



How to Help Military & Veteran Families

FOR ACADEMIC ADVISORS AT COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

The military-affiliated student population is increasing at two- and four-year postsecondary institutions, due in part to substantial education benefits made possible by the Post-9/11 and other GI bills, military tuition assistance, as well as state governments and higher learning institutions. In addition, about 2.6 million service members will be transitioning to civilian life in the future and many will use VA education benefits to get the education and training they need for post-military careers.

Academic advisors at colleges and universities face unique challenges in understanding both external policies and institutional processes facing the military-affiliated student population.¹ They are also frequently in positions to effectively address the needs of these students with programs that aid smooth transitions to meaningful college experiences.²

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Did you know?

- » There are many different types of military-affiliated students. On any given campus there are student service members, student veterans, ROTC students, and military family members—each with access to educational benefits.
- » More than 30 percent of non-combat veterans and almost 80 percent of combat veterans are 24 or older when they enter higher education institutions.³
- » Student service members and veterans are more likely than the general student population to be male. Only about 14 percent of these students were female in 2014, compared to over half of the general student population.⁴
- » A higher percentage of military undergraduates have a spouse, a child or both compared to civilian students.⁵
- » Four primary obstacles are prevalent within institutions of higher education that require attention from academic advisors:
 1. Lack of information regarding resources for military-affiliated students.
 2. University processes that are barriers to success of these students are often slow to change.
 3. Concerns of funding programs for military-affiliated students.
 4. The campus environment itself may hinder integration into higher education by reinforcing stereotypes.¹
- » Sixty-two percent of student veterans indicated they were the first in their family to attend college versus 43 percent of civilian students.
- » Student veterans' behaviors mirror non-traditional students with regard to working outside of college, carrying multiple family roles, studying more than traditional students and feeling disconnected from the university.⁶

Practical Applications

- Learn about military culture. The Center for Deployment Psychology offers a free online training course on military culture, which includes a section on terminology and acronyms. You can also visit the Department of Defense (DoD) website for an online dictionary of military terms.
- As soon as possible, help determine students' eligibility to receive Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) educational benefits. This knowledge can assist with discussing available options and resources.
- There are multiple educational benefit programs available to student service members and veterans. The programs available depend upon numerous factors, including the veteran's status, service branch and time of service. Most educational benefit programs for veterans are implemented through the VA; the best-known programs are the Post-9/11 GI Bill and Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment.⁶ Educational benefits are different for active-duty service members and members of the National Guard and Reserves. Many states provide educational assistance, but typically benefits are provided through the Tuition Assistance Program of the DoD.⁴
- The military experience may have provided training for which military transfer credit is appropriate for the incoming student. Be aware of the school's policies and staff involved with granting the credit hours.
- Service members and veterans in the Army, Coast Guard, Marine Corps and Navy have a Joint Services Transcript available to be requested and sent directly to schools. Those in the Air Force request their transcripts through the Community

College of the Air Force. Students using VA education benefits must have their training evaluated for credit.

- Military-affiliated students may be required to deploy during the academic year, which may require the student service member to withdrawal from the institution. By understanding the institutional policies, academic advisors will be better equipped to assist the student with the withdrawal process.¹
- Veterans often enter college after years of service with a large gap in their educational attainment. Some will find that they may need remedial work before becoming fully immersed in their coursework. It is important for faculty to point military-affiliated students towards learning support services that are focused on closing that gap.



Additional Resources

The transition from military life to campus life can be challenging. Facing these challenges, student service members and veterans have shown many positive characteristics, including maturity and focus, leadership skills and respect for authority and procedures. Nevertheless, student service members and veterans must adjust to academic expectations, which are very different from those in the military; balance academic requirements with other responsibilities, such as working and/or supporting a family; and relate to younger, less experienced classmates. Service members and veterans with injuries, whether cognitive or physical, who enroll in postsecondary institutions, must also manage the effects of these wounds. Below is a list of resources to help academic advisors locate support and information to better serve military-affiliated students.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- » *American Council on Education, Supporting Student Veterans*
 - › *College Credit for Military Service, Transcripts for Military Personnel*, www.acenet.edu/news-room/Pages/Transcripts-for-Military-Personnel.aspx
 - › *From Soldier to Student: Easing the Transition of Service Members on Campus*, www.acenet.edu/news-room/Pages/From-Soldier-to-Student-II.aspx
 - › *Military Guide*, www.acenet.edu/news-room/Pages/Military-Guide-Online.aspx
 - › *Toolkit for Veteran Friendly Institutions*, vetfriendlytoolkit.acenet.edu



- » *Military Family Research Institute, Frequently Asked Questions about the Military and Student Service Members and Veterans*, www.mfri.purdue.edu/FAQstudentveterans
- » *Military Family Research Institute, The Landscape in Higher Education Series*, www.mfri.purdue.edu/landscape
- » *MyCareer Advancement Account*, <http://aiportal.acc.af.mil/mycaa>
- » *National Academic Advising Association, Clearinghouse of Academic Advising Resources*, www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse.aspx
- » *Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges*, www.soc.aascu.org
- » *Student Veterans of America*, www.studentveterans.org
- » *U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Post-9/11 GI Bill and Other Programs*, www.gibill.va.gov/benefits
- » *Veterans with Disabilities: Promoting Success in Higher Education*, www.ahead.org/publications

For a printer-friendly version of this please visit www.mfri.purdue.edu/howtohelp



About MFRI

The goal of the Military Family Research Institute (MFRI) at Purdue University is to create meaningful relationships that bring organizations together in support of military families. Working with researchers and practitioners from both the military and civilian communities, MFRI strives to develop outreach and research programs grounded in scientific evidence.



About the *How to Help* Series

The *How to Help* series equips communities to better serve service members, veterans and their families. The series offers effective, evidence-based guidance on how best to help military and veteran families given the unique challenges they face. Each *How to Help* addresses a different segment of that community, such as extended family, friends and neighbors; teachers; early childhood educators; faith-based groups; and professional service providers. We hope that by increasing understanding of the unique stresses, obstacles and opportunities that often accompany military service; we can strengthen communities by building their capacity to better support the military families within them.

Developed by THE MILITARY FAMILY RESEARCH INSTITUTE at Purdue University
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United States Department of Agriculture
National Institute of Food and Agriculture



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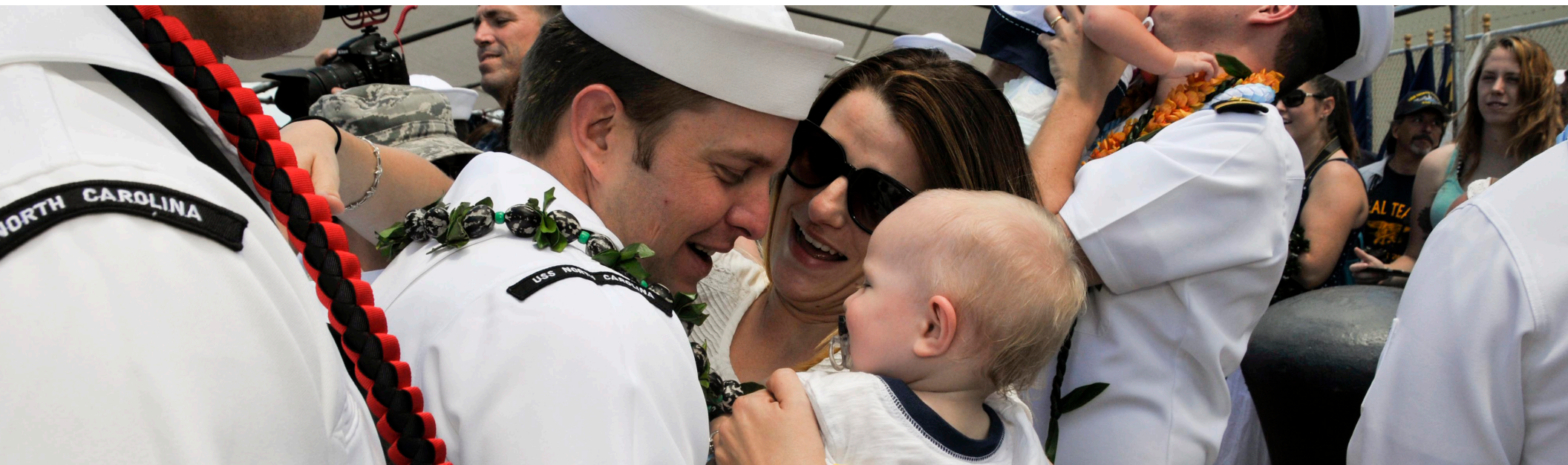
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RESEARCH REFERENCES

- 1 Bucci, D., & Shannon, A. (2012). *Reaching for the stars: Helping student veterans achieve new heights in higher education*. Retrieved from the NACADA Clearinghouse Resource Web Site: <http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/Advising-veteran-students.aspx>
- 2 Bash, L. (2003). *Adult learners in the academy*. Bolton, MA: Anker Publishing.
- 3 National Survey of Student Engagement. (2010). *Major differences: Examining student engagement by field of study—annual results 2010*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research. Retrieved from http://nsse.indiana.edu/NSSE_2010_Results/pdf/NSSE_2010_AnnualResults.pdf
- 4 Military Family Research Institute. (2012). *Frequently asked questions about the military and student service members and veterans*. West Lafayette, IN: Military Family Research Institute at Purdue University.
- 5 Radford, A. W. (2009). *Military service members and veterans in higher education: What the new GI Bill may mean for postsecondary institutions*. Washington, DC: American Council on Education.
- 6 Kim, U., & Cole, J. (2013). *Student veterans/service members' engagement in college and university life and education*. Washington, DC: American Council on Education.



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