions on their total Environmental Evaluation for Veterans Index (EEVI) score”
and was retained. After descriptive statistics were performed, the researchers retained
the null hypothesis because the null hypothesis did not find a statistically significant
difference between the groups. The researchers did not expect to compare 16
Yellow Ribbon designated schools to only one non-Yellow Ribbon school who did
not self-identify. The survey instrument did not require an institution to validate its
Yellow Ribbon designation. It is important to note that institutions may choose to
participate in the Yellow Ribbon program if additional funds can be made available for
the veterans education program without an additional charge to their G.I. Bill
entitlement. The researchers determined each institution’s military friendliness by the
mean score of 35.35. There were seven institutions that presented military friendly
characteristics with total “yes” scores ranging from 39-60. There were 10 schools whose
total “yes” scores ranged from 15-34 with the only non-Yellow Ribbon school score of
25.

The research was limited based on the number of participating institutions. Only
one school did not self-identify as Yellow Ribbon, which would not allow the
researchers to validate that there was no statistically significant difference between
Yellow Ribbon institutions and non-Yellow Ribbon institutions on their EEVI score.
However, a military friendliness mean score of 35.35 was determined based on the
institutional EEVI calculations. An interesting point of the research was that the survey
instrument did not provide Yellow Ribbon program criteria. The individual who
completed the survey responded based upon their perception of the institution.
Null Hypothesis 2 stated, “There is no statistically significant difference between military friendly Van Dusen student responses to non-military friendly veteran Van Dusen student responses” and was retained. This null hypothesis examined the student’s perception of their schools military friendliness by comparing student responses from the seven institutions that scored above the 35.35 mean (e.g. institutions who scored above the 35.35 mean from the EEVI instrument were considered military friendly) to student responses from the institutions deemed non-military friendly (e.g. institution scored at or below the 35.35 mean). The researchers retained Null Hypothesis 2 due to minimal difference between those students who were attending an institution deemed as military friendly when compared to the students who responded from an institution that was deemed not military friendly.

It is important to reflect on the initial research question regarding Yellow Ribbon institutions and military friendly institutions. The quantitative analysis compared the institutions with Yellow Ribbon designation to those who self-identified as military friendly. Institutions who had Yellow Ribbon funding available made a direct impact on the veteran students’ satisfaction of financial support. As evidenced by 63% of the veteran students who used Yellow Ribbon funding which indicated they were financially satisfied at their institution. The results suggested that financial satisfaction correlated to persistence and graduation intentions as evidenced by the 98% response rate. This indicated that retention of the veteran student is likely influenced by the satisfaction of aid from G.I. Bills and Yellow Ribbon funding. Equally important is the strong endorsement for institutions to become a Yellow Ribbon institution. This had positive bearing on veteran student recruitment and retention at all institutions of higher education. The need was especially stressed by student veterans attending TICUA
institutions where the G. I. Bills and military education aide may not cover all the finances needed for tuition and fees.

**Research Question 2**

The second research question, “What practices are appealing from a veteran or military student’s point of view when making a selection of a university?” identified institutional military friendly characteristics. As a student from a TICUA institution stated, “In the beginning, there wasn’t a lot in place to cater to veterans. But that has changed a lot in 18 months. They are learning with us. Financial aid department is trying to make it easier.” She continued to say,

I really would like to reiterate the fact that they made me feel comfortable to thrive. The faculty would be the best thing here. I don’t leave campus frustrated and I can believe they are one of the top schools…I have tried every day to show them it was a good decision.

There was sufficient evidence in the data to support the conclusion that military friendly and appealing practices can have a lasting effect on the veteran students’ perception of higher education. The EEVI portion of the EEVI and Van Dusen Institution instrument was used to answer the research question that related to, “What practice(s) are appealing from a veteran or military student’s point of view when making their selection of a university?” The needs of student veterans were evaluated based on whether institutions have implemented solutions and structures within the three categories of the EEVI: *Personnel and Support Services, Institutional Structures, and Social and Cultural*. Each of the overarching categories contained a range of subcategories and specific characteristics that can be used to evaluate an institution, noting for the purpose of this study the researchers tallied and used a total “yes” score
from all three categories. These measures were used to account for the availability of veteran-specific support structures and the quality of interactions between veterans, faculty, and fellow students.

There was no significant difference in the level of awareness from study groups when asked about the student veteran organization on campus. Thirty-three percent of the study group population indicated on the Van Dusen Student Questionnaire that they did not know about the student veteran organization, while 21% had no opinion, and 46% stated they had awareness. These data only spoke to awareness and not usage. It is important to note that typically the institution’s student veteran organization is student led and does not have faculty and staff involvement other than an assigned advisor. Increasing the advertisement of such services as well as providing professional development opportunities to the faculty and staff could increase the usage.

Upon examination of data on faculty and staff interaction, there was noteworthy evidence that supported the interaction of faculty and staff with the veteran students. The Van Dusen questionnaire revealed that the faculty showed strong respect for the veteran student population. This was a strong endorsement for veteran support and connection with faculty. Eighty-one percent responded that they felt respect from their faculty members. Sixty-eight percent of the participants indicated the veteran’s enrollment office staff treated them with respect. These relationships have strong influence on the adult veteran student success due to the adult learner connection. Additionally, the participants in the questionnaire shared that 81% believed it was not easy to make friends on campus or did not have an opinion about friends on campus. This indicated the veteran students were more similar to the non-traditional adult learner rather than the traditional college student.
There was a strong group identity within the veteran student population. Ninety-four percent indicated that being a member of the armed forces was a significant part of their identity. While not indicated on the questionnaire, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that the veteran student would benefit from cohort-based structure where peer friendships and class bonding with faculty had positive effects on their desire to persist.

Null Hypothesis 3 stated, “There is no statistically significant difference between military friendly TICUA institutions and non-military friendly TICUA institutions on their total Van Dusen Institution responses.” The researchers rejected the null hypothesis because of the significant difference on the total Van Dusen Institutional responses between military friendly institutions and the non-military friendly institutions. The analyses showed that there was a significant difference between the seven military friendly TICUA institutions when compared to the 10 institutions that scored below the 35.35 mean. There were seven TICUA institutions that scored above the 35.35 mean. Those institutions were University A (48), University C (52), College D (45), College E (60), University F (45), University G (48), and College H (39). The scores ranged from 39 to 60. The 35.35 mean was classified as military friendly indiscriminate of the Yellow Ribbon designation.

The EEVI portion of this instrument was an assessment tool designed by Griffin and Gilbert (2012) “to allow institutions to measure whether they have the services, policies, and sources of support necessary to assist returning veterans transitioning into higher education” (p. 2). The Van Dusen Institution portion of the questionnaire allowed the researchers to understand current member perceptions on programs, policies, and practices used to attract and retain veterans. Seventeen of the 31 member institutions
completed the EEVI and Van Dusen Institution survey, for an overall response rate of 58%.

Null Hypothesis 4, “There is no statistically significant relationship between Van Dusen Institution responses to veteran Van Dusen student responses”, was retained. The researchers performed a simple linear regression analysis.” The researchers speculated that an institution’s military friendly EEVI score should affect the veteran Van Dusen student responses. This finding was positive for TICUA institutions because it indicated that the schools that conscientiously implemented military friendly practices were directly influencing their student’s perceptions. The end result after using the continuous Van Dusen Institution and Van Dusen student variables showed a small impact, representing only a slightly positive relationship that was not enough to reject the null hypothesis. These two null hypotheses revealed that an institutional commitment requires a conscientious focus on veteran needs that includes establishing an environment that is supportive. As evidenced in the literature, a veteran students’ sense of belonging directly impacts their willingness to enroll. The institutions researched adopted a campus culture of being military friendly and have proven to recruit and retain students on this premise. While Yellow Ribbon designation and military friendly status do have significant impact on veteran student enrollment, it should be duly noted that being deemed military friendly is important to the veteran population.

**Research Question 3**

The third research question was, “What factor(s) contribute to the veteran student’s decision to persist at an institution of higher education?” used the Van Dusen student questionnaire, focus group, and phone interview responses. Overall, there are multiple factors that determines a students’ intent to persist at an institution. The decision
is contingent on many interrelated factors that were discovered and supported within the quantitative and qualitative research methods. Retention and persistence results from the Van Dusen student questionnaire indicated that the vast majority of the study group participants are likely to be retained at their current institution and persist until graduation.

The qualitative dominant themes obtained from the EEVI were Personnel and Support Services, Institutional Structures, and Social and Cultural Support. The private institutional sub-themes that emerged were: web presence, financial solutions, student veteran orientations, green zone training, accessibility, educational and support, and one stop shop. The public institution sub-themes included: financial solutions, convenience, collaboration and communication, veteran orientation, green zone training and one stop shop.

In both the private and public institutions, a strong web-presence was important in the initial selection and decision making for the military and veteran student population to enroll at a given institution. For those students who are geographically located in a military community, word of mouth followed by location and/or varied instructional methods aided in the convenience factor, all worthy initiatives to consider beyond the geographical site. A blend of on-line course and hybrid instructional solutions, traditional face-to-face classes, and on post classes can make the enrollment decision easier for the military and veteran student population. As noted earlier, institutions with a rigid policy on class attendance and who lack deployment policies may not be as appealing to this population. Several students mentioned they were grateful for the diverse instructional methods offered at the various institutions they were attending.
Both the private and public focus group participants expressed that institutions of higher education should consider a one stop shop approach to further aid in providing support. A one stop shop does not stop with having well-trained faculty and staff, but also should incorporate all aspects of support that a military or veteran student may need within a centralized location as opposed to decentralized locations. The findings noted the discrepancies with regards to veteran student awareness of various services and supports that were offered, a few examples mentioned related to disability services and career counseling. A one stop shop needs to be inclusive of everything—military experience credit assessment programs, financial support services that offer flexible solutions while awaiting the GI Bill benefit payment, varied counseling and other well-advertised supportive services. All of these aforementioned supports must start with having an institution that employs well trained, educated, supportive faculty and staff to ensure that effective and efficient interactions consistently occur between these groups.

**Relation of Findings to Previous Research**

The EEVI had 23 measures within the *Personnel and Support Services* category that were used to capture the extent to which an institution had resources in place to meet the needs of the student veterans. The review of literature (DiRamio & Jarvis, 2011; Dulchinos, 2014; Gomes, 2014, Tinto 2006; Van Dusen, 2011) and evidence obtained from the focus group and phone interview participants supported veteran students identify with assistance programs that include military and veterans affairs offices, tuition assistance programs, military vocational and employment assistance programs and veteran admissions programs. For the veteran students to enroll and persist until graduation they need to feel a sense of comfort and belonging on the institution’s campus. When these results were reviewed and compared to the Van Dusen student
responses, the results related to campus involvement revealed veteran students are similar to the non-traditional adult learner rather than the traditional college student.

Recognizing that veteran students are unique with varied experiences and needs is key for institutions who wish to increase their military and veteran student enrollment numbers.

The *Institutional Structures* category within the EEVI included 31 measures that assessed the extent to which an institution has developed campus policies and procedures that related to administering veterans’ information, benefits, and services within that category. Attention to financial aid and G.I. Bill processing, redeployment policies, transfer-credit evaluation, and flexible course-enrollment options are extremely important factors that are critical in recruitment and retention efforts. The research highlighted in the review of literature by Dulchinos (2014), Griffen & Gilbert (2012), and Gomes (2014) and the focus group and phone interview responses strengthened this factor.

The *Social and Cultural Support* category within the EEVI included 15 measures to assess institutional attitudes, values, and behaviors with regards to veteran students. These measures were used to account for the availability of veteran-specific support structures and the quality of interactions between veterans, faculty, and fellow students. Gomes (2014) identified strategies and/or services that would fit within *Social and Cultural Support* category/construct that was of importance and correlated with prior research. Such veteran-specific support structures noted by Gomes (2014) are critical when considering how an institution can demonstrate its support of veterans. Those factors were:

- Create a peer support group, involve veterans and military students in focus groups.
- Offer military students preliminary review before they are admitted.
• Offer small perks that show military students the institution cares. Some examples were free parking, priority registration.

• Build relationships with outside agencies to create a collaborative network of support. (Gomes, 2014, p. 5)

Texas Tech has also demonstrated many of the aforementioned practices and programs both from an *Institutional Structures* and *Social and Cultural Support* context (R. Van Dusen, personal communication, September 4, 2014). According to the September 4, 2015 USA Today article highlighted in the Texas Tech website, it was ranked the number seven college out of the top 10 colleges in the US for veterans. Texas Tech has also been recognized as the first Purple Heart University in Texas. Military friendly programs and practices that have helped Texas Tech increase their enrollment and notoriety include family friendly programs such as, a military appreciation tailgate and football game as well a food and family night. Texas Tech also supplements their military and state funding with numerous events that include a tribute concert, a 5K run, and a golf tournament.

**Initial connections.** After dissecting the perceived best practices of the military and veteran population, there were distinctive components that rose to the top during the course of the research. The researchers began with a qualitative observational online document review and imagined themselves as a veteran seeking to enroll at a TICUA member institution. Each researcher perused the respective websites with the goal to find institutions who would offer the most services and/or supports for a military or veteran student. The initial results revealed unknown weaknesses within the institutional marketing and advertising structure. Consequently, the researchers were able to make a direct correlation to each institution’s online perception of military friendliness and the
veteran student’s perception of military friendliness at their respective institutions through both the quantitative and qualitative findings.

The weaknesses found during the online observational review were prevalent once the researchers triangulated the methods and analyzed the findings. The impact of an effective and consistent communication and branding strategy for the veteran student population can be associated with the student’s intent to enroll and persist toward graduation. Prior research neglected to identify this characteristic as a key factor in the recruitment and retention practices for this demographic.

Proactive marketing and advertisement of available resources, such as Yellow Ribbon status and university scholarship opportunities for veterans, were noted as important. Grandillo (n.d.) remarked that, “Effective institutional recruiting activities aimed at attracting students indicated that academic reputation and costs were the most influential factors in choosing to apply and enroll”. Additionally, institutions with the Yellow Ribbon designation should ensure there is a clear understanding of what that designation means to a veteran and/or military student seeking to enroll at an institution of higher education. The Yellow Ribbon designation, when appropriately marketed, highlights an institution’s commitment to provide additional supplemental funding assistance to military and veteran students who may need additional funds beyond their Post 9/11 benefit.

Subsequently, the same marketing strategy could be used to target veteran dependents that are also eligible to use the Post 9/11 Education bill. The researchers found that veteran students can name dependents as full or partial beneficiaries. As evidenced by the qualitative findings, veterans and their dependents are interested in maximizing the educational benefits earned for their service and cost is a vital part of
deciding where to enroll. As the Governor’s Veterans Education Task Force (2014) presented in August, having a comprehensive veteran web portal is a critical prong for higher education institutions to consider that will help direct veterans with their educational path. Convenience is also a key factor for institutions to consider in their marketing strategy, especially when an institution’s location is geographically located in the presence of a military community comprised of active duty military members, veterans, and their families.

**Research question connections.** The study not only helped the researchers understand the Yellow Ribbon designation but also clarified the term military friendly indiscriminate of an institution’s Yellow Ribbon designation. The Dulchinos (2014) study on student perceptions of military friendliness was a pivotal component in the groundwork for this study. Dulchinos provided specific measurable outcomes that both helped quantify and qualify the term, military friendly. Dulchinos (2014) summarized factors that contributed to military friendliness along the dimensions of cost, culture, collaboration, convenience, and caring characteristics (p. 34). These factors contributed to military or veteran student’s positive affirmations and ultimately revealed some of the cornerstones of effective recruitment and retention strategies for this population (p. 4). Previous studies had not correlated these variables with veteran perceptions of military friendliness. The researchers were able to make inferences based on Dulchinos’ research and the perceptions of the students interviewed, as evidenced by the researcher’s findings.

Of importance to our study was the Environmental Evaluation for Veterans Index (EEVI) introduced by Dulchinos. The EEVI portion of the EEVI and Van Dusen Institution instrument was an assessment tool designed by Griffin and Gilbert (2012) “to
allow institutions to measure whether they have the services, policies, and sources of support necessary to assist returning veterans transitioning into higher education” (p. 2). The needs of student veterans were evaluated based on whether institutions have implemented solutions and structures within the three categories of the EEVI: Personnel and Support Services, Institutional Structures, and Social and Cultural. While Dulchinos’ factors were insightful, the researchers used the EEVI in their quantitative assessment to answer their research questions. The EEVI allowed the researchers to benchmark participating TICUA institutions then compare and contrast those institutions on military friendly characteristics. The data extrapolated from the instrument also allowed the researchers to use the three categories, Personnel and Support Services, Institutional Structures, and Social and Cultural to categorize their results. 

According to Dulchinos (2014), military friendly collaboration normally involves the establishment of partnerships with the VA and department of defense (DOD) agencies that are normally documented in an MOU (p. 7). He continued with, “The institutional practices are operationalized efforts that demonstrate a shared responsibility in promoting the overall success of military and veteran students” (p.17). “An observed direct correlation existed between the number of enrolled veterans as compared to the programs and activities offered for veterans” (DiRamio & Jarvis, 2011, p. 100).

Furthermore, the importance of faculty and staff training for veterans and the implementation of Student Veteran Organizations (SVO) has been recognized by President Obama as well as the governors of Texas and Tennessee. As noted in the findings and emphasized by Griffin and Gilbert (2012), the result of institution wide committees, student groups, training for faculty and staff, mentoring programs, and
technical standards for course work that recognized and took into consideration the needs of veterans all aid in improved recruitment and retention efforts (p. 8).

Research enacted. In March of 2014, the State of Tennessee sponsored a “Drive to 55” Tennessee Veteran Education Task Force Summit (2014). Dignitaries who attended this conference included university presidents; United States Army representatives, veterans, and other special guests. During the conference, the Governor announced the outcomes of the Veteran Education Task Force's work. He stated that “Student Veteran Organizations should be established on every campus to ensure proper success of student veterans” (Newsroom & Media Center, 2014). This action was considered a necessity when identifying effective best practices during the transition process. As mentioned above, it is key to have veterans available to speak the same language. Haslam also established a $1,000,000 grant for universities and colleges to use toward the establishment of a veteran preferred campus. As of the fall 2015, several TICUA member institutions highlighted in this study applied and are now grant recipients. Considering when this study was initiated in the summer of 2014, it is apparent that some institutions of higher education are committed to improving their appeal to the military and veteran student population. DiRamio and Jarvis (2011) shared,

These students are neither overly needy nor disgruntled; they simply need assistance in getting started, and once set on a positive path or trajectory for success, their maturity, discipline, and initiative will lead them to personal accomplishments and academic achievement. ( p. 17)

Of importance to this study and the findings that relate to institutional structures, Miller-Brown (2002) stated, “Institutions of higher education must provide flexibility in services provided to students. For example, online course registration, one stop
enrollment centers and financial aid counselors familiar with non-traditional student issues can positively contribute to student satisfaction” (Miller-Brown, 2002; Van Dusen, 2011, p. 34). In an effort for institutions to embrace a student-centered approach, institutions who have adopted a technologically rich platform that includes current and accurate web presence will also have an improved perception of military friendly characteristics. Those institutions with a focus centered on embracing the military and/or veteran student needs and who are cognizant of the need to efficiently use time over institutional functions are more appealing to this population.

Tinto (1998) shared, “Commitment to the institutions, commitment to goals, and integration with campus environment would be the best predictors of student retention” (p.125). Coupling this with a highly structured environment, which mirrors their prior or existing military structure, will enable military and veteran students a smooth transition into higher education. These qualities directly related to Dulchinos’ study on military friendliness culture. Additionally, the Tennessee Governor’s Veterans Education Task force (2014) also shared that it is the first two semesters that are the most critical to the transitional stage from service member to student veteran (p. 5). These characteristics were discussed within the theme, Personnel and Support Services, and were further flushed out within the sub-themes found within the qualitative data.

**Quantitative summarizations.** In summarizing the quantitative findings it is important to reflect back to the initial research question regarding Yellow Ribbon institutions and military friendly institutions. The quantitative analysis compared the institutions that are classified as Yellow Ribbon to those who self-identify as military friendly. A review of the literature revealed that the label military friendly entails specific measurable outcomes desired by the veteran student. Dulchinos (2014) summarized the
factors that contributed to military friendliness along the dimensions of cost, culture, collaboration, convenience, and caring characteristics (p. 34). Previous studies had not correlated these variables with veteran perceptions of friendliness.

**Qualitative summarizations.** In summarizing the qualitative findings, the researchers gained insight to the thoughts of student veterans in both private settings and a public setting. The researchers used the feedback from military and veteran students to identify emerging themes to answer the third research question, what factor(s) contributed to the veteran student’s decision to persist at an institution of higher education? Having conducted two focus groups, one at a private Middle Tennessee TICUA institution and one at a public Middle Tennessee institution, and phone interviews with an East Tennessee TICUA institution, common themes emerged.

The three dominant themes that emerged were categorized into personnel and support services offered, institutional structures, and social and cultural support categories. The private institutional sub-themes that developed included: web presence, financial solutions, student veteran orientations, Green Zone training, accessibility, education and support, one stop shop, faculty-student interaction, and student veteran identities. The public institution sub-themes included: financial solutions, convenience, collaboration and communication, veteran orientation, Green Zone training, one stop shop, faculty-student interaction, and student veteran identities. The researchers compared and contrasted the themes for the TICUA institutions and for the public institution. Both revealed policies and practices that correlated to this study’s findings from the qualitative observational online document review and quantitative data analysis.

As stated by Van Dusen (2011), “In order to more effectively contribute to the overall success of student veterans, institutions of higher education must establish policy
and programs that better serve the needs of student veterans.” Both private and public institutions were reported to have positive gains in this area by the interviewed students.

However, disability services can be an area of ambiguity. While veteran students may need services in this area, the accompanying label may deter their willingness to accept the available services. Colleges and universities had greater success attracting veterans who may have needed academic accommodations or other assistance by using a title other than disability services. With deployments occurring for over two decades, the military has seen an increased need for support in the areas of both physical and mental health. Alternate names or titles which could substitute for disability services are *Education Support Services* or *Center for Accessibility.* “The importance of understanding the various support services available to military and veteran students and the associated referral processes for assessing those services” (APSCU, 2013).

As noted in studies on non-traditional students, time for class and studies must be carved out of an already busy life. Knowles (1950) theorized, “Adults typically want to choose what they want to learn, when they want to learn it, and how they want to learn.” As one student stated, “They said the school had a variety of offerings and a lot of class options. They also said the school would work with me if I was deployed.” For the veteran student, classes listed as only five weeks in length are preferable for those who are facing training schedules or deployments. In addition, hybrid course work provides students the flexibility to complete assignments online when training or deployed.

Continuing with the theme of support being essential, the qualitative findings highlighted an efficient consortium of services as keeping the best interest of the veteran student. This was also a student centered model and from a student perspective was considered simple (Fleming, 2013). Gomes (2014) reported the most effective
recruitment and retention strategies for veteran students that supported Cass’s (2014) and Griffin and Gilbert (2012) findings included “have a one stop shop for veterans creating one office where student vets can receive assistance with designated military staffers across service units” (Gomes, 2014, p. 5).

In summary, institutions of higher education, and specifically TICUA member institutions, will benefit from partnering with veteran students to establish programs, services, and traditions that connect the veteran student to the campus culture. These processes will be an individualized recipe for institutional success. There is great importance in recognizing that key investments by the institution in products and services will assist the institutions in recruitment and retention efforts. These investments also come in the form of exceptional experiences with the faculty, flexibility in course offerings, and maximizing the resources available for this demographic as evidenced by our study and prior research (DiRamio & Jarvis, 2011; Dulchinos 2014; Griffen & Gilbert, 2012; Gomes, 2014, and Van Dusen, 2011).

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, the designation of Yellow Ribbon was significant but did not weigh as heavily on the veteran’s decision to enroll as compared to the designation of military friendly. The veteran student’s view of the institution were not affected by a Yellow Ribbon or non-Yellow Ribbon status. Some of the factors that contributed to the irrelevance of the Yellow Ribbon designation could be due to the lack of knowledge about the Yellow Ribbon program and the depth of marketing and advertising of the program. There is evidence that institutions need to employ a more robust educational plan or training on what the program entails and how to utilize funds.
Continuing with the same theme, the findings showed there were minimal differences between the student’s perception of military friendly institutions and non-military friendly institutions. The researchers concluded that the term military friendly does not carry the same meaning for all veteran students. This confusion originates from a larger context than just the participants of this study. From the literature review, the researchers found that a nationally recognized clear and concise rubric defining and outlining the goals and objectives that an institution must meet or exceed to be deemed military friendly was needed. However, the state of Tennessee has made great strides in identifying the initial best practices for veterans, while challenging institutions to develop their version of a military friendly campus culture. This approach was not so rigid that it eliminated campus individualism and unique traditions.

According to the institutional responses, there was a significant difference between the military friendly institution responses and non-military friendly institutional responses. The researchers felt it was important to note that the population answering the survey instrument were employed in positions that worked directly with veteran students. The findings demonstrated that the military friendly institutions were training personnel adequately on services, policies and practices related to the veteran demographic. Conversely, non-military friendly institutions survey responses did not prominently indicate the veteran students’ needs as a priority.

The research regarding the Van Dusen institutional responses as compared to the Van Dusen student responses indicated that the schools that conscientiously implemented military friendly practices were slightly influencing their students’ perceptions at an institution. As evidenced in the literature, an institution’s efforts to create an environment where the student has a sense of belonging would directly impact their willingness to
enroll. The researchers believed that a longitudinal study could provide results that would indicate how these efforts impact the retention of this demographic. According to Van Dusen (2011), “The challenge is to create an environment that is welcoming and contributes a holistic development for the student veterans who attend the institution” (p. 124). He goes on further to say,

Being a veteran friendly campus involves an institutional commitment to create an environment where student veterans are welcomed by all members of the campus community and their success both inside and outside the classroom is a priority of all members of the campus community. (p. 125)

Additionally, the researchers concluded that a variety of factors contributed to the veteran students’ connection to the institution. The researchers found the need for equal distribution of effort by the institution in Personnel and Support Services, Institutional Structures, and Social and Cultural Support. Each of these three dominant themes have valuable impact on a veteran students’ decision to remain at their institution. After completing the qualitative review the researchers were able to conclude that institutions must be delivering a consistent message online and on campus. Failure to do so would damage the credibility of the institution with the veteran student. Convenience was another reoccurring theme within the focus groups findings. The researchers found that veteran students were less likely to persist when the programs and practices were ineffective, inefficient, and inconsistent. These disruptions may have caused students to lose focus and question their original intent.

Each of the aforementioned findings are attainable when an institution’s priorities mirrors the military students’ needs. This can be accomplished by re-evaluating their traditional recruiting practices for specific populations, identifying strategic goals
regarding this population, and positioning a visionary leader with military familiarity in a key administrative position.

**Recommendations**

The results of this study revealed practices that would be helpful to other colleges and universities that are interested in improving and increasing their recruitment and retention of veterans. The research study findings identified several principle points for universities and colleges to consider. The following recommendations have been deemed as best practices used to improve recruitment and retention of the military and veteran student demographic.

**Recommendation 1: Maximizing and Prioritizing Web Presence.** In a time where many use technology to further distance and define their organizations, institutions of higher education should place emphasis on creating professional and accurate websites. Many veterans have held jobs that have provided them with ample experience and a high level of comfort with the use of technology. Private and public school participants initially based their perceptions of a given institution on the university or college website. Additionally many veteran students have expressed technology has helped them maximize their educational experiences as evidenced by their use of various methods of instruction. State support for an improved institutional web presence was established with the Governor’s Veteran Education Task Force. One of the recommendations included the creation of a comprehensive veteran web portal as a point of action that would aid in recruiting the veteran population to Tennessee institutions.

**Recommendation 2: Conduct an Institutional Assessment.** All TICUA member institutions wanting to evaluate and assess the institution’s military friendliness should conduct an annual institutional self-assessment related to student veterans and higher
education. An instrument such as the Environmental Evaluation Veterans Index (EEVI) may be used as a measurement tool to chart improvements and/or pinpoint areas for improvement. An annual self-assessment will allow institutions to adequately assess targeted continuous improvement for veterans.

**Recommendation 3: Implement Green Zone faculty and staff training initiatives to increase awareness.** The non-traditional student highly values the relationship and expertise of their instructors. Therefore, in an effort to build rapport, administration and faculty should work to create meaningful personalized, interactions that build trust, confidence, and loyalty. Institutions desiring to improve faculty and student interaction should reflect on the theories presented by Knowles and Tinto.

According to Knowles, adults learn differently than children or even traditional college age students. There are crucial assumptions, or characteristics, (e.g. self-concept, experience, readiness to learn, orientation to learning, motivation to learn, and need to know), that must be considered with the veteran student population. Tinto added to what Knowles premised about adult learning and asserted that students need to integrate academically and socially into the institution in order to fully commit.

Given the assumptions presented by Knowles and Tinto, veteran students with their varied life experiences are even more diverse than the typical non-traditional student. In an effort to serve this unique population, there needs to be an institutional commitment and environment that supports this population. Institutions should consider Green Zone training initiatives for faculty and staff to promote a supportive environment for veterans. This commitment should not be a perception, but demonstrated by having the appropriate structures, policies, and supports in place. Veteran and military students
shared that positive faculty/staff and student interactions were directly related to their persistence at a given institution.

**Recommendation 4: Record enrollment and track retention.** The first suggestion is to recognize the importance of key investments in products and services that will assist the institution in recruitment and retention. Identifying software that assists in maintaining accurate and efficient tracking mechanisms of enrolled military and veteran students is critical for improved enrollment and persistence efforts. It is also imperative for active duty military members and veterans to be accounted for when institutions are reporting to state and federal agencies. This could produce additional public recognition and grant funding, and also provide data to meet the objectives of the Governor’s “Drive to 55” initiative.

**Recommendation 5: Financial Advisement and Transparency.** Institutions of higher education, specifically TICUA institutions, will benefit from offering one on one financial advisement for veterans on maximizing the use of their educational benefits. Each educational benefit award varies depending upon the veterans individualized years of service, combat duties, disabilities, and financial preferences. Finance personnel at the college or university need to be more transparent when it comes to advising the veteran student on the best use of their educational benefit. Veteran students who understand the specifics related to their educational benefit options will make informed decisions about their academic progress and future goals. In order to improve recruitment and retention efforts, it is vital for TICUA member institutions to educate veteran and military service members on how to effectively maximize this gift from the nation. This initiative will require departmental faculty and staff to be cross-trained on different skills and tasks related to serving veteran and military students.
**Recommendation 6: Clarify Yellow Ribbon Designation.** Institutions need to clarify the Yellow Ribbon designation. While conducting research it was found that many participants were not aware of what the institutional Yellow Ribbon designation meant. The veteran students did not realize that such status is representative that the school offers supplementary financial benefits. Veteran and military service members may be more inclined to explore enrollment opportunities at private institutions when they know how such a designation can benefit them. TICUA member institutions must clearly market and advertise the Yellow Ribbon designation.

**Recommendation 7: Prioritize Policies for Veterans.** Institutions of higher education should place a priority on developing veteran specific policies, adopting these policies, and then promoting the new policies. Examples of this would include consistent award of credit for veteran experience or transfer hours and no penalty for class absences due to deployments or training exercises. Participants in the veteran focus groups shared these as features that determine their college recruitment and retention. When discussing key factors related to recruitment initiatives, an administrator noted, “An important point for the university is to offer flexible credits for prior education or related service.”

**Recommendation 8: Develop Programs that are Veteran Specific.** Develop programs within the institutions that assist veterans with easing the transition from a military environment to an academic setting. Having course delivery options built into programs will assist veterans with their demanding and unpredictable schedules. The student participants identified hybrid course instruction or blended traditional classroom instruction and online as the preferred method of class instruction.
Recommendation 9: *Add and Promote Veteran Resources.* It is important for institutions to rethink the traditional method of recruitment for this demographic of students. Institutions of higher education will benefit by providing potential veteran and military service members resources that dispense relevant information. Specifically, looking at areas related to funding and financial aid options, assessment of degree requirements, time line of funding, and other important institutional policies that support the unique needs of the veteran population. As one of the participants stated, …

Immediately as I walked in people were willing to help and as soon as they found out I was a veteran they were ready to point me in the right direction of what I needed to do veteran specific to get my Chapter 33. Everything at College B just felt right. There was never a single point in my educational career where I felt I made the wrong decision going to College B.

Recommendation 10: *Streamline Processes.* Establish an Academic Skills and Knowledge (ASK) Center and/or streamline institutional processes. The ASK Center could include an online web presence throughout the week in the form of live chats, text messaging, and virtual recruitment via skype meetings in addition to the open door policy for students to speak with faculty and staff. In order to effectively accommodate the non-traditional veteran student population, it is imperative to have academic support sessions as well as counseling and mentorship from fellow servicemen and women available. The staff in the center would include knowledgeable faculty, staff and veteran students who were trained to discuss financial options, common transition questions and career advisement (online assessments) for veteran and military students.

Having a centralized location for veteran students to complete the necessary enrollment requirements would eliminate time loss, confusion, and possible frustration
for the veteran student. Higher education employees should be cross-trained on the processing needs of veterans to reduce the number of obstacles that may deter a veteran from enrolling or persisting at a given institution. This initiative could be accomplished with the transition to an Academic, Skills and Knowledge (ASK) Center. As one of the participants stated,

It is quite an obstacle, and it seems to me that somebody should become a little more educated on exactly what questions to ask a student. A lot of us are here in all different capacities and sometimes knowing these specific questions to ask is half the battle.

When considering the veteran and military student voices, institutions should carefully craft and outline a well-thought out process management approach that would emulate the efficient processes already experienced during their military service.

**Recommendation 11: Visionary Leadership.** As with any strategic initiative in a higher educational institutional setting, visionary leadership at the executive level is critical to the advancement of the institution. Designating a key administrator who is responsible for building a knowledgeable team that can appropriately serve and support this demographic demonstrates institutional commitment. Additionally, having an administrative team with prior military experiences is extremely important to this population.

Consideration of the above recommendations as they relate to each TICUA member institution is the first step in improving an institution’s recruitment and retention efforts. The implementation of the recommendations should include a careful and collaborative plan that involves all stakeholders. As with any change initiative, analysis and feedback must be included within this plan and there needs to be an institutional
commitment that starts with the leadership. After the recommendations have been implemented, ongoing feedback on the effectiveness of changes should be tracked and shared on an annual basis with TICUA.

**Limitations of the Study**

There are several limitations to this study that are significant to the research conducted.

First, the target population for the study included veterans and/or active duty military service members. The researchers found there was not enough female representation in their population sampled.

Second, the researchers fully anticipated the response from the invitation to participate in the study would be accepted. However, there was a low participation and limited feedback from key administrators. The minimal participation at the administration level seemed to have influenced the participation from the student group.

Third, during the investigation of Null Hypothesis 1 the researchers did not anticipate having all of the institutions self-identify as Yellow Ribbon. This conclusion was drawn because of the results from the online observational review process. The websites failed to promote the institutions designation of Yellow Ribbon.

A final limitation to the study is its use of student perceptions and retrospective recollection of events. Veteran and military students often bring a wealth of experience into the institutional setting. Therefore, when asked to reconstruct a history of events, their importance may be skewed and not totally reflect reality. This limitation is not unusual in research but must be noted.
Recommendations for Further Research

This study has provided research that is relative to Tennessee Independent Colleges and Universities Association. These findings were only specific to this state and TICUA member institutions. While the research has provided accurate and relevant information for improvement within this demographic of students and institutions, the data findings are not necessarily valid for implementation in all regions and areas. There is a concentrated focus on veterans and the use of their educational benefits but there is a relatively small amount of attention being given to the spouses and children. Veterans have the option of gifting their educational benefits to their dependents, typically a spouse or children, if they do not need or want to use the funds. A limited amount of information has been collected on this subject. Therefore, it would be beneficial for researchers to conduct a study on the effective recruitment strategies targeted toward these sub groups.

A greater understanding of the cycle of student veterans from recruitment, to graduation, to the workforce would add to the body of knowledge available on student veteran outcomes. In addition, the researchers could look beyond recruitment and retention and explore the factors in decision making for veteran students, who do not elect to use all of their benefits and depart from higher education to join the workforce.

Reflections

In addition to the reported findings, the researchers individually noted their own observations and reflections regarding their entire research experience. The following paragraphs will provide brief observations and reflections from each of the researchers.

Kay Drew. This has been a thought provoking and rewarding research project. For me, the strengths of the study included having the opportunity to contribute to the
existing research on higher education as well as provide potential solutions to help
veteran students maximize the opportunities of higher education. After examining our
survey results and listening to the focus groups, we gained valuable insights into ways
colleges and universities could enhance their existing support and services and ultimately
increase the veteran population attending their school.

It was interesting to observe the veteran students as they participated in our
discussions. They were engaging and forthright in their comments and their inclusion in
our research was vital to drawing the proper conclusions from the data collected on the
surveys. It became obvious during our discussions that veteran students were most
comfortable in a predictable environment where programs and policies were established
and used consistently. This mirrored their professional military experience where day-to-
day activities are strongly regimented. This type of predictability tended to ease the
transition from military service to that of a college student.

As the spouse of an active duty military officer, I have a special interest in the
success of veteran students. I know firsthand how much they have sacrificed by
volunteering to serve in the military and want to find ways to set the conditions for their
success. Our research study reinforced that there exists a need for added understanding on
the part of colleges and universities for the professional and life experiences of these
veteran students. Currently on most campuses, the veteran students must adhere to the
rigidity of the curriculum requirements regardless of their prior credits at other
institutions or special course work they successfully completed during their service to our
country. One of my conclusions from our research is that it would be beneficial for both
the students and the institution if programs were established to help college
administrators gain a stronger understanding of the military profession. A better
understanding of the background of veteran students would enable administrators to
develop programs and services that would better match the support needed by the
veterans.

I see the key point is having a commitment from the institution to create an
environment that is dedicated to the success of veteran students. This is military friendly.
Once they have the sense of belonging and are comfortable in their new environment
there will be increased recruitment and retention of these honorable men and women.

**Daphne Molnar.** I have taken some time to pause and reflect on the capstone
project and will share two personal observations. First, the theoretical constructs used in
this research, especially the assumptions from andragogy theory, are critical components
for institutions to consider as it relates to retention and matriculation efforts. Adults,
especially the military and veteran student population, would like to have their prior
learning experiences respected in the context of credit acquisition. The topic of respect
for prior learning experiences presented itself during a focus group discussion when
members shared service-learning credit requirements. After listening to what service-
learning credits were, it was apparent to me that these individuals know the importance of
serving, as they have all served our country to protect our freedoms and liberties, and
should be exempted from such requisites. This was a clear example of how difficult it
can be to award credit for prior learning experiences, and when the prior learning
experience is not fully acknowledged by the institution, it can be detrimental to both
recruitment and retention.

Second, what it means for an institution to be military friendly is not always
synonymous with the institution’s actual culture. Throughout the literature review it was
apparent that military friendly is a term that is open to interpretation and can change
contextually. My personal perception of what it means to be military friendly has also changed from what was initially defined in Chapter 1. For me, I now believe military friendly should be the sum of an institution’s action that is reflected in the cultural commitment toward the military and veteran student population. This commitment should not be a perception, but instead a reality that is demonstrated by having the appropriate structures, policies, and supports in place to serve the noble men and women who have served our country.

**Ashlee Spearman.** One of the highlights of this research study was being able to synthesize the data and reflect on the findings which caused me to reflect on my own practices as a professional, an educator and person. Throughout this project I became keenly aware of my own strengths and shortfalls. I am forever indebted to the service men and women who allowed us to pry into their personal feelings, lives, and educational backgrounds. Thus affording us the opportunity to enhance existing research on the veteran student recruitment and retention practices within post-secondary education.

As a higher education administrator who started out as an admissions recruiter for the non-traditional student population, I was quickly able to re-count the preexisting barriers associated with the veteran and military population. Yet, I seemed to be somewhat disconnected from the basic essentials of this demographic population. For me, the qualitative research findings were unequivocally the most impactful to the research. As a result of the subjects’ insights, we were able to broaden our scope of vision and uncover new connections to the research that have the potential to impact support services and institutional structures within private and public institutions.
I am honored to have worked with a research team that had the grit and tenacity to push through when times were tough. We were able to produce a body of research that I can be proud of for years to come.
References

Colleges and Universities that participated in this study have anonymity. Any references regarding information specific to participating TICUA member institutions are on file in the College of Education Ed.D. office of Lipscomb University.


BEST PRACTICES FOR RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION


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BEST PRACTICES FOR RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

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From: "Van-Dusen, Ryan" <ryan.van-dusen@ttu.edu>
Subject: RE: permission request
Date: September 10, 2014 at 4:44:34 PM CDT
To: Kay Drew <kddrew@mail.lipscomb.edu>

Ms. Drew, Molnar, and Spearman,
You have my permission to use my survey in your research process. Please do not hesitate to contact me for clarification or if you need further assistance.

Dr. Ryan Van Dusen

From: Kay Drew [mailto:kddrew@mail.lipscomb.edu]
Sent: Wednesday, September 10, 2014 4:40 PM
To: Van-Dusen, Ryan
Subject: permission request

September 8, 2014

To: Dr. Ryan Van Dusen
From: Kay D. Drew, Daphne Molnar, and Ashlee Spearman
Re: Permission to use your survey/questionnaire
Dear Dr. Ryan Van Dusen,
It was an honor and pleasure to speak with you by phone last week. We enjoyed our discussion about veterans and their transition to the college environment. We appreciate your willingness to grant us permission to utilize your quantitative questionnaire from your dissertation titled, A Quantitative Study of Student Veterans’ Intent to Persist.
We also would like to thank you for offering to assist us with our research. We will accept your offer to gather information from Texas Tech through surveys, focus groups and even an interview with you.

If you have further questions about our research work as students attending Lipscomb University, please let us know. Our advisor is Dr. Emily Medlock, Lipscomb University. We would appreciate a reply email or confirmation letter that you have given us permission for using your survey instrument.

Sincerely,

Kay D Drew

Clarksville Academy, Clarksville, Tennessee
kdrew@clarksvilleacademy.com
Lipscomb University doctoral student
kddrew@mail.lipscomb.edu
Environmental Evaluation for Veteran Index (EEVI) & Van Dusen Institutional Survey

Introduction:
You are invited to participate in a research study investigating recruitment and retention strategies for veteran students in Tennessee. The purpose of this study is to provide our client, Tennessee Independent Colleges and Universities (TICUA), with research that identifies factors that contribute to the recruitment and retention of veteran students. This study is being conducted by Kay Drew, Daphne Molnar and Ashlee Spearman doctoral student(s) in the College of Education at Lipscomb University under the supervision of Emily Medlock, a faculty member in the Department of Education. You were selected as a possible participant in this research because you are an educator or administrator working at a university or college at which veterans attend. Please complete both Part A: Environmental Evaluation for Veteran Index (EEVI) survey and Part B: Van Dusen Institutional survey.

Part A: Dr. Kimberly Griffen, in conjunction with the Center for American Progress, created the Environmental Evaluation for Veteran Index (EEVI) survey to be used by institutions, students, and policymakers to promote better educational outcomes for student veterans. The EEVI allows institutions to identify where they are doing well and can pinpoint areas for improvement.

Part A will require a "Yes" or "No" response based upon the presence or absence of items at a specific institution. Once all questions are answered within a category, the number of "Yes" responses will be counted and divided by the total number of possible "Yes" responses to determine an institution's veteran/military friendliness status.

Part B: Dr. Ryan Van Dusen, a veteran who researched military veterans and their intention to persist in college for his doctoral dissertation at Texas Tech University, created the Van Dusen Institutional survey. This survey was designed to help understand current educator and/or administrator perceptions on programs, policies, and practices that are used to attract and retain veterans at an institution.

Part B will require a response to approximately 50 questions using a Likert scale. Please select the radio button indicating 1=strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= No Opinion, 4= Agree, 5=Strongly Agree.

This two-part survey should take approximately 30 minutes to complete. Thank you in advance for your time and participation.

1) Institution Name: __________________________

2) Who can we contact for assistance with sending an online survey instrument to all veteran and/or military students currently enrolled at your institution? Please include the person's name, email, and/or phone number. __________________________
### Part A: Environmental Evaluation for Veterans Index (EEVI) Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3) Institution has a veteran's office</td>
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<td>4) There is an institutional person for dealing with student veterans</td>
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<td>5) Institution works with the Department of Veterans Affairs</td>
<td></td>
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<td>6) Institution works with the state</td>
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<td>7) Institution works with healthcare providers</td>
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<td>8) Institution works with other schools</td>
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<td>9) Institution works with local employers and/or career networks</td>
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<tr>
<td>10) Trainings for faculty on student veterans' issues and concerns are available</td>
<td></td>
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<td>11) Workshops and programs for the student affairs professionals on common veterans' issues and concerns are available</td>
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<tr>
<td>12) Community partnerships for professional opportunities (internships, co-ops, etc.) are available</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>13) Training for staff and student affairs professionals on how to improve services for student veterans are available</td>
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<tr>
<td>14) There is a forum or committee of professionals from across campus to discuss student veterans' issues and concerns</td>
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<tr>
<td>15) Please share other collaborative efforts at your institution that are not listed within this section of the survey.</td>
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<tr>
<td>16) Staff knowledgeable about student veterans' needs and concerns are available in: Career services</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>17) Staff knowledgeable about student veterans' needs and concerns are available in: Tutoring and academic support</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>18) Staff knowledgeable about student veterans' needs and concerns are available in: Disability services</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>19) Staff knowledgeable about student veterans' needs and concerns are available in: Counseling and psychological services</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>20) Staff knowledgeable about student veterans' needs and concerns are available in: Financial Aid</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>21) Staff knowledgeable about student veterans' needs and concerns are available in: Registrar's office</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>22) Staff knowledgeable about student veterans' needs and concerns are available in: Transfer credit evaluation</td>
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<td>23) Staff knowledgeable about student veterans' needs and concerns are available in: Benefits certification</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>24) Staff knowledgeable about student veterans' needs and concerns are available in: Health services</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>25) Staff knowledgeable about student veterans' needs and concerns are available in: Campus recreation</td>
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<tr>
<td>26) Staff knowledgeable about student veterans' needs and concerns are available in: Admissions</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>27) Institution has veteran student organization</td>
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<td>28) There is an orientation or transition assistance program for student veterans</td>
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<td>29) There is a physical space for student veterans to meet and congregate</td>
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<td>30) The Institution conducts assessments of culture and climate for student veterans</td>
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<td>31) School solicits veteran feedback on how to improve services</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>32) Existence of a veterans mentoring program</td>
<td></td>
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<td>33) There are structured opportunities for leadership development</td>
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<td>34) There are structured opportunities for networking with members of the campus community</td>
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<td>35) There are re-orientation programs and services for veterans deployed returning from duty</td>
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<td>36) There are programs and initiatives in place to support student veterans who have families</td>
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<td>37) There are institutional events that celebrate student veterans</td>
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<td>38) There are veteran-specific institutional websites, newsletters, and/or publications</td>
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<td>39) There is a student veteran list-serve</td>
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<tr>
<td>40) Institution provides opportunities for interfacing with ROTC or other military affiliated programs</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>41) Institution offers a veterans support group</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>42) Please share what other institutional support efforts could be offered that were not listed within this section of the survey?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>43) Institution is accredited by reputable accrediting body</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
BEST PRACTICES FOR RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Confidential

44) Institution has Service Members Opportunity College status or Yellow Ribbon status
   Yes □ No □

45) Financial Aid: Institution automatically credits qualifying student veteran accounts with GI Bill benefits regardless of payment from VA
   Yes □ No □

46) Financial Aid: Institution has provisions in place to help students who experience a delay in benefits receipt from the VA
   Yes □ No □

47) If tuition is more than the GI Benefit, the institution: Is a Yellow Ribbon participant
   Yes □ No □

48) If tuition is more than the GI Benefit, the institution: Has veteran-specific scholarships available
   Yes □ No □

49) If tuition is more than the GI Benefit, the institution: Has veteran-specific institutional aid/grants available (books, equipment, funding, etc.)
   Yes □ No □

50) Institution has a way to identify veterans in their student data warehouse
   Yes □ No □

51) Institution tracks and reports on veteran students as a specific category in institutional research
   Yes □ No □

52) Students can indicate veteran status on application for admissions
   Yes □ No □

53) There are specific admissions materials for veterans and marketing to military communities
   Yes □ No □

54) There are institutional policies that preference or otherwise acknowledge veterans in admissions and registration (e.g. admitted as adult or transfer student priority registration)
   Yes □ No □

55) There are multiple pathways and opportunities for student veterans to identify their status on institutional forms
   Yes □ No □

56) Courses are offered on military bases
   Yes □ No □

57) Courses are offered online
   Yes □ No □

58) Courses are offered in the evening or on weekends
   Yes □ No □

59) Core courses in major are offered through flexible options (e.g. resources online, different sessions)
   Yes □ No □

60) Institution offers refresher courses (e.g. on study skills, the way college works)
   Yes □ No □

61) Student services and administrative offices have evening and/or weekend hours
   Yes □ No □

62) Materials for accessing institutional resources (e.g. disability services, tutoring) are available in multiple formats (e.g. online, in brochure, over the phone)
   Yes □ No □
Confidential

63) Institution offers remedial coursework and/or has developed a partnership with another school for the provision of remedial coursework
   □ Yes   □ No

64) Institution has a clear and flexible policy for students being deployed and returning (e.g., faculty work with the students, students can remotely complete some courses)
   □ Yes   □ No

65) Institution will expunge course records for students being deployed mid-semester
   □ Yes   □ No

66) Institution has a clear and flexible policy for tuition refunds when students are deployed (e.g., some or all tuition can be refunded to the student, depending on whether the student chooses to remotely complete coursework)
   □ Yes   □ No

67) Institution has a policy for the evaluation of military transcripts
   □ Yes   □ No

68) Institution considers American Council of Education credit guideline in awarding credit for experience and/or training
   □ Yes   □ No

69) Credits are awarded for military experience
   □ Yes   □ No

70) Credits are awarded for military training
   □ Yes   □ No

71) Institution has a policy in place for the evaluation of DANTES/CLEP credits
   □ Yes   □ No

72) Student veteran military transcripts are regularly awarded more than elective credits
   □ Yes   □ No

73) Institution clearly communicates transfer credit and military transcript evaluation process to prospective students
   □ Yes   □ No

74) How does your institution identify the strengths and weaknesses related to recruitment and retention efforts for veteran and/or military students?
   _______________________________________

75) Please share any additional comments about your institution not asked within this questionnaire?
   _______________________________________

Part B: Van Dusen Institutional Survey

76) Being a veteran is a part of the veteran student’s identity.
   □ Strongly Disagree
   □ Disagree
   □ No Opinion
   □ Agree
   □ Strongly Agree

77) Veteran students are proudly showing their military service.
   □ Strongly Disagree
   □ Disagree
   □ No Opinion
   □ Agree
   □ Strongly Agree
78) Veteran students share with non-veterans that they are veterans.

79) Veteran students seem to feel strongly about completing their degree.

80) It is important for veteran students to complete college in a timely manner.

81) Veterans develop close personal relationships with other veteran students.

82) When enrolled, veterans develop close relationships with non-veteran students.

83) There is a student veteran’s organization on campus.

84) Members of the campus community are aware there is a veteran organization on campus.

85) There is a student veteran office on-campus.

86) I know the director of veteran’s affairs on campus.

87) Veteran affairs is a regular attendee at campus events.

88) Student veterans are participants in other organizations on campus.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Options</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>89) Student veterans are involved in community service activities</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree, Disagree, No Opinion, Agree, Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(besides a veteran's organization).</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>90) Student veterans are generally happy students at this current</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree, Disagree, No Opinion, Agree, Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>institution.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91) There is a tutor available for veteran students.</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree, Disagree, No Opinion, Agree, Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>92) I feel faculty easily relates to veteran students.</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree, Disagree, No Opinion, Agree, Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93) Our school website has a link for student veterans.</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree, Disagree, No Opinion, Agree, Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94) I have used the school's website link to veteran affairs.</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree, Disagree, No Opinion, Agree, Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95) I feel that veteran students are respected on campus.</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree, Disagree, No Opinion, Agree, Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>96) Student veterans are labeled as non-traditional students on campus.</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree, Disagree, No Opinion, Agree, Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97) Student veterans appear to feel like they belong at our institution.</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree, Disagree, No Opinion, Agree, Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98) An education from our institution will help veterans secure</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree, Disagree, No Opinion, Agree, Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>employment.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>99) I feel that the faculty respects the veteran status.</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree, Disagree, No Opinion, Agree, Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
100] Veterans disclose how their military experiences have influenced their political opinions during class discussions.

101] Veterans disclose how their military experiences have influenced an understanding of other cultures during class discussions.

102] Veterans struggle more academically than other students.

103] I am aware of the academic support services (tutoring, writing center, math center, etc.) available to veteran students.

104] I have shared information about the academic support services (tutoring, writing center, math center, etc.) available to veterans.

105] A military mindset makes a better student.

106] The veteran family appears supportive of the family member’s choice to attend college.

107] Veterans often worry in the classroom situation that they have forgotten the things previously learned in school.

108] Our school has no difficulty receiving the G.I. Bill benefits.

109] Veterans are satisfied with the amount of financial support (grants, loans, G.I. Bill, scholarships) that they receive while attending college at this current institution.

110] Veterans often drop out of college due to financial difficulty.
111) Veterans often drop out of college for non-financial reasons.

112) Veteran students are more mature than non-veterans the same age.

113) The discipline received in the military helps them succeed as a student.

114) Veterans approach their academic work the same as a military mission.

115) I am aware of the services provided through the veteran disability office.

116) Students who are veterans use university counseling services.

117) I feel the university's counseling services effectively meet the veteran student's needs.

118) I feel the office where students verify their enrollment status for the VA effectively meets their needs.

119) The staff in the office where students verify enrollment status for the VA treats everyone with respect.

120) It is likely that veteran students will re-enroll at my institution next semester.

121) How does your institution identify the strengths and weaknesses related to recruitment and retention efforts for veteran and/or military students?

122) Name and title of person completing the survey (optional):

123) Contact information (optional):
Appendix C

ENVIRONMENTAL EVALUATION FOR VETERANS INDEX (EEVI) AND VAN DUSEN INSTITUTION RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION STRATEGIES FOR VETERAN AND MILITARY STUDENTS

INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

Introduction:
You are invited to participate in a research study investigating recruitment and retention strategies for veteran students in Tennessee. This study is being conducted by Kay Drew, Daphne Molnar and Ashlee Spearman doctoral student(s) in the College of Education at Lipscomb University under the supervision of Emily Medlock, a faculty member in the Department of Education. You were selected as a possible participant in this research because you are an educator working at a university or college at which veterans attend. Please read this form and ask questions before you agree to be in the study.

Background Information:
The purpose of this study is to provide our client TICUA with research that identifies factors that contribute to the recruitment and retention of veteran students. Approximately 100 people are expected to participate in this research. The number of participants will be determined by the rate of response.

Procedures:
If you decide to participate, you will be asked to participate in focus groups and interviews that will last no longer than an hour. During the interview you will be asked to share personal opinions and experiences that relate to your university and relationships with veteran students. During the interview the researchers will scribe notes and use audio recording in order to capture and later transcribe the response.

Risks and Benefits of being in the study: The study has minimal risk. As a participant you will be asked to share information about the factors that contribute to your experiences with veteran Students. Recounting your experiences could cause emotional discomfort. The information collected in this study will benefit TICUA staff, administration and member schools, state of Tennessee Veteran Task Force, Governor Haslam, veterans and post-secondary institutions.

Compensation:
If you participate, you will not receive compensation. In the event that this research activity results in an injury, we will assist you by removing you from the study environment and seeking medical assistance. Any medical care for research-related injuries should be paid by you or your insurance company. If you think you have suffered a research-related injury, please let us know right away.

Confidentiality:
Any information obtained in connection with this research study that can be identified with you will be disclosed only with your permission; your results will be kept confidential. In any written reports or publications, no one will be identified or identifiable and only group data will be presented. We will keep the research results in password protected database or a locked file cabinet in the researcher’s professional office space and only the researcher(s) named in this form and our advisor will have access to the records while we work on this project. We will finish analyzing the data by August of 2015. We will keep the data for two years after that date should we need to validate any findings. In August 2017, we will destroy all original reports and identifying information that can be linked back to you.

**Voluntary nature of the study:**
Participation in this research study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your future relations with TICUA or Lipscomb University in any way. If you decide to participate, you are free to stop at any time without affecting these relationships.

**Contacts and questions:**
If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Kay Drew at 931-801-0648 or kddrew@mail.lipscomb.edu or Daphne Molnar at 931-993-7654 or dlmolnar@mail.lipscomb.edu, or Ashlee Spearman at 870-648-6123 or amspelman@mail.lipscomb.edu. You may ask questions now, or if you have any additional questions later, the faculty advisor, Dr. Emily Medlock (615-966-6079 or emily.medlock@lipscomb.edu), will be happy to answer them. If you have other questions or concerns regarding the study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), you may also contact Dr. Roger Wiemers. Chair of the Lipscomb University, Institutional Review Board, roger.wiemers@lipscomb.edu.

You may keep a copy of this form for your records.

**Statement of Consent:**
You are making a decision whether or not to participate. Your signature indicates that you have read this information and your questions have been answered. Even after signing this form, please know that you may withdraw from the study at any time.

_______________________________________________________________________

I consent to participate in the study and I agree to be audiotaped.

Signature of Participant                                                        Date

Signature of Researcher                                                        Date
Appendix D

VETERAN AND MILITARY STUDENT RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION STRATEGIES VAN DUSEN INSTRUMENT

INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM FOR VAN DUSEN INSTRUMENT

Introduction:
You are invited to participate in a research study investigating recruitment and retention strategies for veteran students in Tennessee. This study is being conducted by Kay Drew, Daphne Molnar and Ashlee Spearman doctoral student(s) in the College of Education at Lipscomb University under the supervision of Emily Medlock, a faculty member in the Department of Education. You were selected as a possible participant in this research because you are a veteran and/or military student. Please read this form and ask questions before you agree to be in the study.

Background Information:
The purpose of this study is to provide our client TICUA with research that identifies factors that contribute to the recruitment and retention of veteran students. Approximately 34 TICUA member institutions are expected to participate in this research. The number of participants will be determined by the rate of response.

Procedures:
If you decide to participate, you will be asked to participate in the completion of an online questionnaire. The questionnaire will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. The number of yes responses will be calculated and divided by the total number yes response possibilities to provide an overall score on the institutions veteran/military friendliness.

Risks and Benefits of being in the study:
The study has minimal risk. As a participant you will be asked to share information about the factors that contribute to your experiences related to serving the veteran student population. Recounting your experiences could cause emotional discomfort. The information collected in this study will benefit TICUA staff, administration and member schools, state of Tennessee Veteran Task Force, Governor Haslam, veterans and post-secondary institutions.

Compensation:
If you participate, you will not receive compensation. In the event that this research activity results in an injury, we will assist you by removing you from the study environment and seeking medical assistance. Any medical care, for research-related injuries should be paid by you or your insurance company. If you think you have suffered a research-related injury, please let us know right away.
Confidentiality:
Any information obtained in connection with this research study that can be identified with you will be disclosed only with your permission; your results will be kept confidential. In any written reports or publications, no one will be identified or identifiable and only group data will be presented. We will keep the research results in password protected database or a locked file cabinet in the researcher’s professional office space and only the researcher(s) named in this form and our advisor will have access to the records while we work on this project. We will finish analyzing the data by August of 2015. We will keep the data for two years and after that date should we need to validate any findings. In August 2017, we will destroy all original reports and identifying information that can be linked back to you.

Voluntary nature of the study:
Participation in this research study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your future relations with TICUA or Lipscomb University in any way. If you decide to participate, you are free to stop at any time without affecting these relationships.

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You may keep a copy of this form for your records.

Statement of Consent:
You are making a decision whether or not to participate. Your signature indicates that you have read this information and your questions have been answered. Even after signing this form, please know that you may withdraw from the study at any time.

________________________
I consent to participate in the study

Signature of Participant         Date

________________________
Signature of Researcher         Date
TICUA Veteran Student Survey

Greetings,

We would greatly appreciate your participation in this survey. We are collecting feedback about your feelings and experiences at your current university. The survey is approximately 80 questions and should not take any longer than 15-20 minutes to complete.

Your participation is voluntary and your responses will remain anonymous. You can skip any questions, or quit at any time. There will be no personal information collected from this survey.

If you have any questions about this survey or the results of this survey, please contact me by email at asmaranah@gmail.bcpmt.edu or Dr. Emily Medlock at emedlock@bcpmt.edu or by phone at (806) 742-4360.

Thanks,

Ashlee Spearman

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<th>1) Institution</th>
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<th>2) Gender</th>
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<tr>
<td>Female</td>
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<td>Male</td>
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<td>Not reported</td>
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<th>3) Ethnicity</th>
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<td>African American</td>
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<td>Asian</td>
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<td>Caucasian</td>
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<td>Hispanic</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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<th>5) Student Status</th>
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<td>Freshman</td>
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<td>Sophomore</td>
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<td>Junior</td>
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<td>Senior</td>
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<th>6) Enrollment Status</th>
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<td>Full-Time</td>
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<tr>
<td>Part-Time (Primary Method of Instruction)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Online Classes/Distance Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classes only on Military Institutions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hybrid Method of Instruction (on ground and online classes)</td>
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<th>7) Military Branch</th>
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<td>Coast Guard</td>
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<td>Air Force</td>
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<td>Army</td>
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<td>Marines</td>
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<td>Navy</td>
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<th>8) Military Duty Status</th>
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<td>Active Duty</td>
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<td>Reserve</td>
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<td>National Guard</td>
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<th>9) Current Veteran Status</th>
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<tr>
<td>Active Duty</td>
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<tr>
<td>Honorable Discharged</td>
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<td>Dishonorably Discharged</td>
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<td>Other Than Honorable Discharge</td>
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<tr>
<td>Medical Discharge</td>
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<td>Individual Ready Reserve</td>
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<td>Active Reserve</td>
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<td>Active National Guard</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual Mobilization Augmentee</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Length of Service (Years)</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Have you ever been deployed to a combat zone?</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>If yes, were you directly involved in combat? (Years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Did you have any college credits earned before enrolling at your current institution? If yes, how many credits were accepted?</td>
</tr>
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16) Grade Point Average
- No credits completed
- 0-0.5
- 0.51-1.0
- 1.01-1.5
- 1.51-2.0
- 2.01-2.5
- 2.51-3.0
- 3.01-3.5
- 3.51-4.0

16) I live:
- On-Campus
- Off Campus

17) Number of Dependents
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- More than 7

18) Marital Status
- Single
- Married
- Divorced
- Widowed

19) Employment Status
- Full-Time
- Part-Time (On-Campus)
- Part-Time (Off-Campus)
- Part Time (Work Study)
- Not Employed

20) Which form of aid are you currently using?
- Chapter 30: Montgomery G.I. Bill
- Chapter 31: Vocational Rehabilitation
- Chapter 32: Post-9/11 Era Veterans' Educational Assistance Program (VEAP)
- Chapter 34: Selective Reserve Educational Assistance Program
- Chapter 35: Reserve Educational Assistance Program (REAP)
- Chapter 36: Post 9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008
- Hardwood Act
- Yellow Ribbon

Please answer each question using the following scale: 1=Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= No Opinion, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree

21) Being a veteran is a part of my identity.
- 1. Strongly Disagree
- 2. Disagree
- 3. No Opinion
- 4. Agree
- 5. Strongly Agree

22) I am proud of my military service.
- 1. Strongly Disagree
- 2. Disagree
- 3. No Opinion
- 4. Agree
- 5. Strongly Agree

23) I tell non-veterans that I am a veteran.
- 1. Strongly Disagree
- 2. Disagree
- 3. No Opinion
- 4. Agree
- 5. Strongly Agree
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>24)</th>
<th>It is important for me to get a college degree.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25)</td>
<td>It is important for me to finish my program of study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26)</td>
<td>Since coming to this university, I have developed close personal relationships with other veteran students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27)</td>
<td>Since coming to this university, I have developed close personal relationships with non-veteran students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28)</td>
<td>I tell other student veterans that I am a veteran.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29) Members of the campus community can tell I am a student veteran.</td>
<td>1. Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>2. Disagree</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>3. No Opinion</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. Agree</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5. Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30) I am aware there is a student veterans’ organization on-campus.</td>
<td>1. Strongly Disagree</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Disagree</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3. No Opinion</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. Agree</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5. Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31) It has been easy for me to meet and make friends that are veterans and</td>
<td>1. Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and are students at my current institution.</td>
<td>2. Disagree</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3. No Opinion</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. Agree</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5. Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32) My family approves my attending college at my current institution.</td>
<td>1. Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Disagree</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. No Opinion</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. Agree</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5. Strongly Agree</td>
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<tr>
<td>33) I am involved in extra-curricular activities on-campus (besides a</td>
<td>1. Strongly Disagree</td>
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<tr>
<td>veteran’s organization).</td>
<td>2. Disagree</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3. No Opinion</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. Agree</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5. Strongly Agree</td>
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<tr>
<td>34) I am involved in community service activities (besides a veteran’s</td>
<td>1. Strongly Disagree</td>
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<td>organization).</td>
<td>2. Disagree</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3. No Opinion</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. Agree</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5. Strongly Agree</td>
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<td>35) I am confident that I made the right decision in choosing to attend</td>
<td>1. Strongly Disagree</td>
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<td>college at my current institution.</td>
<td>2. Disagree</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3. No Opinion</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. Agree</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5. Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36) I feel like I can relate to veteran students.</td>
<td>1. Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>2. Disagree</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3. No Opinion</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. Agree</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5. Strongly Agree</td>
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<tr>
<td>37) My family encourages me to continue attending college at my current</td>
<td>1. Strongly Disagree</td>
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<td>institution.</td>
<td>2. Disagree</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3. No Opinion</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. Agree</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5. Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38) My close friends encourage me to continue attending college at my</td>
<td>1. Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>current institution.</td>
<td>2. Disagree</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3. No Opinion</td>
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<td>4. Agree</td>
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<td>5. Strongly Agree</td>
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<td>Question</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>40)</td>
<td>I feel that non-veteran students respect my status as a veteran.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41)</td>
<td>It is important for me to graduate from college at my current institution as opposed to some other school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44)</td>
<td>I feel that the faculty respects my status as a veteran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48)</td>
<td>I disclose how my military experiences have influenced my political opinions during class discussions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49)</td>
<td>I disclose how my military experiences have influenced my understanding of other cultures during class discussions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47)</td>
<td>I have struggled academically since starting classes at this campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48)</td>
<td>I am aware of the academic support services (tutoring, writing center, math center, etc.) available to me as a student.</td>
</tr>
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<td>#</td>
<td>Statement</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>I have utilized the academic support services (tutoring, writing center, math center, etc.) available to me as a student.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>My military mindset makes me a better student.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>My family is supportive of my choice to attend college.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>When I came to this college, I was worried that I forgot the things I had previously learned in school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>I am satisfied with the amount of financial support (grants, loans, G.I. Bill, scholarships) I have received while attending college at my current institution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>I have considered dropping out of college due to financial difficulty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>I have considered dropping out of college for non-financial reasons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>I feel that my military service has made me more mature than non-veterans my own age.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58</td>
<td>The personal discipline that I received in the military is helping me succeed as a student.</td>
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<tr>
<td>60)</td>
<td>I have performed academically as well as I anticipated I would.</td>
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<tr>
<td>63)</td>
<td>I am aware of the services provided through the veteran's disability services office.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64)</td>
<td>I have registered in the campus disability services office.</td>
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<tr>
<td>66)</td>
<td>I am aware of the services provided through university counseling services.</td>
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<td>67)</td>
<td>I have used our university counseling services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69)</td>
<td>I feel the office where I go to verify my enrollment status for the VA effectively meet my needs</td>
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</table>
70) The staff in the office where I go to verify my enrollment status for the VA treats me with respect.
   1. Strongly Disagree
   2. Disagree
   3. No Opinion
   4. Agree
   5. Strongly Agree

71) The staff in the office where I go to verify my enrollment status for the VA refers me to other services (on-campus and off-campus) if I need non-G.I. Bill related assistance.
   1. Strongly Disagree
   2. Disagree
   3. No Opinion
   4. Agree
   5. Strongly Agree

72) It is likely that I will re-enroll at my current institution in the spring.
   1. Strongly Disagree
   2. Disagree
   3. No Opinion
   4. Agree
   5. Strongly Agree

73) What do you feel are the institutions strengths related to the recruitment and retention efforts of veteran and/or military students?

74) What do you feel are the institutions weaknesses related to the recruitment and retention efforts of veteran and/or military students?

75) What services or policies could be implemented that would improve veteran and/or military services at your schools?

76) Do you have any additional comments about your college experience thus far?
Appendix F

VETERAN AND MILITARY STUDENT RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION STRATEGIES FOCUS GROUP/INTERVIEW

INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

Introduction:
You are invited to participate in a research study investigating recruitment and retention strategies for veteran students in Tennessee. This study is being conducted by Kay Drew, Daphne Molnar and Ashlee Spearman doctoral student(s) in the College of Education at Lipscomb University under the supervision of Emily Medlock, a faculty member in the Department of Education. You were selected as a possible participant in this research because you are a veteran and/or military student. Please read this form and ask questions before you agree to be in the study.

Background Information:
The purpose of this study is to provide our client TICUA with research that identifies factors that contribute to the recruitment and retention of veteran students. Approximately 500 people are expected to participate in this research. The number of participants will be determined by the rate of response.

Procedures:
If you decide to participate, you will be asked to participate in focus groups, interviews and questionnaires that will last no longer than an hour for each. However, the questionnaire will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. You will be asked to indicate your level of agreement with the statements through the use of a Likert scale. Throughout the interview you will be asked to share personal opinions and experiences that relate to your university. In addition, during the interview the researchers will scribe notes and use audio recording in order to capture and later transcribe the response.

Risks and Benefits of being in the study:
The study has minimal risk. As a participant you will be asked to share information about the factors that contribute to your experiences being a veteran student. Recounting your experiences could cause emotional discomfort. The information collected in this study will benefit TICUA staff, administration and member schools, state of Tennessee Veteran Task Force, Governor Haslam, veterans and post-secondary institutions.

Compensation:
If you participate, you will not receive compensation. In the event that this research activity results in an injury, we will assist you by removing you from the study environment and seeking medical assistance. Any medical care, for research-related injuries should be paid by you or your insurance company. If you think you have suffered a research-related injury, please let us know right away.

Confidentiality:
Any information obtained in connection with this research study that can be identified with you will be disclosed only with your permission; your results will be kept confidential. In any written reports or publications, no one will be identified or identifiable and only group data will be presented. We will keep the research results in password protected database or a locked file cabinet in the researcher’s professional office space and only the researcher(s) named in this form and our advisor will have access to the records while we work on this project. We will finish analyzing the data by August of 2015. We will keep the data for two years and after that date should we need to validate any findings. In August 2017, we will destroy all original reports and identifying information that can be linked back to you.

**Voluntary nature of the study:**
Participation in this research study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your future relations with TICUA or Lipscomb University in any way. If you decide to participate, you are free to stop at any time without affecting these relationships.

**Contacts and questions:** If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Kay Drew at 931-801-0648 or kddrew@mail.lipscomb.edu or Daphne Molnar at 931-993-7654 or dlmolnar@mail.lipscomb.edu, or Ashlee Spearman at 870-648-6123 or amspearman@mail.lipscomb.edu. You may ask questions now, or if you have any additional questions later, the faculty advisor, Dr. Emily Medlock (615-966-6079) or emily.medlock@lipscomb.edu, will be happy to answer them. If you have other questions or concerns regarding the study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), you may also contact Dr. Roger Wiemers. Chair of the Lipscomb University, Institutional Review Board, roger.wiemers@lipscomb.edu.

You may keep a copy of this form for your records.

**Statement of Consent:**
You are making a decision whether or not to participate. Your signature indicates that you have read this information and your questions have been answered. Even after signing this form, please know that you may withdraw from the study at any time.

___________________________
I consent to participate in the study and I agree to be audiotaped.

___________________________  ________________
Signature of Participant       Date

___________________________  ________________
Signature of Researcher        Date
Appendix G

STUDENT FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION PROMPTS

1. Recruitment
   a. Does your institution provide admission events or special admissions information sessions customized for prospective service members or veterans?
   b. Does your institution award academic credit to students for military training received during active duty military service?
   c. Does your institution offer any courses (or sections of courses) specifically for military service members and veterans? (These do not include military science or ROTC)
   d. Does your institution customize your student orientation program for military service members and veterans? (Customization may include breakout sessions)
   e. Why did you choose this institution? Also, how did you start the process of searching schools to attend?
   f. When you began researching schools, did you take private versus public school designation into consideration? If so, how did it impact your school choice decision?
   g. Did you specifically look at schools based on Yellow Ribbon designation, why or why not?

2. Retention
   a. Does your institution have a staff or office member designated as the point of contact for military service members and veterans?
b. Do you have a mentoring program for military service members and veterans?

c. Does your institution offer training for faculty or staff in mental health issues, physical health issues, and transition for military to civilian life issues?

d. Does your institution have a mentor program where faculty with military experience to mentor current students with military service?

e. Does your institution have a dedicated program or give public acknowledgment or recognize for students before or after graduation with prior military service?

f. How long have you attended your institution and what factors have been included in why you are still enrolled? Have you ever attended other Institutions, prior to attending this institution?

3. Resources

a. Does your institution offer customized or additional support services specifically for military service members and veterans? (Academic support/tutoring, career planning, counseling/mental health, and career)

b. Does your institution offer a dedicated social space for military service members and veterans?

c. Does your institution have a dedicated program or give public acknowledge cognize for students before or after graduation with prior military service?

d. Is there a time when you want to be recognized as a college student as compared to a veteran student?
Appendix H

Focus Group Transcripts

**Question 1**: Does your institution provide admission events or special admissions information sessions customized for prospective service members or veterans?

**University A, Focus Group**

- Yes. I’m with mental health counseling program. That was one of the first things they had done was pull us all in as future students and talked to us about what the program was about. There was a second follow up session where they came in which was the actual orientation and assessment.

- I’m part of the computer science program over at community college. It wasn’t directed at veterans per say, but the director of undergraduate studies was absolutely available through email and through in person when I came to campus to answer questions answer questions and kind of point me in the right direction. Who was that that was helpful to you?

- Dr. Professor the director of undergraduate studies

- I agree with what he is saying. We are on the same department in College of Computer Technology, however, when you go – I’m going to speak for myself. My scholarship is through VocRehab because of my disability and when I got in I was planning to go through a master’s degree and because the faculty doesn’t have the knowledge how the scholarship works so they do not have the knowledge to path me into the right direction so it was on myself to figure out everything. Like, VocRehab doesn’t cover master’s credits so you have to switch to post 9/11. Design something for transfer students who are getting out of the military so when you sit down for the first time with the counselor, that counselor knows a little bit like what type of scholarship you have and if you are from VocRehab are you willing to go to a masters. Why do you say that? Well you are a transfer students and have all your Gen Eds knocked out you and if you switch to Post 9/11 I can design this path for you. If you stick with it, you get out with a master’s because our scholarship runs out by month not by money, so we need to maximize it so if we have that kind of help for our veterans it would be awesome.

**Question 2**: Does your institution award academic credit to students for military training received during active duty military service?

**University A, Focus Group**

- Yes but for University A it was very minimal. With my training, I got my P.E credits, and that was it. It was two classes so 6 hours. I mean and I went to an advanced school I mean I was a mechanic and it was a 6 month school and I expected more from it but I didn’t.

- I will tell you based upon my own experience, I don’t think that’s a false academic institution, and the reason being is the military doesn’t do a very good job of translating what you actually do in it. I mean, you know. I mean I’m in my
master’s program right now, I’ve already got another masters, and I’ve been to like five different colleges, and every one I go to it’s always the same thing like, “oh you can shoot a rifle. How does that relate to English?” Do you see what I’m saying? There are so many different skills and you don’t get into the technical specifics of what goes into a degree program, and depending on which specialty or discipline you’re going to choose, you know, it just doesn’t translate well.

One thing the military doesn’t do a good job of is actually informing what classes, like is says something on there about oxygen generator school, but how does that apply to any sort of degrees, but it could I could apply to like basic electrical, but they have no way of telling the school what actually went on in the class. They do a terrible job of job description and skills and the stuff you might have learned. They do not have a way of informing whether or not that should count towards your degree as an electrical engineer. Here I have a basic electricity class I have to take which I feel I have no need to take, but at the same time they have no way of knowing all this. It just says I took some classes, and maybe they don’t know if it’s the right stuff.

It’s a transcript disconnect I’ve seen some branches that have done a little better of a job defining a transcript than others. I know in the Air Force, if you look at their transcripts they look like college transcripts, but the army transcript looks like a 3 year old wrote it with a crayon

• Service credit. It’s basically volunteer work that they want you to serve.

• They want traditional students to have experience in the community so they go out and volunteer in soup kitchens and other things and have to give time and write a paper and do some much work to get those credits.

• For the doctorate degree program, it is not a requirement but for traditional students is it even for veterans.

• It’s mandatory. A veteran has to do service credit because you need to know how to serve. I just served. That doesn’t make any sense.

• I mean I can understand it from a traditional freshmen right out of high school.

• Student: but a veteran that had lost a limb or something in a wheel chair needs to learn to serve?

• It is contradictory where to school to transfer from military to civilian life, they will teach you how to translate your experience, but they don’t do that on you or your transcript. At this university the community service credits or hours do not transfer. I was 30 something fair on veterans. We were willing to give our life for the war and we still had to do community service credits.

**Question 3:** Does your institution offer any courses specifically for military service members and veterans?
University A, Focus Group

- We have a bible class now.

- With Professor?

- Yea, University A has a chapel policy depending on the nature of your enrolment so if you’re like a Tuesday Thursday student but only in the evenings your chapel requirement is different that if you’re a student going full time otherwise. I don’t know about the adult program.

- For the degree program, you don’t have to do it.

- But it’s basically twice a week for a regular student you are going to go to a chapel session and there are a bunch of extra events you can go to get extra credits but you go to the chapel for an hour or two and they have a veterans chapel that they what they were talking about.

- No, there is a class. The professor has one for veterans and somewhere somehow they said “No, Faith and Culture”. “Faith and Culture,” that’s the name of the class, but he announced, he sent out an email and said this is for veterans so you discuss all types of topics like PTSD, guiltiness …

- Bible Department with Professor

- We also have our own chapel for this so it’s pretty cool to…

**Question 4:** Does your institution customize your student orientation program for military service members and veterans? (Customization may include breakout sessions)

University A, Focus Group

- So there was like normal orientation, and after that there was a lady, and she said all the veterans come over here, and she talked about it.

- And supported a stuff all these things are homemade besides Professor is kind of a forerunner but for the institution the little segment after veteran breakout chapel do discuss things like that that’s one man. That’s not institutional.

**Question 5:** Why did you choose this institution? Also, how did you begin your process of searching schools to attend?

University A, Focus Group

- When I was getting everything processed by the military I did my gen Eds at Public Institution 1 on campus. When I got out I shopped around and looked at computer science majors. Public Institution 2 only had one and Public Institution
3 only had one. You keep going they don’t have a large shopping list to choose. When I got here they had computer science, software engineer, game development, web development, security, data signs. You choose what you want to do and say, “This is home. I was born for it.”

• Yes, I looked at all the universities and what they had to offer for computer science and everyone else had one or two majors’ to pick. We have 8 or 9.
• Yes, when I saw all those 9 majors, I shot an email and got a response back that day saying come to my office we need to talk.
• I did all my research online.
• Me too
• I did too
• Looked online when I was getting ready to get out and I got online to the VA.gov website and checked out all the Yellow Ribbon schools

Question 6: When you began researching schools, did you take private vs. public school designation into consideration? If so, how did it impact your school choice decision?

University A, Focus Group

• Money wasn’t because I knew I had a scholarship, so money checked out.

Question 7: Did you specifically look at schools based on “Yellow Ribbon designation”? Why or why not?

University A, Focus Group

• It was not part of my search criteria. I was more focused on finding the right school if it didn’t have the Yellow Ribbon, for me being in the right school is more important than the Yellow Ribbon. It strengthens it, but not having it wasn’t a make or break type deal.

• Yes. It was for me.

• So I visited 4 or 5 different schools and I was originally from small town, so I knew about University A. This is where I was coming back here from out west. I took a week of leave to look at all the schools and this one I feel like, they cared about me, and the veteran’s office was also a huge part of it too. When I came to visit here, most public schools didn’t have a veteran’s office. Like at Public Institution 4, she’s just a secretary, and she has a bunch of different jobs, and she also deals with the veterans, and she seemed mad that I was making her do her job. At University A they welcomed me and gave me all the stuff I needed to give to them, and it was easy.

• Really two things, well three, I looked online when I was getting ready to get out, and I got online on the va.gov website and checked out all the Yellow Ribbon schools in my area, but one stood out the most because it was 100% Yellow Ribbon, and moreover, they had an institute for environmental science which is what I wanted to do. If they were going to pay 100 % to pursue an environmental
science degree, well. Nobody else does that around here. That was pretty much a no brainer.

• When I was getting ready to retire I did a search pretty much because I was interested in becoming a counselor so I started looking at schools where I had the proper accreditation, and Yellow Ribbon was a big part of it. University A was the way to go. It was a combination of the VA office, the accreditation, and overall the positive people that sold me.

• I really wasn’t looking for a school. I was just trying to figure out if I was going to retire or stay in the military, and my sister-in-law was actually a student here, and she was the person’s predecessor, and I saw this was my future. I was getting out and going to school, and I knew about my G.I. bill, but they started talking about free, and I like free. I’d take that, and it was a one hour and 15 minute tour, and I decided the rest of my life I was going to school.

**Question 8:** Does your institution have a staff or office member designated as the point of contact for military service members and veterans?

**University A, Focus Group**

• Yes, and that’s veteran affairs advocate?

• Yes

**Question 9:** Do you have a mentoring program for military service members and veterans?

**University A, Focus Group**

• No, I haven’t heard of anything. If we are doing anything, we are doing it with each other.

• I would like that personally. Yes, that falls back to what we talked to at the beginning, but he would have the knowledge so he wouldn’t just tell you all the problems with your case. They will actually know what your problems are and try to help you.

**Question 10:** Does your institution offer training for faculty and staff in mental health issues, physical health issues and transition from military to civilian life issues?

**University A, Focus Group**

• They do. I know veteran affairs advocates have meeting and little teams that the school does, but they are not specifically for veterans necessarily. It’s just like conflict resolution. If a student is having problems there are people trained on campus to specifically get with them and help them.
• They also offer counseling here on campus. You can just shoot an email and they make you a schedule.

• They have a pretty good system set up they get you cared for and it doesn’t cost you anything.

• Yeah you have 36 months of post 9/11

• There is a certain amount you can get every semester, but there’s not a total amount that you can spend, and with that amount that’s how much the VA pays and the Yellow Ribbon pays for the rest of it, so if you have like a day left of your total GI bill you can get an entire semester of school work, so if you have one day of the semester left and the VA runs out the Yellow Ribbon will pay for the rest of the semester

• There is a bunch of technical data that comes out of both the post 9/11 bill and VocRehab. I am post 9/11, and the headaches that I faced trying to go through VocRehab here in Nashville were monstrous. The VocRehab office dropped the ball a couple of times on me, and as soon that happened I stopped trying to pursue VocEd and just stuck directly with 9/11 and started to just build my own schedule with more options to figure out what I was going to do and what was going to work. For the guys that are doing vocational rehab, if there were counselors on campus who were absolutely knowledgeable about those differences and what those different paths look like and the different individual benefits that can be applied that would be immensely helpful to a new student coming in who didn’t have any idea where his elbow was.

• That make sense?

• Yeah because I go across the door and go talk to veteran advocate she knows how that works but she is on the VA side. She doesn’t know what path I’m going to take. How can you take advantage of most of your scholarship in order to pursue a master’s degree?

• I think it’s more helpful if our counselors knows a little bit about. Here if I sit down I say “nice to meet you how may I help you” “I would like to do web application development” “ah that’s great, I see that you are a transfer student so you knocked out 24 credit’s so in his mind he says you only have one year left and have 36 months of scholarship . So next question how you going to pick your masters? What bill are you on? Are you VocRehab or post 9/11? VocRehab. Hmm we have a problem? Why? Because VocRehab doesn’t cover graduate school. Are you willing to switch to post 9/11? These are the differences. Are you willing financially to switch to post 9/11? Yes. Awesome. You see. Make since now?

• I was just going to agree with you. That is absolutely true, and it is quite an obstacle, and it seems to me that somebody should become a little more educated on exactly what questions to ask a student. A lot of us are here in all different
capacities and sometimes knowing these specific questions to ask is half the battle. Sometimes we ourselves don’t know what questions to ask. Like when I was a freshmen I’d never been in college before and much less knew how post 9/11, GI bill works and that stuff and as a counselor, they need to ask questions that I can reciprocate and vice versa.

**Question 11:** Does your institution have a mentor program where faculty with military experience mentor current students with military service?

- Yes, Professor
- I would because I’m a business major. Part of the reason I’m in school is for the whole connection opportunity’s to try and find a job but to find some sort of mentor faculty wise who is ingrained with the community and everything that can introduce you to people that would be nice. I’d like that. From my perspective, like an upperclassmen in your major, even that would be better. Someone who is ingrained with what’s going on besides us veterans. We don’t have much contact with the rest of the people, but at least that’s how I feel. You all might feel differently of course, but with the veterans usually when we find each other in the class we hook up and we talk, and you know, everyone else is just kind of there

**University A, Focus Group**

**Question 12:** Does your institution have a dedicated program or give public acknowledgement or recognize students before or after graduation with prior military service?

**University A, Focus Group**

- Yeah there’s a scholarship that’s awarded to students. Of course we have the SVO. And different positions in the veterans organization.

- Some of the chapel events are more special like the first one of the year and some others ones trough out the year where veterans stand up and are recognized or all freshmen veterans. On Veteran’s Day, we had a bar-b-q and I was presented a flag on behalf of the school.

- But all those activities are not organized by the university. It’s usually something we gather together and say let’s do this.

- You got to be careful when saying that because veteran advocates do work for the university.

- Oh it’s through them? I thought it was something else.

- You know they are literally building it from scratch. I mean they’re not using institutional funds for that. We are selling breakfast burritos and stuff like that for money. Most of their money, what little bit they do get goes to buy office supplies, veterans medallions for when they graduate and things like that –
institutional stuff. All the bar-b-q’s and events we have are homegrown. The institution provides nothing but the blessing that it’s okay.

- There’s a cord and coin ceremony
- I think that’s cool
- I mean, I’m not trying to flaunt it but I would like a little more recognition but not like to have a stand up and cheer because that gets a little old.

**Question 13:** How long have you attended your institution and what factors have been included in why you are still enrolled? Have you ever attended another institution prior to this one?

**University A, Focus Group**

- I’ll tell you right now, based on my experience with University A, you couldn’t ask for a better school. From mentorship of the professors to the VA office here to the pro activeness of the recruiters who are going out taking to folks. I mean, we’re going to a private school that’s like $40,000 a year and our G.I. bill is going to cover half and Yellow Ribbon the other half. To me, you are not going to get that at any other school including Public Institution 1. I’ve been to other schools, and you’re just not going to get the kind of repose you get here. Hands down this is the best school. I think Lipscomb as well as the veterans department here are the best hands down. I’ve been doing college since 1995, and it’s been a pleasurable experience. Very low key. My effort compared to other schools is like zero percent because I can just focus on school.

- I think it is the school. As an example from the first day I’d get a call signed up I got a phone call and if I shot an email I would get a call from the recruiter while she was out running errands. I had to figure out what went on with my G.I bill and Susan called me and sorted it out it didn’t take weeks or days. The feedback was almost immediate.

- I can agree with you I’ve been to 3 university colleges, and University A is separated from every other university I have seen so far. With the nature of the faculty and the staff, I definitely agree that we are able to focus a lot more on the academics. Yea, there are always going to be issues that you miss. Some of our military background might come into play on that, but we’re just going to steamroll over it and find the answer anyway. University A has been almost problem free for me when it comes to any issue I have come across.

**Question 14:** Does your institution offer customized or additional support services specifically for military service members and veterans? (Academic support/tutoring, career planning and counseling/mental health).
University A, Focus Group

- I don’t think there are institutionally, but I can’t speak on the behalf of others. Post 9/11 does pay for some tutoring but as far as the institution goes for specifically veterans, there isn’t any.
- They have tutoring program, but it isn’t geared directly for veterans. It is geared towards the entire student body.
- And I actually have used that tutoring program several times, and I think it’s great. Does one need to be geared towards it? I don’t think so, not necessarily. They have a writing center I’ve used that a couple of times when I was taking algebra I had to use it; it was fantastic. With the tutoring system I’ve never had a problem finding help when I needed it.
- They have a resume center in there. So, if you go in there and talk to the student advisors that they have in there, they will have no idea how to look at your resume because you have things on their other than I went to high school. That would have been good to know when I was making my appointment because I got nothing out of it.
- As traditional students all they have done is high school so they don’t know how to deal with someone who has served in a professional capacity before. You know what I mean? I was a professional soldier, and I think that counts for something. I think mine is going to look quite different than… you know?

Question 15: Does your institution offer a dedicated social space for military service members and veterans?

University A, Focus Group

- Yes, veteran advocate’s area.

Question 16: Is there a time when you want to be recognized as a college student as compared to a veteran student?

University A, Focus Group

- That goes back to what I said. We gravitate to each other because we are older and aren’t 19 and for fresh out of high school, and I’d love to have them come up and talk to me but they don’t, but if we work on a group project of course they are going to talk to me a little, but if I want into the student center, I might get a wave. And life experience creates a divide
- Like you talk to a kid and they’re like “why is this still downloading? It’s taking forever.” Because it’s going to space and coming back. Give it a second.
- The challenge is, and I think the reason why we are sitting here in this survey is because the challenge is doing both at the same time. We don’t want to be
segregated as one or the other. It doesn’t matter what time of day, the challenge is how do you become both of those in one moment? Like, that’s the hard part.

- The student and the veteran at one time. I mean you asked “when do you want to be a student and when do you want to be a veteran?” The problem is we have to make that distinction in the first place. The challenge is being both we don’t need a veteran stamp on everything. This isn’t a veteran’s college, and I’m looking, and there is a disconnect with the academic advisors. That’s critical. There’s a huge disconnect and getting credit for past courses so a DOD issue and there are vast inconsistencies that should be looked into a lot more carefully. The issues with that office here on campus, I guess I’m torn because building these programs from the ground up is a good thing but the students who are in charge of these things and help with the development are not going to be students here indefinitely. They are not employed by the school. They do it voluntarily for nothing.

**Additionally Comments**

**University A, Focus Group**

- military friendly, I think is like calling a particular car a green car. I think it’s a brand. It’s a buzz word and the more you use it the less it means. I think, if you are going to be military friendly you don’t need it to be a slogan. Just be military friendly. You don’t have to say it because it is a phrase of action. It’s not like “At University A, we are military friendly.” Alright, prove it.

- Everyone is different. We do our assignments different. We know who we are. We have walked 3/4 of the path already. If you want to be military friendly, you have to take a veteran who doesn’t know anything on the VA side or academically and help them get them on their path in the 36 months. So you have to take a veteran who knows nothing and has PTSD and problems and make it smooth.

- I don’t think veteran and handicapped accessible should be together, but that’s kind of what it’s like. All the schools in town say they are veteran friendly. What’s that mean? Can you quantify it?

- When I think about it, I think of [Public Institution] they don’t have to say that they are military friendly because you can see it. The quality and quantity, you can just see it. Asking “Are you military friendly?” is like asking “Are you handicapped or wheelchair accessible here?”

- Some places they say they are military friendly because school is free and I talk to people that go there and they say they are having a terrible time. Yeah and that’s why I say most of them are going to take the post 9/11 bill.

- Yeah we are happy to take your money
• That’s not where veterans want to go. They need somewhere that someone can help them. They need a degree so they can get a job. If you help on that 36 month path and they walk you through.

• I know overall it isn’t just about University A, it’s much wider. Thinking aspects of military friendly is eradicating the adverse and anything dealing with the military has a negative effect applied to the veteran just by them having that status. Some schools are against veterans. Most of the schools around here aren’t. It’s kind of putting a huge focus not recognizing it if someone is military friendly they don’t need to walk around with a big T-shirt that says “I’m military friendly.” The schools can be subjective, but as I said, the more you say it the less it means.

• I’m coming into my second year at Li University A and I’m still trying to get them to take off one of my communication classes which is part of my major. For me, I’ve been through like, NCO development schools and other type courses where you stand in front of people and teach courses and subject matter and give speeches, so in some way my experiences might translate. I am still going through that process. I’ve got to get my NCOARs turned in and my evaluation reports from the army turned into the registrar, and that plus my arts might get that wiped off of my requirements list just like a check that you have the equivalent life experience, but the process before of getting the university to stamp off and say yes you’re qualified, you got that is a difficult process that doesn’t stack up across the number of hours and effort into particular subjects. I also think the longer someone spent in the military and the higher the rank they have gone and attained, probably plays a role in those opportunity to go take those teaching type courses, the courses that are more likely to transfer over to the academic university side. If I had a question on that topic it would be, by what measure are they looking at to determine whether this student qualifies to get the credit for what he’s done in the service? How do they measure or quantify that? Is it just someone saying one that sounds good and puts it in the computer but then the other student, and this is where I am talking about the inconsistencies – another student comes in with his transcript with the same course but it reads differently? Now, they are “Oh no, that’s not right.” Is it a personal opinion or a professional opinion, and if it’s professional, by what unit of measure are you gauging? If the class has a curriculum which I know the professor has to generate a curriculum in the syllabus before the class, how does a student qualify? It’s really frustrating, and it’s because of the inconstancy. There’s no infinitive yes that class will take or no that class won’t take. So who is the person who decides it and by what measure? It’s kind of like the magic 8 ball.

• Every time you go to a class in the military it goes into your smart transcript which you can get online and send it just like transfer classes to Lipscomb, and they never tell you why some of those classes don’t count for anything. Like I have 24 credits, but on my smart transcript I have 76. So why didn’t the others count for anything. And the ones that do count don’t even go towards my major; they are just nonsense.
• If you’re looking for professional growth, if you’re looking for the best reputation of the school really that is the output of the student you’re sending out into the world, and when those people get the jobs, and they’ve got the confidence. I can say hands down, I know when I get through this degree program, I will be confident because I know there is accreditation with the mentorship that the professors have given us. Just as our cohort as a whole, like I’m the only veteran in my class, but they all said the same thing which is they feel very confident in the whole thing. If you gage it in that regard then, yes, you can put a quantifiable measurement on it to say “yes this is a military friendly school.” It goes back to University A but I don’t think they look at it as we are going to focus on veterans as a group, they are looking at it from the student aspect of it to focus on treating everyone equally. They focus on you as a student.

• We gravitate to each other because we are older and aren’t 19 and fresh out of High School. I’d love to have the regular college students come up to me and talk to me but they don’t. If we work on a group project of they are going to talk to me but if I go in the student center, I might get a wave.

• We don’t want to be segregated as one of the other. The challenge is How do you become both in the same moments, like that’s the hard part.
Appendix I

Phone Interview #1 Transcripts

College B, Personal Interview #1

**Question 1:** Does your institution provide admission events or special admissions information sessions customized for prospective service members or veterans?

- I will be honest I was one of the first VA students to go to College B. We broke the mold. Usually young students attend here. It’s not a large group, one out of eleven were voc. rehab. In the beginning, it wasn’t a lot in place to cater to veterans. But that has changed a lot in 18 months. They are learning with us. Financial aid department is trying to make it easier. Veteran Advocate is great. We have a room and our own office. Tutoring anything. Programs have been geared to students on campus so we found ourselves grouping together and studying so we are working to make a better one. Non-trad scholarship is in discussion and a scholarship offer to students is good. Dean of students and veteran affairs coordinator. We have a veterans club on campus. We sit around have a cup of coffee and network with veterans.

**Question 2:** Does your institution award academic credit to students for military training received during active duty military service?

- Yes credit is awarded. One of the first things. There is a required class, PE, mountain training, Veterans all get that transferred. It comes out to about 6 credit hours. I transferred in from community college so credits transferred from community school to a private school. VA is not that crazy about letting you take the classes over so they sat with me and did a good job. Psychology department told me about College B.

**Question 3:** Does your institution offer any courses specifically for military service members and veterans?

- No courses specifically but the orientation is a week and a half long. Giving us that kick-start in the beginning to build a report.

**Question 4:** Does your institution customize your student orientation program for military service members and veterans? (Customization may include breakout sessions)

- Yes, first veteran’s orientation this year. I think it is key to have veterans who are already veteran language is universal. Straight and to the point. Having veterans talk to others was good. They separated veterans out and we has lots of support at the school.

**Question 5:** Why did you choose this institution? Also, how did you begin your process of searching schools to attend?

- I looked at [Public Institution] and College B and I knew that College B was smaller. I’m not comfortable in crowded spaces. The thing that made the
decision for me was at Pell grant. They shared that you need to go to College B for Psychology. I got on line and looked and I had a disability so I knew walking might be a strain. I like the one on one. There is a connection between the faculty and the student. It felt like home. The vets became a group and I cared less about cost and more the facility.

**Question 6:** When you began researching schools, did you take private vs. public school designation into consideration? If so, how did it impact your school choice decision?

- No, I looked at private and public

**Question 7:** Did you specifically look at schools based on “Yellow Ribbon designation”? Why or why not?

  - e. No because I am a rehabilitation student.

**Question 8:** Does your institution have a staff or office member designated as the point of contact for military service members and veterans?

- Yes, Veteran Advocate or Veteran Affairs Coordinator

**Question 9:** Do you have a mentoring program for military service members and veterans?

- Yes I am a member, the orientation guy and recruits non-trads. We kind of demanded a program where he meets with vets. If someone comes in and he knows prior military then he pairs them up.

**Question 10:** Does your institution offer training for faculty and staff in mental health issues, physical health issues and transition from military to civilian life issues?

- Yes they offer Green Zone training began in the last two semesters. If you are not used to having military students in class who want to talk about it or don’t want to talk about it. Sometimes, it’s important if there’s one person on campus for them to let them know the basics. A lot of stuff is changing, like faculty and staff and veteran training.

**Question 11:** Does your institution have a mentor program where faculty with military experience mentor current students with military service?

- Veteran advocate may be the only one. I have never had a class with someone who was.

**Question 12:** Does your institution have a dedicated program or give public acknowledgement or recognize students before or after graduation with prior military service?

- Yes we had our first one this year. One graduation per year. We had veterans cord ceremony for them and their dependents. I think we receive coins and cords.
Question 13: How long have you attended your institution and what factors have been included in why you are still enrolled? Have you ever attended another institution prior to this one?

- Only community college and here. I looked at [Public Institution] and College B and I knew that College B was smaller. Not comfortable in crowded spaces. The thing that made the decision for me was at Pell. They shared that you need to go to College B for psychology. I got on line and looked and I had a disability so I knew walking might be a strain. I like the one on one. There is a connection between the faculty and the student. It felt like home. The vets became a group and I cared less about cost and more the facility.

Question 14: Does your institution offer customized or additional support services specifically for military service members and veterans? (Academic support/tutoring, career planning and counseling/mental health).

- Not just for Vets but I know that with the opening of the new offices on campus. Advocate has many plans but we do not know them. Career placement is part of this and voc. rehab. College B already has a great program for placement and master’s continuation. Resume builder help. Always at least one honor student in every class who tutors. Take it once and then sit in again for tutor. Writing and math lab that is staffed. There is no reason you cannot find help.

Question 16: Is there a time when you want to be recognized as a college student as compared to a veteran student?

- I don’t have a problem with it and I don’t mind being referred to as a veteran. I want to work for VA when I graduate and I want to work with veterans when I graduate. I work in the voc rehab now as my they served and you served.

Additionally Comments

- The next big step is scholarship fund, they don’t have veteran’s scholarships and non-trads need assistance. Every student is entitled to a book voucher, vets get stipend, and VA gets books. Not specific for veterans.
- I really would like to reiterate about the fact that College B would be comfortable and thrive. The faculty would be best thing. I don’t leave campus frustrated. I can believe College B is one of the top schools. It is much more costly. VA tends to send them to a lower cost school. I have tried every day. I have tried to show them it is a good decision. 4 honors programs and veterans made up the bulk of the honors programs. The veteran’s programs are flourishing.
Appendix J

Phone Interview #2 Transcripts

**Question 1:** Does your institution provide admission events or special admissions information sessions customized for prospective service members or veterans?

- They do, it was a little bit newer, but they did have a transition nontraditional program when I went through back in 2012. I believe it was the next year or the year after they started the veteran specific, but they did recognize me as a veteran. Admissions got me in and asked me individually if there was anything I had questions about or if there was anything they could do for me.

**College B, Personal Interview**

**Question 2:** Does your institution award academic credit to students for military training received during active duty military service?

- They do and the Air force base, they actually just set it up to where we have night classes there and their credits will transfer. None of my credits from the Navy pertain to what I was going for now. I know that the basic training counted as a PE course, but they have become more specific with it especially since the veterans present has risen on campus. I do believe they offer that, but for me it didn’t pertain.

**College B, Personal Interview**

**Question 3:** Does your institution offer any courses specifically for military service members and veterans?

- Not that I know of, but I could be missspoken on that.

**College B, Personal Interview**

**Question 4:** Does your institution customize your student orientation program for military service members and veterans? (Customization may include breakout sessions)

- They do now.

**College B, Personal Interview**

**Question 5:** Why did you choose this institution? Also, how did you begin your process of searching schools to attend?

- When we were in west coast, my husband grew up in small town. He was willing to move anywhere; I looked at colleges for their art department. I looked at quite a few colleges and my husband graduated from Public Institution so he is a little partial. When we came here we came to visit his family and he took me on College B campus and I went in and I talked to them. I had contacted all of the other schools and College B was the first college to ever get back to me that same day. The other colleges it took numerous emails, it took numerous phone calls so I did not want to be put on a backburner. I was a great student, I knew that I could succeed and once College B campus I fell in love with it. Immediately as I walked in people were willing to help and as soon as they found out I was a veteran they
were ready to point me in the right direction of what I needed to do veteran specific to get my Chapter 33. Everything at College B just felt right. There was never a single point in my educational career where I felt I made the wrong decision going to College B. I looked a little bit online at College B, but I was actually quite set on [Public Institution] fine arts program. I love being challenged since I can’t play sports anymore, I want that academic challenge and College B is known for their rigorous academics and I love that. So it was a combination of being challenged, not being somewhere that I was going to be put in the background and I like that small family atmosphere and I like that people were willing to figure out my name and willing to remember it. That was what College B is all about.

- The fine arts, the professors are amazing, but their actual building and what they have to offer in the fine arts department is less than par, I won’t lie on that. The professors are amazing, but if it was up to what my degree was we would have went to [Public Institution], but it’s the people that really brought me here.

**College B, Personal Interview**

**Question 6:** When you began researching schools, did you take private vs. public school designation into consideration? If so, how did it impact your school choice decision?

**College B, Personal Interview**

**Question 7:** Did you specifically look at schools based on “Yellow Ribbon designation”? Why or why not?

- Something that I did really like about College B was they offered the Yellow Ribbon program. I looked at the price tag of College B and that is actually why I stopped looking. My husband brought me to the campus because he wanted me to make the best decision possible. When I went in they told me about Yellow Ribbon and that was really something that got me. I have never been to a private school and so once I went on campus and saw that there small amount of students that did appeal to me over going to a college that is going to have that in like a classroom; that was something that really benefitted me. I have serious issues, I have nerve damage and so being bumped around, having to walk all over campus, having social anxiety. Just being out there, that was something that was important to me, that small class size and then the funding as well. I do not want to go to college and be in debt.

**College B, Personal Interview**

**Question 8:** Does your institution have a staff or office member designated as the point of contact for military service members and veterans?

- Yes they do, and she is absolutely amazing. She is the registrar’s office. She processes the VA, because she has been an insane amount of help even when I first went there. She immediately grabbed me and made sure that I had every question answered and gave me her contact information. She said I don’t care if it is a stupid question, come to me.

**College B, Personal Interview**
Question 9: Do you have a mentoring program for military service members and veterans?

College B, Personal Interview

Question 10: Does your institution offer training for faculty and staff in mental health issues, physical health issues and transition from military to civilian life issues?

• I know they did green ___ training. It was huge on campus because it allowed the community, campus community, and the veterans to all get on board on how to speak to veterans, how to communicate properly; those are some of the issues that arise. I do not know if you can take a course or if they have a specific one but they do programs like that.

• I think the faculty is doing a great job as of now. It has been pretty darn impressive with what they have been able to accomplish. It is amazing that the admissions and everyone else in the office works towards that common goal. I guess everyone should train, but I do not think the faculty needs it because they are already doing a fantastic job going over every single transcript and credit that could transfer. They even started talking about doing something where someone has a specialty that they were overseas and they communicated with many different cultures and they look at, could they transfer as a cultural credit. Also that you were well versed and that you understand it, so they are even taking the time to looking into that area more specific to each.

College B, Personal Interview

• Question 11: Does your institution have a mentor program where faculty with military experience mentor current students with military service?

• I’m not sure about faculty, but I know for sure that we have a mentoring program with established veterans on campus for people who are just coming in. Like for me I am a mentee and a mentor, or the person I am over she was maybe in the graphic design program. They match us up specifically and look at what their degree is going to be and what branch they were in. Just any kind of common interests trying to link the better inputs. For me it made me feel more comfortable to talk to a veteran that is a faculty member.

• Veteran Advocate is over the program and its majority him but the admissions office works in conjunction with it. It is a list of all the incoming veterans, advocate contacts them directly and says hey this is who we are, this is what we’re about, and would you be interested in somebody contacting you. If they say yes then he gets in touch with them with a veteran that is established. Every single veteran in the program is asked who has been there throughout this process, who knows the campus and everything. Every single veteran is asked would you be willing to take on a new incoming student and be there for them if they have any questions and point them in the right direction. If they say yes then their name goes down on a list and I was one of those people, so that is how I got it. There is no compensation. It is a very close net group and it has been really wonderful on
the College B campus, and like I said when I came in there wasn’t anything extremely established and now you get to see where it has gone.

College B, Personal Interview

**Question 12:** Does your institution have a dedicated program or give public acknowledgement or recognize students before or after graduation with prior military service?

- They do have the awarding of cords and we just now got College B challenge coins. That is extremely special, the challenge coins especially, that is the military tradition that started way back when. That honor is bestowed on us the same day we get our veteran cords of red, white, and blue; you get to wear them at graduation. This is open to the public and they like to have the family members specifically come, but anybody, I have work very closely with the disabilities office and they sent them an invitation knowing how much those people meant to me, hence my education they invited them as well. Anybody from the community, it was really great and they even invited past veterans who have already graduated to come and celebrate.

College B, Personal Interview

**Question 13:** How long have you attended your institution and what factors have been included in why you are still enrolled? Have you ever attended another institution prior to this one?

- No before I joined the military I had actually gone on school academic scholarship to [Public Institution]. I was in high school and had I a dual enrollment to a community college, two community colleges to get courses. Then I also attended in school on west coast when I was stationed out there.
- College B has been the best decision I have ever made, the other colleges could care less. I mean, you want an honest answer, I was on campus and my tires got split and my windows slashed in my jeep because I had a military sticker on my car. I can honestly say that College B has been the absolute best decision, I mean I walk on that campus and everyone says hello, everyone recognizes me as a veteran. If I need any help everyone is willing to help which is just absolutely incredible.

College B, Personal Interview

**Question 14:** Does your institution offer customized or additional support services specifically for military service members and veterans? (Academic support/tutoring, career planning and counseling/mental health).

- I know that counseling we work with Signup for Vets I believe it is, we do work closely with them. They actually just gave an excerpt at the beginning of school, giving contact information and everything. As far as the career center and that type I am not familiar with anything that is veteran specific, but I do know that those kind of questions, if any of us have them, we go directly either to Ted or to Kathy Wilson and they will get us whatever we need.

College B, Personal Interview
**Question 15:** Does your institution offer a dedicated social space for military service members and veterans?

- We do, it is actually amazing, we’ve got TV, and computers donated to us that if student veterans don’t have the money or the capability of having a computer at home they can rent it out. We have resources we have been trying to get books donated, text book donated to our space and that way the veterans should have a quiet, calm space that they can go and it doesn’t matter when it is. Actually one of the really neat things that they did in the veteran community on College B campus, they actually invited the dependents as well. It is not just closed off, we have a lot of dependents that come who want to feel that connection.

**College B, Personal Interview**

- I

**Question 16:** Is there a time when you want to be recognized as a college student as compared to a veteran student?

- This is actually a conversation I just had with one of our veterans. She was only in for less than a year, she got injured I believe at boot camp. She showed up to our first meeting, but she didn’t show up again and I kept running into her. I asked “Why don’t you ever come?” and she said, “I don’t feel like a veteran, I don’t feel like I deserve that, I didn’t go overseas.” I brought that up at a meeting and everyone was just kind of like we need to see if there are other people out there that feel like that when people don’t want to be recognized or don’t feel like they are when they have a traumatic experience. For me, I am really, personally am very proud of what I did, I absolutely loved serving and I wish I could still do it if I didn’t get injured. So, it’s not I don’t want to be recognized just as a veteran, but that is part of who I am.

**College B, Personal Interview**

**Additionally Comments**

**College B, Personal Interview**

- College B really is an amazing place and I am very grateful that I chose there. I think it was the best fit for me.
- Something that was really important to me at College B as well. I didn’t know that I could do Art and I only had been painting for three years. I’ve had amazing and incredible opportunity to where my artwork is featured on a beer can and box in store. It’s pretty exciting. But College B recognized that immediately and they wanted me to not only be recognized at the school but also at the community and they make a great, great effort in the Communication department to get the veteran, not only well known at College B but also within the community and they really bring that aspect together. Not just limited to campus. That is something that is absolutely wonderful about them.
Appendix K

Phone Interview #3 Transcripts

**Question 1:** Does your institution provide admission events or special admissions information sessions customized for prospective service members or veterans?

- Yeah they do, I actually went to College B once before. I am a readmit I started back in '06 and I left in the wake of having a child. I joined the army then and coming back now I wouldn’t say it is completely different, but being a vet I’ve known that they have definitely have really catered and have really done a lot to help me get back into school. They had a transfer orientation then, a section where the vets broke off and had their own time that day. It was optional. I wanted to come back, I am not from this area I am from out of state originally, but while we were here for the two years it made me feel at home. I am married now with kids and we have made our home. It was just more of I have been here before and I know what to expect; it is a school I like going to and it kind of went from there.

**College B, Personal Interview**

**Question 2:** Does your institution award academic credit to students for military training received during active duty military service?

- They did, we still are kind of looking at that because of the way the VA is paying. It is based on what your major is and how many hours you have. I have talked to them and everything I have is pretty much any coin I can bring in, whatever to help me along if I need it. The credit I have gotten so far has been, I think as elective. My MLS in the military kind of transfers over to what I am doing now, so I have talked to my counselor and she thinks that some of the credits will come back in to play. Major is exercise science.

**College B, Personal Interview**

**Question 3:** Does your institution offer any courses specifically for military service members and veterans?

- Not that I know of. I know that College B used to have a freshman orientation class, I’m not sure if they have that anymore, but I don’t think if they have a transition class for vets though. They do a really good job in grouping everyone together and then coordinator gives you a mentor that kind of helps you around.

**College B, Personal Interview**

**Question 4:** Does your institution customize your student orientation program for military service members and veterans? (Customization may include breakout sessions)

- I did come in and they did group shots of the vets that they use in kind of recruiting. They went over the area if people didn’t know about this area, the history of the school, stuff like that.
College B, Personal Interview

**Question 5:** Why did you choose this institution? Also, how did you begin your process of searching schools to attend?

- Football. I came in and the coach at that time had played with my high school coach and they talked me into coming up here.

College B, Personal Interview

**Question 6:** When you began researching schools, did you take private vs. public school designation into consideration? If so, how did it impact your school choice decision?

- Did not care about private or public, finances was a factor in the research. It helps that I live about five minutes away from College B too.

College B, Personal Interview

**Question 7:** Did you specifically look at schools based on “Yellow Ribbon designation”? Why or why not?

- Absolutely, I knew that I could go to state school pretty much for free, but with them participating in the Yellow Ribbon and everything that just sealed the deal. I could go there and I’m not taking out loans again, I’m not putting myself further in debt, and I am getting a very good education.

College B, Personal Interview

**Question 8:** Does your institution have a staff or office member designated as the point of contact for military service members and veterans?

- Coordinator, I think is the only contact they have right now.

College B, Personal Interview

**Question 9:** Do you have a mentoring program for military service members and veterans?

- Right now the only one that I know of is Coordinator. I don’t know of anyone else on campus, any other instructors or professors. I know he is very open and inviting and you can talk to him about everything.

- I have not participated yet. When I left the first time I kind of left myself in this big hole/gap and I am trying to dig myself back out of that to where I can breathe a little bit. When I have more time, I am definitely hoping to become a part of that and help out either new transfers or entering into college help them out.

College B, Personal Interview

**Question 10:** Does your institution offer training for faculty and staff in mental health issues, physical health issues and transition from military to civilian life issues?

- On campus I haven’t seen that yet, but Coordinator did bring in the local vet center here in town. They came in and talked to us and said if we need somebody
that we can go talk to them. They gave us a reference here at the courthouse we can talk to.

**College B, Personal Interview**

• **Question 11:** Does your institution have a mentor program where faculty with military experience mentor current students with military service?

**College B, Personal Interview**

**Question 12:** Does your institution have a dedicated program or give public acknowledgement or recognize students before or after graduation with prior military service?
  • I don’t know

**College B, Personal Interview**

**Question 13:** How long have you attended your institution and what factors have been included in why you are still enrolled? Have you ever attended another institution prior to this one?
  • No
  • I looked at community colleges close, I look at [Public Institution] and I didn’t even know about all the vets here on campus yet. I just knew that I was here before and this school completely made me feel like it’s a community, small class sizes. The professors actually care if you graduate or not, they are not just there to make a pay check. I just felt that it was my best chance at really getting a quality education.

**College B, Personal Interview**

**Question 14:** Does you institution offer customized or additional support services specifically for military service members and veterans? (Academic support/tutoring, career planning and counseling/mental health).
  • They have an academic support center on campus. I don’t know about new students coming in that are vets, but as transitioning students you have to actually go once a week and talk to them about how things are going and how things are working out. They kind of make you do it in a sense, but it is something you want to do because they talk to you about your week, how you’re doing, and keep you on track.

**College B, Personal Interview**

**Question 15:** Does you institution offer a dedicated social space for military service members and veterans?
  • Yes, they had one before but they just moved into a new area. It is only for vets they’ve got computers in there, we have a TV, a couple of textbooks.
Question 16: Is there a time when you want to be recognized as a college student as compared to a veteran student?

- Not necessarily, most of my classes I have at least one vet in each class but we don’t really converse, like we were vets because we only have one class together, trying to get through it. We also don’t close ourselves down, we open up to the whole class.

College B, Personal Interview

Additionally Comments

College B, Personal Interview

- I have definitely appreciated all of the help I’ve gotten, I mean it’s all just worked itself out in a good way. They want vets there, not more so than the person, but I think they understand that they have a focus in life now rather than coming out of high school and not knowing if this was right for you. I appreciate the vets being there. No one there makes you feel unwanted at all.
Appendix L

Public Focus Group Transcript

1. Open Ended Questions from Focus Group

**Question 1:** Does your institution provide admission events or special admissions information sessions customized for prospective service members or veterans?

**College C, Focus Group**
- No, I was an active duty officer who PCS to base. I learned about this institution from my out-processing briefing. It would have been helpful to hear about college from an admission recruiter at this brief.
- No, PCS to local base and knew about this school from another soldier who attended.
- No, I was in the Air Force and returned here because it is my hometown.
- No, my family had attended this school in 1976.
- No, my sergeant had a required walk through at the education center on post.

**Question 2:** Does your institution award academic credit to students for military training received during active duty military service?

**College C, Focus Group**
- Yes, I received about 30 elective credits but only 7 of them went to course work.
- Yes, I received 42 credits because I was a medic.
- Yes, I received 60 elective credits,
- Yes, I received 36 credits.
- Yes, I received a majority of my credits but I was a transfer from [Public institution].

**Question 3:** Does your institution offer any courses specifically for military service members and veterans?

**College C, Focus Group**
- No
- No
- No
- No
- No
- Not that I know of.

**Question 4:** Does your institution customize your student orientation program for military service members and veterans? (Customization may include breakout sessions)

**College C, Focus Group**
• Freshman seminar does have a part that had veteran specific information. I would have benefited from a military specific orientation. We are already viewed as non-traditional anyway.
• No, but there are tables set up at the student information fair like Vet Success and Military Student Center.
• No, orientation at all except freshman seminar course.
• Yes, on post and main campus. I would have been completely lost without it.
• No, when I am here I just want to be known as a student.

**Question 5:** Why did you choose this institution? Also, how did you begin your process of searching schools to attend?

**College C, Focus Group**
• I am stationed at Fort Campbell and it’s a convenient location. Classes were available on post and main campus.
• Retired locally and attended high school in this town. Researched the university by visiting campus and I asked the department chair if they were accredited. After visiting I knew the faculty would be helpful.
• I heard about it from local base and that they had a decent computer science program. It is also convenient.
• ROTC provided me information about this school. It is convenient and cost effective.
• The men in my unit told me about it. They said the school had a variety of offerings and a lot of class options. They also said the school would work with me if I was deployed.

**Question 6:** When you began researching schools, did you take private vs. public school designation into consideration? If so, how did it impact your school choice decision?

**College C, Focus Group**
• No
• No
• No
• No
• No
• I applied at Private Institution but was declined because of my high school graduation requirements. I also was declined here but I knew there was an appeals process so I went through that and was admitted on probation.

**Question 7:** Did you specifically look at schools based on “Yellow Ribbon designation”? Why or why not?

**College C, Focus Group**
• What is that? Do I qualify for that? All I know is everyone knows about the GI bill.
• I work in the VA office as a student worker, so I know about this. I probably would not know if I did not work there. We only awarded the Yellow Ribbon to 5 to 6 students because of funding. We are still working through this so the veterans can fully understand how to use the program. Not all of the military briefers fully understand how to advise the soldiers on how to use their benefits. I was not fully advised. ……no, I use Montgomery GI bill by choice. This way I could get 12 additional months and it pays out housing books and fees. I wanted to see what my retirement would look like when comparing the use of Yellow Ribbon against Montgomery Bill.
• I used the Chapter 33 Post 9-11. Everyone knows about GI Bill but not the Yellow Ribbon. This concerns me that we are not taking full advantage of the programs that are available to us.
• I use Post 9-11 Bill but I am still waiting on the VA to pay my fees. I had to take out the student loan to pay for the portion I was waiting on from VA. Now the university chose to put it toward my tuition. VA is holding my money. I know I will get reimbursed just not sure when.
• No, I use the Post 9-11 and Voc, Rehab benefits. I get a book stipend and a house stipend.

**Question 8**: Does your institution have a staff or office member designated as the point of contact for military service members and veterans?

**College C, Focus Group**
• Yes, there is a Military Student Center, an Office of Vet Affairs and a guy at Fort Campbell in the registrar’s office. It would be great to have a One Stop Shop set up.
• Yes, there is a guy at Fort Campbell.
• What is Vet Success?
• It is a program that helps you transition into the civilian education sector.
• Isn’t there a disabilities services person?
• I have no idea but we all have different disabilities. There are some veterans here that have no idea they even have a disability or maybe it’s not severe enough to be labeled a disability. Like me, I jump when I hear a certain ring tone on an iPhone that sounds like the alarm for hit your bunker or I jump when another student drops their books because it sounds like a bomb. No worries, Walter Reed said I was good.

**Question 9**: Do you have a mentoring program for military service members and veterans?

**College C, Focus Group**
• Yes, Vet Success offers mentoring and tutoring.
• Doesn’t the military student center offer mentoring?
• I don’t know I got a calculator there once.
• Me too.
• I tried to get a book but the process was too complicated.
**Question 10:** Does your institution offer training for faculty and staff in mental health issues, physical health issues and transition from military to civilian life issues?

**College C, Focus Group**
- No, but I think they need some for faculty on transfer credit and military experience.
- No, it might be nice to know there had been some training.
- No
- No, I don’t think so.
- Yes, Green Zone training happened this past summer.

**Question 11:** Does your institution have a mentor program where faculty with military experience mentor current students with military service?

**College C, Focus Group**
- No
- No, I think training for faculty is enough.

**Question 12:** Does your institution have a dedicated program or give public acknowledgement or recognize students before or after graduation with prior military service?

**College C, Focus Group**
- Yes
- Yes
- Yes, military student center sends invitation for a ceremony.
- Yes, there is a dinner and cord/coin ceremony that is really nice.
- Yes, the Student Veteran Organization will give you a graduation stole if you are a part of the organization.

**Question 13:** How long have you attended your institution and what factors have been included in why you are still enrolled? Have you ever attended another institution prior to this one?

**College C, Focus Group**
- One year. I live here and it is cheaper.
- Smaller campus is nice.
- Convenience and smaller classes.
- 2 years. The school’s accreditation and reputation is very important to me. I know stories from others guys I served with who were attending schools because of promises to graduate fast and online options but the schools had no accreditation. This school has a great faculty and great staff. I have bounced between two campuses and my paper work has followed me without any hiccups. The people here do a great job and make miracles happen for their students.
• 4 years and I wanted to major in Computer Science. I have been able to add three concentrations with a data base information minor. The faculty played a big part in me getting this done.

**Question 14:** Does your institution offer customized or additional support services specifically for military service members and veterans? (Academic support/tutoring, career planning and counseling/mental health).

**College C, Focus Group**
- Not that I know of.
- No
- No
- No
- No

**Question 15:** Does your institution offer a dedicated social space for military service members and veterans?

**College C, Focus Group**
- Yes
- Yes, they have a Textbooks for Vets program and you can rent a calculator for stats.
- It is easier to get a calculator than a book. It happened to me too.
- Yes
- Yes, but the space is too small for the amount of vets to socialize. If feels like a study space.
- Very few students go to it but if they do they are studying not socializing

**Question 16:** Is there a time when you want to be recognized as a college student as compared to a veteran student?

**College C, Focus Group**
- Nope
- I just want to be a regular student. I don’t want to have to relate to students about being a vet.
- I only want to be recognized as a vet when it comes to getting my benefits.
- I don’t really care but I noticed some professors are starting to list special accommodations for veteran students.
- Yes. However, I feel the professors should know if safety is a concern.

**Additionally Comments**
**College C, Focus Group**
• The satellite campus for this school is not an advantage. When I attended the campus on post the receptionists were rude and it seemed like the instructors would not have been hired for main campus.
• I have attended both campuses and the experience was not the same. The faculty were great and everyone was very helpful.
• For two years, I attended local base and the campus was great experience.
• There are a lot of similarities between vets and Non-traditional students but our money is going away in 36 months so that is our motivation for success. And we are trying to get our second career started.
• Sometimes as a vet, you are overloaded with information.
• The military has a big list and it includes [Public Institution]. There is a lot of confusion about schools that are best for using your military benefits. University, etc. and some of these are not what we really need. Because the military gives this information out you think it has been checked for accreditation and military friendliness but that’s not the case all the time.
• I would like to make a comment about the way people throw around “military friendliness”. What does this really mean? Anyone can say they are military friendly but we want to see what they are doing for vets before being able to say you are military friendly.
Appendix M

Hi Daphne -

Thanks so much for reaching out to ask about using the EEVI in your dissertation research. Of course - please feel free to use it! We developed it with the hopes that it would be useful and helpful in research and practice. We just ask that you cite the source, and of course share your work with us when you've completed it.

Take care, and be well,

KAG
--
Kimberly A. Griffin, Ph.D.
kgriff29@umd.edu
Associate Professor
University of Maryland


On Thu, Sep 25, 2014 at 5:17 PM, Molnar, Daphne <daphne.molnar@vanderbilt.edu> wrote:

Good afternoon,

I am a doctoral student at Lipscomb University in Nashville, TN who is in the midst of exploring best practices for recruitment and retention of veteran and military students who hope to use, or are using, their Post-9/11 G.I. Bill educational funds. However, in researching the available literature on the subject, it became apparent the need to define ‘veteran or military friendly’ as it relates to higher education institutions who use such a label to attract potential veterans and/or military students.

My interest is with securing approval to use the ‘ Environmental Evaluation for Veterans Index, or EEVI’ to survey and collect data from targeted higher-education institutions within Tennessee, both private and public, and outside of Tennessee. The EEVI instrument along with the Easing the transition from combat to classroom: Preserving America’s investment in higher education for military veterans through institutional assessment report provided a lot of insight as we (Kay Drew, Ashlee Spearman, and myself) begin writing our dissertation and look to collect both quantitative and qualitative data.

I look forward to a response and would welcome the opportunity to answer any questions you may have regarding our project. Also, I would like the opportunity to ask questions as we move forward in our research. Social media is a wonderful tool-I have requested to be connected with you on ‘LinkedIn’.

Cheers-Daphne Molnar, MBA, CPIA, CMAR, RLATG
MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN

LIPSCOMB UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND TENNESSEE INDEPENDENT COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES ASSOCIATION (TICUA)

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) establishes the relationship and guidelines between the above parties regarding the research partnership described below.

The College of Education (COE) of Lipscomb University offers the Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) degree in Learning Organizations and Strategic Change. This degree is focused on preparing leaders for public and private organizations and academic settings. The program culminates with a practical, collaborative capstone research project with a partner organization, TICUA, ("The Client") that has requested a Capstone Team to address a real research need in an authentic setting. Successful completion of this capstone project will fulfill part of the requirements for completion of the Doctor of Education degree.

TICUA engages Tennessee's private colleges and universities to work collaboratively in areas of public policy, cost containment, and professional development to better serve the state and its citizens. TICUA's 34 member colleges and universities educate more than 75,000 students from across the state, country, and throughout the world.

The College of Education at Lipscomb University and the Client are entering into and operating under this MOU for a research partnership and agree to the following.

1. REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE

The Client has submitted a Request for Assistance (RFA) outlining the following research need:

What strategies and/or initiatives to recruit and retain veteran students are in place at TICUA institutions? What strategies are effective? What are not? To
what extent are TICUA institutions implementing recommendations from the Governor's Task Force on Veteran Education? Are there strategies in place at other institutions that would better serve veterans and TICUA members?

I. PROJECT PARAMETERS

The COE will supervise and direct a team of two to four doctoral students who will frame and conduct the research, and form recommendations for the client's research need.

The COE will provide the training for the Ed D. student to complete the requested research project through its curriculum and capstone project support structures. This training and support includes but is not limited to quantitative and qualitative research techniques, instrument design, and development of specific timelines, benchmarks, and processes pertaining to conducting research, and the assignment of a capstone faculty adviser who will oversee the team throughout the research project.

The Client will facilitate access to its membership and will allow the team to collect quantitative data on outreach, enrollment, and retention of veterans. Access to students, faculty, admissions and financial aid staff as well as other student services staff will be granted to collect qualitative data.

III. PROJECTED RESEARCH TIMELINE

The Client will present a 10-minute presentation (including Q & A) of the RFA to the Fall 2013 Cohort on Client Presentation Day, which is scheduled for the evening of Monday, June 2, 2014.

--June 2, 2014: Client Presentation Dinner. The Client will present a 10-minute presentation (including Q & A) of this project to the Fall 2013 Cohort.

--June 6, 2014: cohorts return ranking sheets

--June 9, 2014: Teams assigned

--June 30, 2014: Teams should have met with Client

--September 8, 2014: deadline for project proposal to Client
--September 15, 2014: deadline for Client approval or revision request of proposal

--September 22, 2014: deadline for project proposal submission to Lipscomb IRB. Substantive changes requested by the IRB will be discussed with the Client prior to implementation. Pilot testing of instruments and official collection of data may not begin until approval has been received by the IRB.

--January 30, 2015: deadline for submission of first three chapters to the Juried Review Committee. The Capstone Team will submit a draft of the first three chapters of their research manuscript and any applicable research instruments to their Juried Review Committee. Chapter three should include a description of pilot testing of research instruments if applicable. The Juried Review Committee and the Client must approve the final research instrument(s) before official data collection begins.

--TBD, November 2014- January, 2015: Upon receiving approval from the IRB, the Capstone Team will formally begin the research.

--June 1, 2015: target date for completion of data analysis

--July 15-October 15, 2015: window for presentation of research to Client and Juried Review Committee

--Client will completes evaluation of the analysis and the project experience one week after presentation

--July-November, 2015: team completes technical review and uploads to ProQuest; electronic copy sent to Client for use at Client's discretion.

--December 12, 2015: (tentative) graduation

v. FUNDING

The Capstone Team, the COE, and the Client will make every reasonable effort to minimize costs associated with this project.

As of the date of the signing of this document, the project presented by the client is expected to require no funding by either the COE or the Client.

Capstone Team members are expected to be responsible for normal and customary costs associated with doctoral students engaging in doctoral research (i.e. cost of mailings, printing, paper, envelopes, postage, transportation.
However, should the Capstone Team members identify what they consider to be an out-of-the-ordinary funding need, then the team members should seek funding from the Client during development of their project proposal and prior to submission of the proposal to Lipscomb's IRB. Regardless of when the funding need is realized, written approval and, phone calls, email, etc. and agreement to provide funding should be received from the Client prior to any expenditure being made. Expenditures incurred without expressed written approval from the Client will be the responsibility of the Capstone Team members. Team members will be provided a copy of this MOU.

VI. RESEARCH PRODUCT and DISSEMINATION

The Capstone Team will prepare a full report and presentation to the Client and a COE Juried Review Committee. This report and presentation must meet or exceed all the requirements of the capstone project as outlined in the COE's Capstone Project Manual (see addendum).

The COE may make the manuscript accessible in electronic format through conventional venues that provide access to culminating research projects for doctoral programs.

The Client may request an alternative manuscript format for the client's purposes. Within reason, the Capstone Team is expected to meet the client's needs and produce a copy of the manuscript in the format requested. An alternative manuscript format may be sent to the Client electronically or as a loosely bound hard copy.

All rights and obligations related to interests in and ownership of the Capstone Project shall be subject to the Lipscomb University Intellectual Property Policy (a copy of which is attached hereto).

VII. FAILURE TO MEET RESEARCH OBLIGATION

If the Capstone Team members cannot produce the requested research product they shall present their concerns to their faculty advisor. The faculty advisor will discuss the matter with The Client and attempt to craft a remedy to continue the project. If a remedy exists that will materially alter the research product, then the Client, the COE designee, and the Capstone Team shall meet and develop an altered research product that meets the needs, goals, and objectives for all parties. In that case, an addendum to this document shall set forth the new parameters of the adjusted research project.
If no remedy is available, the COE may unilaterally remove the Capstone Team from the research project and the Client will hold the COE, the Capstone Team, and Lipscomb University harmless.

VIII. LIABILITY

The Client shall indemnify and hold harmless Lipscomb, its Board of Directors, officers, agents, employees, and students from any and all claims, losses, damages or liability, including attorney's fees, resulting from or attributable to the acts of the Client, its employees or agents.

The Client agrees to abide by all regulations of the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

The Client agrees that its personnel will not discuss the Team members' enrollment, academic performance, or graduation status at Lipscomb University with a third party at any time during the project or following its completion and publication.

Lipscomb University shall indemnify and hold harmless the Client, its officers, agents, and employees from any and all claims, losses, damages or liability, including attorney's fees, resulting from or attributable to the acts of Lipscomb University its employees or agents.

V. AUTHORIZATION

On behalf of the Lipscomb University College of Education and the Client, the undersigned agree to the above stipulations and pledge that the organizations will strive to the best of their abilities and in good faith to complete these objectives.

Further, we pledge that should the need for modifications arise, we will in good faith attempt to make such changes or additions as the situation dictates and as are further detailed in subsequent mutually agreed upon addendums to this document.

VI. MISCELLANEOUS TERMS
The following terms shall apply in the interpretation and performance of this MOU: Relationship of the Parties - This MOU shall not be construed to create a relationship of partners, brokers, employees, servants or agents as between the parties.

A. Advertising and Publicity - Neither party shall use the other's name, or any name that is likely to suggest that it is related to the other institution, in any advertising, promotion or sales literature without first obtaining the written consent of the other party. Any publications regarding this MOU must be reviewed and approved by the parties.

B. be governed by and construed under the laws of the State of Tennessee, which shall be the forum for any lawsuits arising from an incident to this MOU.

C. Waiver - A waiver of any breach of any provision of this MOU shall not be construed as a continuing waiver of said breach or a waiver of any other breaches of the same or other provisions of this MOU.

D. Non-Assignment - This MOU may not be assigned by either party without the advance written consent of the other.

E. Severability - In the event one or more clauses of this Agreement are declared illegal, void or unenforceable, that shall not affect the validity of the remaining portions of this Agreement.

The authorized representatives of both parties have executed two copies of this Memorandum of Understanding on this; d-day of

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LIPSCOMB UNIVERSITY

By: [Signature]
Title: Vice President

By: [Signature]
W. Craig Bledsoe, Provost
Appendix O

Certificate of Completion
The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that Kay Drew successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course “Protecting Human Research Participants”.
Date of completion: 06/30/2014
Certification Number: 1497280

Certificate of Completion
The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that Daphne Molnar successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course “Protecting Human Research Participants”.
Date of completion: 06/26/2014
Certification Number: 1495415

Certificate of Completion
The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that Ashlee Spearman successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course “Protecting Human Research Participants”.
Date of completion: 06/30/2014
Certification Number: 1497279
Status of Research Review

Date: 11-21-14
Title of Project: A Qualitative and Quantitative of the Best Practices of Colleges and Universities for Veteran Recruitment and Retention
Principal Investigator(s) and Co-Investigator(s): Kay Drew, Daphne Molnar, Ashlee Spearman

☐ Research approved.
☐ Conditional approval. (See attachment.)
☐ Committee requests further information before a decision can be made.
☐ This proposal has been denied.

The IRB has met and reviewed your project proposal, and its decision is marked above. Please review the appropriate text below for the decision that was rendered regarding your proposal:

Research approved: If your protocol has been approved, please note that your project has IRB approval from today for a period of one year and you are free to proceed with data collection. If this study continues unchanged for longer than one year, you will need to submit a Request for Project Continuation form. If this study continues for more than one year and there are changes to the research design or data that is collected, you will need to submit a Request for Amendment to Approved Research form. The IRB reserves the right to observe, review and evaluate this study and its procedures during the course of the study.

Conditional approval: If conditional approval is granted, you are allowed to proceed with data collection provided that the required modifications (see attached) are in place. You will need to submit a Request for Amendment to Approved Research form within 30 days. If this study continues unchanged from that amended protocol for more than one year, you will need to submit a Request for Project Continuation form. If this study continues for more than one year and there are changes to the research design or data that is collected, you will need to submit a Request for Amendment to Approved Research form.

Committee requests further information: Please see the attached document and use it to guide required modifications, then re-submit your request.

This proposal has been denied: See the attached document for an explanation of why your proposal has been denied.

Roger W. Wiemers
Roger Wiemers, Ed.D
Chair, Lipscomb University Institutional Review Board
Appendix Q

AUSTRAL PEAY STATE UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Date: 9/15/2015

RE 15-033: A qualitative and quantitative study of the best practices of colleges and universities for Veteran recruitment and retention

Dear Ashley Spearman,

We appreciate your cooperation with the human research review process. This letter is to inform you that study 15-033 has been reviewed on expedited level. It is my pleasure to inform you that your study has been approved, and meets the criteria for exempt from further review. Exemption is granted on the basis of 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2); research involves the use of interview procedures and does not present more than minimal risk to participants, further the data to be collected is about an institution and not about the participants. You are free to conduct the study at this time.

This approval is subject to APSU Policies and Procedures governing human subject research. The IRB reserves the right to withdraw approval if unresolved issues are raised during the review period. Any changes or deviations from the approved protocol must be submitted in writing to the IRB for further review and approval before continuing.

This approval is for one calendar year and a closed study report or request for continuing review is required on or before the expiration date, 9/15/2016. If you have any questions or require further information, you can contact me by phone (931-221-6106) or email (shepherdso@apsu.edu).

Sincerely,

Omie Shepherd, Ph. D. Chair, APIRB
Kay Darnell Drew is a native of Clarksville, Tennessee and was named Head of School for Clarksville Academy, a PK-12 independent college preparatory school, in 2003. She began her teaching career immediately after earning her B.S. degree in Education from Austin Peay State University. She later received her M.A. in Educational Leadership from APSU. She not only serves the CA community as Head of School, but also the Clarksville Community Health Foundation, Clarksville/Montgomery Co. Economic Development Board and Industrial Development Board. She assists the military community as an advisor to Family Readiness Groups of the 101 Combat Aviation Brigade, of Fort Campbell, Kentucky. She is happily married to Colonel Tom Drew, Commander of the 101st Aviation Brigade, who helps her maintain a perspective on balancing the things that are most important-family, friends, and honor. They are the proud parents of Kaley Drew McCarthy. Her parents, Betty and Ray Darnell taught her the importance of lifelong learning. She enjoys watercolor and oil painting, travel, reading, cooking, and gardening.

Daphne Molnar has earned a Bachelor of Science and a Master’s in Business Administration prior to her pursuit of a Doctorate in Education. She started in the field of laboratory animal science at the University of Michigan in 2000. At present, she is employed at Vanderbilt University Medical Center and is afforded the ability to consult for various contract research organizations. She has earned Certified Professional IACUC Administrator (CPIA), Certified Manager of Animal Resources (CMAR), and Laboratory Animal Technologist (LATG) certifications. She is an active member in the American Association for Laboratory Animal Science (AALAS), Public Responsibility in Medicine
and Research (PRIM&R), Laboratory Animal Management Association (LAMA), and the Laboratory Animal Welfare Training Education (LAWTE) organizations. She has served as a volunteer on multiple committees and affiliate organizations. She has presented varied topics and workshops at conferences such as: AALAS, LAMA, LAWTE, PRIM&R, Tradeline, Turnkey, and the Leonardo Automation Club Symposium in Milan, Italy. She is the daughter of Donald and Deborah Jeffers who have taught her the importance of education and how it can be the key to independence. She enjoys her family, animals, gardening, reading, and travel.

**Ashlee Spearman** earned a Bachelor of Arts in Communication from Grambling State University and her Master’s in Business Administration from Texas A&M University-Texarkana. She started in the field of Education at Texas A&M University- Texarkana in 2006. At present, she is employed at Austin Peay State University and has played a significant role in student success initiatives and research practices over the years. She has served on several committees and is an active member in the community, as well as the Achievers & Scholars mentor program. She is the proud parent of a Yorkie – Poodle named Bentlee. She has always believed in the power of education and is thankful that her mother, Jawanda has instilled such an amazing work ethic, which came in handy during these last few years in the Doctoral program. She is most thankful for the friends, family and colleagues that have poured out words of encouragement and support throughout her life’s journey and looks forward to the many blessings to come.