


2015

Perceived Academic Needs of Military Veterans Within a For-Profit

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Yvonne Ross

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2015

Abstract

Perceived Academic Needs of Military Veterans Within a For-Profit
Postsecondary Institution

by

Yvonne Rose Ross

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Education

Walden University

December 2014

Abstract

The number of recent U.S. military veterans attending college has increased due to the Veterans Education Assistance Act; however, retention and graduation rates for this population have declined. The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify the experiences and academic needs of recent military veterans as they transition from the military to academic life at a for-profit, proprietary college. In addition, this study identified differences in the problems faced by male and female veterans and explored whether veterans understood the resources available to them as they enrolled in higher education. Schlossberg's transitional theory was the conceptual framework used in this ethnographic case study. Eight female and 8 male military veterans of the Iraq or Afghanistan war were selected for focused interviews through purposeful sampling. The results of the study indicated that regardless of gender, military veteran students at the local college needed time management skills, help with medical and social issues, and career development. While the college was perceived as student centered, another emergent theme was ineffective classroom management. A 3-day professional development program was designed for faculty and staff in order to increase their knowledge of the challenges faced by veterans in transition and to help military veteran students achieve academic success. Future research could expand the numbers of colleges and students represented in the study. This study promotes positive social change by providing higher education faculty members the results of the study so that they can apply the findings in amending current teaching strategies in an effort to provide a comprehensive learning environment for military veteran student.

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Dedication

I dedicate this to all military veterans with the hope that it will help them achieve academic success. I personally want to thank you for your service. I also dedicate this study to all higher educational personnel with a desire to help military veterans become academically successful.

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge God, first and foremost, for providing me with the tools necessary to endure. I would also like to acknowledge my chair, Dr. Mary Ellen Batiuk, for her hard work in helping me to meet my doctoral goals. My second chair, Dr. Kathleen McKee, is acknowledged for her detailed analysis of my project, as well as her strong, encouraging words when I needed them the most. In addition, I would like to acknowledge my children, Morgan and Shawn Ross, who have provided me with tremendous support and encouragement. Without them, I would never have reached this milestone in my life. They have stood by me through countless nights of research and classwork while challenging me to succeed and never give up. It has been through their strength and confidence in my abilities that I have been able to persevere and complete this project. I pray that they will also be able to achieve their highest goals with me as an example. I love you both so very much!

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Section 1: The Problem

Introduction

In June 2008, the Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008 was enacted (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2013). This bill, called the *Post 9-11 GI Bill*, was one of the most significant changes affecting the education benefits provided for U.S. military personnel (U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions, 2010). The Post 9-11 GI Bill has provided military veterans with opportunities to attend higher educational institutions and achieve academic degrees using educational benefits. The Post 9-11 GI Bill offered an increase in veterans' benefits relative to previous GI Bills, including additional benefits to cover educational expenses such as housing and textbook costs, as well as the ability to reallocate unused educational assistance to immediate family members (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2013).

The number of veterans using Post 9-11 GI benefits grew almost 85% over the last 4 years from 2008 to 2012 (Association of Private Sector Colleges and Universities [APSCU], 2013). From 2000 to 2009, military veterans also achieved increased success in obtaining undergraduate college degrees, with the percentage of veterans graduating with a bachelor's degree increasing from approximately 14% to approximately 18% (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2011). While graduation rates increased for military veterans, nonveterans' graduation rate was 36% during the same period (Knapp, Kelly-Reid & Ginder, 2011).

A Senate committee report mentioned that for-profit institutions showed over a 683% increase in the use of veterans' benefits from 2006 to 2010 (Karp, 2012; U.S.

Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions, 2010). Among military veterans in postsecondary academic institutions, 12% attend for-profit schools, 64% attend public institutions, and the remaining 24% attend private institutions (Radford & Weko, 2011). To date, the majority of research regarding veteran students has been conducted at nonprofit public institutions (Ackerman, DiRamio, & Mitchell, 2009; Cook & Kim, 2009; DiRamio, Ackerman, & Mitchell, 2008; Hawn, 2011; Murphy, 2011; Persky, 2010; Rumann & Hamrick, 2010; Zinger & Cohen, 2010). The research conducted at nonprofit public institutions has examined military veterans' academic needs, experiences, social interactions, and preparedness, as well as transitions from military to academic life. With the majority of research addressing military veterans' academic needs at public institutions, it is important to address the needs of veterans who attend for-profit institutions.

Definition of the Problem

Since 2009, military veterans have increased their attainment of college degrees (APSCU, 2013). Nearly 4% of all college students are military veterans (Radford & Weko, 2011). However, of those veterans who attended college from 2000 to 2009, only 18% had completed college and received an undergraduate degree by 2009 (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2011). Compare this to a graduation rate of 36% during the same period for all college students (Knapp et al., 2011).

At the same time that so many veterans are returning to college, a higher percentage of all students are seeking for-profit alternatives for their postsecondary experience (Lipton, 2010). In one southeastern state, about 40% of all undergraduate

students enrolled in postsecondary education attend public institutions, 52% attend for-profit institutions, and 8% attend technical colleges (Knapp et al., 2011). The national average of undergraduate students enrolled in a for-profit institution is 32% (Knapp et al., 2011). With 52% of all undergraduate students enrolled in for-profit, postsecondary education in this particular southeastern state, the attendance at for-profit institutions is clearly higher than the national average of 32% (Knapp et al., 2011). With more military veterans attending postsecondary educational institutions, and with a higher than average number of all undergraduate students selecting for-profit institutions in this geographical region, there is an increased likelihood that veterans will select a for-profit institution to achieve a college degree as well.

With the withdrawal of troops from Iraq and Afghanistan, the number of veterans using the Post 9/11 GI Bill is expected to grow (American Association of State Colleges and Universities [AASCU], 2012). As more veterans pursue academic endeavors, their rates of graduation should be identified and addressed. One problem at a for-profit college in the southeastern United States is a low graduation rate for military veterans. The overall graduation rate for undergraduate veteran students at this for-profit college, calculated on the basis of completing an undergraduate degree in no more than 5 years, is 15% (T. LeGrand, personal communication, December 10, 2013).

The local culture of the college is affected by the large population of military veterans in the area. Sixty-five percent of campus-based students are veterans (T. LeGrand, personal communication, November 3, 2013). The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (2011) reported that 82% of veterans will not complete an

undergraduate degree within 5 years of enrolling in a postsecondary institution. The high percentage of veterans not graduating is a legitimate concern for a for-profit college with a high percentage of student veterans. The setting for the study was a 4-year for-profit college situated in the southeastern section of the United States. With few veteran support services offered at this campus, research identifying veterans' needs was essential.

According to the college website, the for-profit postsecondary institution that the participants attended has been in existence well over 150 years, with 29 additional postsecondary institutions located near the study site. The postsecondary institution studied is located in the southeastern United States, in a city with a population of approximately 140,000 individuals, of whom 15% are military veterans (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). The institutional enrollment is approximately 500 students, with 19% being military veterans who served in the Iraq or Afghanistan war (T. LeGrand, personal communication, June 4, 2013). According to the college website, this postsecondary institution markets itself to military veterans as providing a unique learning environment that may appeal to this population. In addition, several military branches conduct monthly training meetings at this postsecondary institution, promoting a veteran-friendly environment (L. Wilson, personal communication, June 19, 2013).

Rationale

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

In one for-profit postsecondary institution, 65% of students are recent military veterans (T. LeGrand, personal communication, November 3, 2013). The for-profit

institution reported that approximately 74% of veterans leave the college prior to completing an undergraduate degree (T. LeGrand, personal communication, November 3, 2013). This high veteran dropout rate has been a genuine concern for the local for-profit institution. Thus, there has been a critical need to identify the needs of recent military veterans attending the for-profit, 4-year postsecondary institution. Through identification of academic needs for this unique population, this research was aimed to help staff of the institution to understand the depth and breadth of the needs that returning military veterans have.

A low graduation rate within for-profit colleges is a concern for veteran students and the institutional process as a whole (Cunningham, 2012). Powers (2008) recommended surveying students to identify their needs as a first step in addressing student veterans. This information-gathering suggestion was reiterated by other researchers (APSCU, 2013; Ford, Northrup, & Wiley, 2009). Colleges can aim to increase graduation success and become more marketable by understanding the needs of military veterans (Gayheart, 2009).

The majority of military veteran higher education studies currently conducted are at public or private institutions (Ackerman et al., 2009; Brown & Gross, 2011; DiRamio et al., 2008). In addition, current literature aimed at addressing military veterans' needs at public institutions does not directly address the specific circumstances of attending for-profit postsecondary institutions. This project study identifying the needs of military veterans transitioning to academia in a for-profit institution was intended help to close the gap between research studies completed in public versus for-profit institutions. In

addition, with postsecondary institutions addressing diversity, military veterans have largely been ignored by previous research (Livingston, 2009). Through this study, for-profit institutions may be better equipped to address the needs of military veterans transitioning from the military to academia.

This study complements other educational studies that are geared primarily toward community college settings (Ackerman et al., 2009; Brown & Gross, 2011; Cook & Kim, 2009; DiRamio et al., 2008). In addition, identifying the academic needs of military veterans may be beneficial for public, private and nonprofit educational settings.

Evidence of the Problem From the Professional Literature

In 2008, there were approximately 18 million students enrolled in U.S. postsecondary institutions offering undergraduate degrees (Knapp et al., 2011). Of this population, approximately 13.5 million students were enrolled in public institutions and 4.5 million were enrolled in private colleges (Knapp, et al, 2011). Among students at private colleges, approximately 2.5 million students attended not-for-profit institutions and nearly 2 million were enrolled in for-profit institutions (Knapp et al., 2011). Of these enrollments, approximately 3% of all graduates were military veterans (Radford, Wun, & Weko, 2009).

According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (2011), from 2007–2008, public undergraduate institutions distributed nearly 64% of undergraduate degrees that were awarded to military veterans. For-profit institutions awarded 12% of the undergraduate degrees received by military veterans, nonprofit institutions awarded 13% of the undergraduate degrees received by military veterans, and 9% of military veterans

attended more than one institution (Radford et al., 2009; U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2011). During the same period, among graduating nonveteran undergraduate students, 68% earned degrees at public institutions, 15% earned degrees at for-profit institutions, 9% earned degrees at non-profit institutions, and 8% attended more than one institution (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (2011).

Over the last decade, military veterans have exhibited an increased desire to attain a college degree (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2011). The Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts increased the percentage of veterans coming out of the military seeking a college degree to over 84% (APSCU, 2013; U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). There is no question that the number of student veterans pursuing higher education has increased. With the influx of military students, postsecondary institutions must recognize the importance of addressing military veterans' individual educational needs to aid in their academic success.

With the increase in veterans attending postsecondary institutions, graduation is an important concern. In 2009, approximately 16% of veteran college students graduated with a bachelor's degree (U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, 2011). The percentage of nonveteran college students who graduated with an undergraduate degree was approximately 18% in 2009 (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2011). While increasing numbers of students attend postsecondary institutions, the percentage of those who earn a degree have remained stagnant (AASCU, 2012). While there is not a tremendous difference between the graduation rates of veteran and nonveteran students, it is clear that military veterans are not graduating with undergraduate degrees at the same

rate as their nonveteran counterparts. Several studies have identified issues that surround lower graduation rates among military veteran students (Bauman & Davidson, 2012; Cunningham, 2012; Lang & Powers, 2011).

One pilot study of student veterans' success in graduating from public postsecondary institutions found that 31% of veteran students were not successful academically (Lang & Powers, 2011). The researchers in the study randomly selected 200 veteran students from seven universities around the country and looked at retention and graduation rates. The Lang and Powers (2011) study concluded that those who had not graduated reported a lower level of involvement in academic and nonacademic school activities; the goal of the study was to provide a quick look at veterans' progression within higher education.

The unique needs attributed to recent veteran students are now being recognized at postsecondary institutions across the United States. In 2009, the University of Arizona noted a strong 96% retention rate among military veterans after introducing education programs targeting veterans (Bauman & Davidson, 2012). These strong outcomes show that it is critical to identify veteran students' needs to ensure a positive college transition and a better chance of graduation (Bauman & Davidson, 2012).

Studies have confirmed the importance of identifying the needs of veterans. Murphy (2011) conducted a study to look specifically at the needs of student veterans at one public university. This study concluded that military veterans have multiple individual and collective needs when attending postsecondary institutions (Murphy, 2011). Murphy observed that these needs include transitional, social, financial, and

academic issues. Murphy also acknowledged that the “special needs attributed to war veterans who desire to attend college are just now being fully recognized at many college campuses” (p. 3). In addition, student veterans tend to have weaker educational preparation and less understanding of the college environment than nonveteran students (Wurster, Rinaldi, Woods, & Liu, 2013). Overall, there are limited studies identifying the needs of military veterans transitioning from the military to academic life (Bonar & Domenici, 2011).

From the limited research conducted, results include a need for a more supportive environment for, and better awareness of, this population (Arzola, 2012). The value of identifying military veterans’ academic requirements resonates through public as well as nonpublic postsecondary institutions. Little research has been completed regarding this population’s experiences within for-profit institutions. Veterans are a unique population, and it is essential to ascertain what needs must be met in order for them to be successful (APSCU, 2013). Studies have concluded that addressing the needs of veterans is critical to their successful completion of higher education, in addition to reinforcing the need for additional research studies to close the gap in the literature (APSCU, 2013; Bauman & Davidson, 2012). The academic needs of military veteran students attending for-profit institutions have not been studied extensively and are a critical component of military veteran students’ overall success.

Identifying military veteran students’ needs will allow campus support programs to be institutionalized, thus providing a connection from the college to individual veterans (APSCU, 2013; Bauman & Davidson, 2012). Hassan, Jackson, Lindsay,

McCabe, and Sanders (2010) acknowledged that veterans' needs should be "uncovered, highlighted, developed, and nurtured" (p. 31). While this may be a challenge, identifying and addressing veterans' needs will enhance veterans' educational success (APSCU, 2013; Burnett & Segoria, 2009; Ford et al., 2009). In addition, faculty members need to be made aware of the characteristics of veterans returning from the Iraq and Afghanistan wars through faculty training programs (Grossman, 2009; Hollis, 2009).

Identifying the educational needs of recent military veterans is critical to the betterment of society. Murphy (2011) noted in his study that military veterans experiencing college have not been directly questioned about their needs. Given that published studies have primarily been conducted at public institutions, there is a need for research addressing the needs of veterans in for-profit postsecondary institutions. Unless more is known about military veterans attending for-profit postsecondary institutions, veterans will continue to show low graduation rates (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2011). The current literature does not strongly identify the needs of veterans attending for-profit postsecondary institutions. However, the current literature will be used as a basis for this study in identifying issues that military veterans encounter as they integrate into academia.

Definitions

Active duty: Service members who are full time in any branch of the U.S. military are considered active duty (Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2010).

Branch: For the purpose of this study, a branch is a subdivision of the military (Joints Chiefs of Staff, 2010).

Dropout: An individual who has vacated a course of study is considered a dropout for the purpose of this study (“Dropout,” 2013).

For-profit institutions: Unlike nonprofit colleges, higher educational institutions that are managed and governed by private and public organizations are considered for-profit institutions (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2014).

Graduation rate: The number of individuals attending college who complete their degree program within 150% of the anticipated completion time; used to determine graduation rates (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2014).

Military veteran: An individual who served in any branch of the U.S. Armed Forces is considered a military veteran (Lang & Powers, 2011).

Needs: A need is something essential that is required (“Need,” 2013).

Nontraditional students: Learners who did not attend a higher educational institution directly out of high school and are older in age are considered nontraditional students (Cunningham, 2012).

Proprietary institutions: Proprietary institutions are higher educational institutions that are privately owned and run as for-profit businesses (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2014).

Recent military veterans: For the purpose of this paper, recent military veterans are defined as military veterans who served in the Iraq or Afghanistan conflicts (Lang & Powers, 2011).

Reserve: Reservists are “members of the military services who are not in active service but who are subject to call to active duty” (Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2010, p. 239).

Transitions: A transition is any issue that results in a change in relationships, habits, roles, and norms (Schlossberg, 1984, 2011).

Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008, also called the Post 9/11 GI Bill: The Post 9/11 GI Bill offers military veterans educational benefits to include tuition, textbook, and housing financial assistance (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2013).

The purpose of this study was to identify military veterans' academic problems, the understanding of available resources, and potential differences in experiences based on gender as they integrated into academia, and attended a for-profit, postsecondary institution.

Significance

Military veterans have provided selfless service to defend the country and should be afforded every opportunity to be successful. As a community, it is imperative that honor military veterans are honored for their service (Knapp, 2013). Transitioning from military to civilian life should be facilitated by all, including postsecondary institutions (Knapp, 2013).

Higher educational institutions should aim to identify the specific needs of military veteran students. Higher educational institutions can emerge as leaders providing this unique student population with services rightly deserved (Madaus, Miller, & Vance, 2009). It is the responsibility of the schools to do whatever they can in order to serve their students. Therefore, collegiate institutions need to identify specific needs of veterans in an effort to streamline the existing resources, in addition to implementing veteran-specific resources (O'Herrin, 2011).

Further, taxpayers, who are paying for higher educational benefits for military veterans, deserve postsecondary institutions that complete their jobs effectively for the overall benefit of society. With unemployment among military veterans at approximately 60%, society expects military veterans to be afforded assistance in transitioning to the work force (Ostovary & Dapprich, 2011). Assistance in job training, job searches, and resume building are some services that postsecondary institutions can provide for the military veteran student (Ostovary & Dapprich, 2011). Increasing educational attainment for military veteran students has the potential to yield substantial positive social change. This project study may assist readers in better understanding of the needs of military veterans who attend for-profit postsecondary institutions.

Guiding/Research Question

I used three research questions to guide this study in an effort to gain a better understanding of the perceived educational needs of recent military veterans.

RQ1: What problems do returning veterans face as they integrate into academia?

RQ2: Do female and male military veterans experience different sets of problems as they integrate into academia?

RQ3: Do military veterans understand the resources available to them as they interface with the for-profit institution?

With little research conducted at for-profit institutions, there is a clear gap in the literature on veterans in postsecondary institutions, thus justifying the need for this study. The study was conducted at a for-profit postsecondary institution located in the southeastern United States. The study complements other educational research that is

geared primarily toward public community college settings. In addition, the study provides specific information to the local community regarding the educational needs of recent military veterans, as well as professional development opportunities for faculty.

Review of the Literature

The literature review involved the use of the EBSCO databases of Walden University and the study site's Virtual Library. Search terms included the following: *military veterans in higher education, for-profit institutions, veterans' post-secondary institutions, military veteran disabilities, veterans and college students, military veteran transitions, military veteran student needs, teaching post 9/11 students, qualitative studies, post 9/11 GI Bill, transition theory, and Schlossberg's model and military veterans.*

Websites explored for the literature review included the following: Association of Private Sector Colleges and Universities, American Association of State Colleges and Universities, ASHE Higher Education Report, Joint Chiefs of Staff, National Center for Education, National Survey of Student Engagement, U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, and U.S. Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee. The ensuing literature review outlines the conceptual framework of the study, as well as transitional, financial, social, academic, and health issues related to military veteran students attending postsecondary institutions.

Conceptual Basis

The conceptual basis for this study was Schlossberg's (2011) theory of transitions. Schlossberg's (2011) transition theory posits that life's transitions reflect individual

perceptions of importance. A transition that may be perceived as important for one individual may not be perceived as important to a different individual. A *transition* is defined as involving any issue that results in a change in relationships, habits, roles, and norms (Leibowitz & Schlossberg, 1982; Schlossberg, 1984, 2011). Recently discharged military veterans experience the transition from military to academic life by altering routines, roles, relationships, and assumptions. Schlossberg (2011) identified different types of transitions that can be applied to military veterans as they leave the military lifestyle and enter the higher education realm.

A transition can be anticipated, unanticipated, or a nonevent (Schlossberg, 2011). *Anticipated transitions* are major life events that are expected (Schlossberg, 2011). Expected life events are events that one would expect to occur throughout life. Such life events include graduating from high school, getting married, beginning a first job, and having children. In contrast, *unanticipated transitions* are events that are not expected. Unanticipated transitions include unexpected or disruptive events (Schlossberg, 2011). Unanticipated events include divorce, surgery, major illness, and job loss. A *nonevent transition* is an anticipated transition that does not occur (Schlossberg, 2011). Nonevent transitions include no marriage, no promotion, and no children. Individuals' transitional experiences are handled differently based on individual experiences (Schlossberg, 2011). However, it is the altering of routines, roles, relationships, and assumptions that is important.

Student veterans may experience all three transitions upon leaving the routine of the military and then having the freedom of being a student. While transitions take time,

reactions differ across individuals. For some, the process of transition is quick and relatively easy, whereas others take more time and find the process more difficult (Schlossberg, 2011).

Schlossberg (2011) posited that transitions alter individual lives in multiple ways. Transitions change an individual's life, which is why transitions can be positive or negative experiences (Schlossberg, 2011). Individuals need to feel important to others and to have a sense of belonging (Palmer, Maramba & Dancy, 2011). This sense of mattering, or belonging, determines whether an individual is successful during a transition (Ryan, Carlstrom, Hughey, & Harris, 2011). Transition occurs for veterans as they leave the military and enter civilian life, including the realm of higher education (DiRamio et al., 2008). How veterans address the transition from military to academic life is an individual process. Still, some patterns emerge.

According to Schlossberg (2011), the amount of time spent in transition depends on four major sets of resources. These four major sets of resources, as developed by Schlossberg (2011), are known as the *4S System* and are used by individuals coping with transitional issues. Within Schlossberg's 4S System are four categories that are common to all transitions (Sargent & Schlossberg, 1988; Schlossberg, 2011). These four categories are "situation, self, supports, and strategies" (Schlossberg, 2011, p. 48). The *situation* category refers to the individual's situation at the time the transition occurred (Schlossberg, 2011). If the transitional situation has little stress, then coping with the transition may be simple. The second category, *self*, relates to the individual's strength found intrinsically (Schlossberg, 2011). This second category is unique for individuals.

Family, financial, professional, emotional, and social support constitutes the *support* component (Schlossberg, 2011). The support available for individuals going through a transition will also vary. Finally, coping strategies used by individuals comprise *strategies* (Schlossberg, 2011). Individuals, professionals, and researchers may apply Schlossberg's transition model to particular circumstances (Burns, 2010). The 4S System, common to all transitions, can be applied directly to the transition process of veterans moving from military to academic life.

For most recent veterans, the process of shifting from the military to academic life is a major life transition, as it can change relationships, routines, and roles. Several studies have directly related Schlossberg's transitional theory to military veterans' transition from military to academic life. Livingston's (2009) study validated Schlossberg's theory, as it focused on the transition process military veterans experienced in adjusting to academia. With 16 participants, Livingston used Schlossberg's transitional theory to develop questionnaires ascertaining how veterans transition to academic life. This study concluded that some student veterans had a difficult transition from the structured military atmosphere to a seemingly unstructured academic environment (Livingston, 2009). The various types of transitions—anticipated, unanticipated, and nonevent—were confirmed through Livingston's study. The conclusion was that the principles of Schlossberg's transitional theory, as a whole, were evident in the experiences of the participants in Livingston's study.

Ryan et al. (2011) completed a case study involving three veteran students who were transitioning from the military to a postsecondary institution. The researchers used

Schlossberg's transitional theory, specifically the 4S factors, to better understand this unique population. The participants perceived the transition to academia to be temporary; this perception helped them to work through the transition period (Ryan et al., 2011). The study also suggested that some veterans would be better prepared than others to face the transition from military to academic life (Ryan et al., 2011). To effectively serve students who have served in the military, Ryan et al., postulated that institutions should be aware of each unique situation and have the resources available to aid in the transition. Through study of the needs of military veterans, postsecondary institutions will be better equipped to accommodate transitioning military veterans.

Using Schlossberg's transitional theory as a basis, Normandin (2010) uncovered unique factors regarding student veterans' transitional process. This study identified phases of transition including "moving in," "moving through," and "moving out" (Normandin, 2010, p. 57). As individuals move through the transitional process, they reflect on each transition, determine the effects, and then look for resources to help them with the transition process (DiRamio et al., 2008). The transitional process was a guiding factor in Normandin's study of military veterans who were transitioning to the academic environment.

The Normandin (2010) transitional study uncovered positive and negative factors that may affect student veterans' transition from military to academic life. The 11 participants selected had served in the military following September 11, 2001, specifically in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars; were enrolled at a specific postsecondary public institution, and represented a broad range of demographic factors (Normandin,

2010). The results showed that student veterans experiencing the life-changing transition from the military to student life had a more difficult time coping than traditional students did (Normandin, 2010). Normandin, using Schlossberg's transitional theory, identified anticipated events as entering and leaving the military, as well as entering higher education. Unanticipated events included being injured in combat and being discharged early, which were not predicted (Normandin, 2010). Each participant of Normandin's study experienced "unique and individualized transitions from military life to student life" (Normandin, 2010, p. 91). The findings also indicated that all participants experienced adjustments in roles, relationships, and routines as outlined by Schlossberg's transitional theory (Normandin, 2010). Normandin's findings showed that recent military veterans attending a public postsecondary institution had both advantages and challenges during the transitional process. It is clear that transitions are significant in the lives of recent military veterans who choose to attend postsecondary educational institutions.

Schlossberg's transitional theory may provide a basis for gaining information regarding veterans' transition from military to college life. While individuals in transition often feel inadequate in new situations, postsecondary institutions can incorporate strategies to aid in the transition process (Kotewa, 1995). One attribute of Schlossberg's transitional theory is that it can be used in multiple situations (Mims, Mims, & Newland, 2009). Given this quality, Schlossberg's transitional theory was expected to be useful in identifying the needs of recent military veterans when transitioning from military to academic life. Military veterans directly experience transition when moving from the

military to academia. These transitional experiences can be clarified using Schlossberg's theory as a foundation.

Review of Pertinent Literature

Transition issues. Several studies, outlined above, have been conducted regarding transitional issues affecting military veterans as they transition from the military to academic life. Many military veterans struggle with the transition from military to academic life. Livingston (2009) conducted a grounded theory study to identify how veteran students managed the transition from military to academic life. This study, which involved interviews of 16 student veterans and two staff members, indicated that veterans were more mature and focused, were less likely to seek academic support, hid their veteran status, and had considerable financial and social hardships (Livingston, 2009). Normandin (2010) explored veterans' transition experiences, looking at positive and negative effects. As described above, Normandin's study documented the significance of transitions from military to academic life and indicated that military student veterans encountered various types of transitions as they entered higher education.

Other studies have corroborated this finding (Ackerman et al., 2009; Cate, 2011; Jones, 2013). Cate (2011) conducted a study of 26 students that found that 73% of participants noted that the transition from military to college was difficult. The results showed that transition challenges included academics, socialization, and the college as a whole (Cate, 2011). The results of this study verified that identifying veterans' needs aids in the military-to-academic life transition process (Cate, 2011).

Ackerman et al. (2009) also suggested that Schlossberg's transition model was clearly related to recent military veterans' transitions to the academic community. Ackerman et al. interviewed 25 college students who had served in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. The researchers looked exclusively at the transitions veterans experience when moving from the military to academia. The results of the study indicated issues of concern involving the U.S. Veterans Administration as a whole, campus support services, relearning academic skills, mental and health issues, as well as social limitations (Ackerman et al., 2009). The researchers concluded that there was a need for postsecondary institutions to be prepared for the needs of this unique population (Ackerman et al., 2009).

Jones's (2013) phenomenological study focused on three participants in an effort to describe and understand identity development as they transitioned from military service to student life at a postsecondary institution. While the study was small, one theme identified was the challenge of transitioning to academia after a regimented life in the military (Jones, 2013). All of the participants noted difficulty in transitioning to higher education and being able to make independent decisions (Jones, 2013). Jones posited that the transition challenge should be noted at the institutional level and that efforts should be made to improve services for student veterans.

Financial issues. With the introduction of the Post 9-11 GI Bill, veterans gained access to more financial support to pursue educational goals (APSCU, 2013). The GI Bill is a "program set up between the university and the VA that instructs the university to agree to cover a certain amount of the tuition while the VA matches up to half of the

tuition” (Cunningham, 2012, p. 16). Although the Post 9-11 GI Bill provides military veterans with the chance to attend college, there are several negative factors that may affect veterans attending postsecondary institutions. Financial issues have been noted in numerous studies as being of concern (Burnett & Segoria, 2009; DiRamio et al., 2008; Durdella & Kim, 2012; Ellison et al., 2012; Murphy, 2011; Steele, Salcedo, & Coley, 2010).

Difficulty obtaining needed information, as well as differences in tuition rates among postsecondary institutions, often causes confusion for military veteran students, which may hinder their academic success (Cunningham, 2012; Ellison et al., 2012). This red tape is often difficult to understand, resulting in veterans misunderstanding bureaucratic rule changes, which may, in turn, make meeting financial demands difficult (Burnett & Segoria, 2009). Struggling financially, veterans may work longer hours, which could adversely affect their academic success. Durdella and Kim (2012) found that “student veterans tend to report higher levels of work unemployment, and lower levels of income” (p. 122) than non-veteran students. Financial issues include the timely processing of college costs by the U.S. Department of Veterans Administration. Delays from the Veterans Administration regarding payments and paperwork completion is also identified as an issue among veterans attending colleges (McBain, 2010). Cook and Kim (2009) identified acceptance of military training as college credits as a significant issue in their study. The study conducted by DiRamio and Jarvis (2011) concluded that private institutions were 35% less willing to accept military training for college credits when compared to public institutions. With military training not being accepted for college

credits, military veterans may spend additional monies taking courses that they feel are unnecessary or repetitive.

Social issues. In addition to financial concerns, recent veteran students may encounter individuals who cannot relate to their unique experiences and struggles. This culture shock may negatively affect student veterans (Gayheart, 2009). Because most veterans are mature and have more life experiences than younger students, they are considered nontraditional students and may struggle with the culture shock of leaving the rigor of military life and transitioning into the less strict realm of higher education (Cunningham, 2012; Moon & Schema, 2011). *Nontraditional students* refers to students who did not attend college out of high school and are generally older than most college students (Cunningham, 2012). Normandin (2010) noted in his study that military students, who are considered nontraditional, enter postsecondary institutions with different experiences and expectations than traditional, nonmilitary students. These unique experiences and expectations cause some military veteran students to have social issues upon attending higher educational facilities.

DiRamio et al. (2008) studied veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan military conflicts. The participants attended one of three universities and were found to have a difficult time dealing with the overall culture of academic life compared to military life (APSCU, 2013; DiRamio et al., 2008). The study, using Schlossberg, Lynch, and Chickering's (1989) conceptual framework, identified how recent veterans coped with the shift from military to college life (DiRamio et al., 2008). The results indicated that veterans may feel isolated due to the culture shock involved in going from a highly

regimented schedule to freedom in a college setting (DiRamio et al., 2008). This freedom may allow for reflection on their military service as well as their prior and current situations, reinforcing isolation (Cunningham, 2012).

Additional researchers documented that veterans were shown to struggle in relating to students who were never in the military, and peers who were unorganized, and who made derogatory comments regarding the war and the military service as a whole (APSCU, 2013; Cunningham, 2012; Gayheart, 2009). Perceptions of student veterans are important when identifying issues relating to transitioning to college life and culture shock. Several studies identified a perception from student veterans resulting in difficulty relating socially when attending classes with younger students (Bauman & Davidson, 2012; Ellison et al., 2012). Jones (2013) noted that the support from peers was vital for student success. In addition to cultural and social issues, veteran students transitioning from military to academic life also struggle with being prepared academically. Military veterans entering postsecondary institutions need someone who will assist them in the transition to higher education, as well as a more inviting and accessible environment (Madaus et al., 2009).

Academic issues. Ellison et al. (2012) conducted a study citing academic readiness as a concern for veterans transitioning to academic life. The study posited that some military veterans did not feel they were prepared for academic challenges of postsecondary institutions (Ellison et al., 2012). This lack of preparedness may affect the overall experience of veteran students. Through this lack of preparedness, as well as military experience, some veterans were noted to feel labeled or stigmatized by

nonveteran students (Burnett & Segoria, 2009). In addition to veterans' perceptions that they are not prepared academically, several studies have identified issues with the postsecondary institution as a whole.

Veteran students have cited difficult interpersonal experiences with all levels of the higher educational institution (APSCU, 2013; Arzola, 2012). These issues not only extended to the academic culture, but to the institutional culture as well. The National Survey of Student Engagement (2010) report documented that many veterans perceived little support from the campus as a whole. This perception caused the veterans to become less engaged (National Survey of Student Engagement, 2010). Postsecondary institutions have made some changes in an attempt to change the perception of little institutional support.

Some postsecondary institutions give credit for military training; however, it is not necessarily the norm. Many military veterans enroll in colleges where credit is given for prior experience and military training (Bauman & Davidson, 2012). Bauman and Davidson (2012) found that military veterans are drawn to postsecondary institutions that do provide credit for military service. Veteran students have found some program and services offered by postsecondary institutions to be helpful in the transition from military to academic life.

Programs and services offered by higher educational facilities vary from institution to institution. A survey sent to 690 institutions noted that 62% of all institutions that responded provided programs and services specifically for military students (McBain, Kim, Cook & Snead, 2012). The study noted that there was diversity

in how institutions chose to serve military students, and that most of the institutions that responded have academic support available for military students (McBain et al., 2012). Cate's (2011) study of military veteran students found that many have utilized financial aid, the veterans' affairs office, counseling services, advising, and tutoring centers within college departments. While the use of these programs are important, not all postsecondary institutions provide these services.

Active veteran-centered programs help new and returning student veterans to connect with each other to help achieve their academic goals (Summerlot, Green & Parker, 2009). Ford et al. (2009) found that student veterans wanted, and utilized, a Student Veterans of America group available for support. The national organization, Student Veterans of America (SVA), is aimed at aiding military veterans at every step throughout the transition to academic life (Ford et al., 2009). The SVA is primarily for military veterans and immediate families, and helps military veterans, who are students, achieve academic success (Cate, 2011). Gayheart's (2009) study found that there is a need for programs specifically geared for students transitioning from military to academia. Through a case study, Wurster et al. (2013) found that the student veterans should connect with other student veterans in an effort to share similar experiences and challenges. The connection among student veterans would allow students to feel connected to the institution as a whole (Wurster et al., 2013). While not all colleges offer an SVA, or student veterans program, it is an asset to any postsecondary institution.

The transition from the military to civilian life to academia can also be challenging (APSCU, 2013; Arzola, 2012). This transition adds unique stresses that may

affect veteran students' college success, and overall experiences. Hopkins, Herrmann, Wilson & Malley (2010) posited that adult learning continued to overlook veterans who transitioned to college, and revealed that administrators and civilian students may not be aware of the military culture. Unawareness of the military culture could cause some students and faculty to behave in a manner that is unappealing to military veterans (Hopkins et al., 2010). This lack of awareness may provide additional obstacles for military veterans transitioning to college (Shackelford, 2009). Education professionals should understand how military experiences help to form meaning of college student experiences (DiRamio & Jarvis, 2011; Jones, 2013). Lack of understanding of military veteran's academic needs continues to affect higher educational institutions (DiRamio & Jarvis, 2011).

Vance and Miller's (2009) study of 237 surveys provided postsecondary institutions some insight into the lack of formal training for college personnel regarding military veterans, and their disabilities and accommodations. The study found that campus professionals were not prepared to adequately assist military personnel transitioning to higher education with war caused health issues (Vance & Miller, 2009). Vance & Miller suggested that postsecondary institutions should design programs to educate campus professionals on the unique needs of military veterans. Postsecondary institutions should insure an accommodating transitional process into higher education, and ultimately a career path (Kraus, 2012; Vance & Miller, 2009). Jones (2013) completed a phenomenological study of military personnel transitioning to higher education. Jones noted that military veterans make meaning of their military life in a

different way than they make meaning of their academic life. This difference was found to be a challenge for military veterans who were transitioning to higher education (Jones, 2013).

Military veterans bring a unique set of experiences to higher education which should not be ignored. These experiences may be in the form of challenges, not only for the military veteran student, but the institution as a whole (Francis & Kraus, 2012). It is imperative to identify the needs of military veterans who attend postsecondary institutions. Identification of military veterans needs is a critical step in ascertaining how to assist military veterans to be successful in their quest for higher education. Military veterans bring a unique perspective to the classroom based upon their life experiences (APSCU, 2013; Hassan et al., 2010). These unique perspectives include demonstrating leadership, experiential learning, and critical thinking skills which they bring to the classroom (Ackerman et al., 2009). Military veterans have been trained for leadership under tremendous adversity bringing about unique perspectives in the classroom (Branker, 2009). These perspectives are vital to the growth of nonveteran students and to society as a whole. Postsecondary institutions are in a position where they can provide support for military veteran students as well as provide nonmilitary and military students an opportunity to learn from each other's experiences (McBain, 2008). Evaluating Schlossberg's 4S System may help college professionals understand that individual students experience alike transitions differently (Kraus, 2012).

Health issues. Health issues are also legitimate concerns for military veterans attending postsecondary institutions. Approximately 11% - 17% of recent veterans will

suffer acute health and social issues transitioning from military to civilian life, according to recent studies (Murphy, 2011; Ruh, Spicer, & Vaughan, 2009).

Ellison et al. (2012) conducted a focus group study with 31 veterans to ascertain educational needs for students with mental and health issues resulting from military deployment. The results demonstrated a strong need for education planning and access, benefits counseling, transitional re-integration, and health services (Ellison et al., 2012). Good, Worthington, and Alfred (2011) acknowledged that little research existed regarding veteran needs in postsecondary education, and noted that more research was needed to completely understand the overall needs of student veterans. Good et al. (2011) addressed the psychological well-being of student veterans, and the challenges that they encountered in postsecondary institutions. More research addressing military veteran students' needs at a mental and physical level is important.

There is no reliable documentation providing a percentage of disabled military veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan wars who were headed for postsecondary education (Grossman, 2009). However, several studies indicated approximately 40% of military veterans returning from the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts have some type of psychological, or physical disability (Bauman & Davidson, 2012; Church, 2009; Lokken, Pfeffer, McAuley & Strong, 2009).

The Rand Corporation completed a comprehensive study of mental health issues of military personnel in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. The study found that 14% of Iraq and Afghanistan military personnel return to the U.S. diagnosed with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Tanielian, Jaycox, Schell, Marshall, Burnam, Eibner, Karney,

Meredith, Ringel & Vaiana, 2008). The study noted that military personnel are reluctant to seek care for PTSD (Tanielian et al., 2008). Cate's (2011) study found that veterans from the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts reported high levels of posttraumatic stress. However, the military veteran student would need to identify individual mental health needs, as well as details of their psychological and physical conditions, which would help to foster a progressive learning environment (Hulsey, 2010). Many military veteran students are not self-disclosing about potential disabilities or difficulties (Church, 2009). With prior knowledge regarding the psychological and physical needs of veteran students', postsecondary institutions can provide better services to help veteran students become academically successful (Madaus et al., 2009; Sinski, 2012). Psychological issues can be identified in different ways. Many returning veterans experience memory and concentration issues, as well as posttraumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injuries, and depression (Ford et al., 2009; Moon & Schma, 2011). With each student experiencing military service differently, it is difficult to ascertain the required needs. But the reality is that there are a growing number of recent veteran students who attend college with psychiatric disabilities (Ellison et al., 2012). With health issues affecting military veteran students, it is critical that instructors understand the importance of these issues (Sinski, 2012).

Barnard-Brak, Bagby, Jones & Sulak (2011) conducted a study of nearly 600 faculty members. The participants were surveyed regarding their perceptions of student veterans who potentially displayed signs of PTSD (Barnard-Brak et al., 2011). The study found that the faculty perceptions affected the overall success of the student veteran

(Barnard-Brak et al., 2011). The study concluded that training programs be put in place to focus on collaborative understanding of military veteran student's health needs

(Barnard-Brak et al., 2011).

Implications

The purpose of this study was to identify military veterans' academic problems, the understanding of available resources, and potential differences in experiences based on gender as they integrated into academia, and attended a for-profit, postsecondary institution. Within the local community, the results of this study will be provided to additional campus locations to benefit the specific postsecondary, for-profit institution participating in this study. These results will provide additional information to for-profit institutions as a whole in order to assist military veterans pursuing higher education. The results will also be distributed to all levels of the college and made available for other institutions, primarily for-profit institutions, which may find the information beneficial. The implications for this study are twofold. This study will foster better awareness of the needs of recent military veterans and allow for a greater array of programs and amenities to accommodate this population. This, in turn, will give military veterans a greater opportunity for transitional and academic success. By addressing the needs of this diverse population, the college can create and amend military veteran programs and services. These programs would provide a benefit to the veterans, the institution, and society. Possible project directions include a proposal for faculty development to be provided to college instructors. Professional development opportunities would allow

instructors to learn more effective ways to work with military veterans as they pursue higher education.

Summary

In summary, with recent military veterans' increasing participation in postsecondary institutions, it is imperative that specific needs be identified in order to accommodate student veterans' quest for higher education. It is clear from the limited available resources that military veteran students face challenges as they transition from military to academic life. It was the overall goal of this study, through interviews with military veterans attending a specific for-profit, postsecondary institution, to aid in identifying the perceived academic needs of this unique population, as well as noting gender differences in experiences, and veteran understanding of the resources available to them in an effort to ease the transition from military to academic life.

However, in the literature reviewed and examined, it is clear that military veterans face issues when working towards graduation within the higher education realm. The literature showed research being completed at public postsecondary institutions with a definite gap in studies completed at for-profit, postsecondary institutions. A goal of this research project was to provide additional information regarding the problems that military veterans encountered as they transitioned to academia within a for-profit, postsecondary institution. Section two describes the methodology surrounding the study to include a description of the qualitative research approach, participants, site, data collection and analysis.

Section 2: The Methodology

Introduction

This project study examined the academic needs of recent military veterans attending a for-profit postsecondary institution located in the southeastern United States. The literature review demonstrated a lack of information regarding identification of military veterans' academic needs. The purpose of this project was to identify issues that military veterans face, any gender differences in these experiences, as well as veterans' understanding of currently available resources as they integrate into academia. Three research questions guided this study to identify the perceived educational needs of recent military veteran students. The initial research question focused on the identification of problems returning veterans face as they integrate into academia. The second research question addressed whether female and male military veterans experience a different set of problems as they integrate into academia. The final research question concerned whether military veterans understand the resources available to them as they interface with the for-profit institution. This section includes the research design and approach for the study, including selection of participants, data collection, and data analysis.

Qualitative Research Design and Approach

In light of the research questions guiding this study, a qualitative method of inquiry was used for identifying the needs of military veterans who attended a for-profit postsecondary institution. Qualitative research is a method by which researchers examine participants' experiences in depth through the use of a specific research methodology (Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2011). Qualitative research methods consist of interviews,

focus groups, observation, biographies, and content analysis (Hennink et al., 2011). A qualitative researcher attempts to identify issues from the participant's perspective (Hennink et al., 2011). This allows for an understanding of an individual participant's experiences and his or her perceptions of those experiences (Hennink et al., 2011). This interpretative approach was critical in identifying meaning and understanding in relation to the research questions.

Qualitative research is used to develop a deeper understanding based on participants' views and experiences (Creswell, 2009). Researchers using the qualitative method study individuals in a particular setting while interpreting the meanings of experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). This project required me to gather the views of the participants in an academic setting in an effort to bring meaning to the experiences of military veteran students. Within the qualitative study, an ethnographic design was used.

A researcher using an ethnographic design identifies a group of individuals and studies this group in a particular setting (Creswell, 2012). An ethnographic design was selected in an effort to understand and describe a particular experience (Bickman & Rog, 2009). Through this design, the study examined the academic needs of recent military veterans in a postsecondary for-profit institution. Realist, case study, and critical ethnography are three different types of ethnographic design.

Realist ethnography "reflects a particular stance taken by the researcher toward the individuals being studied" (Creswell, 2012, p. 464). The study did not reflect my position as the researcher. *Critical ethnography* is a second research design that could have been selected. Critical ethnography encourages liberation of disregarded groups in

society (Creswell, 2012). These two types of ethnographic design were not selected for the study because they did not meet the project requirements. *Case study*, a third type of ethnographic design, was selected as the best choice for this study.

A case study focuses on in-depth analysis of an activity, experience, or process within a specific time or place (Creswell, 2012). The case study allows for more detail and depth at a particular time and within a specific context (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Through a case study design, I provided an in-depth analysis of military veterans' experiences as they integrated into academia. Studying 16 participants within the case study genre allowed deeper insight into military veterans' perceived problems as they integrated into academia.

The study used qualitative methodology consisting of focused, in-depth interviews of military veteran students centered on identification of academic needs, gender experiences, and knowledge of resources available. In-depth interviews entail one-to-one interaction between the participant and the researcher (Hennink et al., 2011). The purpose of in-depth interviewing in this study was to gain insight into the issues surrounding military veterans attending a specific for-profit postsecondary institution. The in-depth interview allowed for a discussion in which the participant and I could ask and respond to the research questions, as well as react to nonverbal cues including appearance and personality. This interaction created a meaningful partnership while producing a knowledge-based discussion (Hennink et al., 2011). The in-depth interview was vital to gaining insight into military veteran students' perception of academic needs, as well as their academic experiences and knowledge. It was with this insight that in-

depth interviewing was selected in order to gain a deeper understanding of recent veterans' academic needs, differences between the needs of male and female veterans, and veterans' knowledge of resources available for academic success. Within the study, basic demographic characteristics, gender specifics, and the military branch served were identified.

Quantitative research is used primarily when explaining relationships among variables (Creswell, 2012). Through relationships, it can be determined if one variable affects another variable (Creswell, 2012). The study did not address different variables' relationships, as one would in a quantitative study. Therefore, a quantitative methodology would have been less effective and not appropriate for use in this study. In addition, action research could have been used for this study. Action research is used primarily when attempting to solve problems in schools and within the classroom using both qualitative and quantitative methods (Creswell, 2012). The aim of the study was not to solve problems; rather, the goal was to gain in-depth understanding of veterans' academic needs. Therefore, action research would have been less advantageous than the use of a qualitative design. Other research methodologies, such as quantitative and action research, would have provided the opportunity to gather useful information about veterans' academic success. However, in terms of identifying perceived academic needs based on individual experiences, such an approach would have been less effective.

Qualitative research was appropriate in this study of military student veterans as a means to ascertain perceptions of academic needs, experiences, and resource knowledge. The qualitative design also made it possible to enrich the current literature, generating a

primary base of knowledge for further studies on for-profit postsecondary institutions. One goal of a qualitative study is to explore in detail a central issue, which may not be generalized to the entire population (Creswell, 2009). Therefore, in the effort to gain a better understanding of this unique population, this project study methodology was an excellent choice.

Qualitative studies have a large population or participants, some of whom are selected to create the study sample (Hennink et al., 2011). Participants were selected based upon particular traits that provided a deeper understanding of the issues studied (Hennink et al., 2011). This nonrandom approach involved the selection of participants with specific characteristics and experiences that were critical in understanding the military veteran students' academic issues being studied. For this study, I used purposeful sampling, intentionally selecting individuals from a specific for-profit institution to understand their academic needs. Purposeful sampling is based upon sites and participants that can help identify a central experience (Creswell, 2009). In addition, homogeneous sampling was used, allowing for the selection of "certain sites or people because they possess a similar trait or characteristic" (Creswell, 2009, p. 208). The selection included participants who were similar in that they all attended one specific for-profit postsecondary institution and were Iraq or Afghanistan conflict veterans. This project is beneficial to the academic community in offering a means to clearly comprehend veteran students and their perceived academic needs.

Sample Selection

The first phase of the study involved identification of military veterans who had completed at least one tour in Iraq or Afghanistan and were currently enrolled at the selected proprietary school in one southeastern state. This identification occurred through review of college reports obtained by the institution. At the beginning of the study, there were 94 military veterans attending the for-profit postsecondary institution (T. LeGrand, personal communication, January 21, 2014). Of the 94 military veterans attending, all were using the Post 9-11 GI Bill and had served in either the Iraq or the Afghanistan conflict (T. LeGrand, personal communication, January 21, 2014). Therefore, approximately 94 recent military veterans were identified to participate in this project study. I chose a sample size of 16 participants in order to allow for a diverse set of experiences and achieve an equal gender distribution. For the 16 participants, eight male and eight female participants were randomly selected. While this was not a large selection, a deeper understanding of the individual participants was obtained. Qualitative studies often have small participant numbers in an effort to obtain in-depth information regarding participant knowledge and experiences (Hennink et al., 2011).

Approval from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) was required; the postsecondary institutional site did not have an independent IRB review board. In addition, a site participation agreement and signed participant consent forms were obtained. Upon receiving permission from the Walden University IRB (IRB approval #01-06-15-0235569) and institutional approval from the postsecondary institution, a current list of Iraq or Afghanistan war military veterans was produced

through institutional records. This list included contact information and produced approximately 95 names. All students were contacted on January 21, 2015 by the dean of instruction through email correspondence, located in Appendix B. A second follow-up email, located in Appendix B, was sent February 4, 2015 by the dean of instruction.

Interviews with the students were completed after appropriate consent forms were signed (Appendix D), and students' questions were answered prior to participation in order to strengthen the researcher-participant working relationship. A positive researcher-participant working relationship developed due to the assurance of participant anonymity, and confidentiality. Concern for military veterans attending postsecondary colleges was also stressed in an effort to promote overall concern for the betterment of military veteran students.

One-on-one focused in-depth interviews were conducted at the institution at times convenient for the participants (see Appendix C). The interviews, semistructured in nature, provided the participants with questions that were amended as needed during the progression of the interview. A field test of the interview questions was conducted by the dean of instruction and the criminal justice chair, who had been at the college for over 5 years and were both military veterans. They reviewed the interview questions to ensure that they were clear and to provide me with extensive feedback. One-on-one audio taped interviews included open-ended questions, researcher notes, and interview transcription notes. Through this interview process, I sought to develop a deeper understanding of the needs of this select group. This information formed the basis of recommendations for improvements to veterans' programs and services in order to increase success rates

among military veterans. Extra care was taken to ensure anonymity, and ethical procedures were overseen by the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB). Anonymity was ensured, as interview tapes were stored in a secure location only accessible to me. Through the use of pseudonyms, all information identifying the participants was removed from the interview transcripts to ensure individual anonymity. Participants were notified that all information collection, analysis, and reporting was completed with anonymous data, with all participant identifiers removed.

Creswell (2009) reinforced the importance of ethical guidelines as a primary consideration for any research project. Ethical considerations to protect participants' rights included confidentiality and anonymity, as well as assurance that voluntary participation approval was obtained through detailed informed consent forms. In addition, all participants were over the age of 18 and were required to sign an informed consent form outlining the purpose of the study, processes, voluntary participation, benefits and risks of partaking, compensation, confidentiality, and contact information for Walden University, my doctoral committee chair members, and researchers. I provided a copy of the informed consent form to each participant. Participation was voluntary, and no risks of harming participants were identified. In addition, compensation was not provided, and no identifiable participant personal data were made publicly available. The research documents are held on a password-protected computer within a locked office.

Data Collection

Semistructured face-to-face interviews using open-ended interview questions were conducted to collect data for this study. After IRB and postsecondary institutional

approval were provided, a report was generated by the institution identifying qualified participants. An email requesting participant involvement was sent to military veterans who had served in the Iraq or Afghanistan wars and had been identified by the institution. The email was sent by the dean of instruction with directions to contact me. A second follow up email was sent as a reminder. The military veterans who responded to the email were randomly assigned to gender groups through a random mechanism. Random assignment is the process of placing potential participants into groups (Creswell, 2012). A random mechanism allows for the selection of participants without bias (Bickman & Rog, 2009). The random mechanism involved the use of participant names on 2-inch pieces of paper that were folded in half. The pieces of paper were grouped according to gender, with each group independently placed in a hat and randomly selected. The participants were assigned to gender groups by randomly selecting names from a hat. From each of the two gender groups, male and female, eight participants were randomly selected. A total of 16 participants were selected. Random selection allows for selecting participants in a random, unsystematic manner (Creswell, 2012).

Participants were contacted, randomly assigned to gender groups, provided pseudonyms, and scheduled for interviews. A 45-minute face-to-face interviews was conducted with each participant. Interviews were scheduled with respect to the time constraints of the participants. Interviews were audiotaped using a digital recorder. My thoughts and observations made during the interview process were documented in field notes. After individual interviews were completed, all audiotaped information was transcribed into a Microsoft Word document using a personal computer. All data were

reported and summarized with the assurance of honesty and integrity. A summary of my interpretations was e-mailed to the participants for verification and member checking purposes to ensure internal validity. In an effort to triangulate the data, member checking was used. Member checking involved a written draft of the data collected being provided to the participants with a request for authentication (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The participants were provided a copy of the interview transcripts to authenticate in an effort to retain honesty and integrity within the study. During this process, participants were given 2 weeks to read the interview transcript and edit as necessary. Two transcripts were returned with comments, and the transcripts were amended as requested.

An individual interview protocol, located in Appendix C, was used to record information obtained during the interview. This protocol included audiotaping to ensure a detailed record, as well as note taking during the interview (Creswell, 2009). Schlossberg's (2011) transition theory formed the conceptual framework for the interview questions with a focus on obtaining information regarding military veterans' experience in transitioning from the military to academia. The interview protocol was intended to be easily understood, with open-ended questions so that participants would feel comfortable sharing individual experiences.

I hold a chair position for the business department at the postsecondary institution where the study was conducted. In addition, I am a faculty member for the capstone classes students complete prior to graduating with an associate's or a bachelor's degree. Any participant who was a student under the business department curriculum was ineligible for the study.

All participants had the researcher's role explained to them clearly. All information being collected, analyzed, and reported was fully explained, thus establishing a working relationship. The purpose of the study, and that participation was voluntary, was also explained. Participants were not treated differently if they elected not to participate, or if they elected to discontinue the process at any time. The participants were informed that withdrawing from the project for any purpose was an option. All participants will remain anonymous through assigning pseudonyms acknowledging that the data collected will maintain strict confidentiality. The participants received copies of the purpose of the study, confidentiality statements, ethical concerns, and consent documents. In addition, all participants will be provided a copy of the completed project.

Data Analysis Results

The first step in analyzing the data included organizing and preparing it. This included transcribing interviews, and reviewing field notes, while sorting and categorizing the data into similar types (Creswell, 2009). I transcribed each of the interviews using a personal computer and Microsoft Word processing software. I then reviewed the transcript and my field notes documenting emerging themes on each transcript. Utilizing Microsoft Excel spread sheet software I documented each of the participants and their individual responses to each interview question. Sorting through the transcripts I identified emerging themes. The data were categorized according to the interview questions and an organized document of my study results was created.

Exploring and analyzing the data, while reflecting on the overall context, was the second step in analyzing data (Creswell, 2009). I reviewed each transcript no less than

three times to ensure understanding. With each reading I paid more attention to what each participant was saying. I reflected on the transcripts noting the verbal and nonverbal cues of the participants to increase understanding of the interview comments.

Similarities and contrasts in participant's experiences were identified and noted on the field notes and transcriptions. I underlined important words and phrases and wrote notes in the transcript margins to show possible relationships within themes. I continued to note ideas on the transcripts while streamlining emerging themes. With a strong familiarity of the data I was ready to categorize and code the emerging themes.

The third step was to categorize and code the data using emerging themes (Creswell, 2009). This categorization led to the coding system put in place describing the categories or themes identified. The initial coding identified several themes within and written on each transcript. I narrowed the themes to no more than seven combining several similar themes. Refining the themes provided a clearer focus on the categories. The codes were descriptive in nature in an effort to best describe the participant's perceptions. The refined codes were documented in a Microsoft Excel spread sheet software program in an effort to stay organized and keep track of the themes. The codes were listed in the order of the interview questions allowing for a gender and overall comparison of the data results. Codes were continuously revised until I felt that all of the concepts were classified and no additional categories could emerge.

The final step was to interpret and report the data (Creswell, 2009). The analysis, understanding, categorizing and coding of the emerging themes helped with the interpretation of the data. Interpretation encompassed a review of the findings as it

related to the research questions, personal reflections, limitations, and suggestions for future research. The three research questions guided this study in an effort to gain a better understanding of the perceived educational needs of recent military veterans. The first research questions asked what problems returning veterans faced as they integrated into academia. The second research question examined if female and male military veterans experienced a different set of problems as they integrated into academia. The third research question asked if military veterans understood the resources available to them as they interfaced with the for-profit institution. The study was built on the findings from the research questions.

Data reporting included tables and detail rich narrative discussion. A narrative discussion clearly outlines the results of the data analysis (Creswell, 2012). In addition, narratives drawn from field notes, interview transcripts and other materials allowed for readers to think and feel with a story (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Examples from the interviews were utilized relating them to the themes previously identified.

Sixteen participants, eight female and eight male, were interviewed. The participant demographic data indicated the following characteristics of the population ($N = 16$). The sample population was equally distributed in the gender ratio ($n = 8$ males, $n = 8$ females). The sample population included members of the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corp branches of the military. The largest military branches represented were the Navy and the Army respectfully. An equal number of females and males were members of the Army ($n = 6$) and the Marine Corps ($n=2$). However, one more male

than female participants were members of the Navy ($n = 7$). Only one Air Force member was represented by a female. This information is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

Participant Population Demographic Data—Gender and Military Branch (N = 16)

Branch	Females	Males
Air Force	1	0
Army	3	3
Marine Corps	1	1
Navy	3	4

The average time served in the military varied greatly among genders. Females had an average of 4.875 years serving in the military with 10 years being the longest served. Males, on the other hand, had an average of 11.5 years serving in the military with half of the male population serving 14 years or more. Of those service years, six female participants served in the Iraq conflict and three served in the Afghanistan conflicts. Only one female served in both the Iraq and the Afghanistan conflicts. In contrast, all of the males served in the Iraq conflict and four also served in the Afghanistan conflict.

In terms of the length of time participants took leaving the military prior to attending the college, the distribution was skewed from several weeks to ten years. Approximately 3.5 years was the average time the female participants were out of the

military prior to attending the college. The male participants were out of the military, on average, almost 7.5 years.

The interview consisted of four main sections with sub questions. The four main sections related directly to the research questions being studied. The four sections investigated included participant's current college experiences, military to higher education transition, student experiences on campus, and college experiences. The first main section primarily addressed research questions one and two and discussed participants' current college experiences.

Interview Questions

Interview Question 1a. Interview Question 1a asked participants why they decided to attend the college. The themes identified included convenience; the school's reputation for being military friendly, student centered, and career oriented; and being referred by friends. Convenience referred to the location of the college and its convenience to the participant. Student centered included participants belief that the college, faculty, and staff provided assistance to directly help the student to be successful. According to Cubukcu, teaching with a student centered model "focuses on the students' responsibilities and activities in the learning process which takes into consideration the students' interests, demands, and needs" (2012). According to Military Advanced Education Magazine (2013) a military friendly college provides students with data about colleges that assist military students. Career oriented referred to the college providing curriculum directly related to obtaining a career. The college website promotes the

college as a career, military friendly college utilizing the student centered approach, which is what brought the participants to enroll in the college.

Sixteen participants (three females and three males) found the location of the college to be convenient and military friendly. Janet decided to attend the college “because it was convenient to where I live.” Shawn stated that the college accepted transfer credits and “was close to my house.” Morgan noted that the college was near her house and had the Health Services career program. Susan attended the college because of convenience, transfer of credits, and the fact that it had a day care for her child. Don noted that he attended “because it was recommended” by his military veteran friends. Ann felt that the college was “a military friendly school and they had good reviews.” Marie stated she attended “because they did say they were military friendly and veteran friendly” with regards to how they treat military veterans and the educational process. Some participants found it important to attend a college that was identified as friendly to the military veteran population.

Four females and one male found the college to be student centered. Mark cited that “it was a small environment [and] the curriculum...was very focused instead of wasting your time with a lot of extra things that I had no interest in pursuing in life.” Mark was interested in the career oriented aspect of the college and felt that this helped the student centered approach. Becky thought the college seemed smaller and not heavily populated and that “the staff and the faculty were more tight knit.” Becky also felt that if she was to attend the college the faculty and staff would know her name and not just consider her a number. Becky went on to state that the college “was more focused on the

student and helping them succeed.” Janet felt the “student to instructor ratio for me was perfect.” She also felt that she “wouldn’t be micro-managed either so it was a great fit for me.” Janet felt that being able to complete her work independently within a small classroom was key to her receiving the student centered approach by the college. Being a student centered college was important to half of the female participants.

Four females and one male found the college to be oriented towards a specific career. Michael noted that the “program curriculum was really compatible to the courses I’ve already completed. Therefore, a lot of my college credits transferred over from former universities and the police academy.” Cheryl noted that “it was career based and it focused on what I wanted to do.” She continued to point out that she “wanted a private school where I could have one on one time with the instructor and the instructor actually knows my name.” Marie noted that some veterans told her not to attend yet she “still chose to come because they had the criminal justice field.” Charles, Marie, and Rose selected the college because it had the Health Services career program. Half of the female participants selected the college based on the career programs offered.

In contrast, no females and five males selected the college due to a referral from friends. Charles noted that “a friend referred me to the college.” He went on to say that he was going to attend a different institution but that this college was more convenient. Don stated that he had friends at a different campus that provided him with “good information about the college.” Jake attended the college “because a friend of mine told me about it.” John felt that with his busy schedule “it would be the right institution for me because they offer a lot of night classes for the working student.” John also had a

“friend that was a student here and she said nothing but good things.” Ross “talked with somebody who used to be on the faculty here...and it sounded like something that would fit with my schedule.” It is apparent that the male participants utilized referrals from friends to guide their decision on what college to attend.

The results indicated that males were more likely to select the college based on friend referral rather than its convenience, military friendliness or student centeredness. In addition, females were more likely to select the college oriented towards being student centered and availability of a specific career. The college should continue to focus efforts on being identified as military friendly and centering on the overall success of their students in an effort to attract and retain military veterans.

Interview Question 1b. Interview Question 1b asked participants to describe their experience at the college. The results of the participants’ experience at the college identified three main themes and two additional descriptions. The main themes describing the college experience included “good,”- “great,” and “enjoyable.” All but two of the participants selected one of the three themes. The other two participants, one female and one male, selected “mixed feelings” and “enlightening” respectfully.

Three females and three males felt that the experience at the college was good. Don’s experience was pretty good as he felt “the advisors are willing to work with you. The professors are willing to work with you. You get a lot of face-to-face training.” John and Jake felt the experience was good. John noted that if he had questions “I always had help, or [was] guided to go and get the right answers that I needed for anything.” Ann felt that it took “quite a while to meet people and get acquainted with financial aid

and student services so it's been pretty good." Morgan described her experience as good, noting that "teachers give out their cell phone" and that "other colleges don't have round discussions" within the classroom. She also noted that she likes the fact that she can interact with the deans which was different than her experiences at other institutions. Morgan compared the fact that instructors and deans were readily available to speak with her about her classes to her superiors in the military who were also available to speak with her regarding military issues.

Two females and three males found the experience to be great. Charles thought his "overall experience [was] pretty awesome." He went on to state that he had no conflicts with his instructors and that the work was challenging. Mark found the school to be great "because I'm inquisitive and people always take the time out to answer the questions...and to help you achieve those answers." Shawn felt that "it's a friendly school and friendly people" and the experience had been great. Becky felt her experience had been "really great." She noted that she "had a fear that I wouldn't be able to adapt" but she was doing the best that she could. Janet felt her experience was wonderful as "the instructor's work with you...they have work study...child care services are here [and] it's affordable." Rose felt her experience was great until last semester which found the institution difficult to work with regarding her health issues. This comment will be discussed further in a later discussion.

In addition, two females and one male stated that they enjoyed their college experience. Michael said "I really enjoy being here." Cheryl enjoyed her college

experience noting that “peers are friendly [and] there is not a lot of congestion... it’s just right.” Susan also enjoyed school and thinks “it’s a good school.”

Ross described his experience as enlightening “on how different the interaction is in the civilian setting of college. Compared to what my military setting interacting with people.” He went on to note that it was enlightening to him to see the way the students attitudes were compared to the military. Marie gave mixed reviews about her experience as her first semester was prior to being on active duty and she had plenty of time for her studies. She went on to comment that “when I came back on active reserve is where I had run into problems with the institution.” She noted that not having as much time for her studies, while being on active duty, contributed to her challenging experiences. In addition, Marie noted that some instructors were not willing to work with her when she had to miss class for required military training. The majority of participants found their college experiences to be satisfactory which is important in attracting and retaining military veteran students.

Interview Question 1c. Participants were asked if they felt their military experiences affected their experiences as a college student. Seven females and seven males felt that their military experiences affected their college student experiences. Three females and two males did not feel that their military experiences affected their college experience. Two females and one male both agreed and disagreed that their military experiences affected their college experiences. However, the majority of the participants acknowledged that it did affect their college experience.

The central themes that military experiences affected college experiences included the fact that the military had improved academic and career focus, as well as, time management skills. The military also helped establish leadership traits, and improved social issues. The participants also identified military experiences which negatively affected their college experiences such as medical and social issues.

The academic and career focused qualities include research, oral presentations, and group projects. Don felt the military experiences gave him the ability to “learn more how to do research, be able to talk to people, [and] hold presentations...public speaking.” John felt his military experience graded him on a higher standard than college. He felt that the military gave him “a better chance to always want to strive to do your best in everything that you do. Even when it’s challenging you got to take the extra steps to make sure that you finish on time.” Mark felt the military made him “realize that I wanted more than what I had.” He noted his military experience allowed him to see the world and “it helped me to know that I wanted [something] bigger than to go back home and living life.” Michael stated that he enjoyed “doing presentations and group projects as those were things [that] reminded me of the military.”

Becky also felt the military affected her academic and career aspirations. She felt that “when it comes to discussions I feel like my thoughts and my ideas are a little bit more educated.” She went on to say that sometimes she does not speak up during class because she felt “like it’s going to take so much more effort to try to explain myself and it’s just going to fall on deaf ears.” Marie felt that all of the students were “learning at the same time [and that] nobody’s too far ahead of the other person.” It was in this way

that Marie did not think that the military experiences affected her college experience. She felt there was no difference between military veterans and nonmilitary veterans in regards to her military experience and her college experience. However, military veteran participants felt that the military provided them with academic and career focus that were not necessarily present in nonveteran students.

Time management focused on balancing work-life-school issues, as well as completing assignments on time. Charles believed that the military experiences affected his college experience by helping him value completing assignments on time “instead of to wait or even procrastinate on doing stuff. [To] go ahead and get it done.” On the other hand, Don’s military experience left him with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) which he felt had a negative effect on completing his work on time. He stated that “I do get it done on time [with] a little bit more stress.” Ross felt that his military experiences affected his college experience by making him “better prepared for the scheduling of college. What’s the word...perseverance?” Shawn also felt more discipline “when it comes to showing up to class on time and getting my work done.” Ann found that her military experiences helped her to “prioritize and juggle work and school and being a parent.” Susan felt that the military experience made her college experience better “because I’m not tardy for class. My assignments are always on time.” Participants felt that the military had provided them with time management skills that affected their overall academic success.

Leadership traits were identified from The Intellectual and Leadership Center of the Air Force known as Air University. The Military Strategic Leadership Competencies,

Competency Models, and Skills identified leadership traits that were relatable to all military branches. The leadership traits identified by the participants included comradery, maturation, integrity, discipline, determination, and initiative (Air University, 2014). Charles believed that his military experiences affected his college experience “because it taught me to take the initiative.” instead of to wait or even procrastinate on doing stuff. [To] go ahead and get it done.” Janet felt that many things she learned in the military she could apply to college. She identified camaraderie and cohesiveness; and noted that “being in the military you have to be punctual [and] be on time.” Cheryl listed several ways the military affected her college experiences. The list included “integrity; not procrastinating; discipline; attentiveness.” Rose noted that the determination the military taught her helped “to see it through...pushing through because I don’t want to ever fail.” Susan noted that the military instills “respect for your teacher. Respect for your students and other students.” Some participants felt that the leadership traits taught by the military helped them to stand apart from nonveteran students.

Participants also identified medical issues (both physical and mental) that affected their experiences as a college student. Don felt the military provided negative experiences in staying on task due to his medical issues. He noted that “being a person with PTSD and adjustment mood disorder, sometimes that can have an effect on school work and trying to accomplish [assignments] on time.” Rose described the difficulty of concentrating “because of the medication and the health issues that I’ve been having mentally and physically. Memory lapses, and stuff like that – it’s been hard.” She also noted that the medical issues were directly related to being in the military.

In the same way, social issues as an outcome of their military experiences also affected the participant's social interaction with nonveteran students. Michael believed his military experiences positively affected his college experience. However, he cited "when students in the class begin talking a little bit out of control" it is an area of concern. Michael went on to explain that "I'm accustomed to the orderly fashion where you either raise your hand or you stand to speak. There were times when that became a little over whelming." He went on to note that students that spoke out in class and interrupted was overwhelming to him as he was used to the military structured environment. In addition, Becky discovered that relating to other students who are younger and have different life experiences to be difficult. She felt that "a lot of people they just know what's on the TV and they don't really know on the inside what's really going on. So I feel like for me and my perspective I do kinda know a little bit more." Marie also agreed with Becky in stating that "we're the older ones in the classes and we have a little bit more life experiences" which made her feel awkward. Participants felt strongly that their military experiences affected their ability to socially interact with other students. It was clear that some participants found it difficult to relate socially to nonveteran students.

One female and one male strictly stated that their military experience did not affect their college experience. Jake did not feel that his military experience affected his college experience "because the military is all about out of the classroom type things. So what I did in the army didn't prepare me for college." Jake felt that middle and high school prepared him for college through learning things. He went on to state that "the

military is all about being out and doing something with your hands. Participating in live exercises.” Morgan also did not see the military experience as affecting her college experience noting that she didn’t “see a connection between college and the military. I learned to live without the military once I got out.”

Interview Question 1d. Question 1d asked participants if they felt their military experience adequately prepared them for college. All female participants agreed that the military experience did adequately prepare them for college with two participants also selecting, and discussing, the areas where it did not adequately prepare them for college. In contrast, six male participants felt they were prepared for college, and two male participants did not feel that they were prepared for college due to their military experiences.

Jake felt the military experiences he received did not prepare him for college as “the military is all about out of the classroom type things.” Mark also did not feel the military adequately prepared him for college. He explained that “it’s the life outside of the military that they don’t prepare you for. You’re trained to be in the military but once you’re out you have to learn how to deal with family [and] with non-military people.” He also felt that there was a language barrier citing that there are “different languages that you use besides the military.” Mark went on to say that he received only a small portion of the transition program provided by the military. He noted that the military was more “comradery or on the job training type deal” and that to “pull out a book and read through the manual didn’t happen a whole lot” while in the military. Becky also felt the military did not prepare her for college because nonveteran students have a different

mindset. She explained “I have friends and family who have served and there are things that are way more important than what Beyonce is doing on TV. It’s not worth even entertaining because to me that’s just stupidity.” Becky went on to state that she thought she would “probably be like them [civilian students] if I didn’t have life experiences” from the military. The central themes, as in the previous question, were improved academic and career focus, time management skills, and leadership traits. Medical and social issues also affected the participant’s preparation for college.

Charles felt the military experiences prepared him for college “with taking the initiative and not waiting. Taught me how to manage my time more wisely [and] more efficiently.” Don noted the military prepared him for college by giving him “the keys to be on time to school. To take directions and instructions.” John felt it “helped because you got to be serious about what you do and think.” He felt that it was important for him to take advantage of the “opportunity to go to college after military.” Michael thought that the military helped him to be more tolerant and “prepared me mentally knowing that I’ve experienced other cultures.” Ross believed that the military prepared him for college through “time management [and] the attitude that once you start something [to] complete it.” Shawn felt that the military provided him with “an all-around view of how to handle different situations [and] how to solve different problems.”

Ann noted that the military “helped with being able to do work and school. It kind of helped with migrating into the working world and going to school at the same time.” In that way the military assisted her in preparing her for college. Becky believed that the military prepared her for college by providing her with the ability “to handle

stress and to ask somebody” if she needed assistance. She felt that she was a classroom leader and “people want to be on my team when it comes to doing things” and felt that the military provided her with that leadership trait. Janet felt that the military guided her “straight into adulthood with some structure. That way when you come to college you already have that structure established.” Cheryl felt that the military prepared her for college as she “had to actually talk to customers or military personnel and civilians. However, she also felt that the military did not prepare her academically. Marie stated that in the military “we do sit in classes from hours and learn and take notes and stuff like that. It’s almost the same thing as college except we don’t have to write so many papers for each course.” Morgan felt the discipline was the only way her military experience prepared her for college. Susan felt the military adequately prepared her for college through being prompt in class and with assignments as well as respect for others. The majority of the participants felt that the military did prepare them for college. The results indicate that leadership traits affected males more than females with academic and career focus and time management skills also affecting college preparation.

Current college experiences perceived by the military veteran student participants identified how the college was selected, experiences at the college, and being prepared for college. The participants identified that the college was selected primarily by referral, military friendly status, student centered, and career oriented. It is important for the campus community to be aware of the participant’s selection process in an effort to attract, and retain military veteran students. Participants’ discussions about their college experience were overall positive. The campus needs to be aware of the participant’s

overall college experience in an effort to continue to provide a positive college experience for military veteran students. The majority of participants felt that their military experiences affected their college student experiences. Improved academic and career focus, time management skills, established leadership traits, medical, and social issues were all identified as areas where the participants perceived the military experiences affected college experiences. The current college experience questions shed light on research question one and two regarding problems returning veterans face as they integrate into academia, and any gender differences.

It is critical to share the study results to all faculty and staff to ensure a better understanding of the perceptions of military veteran students. Through the projected faculty development program, faculty and staff will understand how military experiences affect college experiences. This will allow for faculty and staff the opportunity to continue to amend current strategies in an effort to help military veteran student's to be successful in academia. Finally, the participants overall felt they were prepared for college through their military experiences. However, several participants identified areas where they were not prepared for higher education. Ensuring that faculty and staff are aware of these issues will allow for some military veteran students to be more prepared for higher education. It is through the project faculty development program that the campus as a whole will have an increased understanding of the perceptions of the military veteran student participants which will allow for faculty and staff to revisit and improve upon current strategies.

The second main topic investigated the participants' transition from the military to higher education. The sub-questions looked at challenges, support, perception, and college responses to military experiences; as well as campus support services, and the nature of positive transitions. The first subquestion asked participants to identify the challenges they encountered as they transitioned into being a college student. The main themes identified included finances, time management, academic process, class management, and self-confidence.

Interview Question 2a. Question 2a asked participants to identify challenges encountered as they transitioned into being a college student. Finances, time management, academic process, class management, and self-confidence were identified as being challenging. Finances included veteran education benefits and personal financial issues. Time management focused on balancing work-life-school issues, as well as completing assignments on time. The academic process included college expectations and the process of enrolling, registering, and other paperwork affiliated with attending college. Class management included discipline, structure, and nonserious students within the classroom. Self-confidence included fear of the unknown, increase stress, apprehension, and adaptability.

Three female participants and no male participants identified finances as a challenge. Ann noted that finances were a challenge as "when I got out of the military I was no longer working and the only thing that I was getting was a GI bill." Janet found that finances were a challenge and that the college had child care which was "very affordable."

Three females and five males identified time management as a challenge encountered as they transitioned into being a college student. Don felt “having a job, family life, trying to find ways to balance all that” was a challenge. Jake felt that “one of the biggest challenges is that I have a full time job and balancing work with classes and required homework and papers... [is] the biggest challenge. Juggling all of that at once.” Mark’s time management challenge was to “learn how to take care of family here, go to class here, do practice here, [and] volunteer here.” “Dealing with life and school at the same time” was a challenge for Shawn as he transitioned to higher education. Cheryl’s challenge in transitioning from the military to higher education was time management. She stated that she was “used to waking up at 4:30 in the morning.” Being in college Cheryl did not have to get up early and found managing her time to be difficult. Charles felt that he had to “study more than in the military. In the military they train you for what you’re doing and give you the courses so it comes a little easier than being introduced to something new.” Michael found “being to class on time [and] completing your assignments on time” to be challenging as he transitioned from the military to higher education. Not having the military structure made it difficult for him to be prompt and meet deadlines. Michael found it difficult to manage his time independently of the military. It is clear that time management was a challenge for the participants as they transitioned into becoming a college student.

Four female and six males identified the academic process as a challenge. Becky stated that “understanding the process again and knowing that if we are talking with someone and give somebody the paperwork [that] they’re taking care of it or what’s the

next step for us to do.” She acknowledged that the military constantly tells them what to do and she was unsure what to expect when starting college. Rose noted that the requirements of the school had changed providing her with the challenge of “more clinical work and more tedious...anatomy and stuff like that. It’s a little more time consuming.” Rose found the academic process to be challenging as the process changed during her time at the college.

One female and two males found class management to be a challenge. One of the challenges Don experienced was learning “the difference between the atmosphere of the military where you have that discipline and you come to your other peers in college and some are a little bit disciplined and you have to learn to accept that and adapt.” Don found the instructor’s inability to manage the class for student’s not disciplined to be difficult. John’s challenges included students that “didn’t take the education as seriously as older students.” He went on to state that being around others who are not taking the classes as serious as the older people was a challenge. Mark noted that “learning how to speak with people that don’t understand the military lifestyle” was also a challenge. He felt that some words he was accustomed to saying in the military were not always understood by civilians. Mark found it challenging to learn how to speak differently. Susan was challenged by the fact that “there’s less structure in the school” acknowledging that she misses the military structure. She felt that the classrooms were not managed as well and there was little respect for teachers and other students. Some military veteran participants felt challenged by the lack of a strong managed classroom.

With the military's rigid structure and respect requirements, some participants felt the lack of structure in the classroom setting to be a challenge.

Three females and two males noted that low self-confidence was a challenge as they transitioned into being a college student. Becky felt that "the biggest thing too, for me, I was scared of failing." Without knowing what to expect, she was concerned that she would not be successful. Marie, who is still currently serving in the military, felt that "doing my duty and coming to classes [causes] strain on both myself and my unit" and that this was a challenge as it increased her stress level. Charles noted that the unknown was also a challenge referring to it as "a different side of life so to speak." Low self-confidence was a challenge for several participants as they transitioned to college from the military.

Generally females found finances to be a major challenge while males identified time management and the academic process as their main areas of concern. Gender differences in how participants rated class management or self-confidence issues were not apparent.

Interview Question 2b. Participants were asked if they felt they received support from the military, college, family members, or friends as they transitioned to the college setting. All but one female received support either from the college, family, or peers. One female felt that she received no support overall and cited the military as definitely being unsupportive. She felt the military misled her by promising her a job once out of the military. She was unable to obtain employment which led her to attend college. All of the males agreed that they received some sort of support as they transitioned to

college. The support systems included the college, military, family, other students, and employment.

Five of the eight female participants and seven of the male participants felt support was provided by the college. Charles felt that “the majority of my teachers have been quite supporting.” Don agreed noting that the campus advisors “give me that encouragement because they’ve been there before. It’s all good to know that other people have experienced the same things.” John felt the college supported him “because we have the veteran’s center here... and it’s very veteran friendly.” Michael felt “the advisors, the deans, and even some of the students assisted me at times.” He felt his expectations were exceedingly met. Ross noted that “all of the teachers are always willing to help you with the classes and help you understand everything.” He went on to state that help and additional resources were available. Ann felt support was provided by the college “in terms of having people take care of my child while I’m in school.” Becky felt “completely overwhelmed with the amount of support” she received from the college. This positive college support was mirrored by Janet who felt support from the college when it opened up the veteran’s center. She also noted that “a lot of instructors are veterans and...it’s that instant camaraderie – that instant brotherhood – sisterhood.” A few students felt that the school was not supportive. Marie stated “as far as the school you know, they sound concerned but I don’t think it’s a priority of their concern.” Marie noted that people at the college acknowledged that items needed to be fixed but nothing was done. She stated “I don’t really have the time to sit here in their face every day and

say ‘hey what’s the status of or what do I need to do.’” The majority of the participants felt the college was supportive of them as military veteran students.

None of the females and only one male participant felt any support was received from the military. Morgan said “it feels like the military don’t give you no kind of support.” She went on to say that she had to learn thing on her own and was unable to find employment upon leaving the military. Charles felt that he received support from everyone in the military with the exception of one individual. The majority of participants did not mention receiving, or not receiving, support from the military in their academic journey.

Three female and three male participants felt they received support from their family. Don noted that “the support I have from family members, my wife [and] kids...help me a lot for my issues.” Jake stated that “my family was really supportive of me going for my bachelor degree in criminal justice.” Susan felt her “husband and my family” provided her support for going to college. Both Don, Jake, and Susan found support for their academic journey among their family members. Mark, on the other hand, found that “family has been one of the hardest things to adjust to as far as college” and noted that the transition was difficulty for his wife who was not supportive. He went on to say that his wife was used to a steady income from the military which was absent when he returned to school.

One female and one male received support from other students and one male participant felt support was provided by their employment. Jake explained that he had strong support from his employer stating “I’m in law enforcement so they were – when I

talked to them about an achievement certificate, they're really supportive and their like 'way to go'." Support from peers and co-workers were acknowledged with a few participants.

The participants definitely felt support from the campus community as they continued their education. The campus community included instructors, advisors, and additional support staff. Some participants found support from the military, family, peers, and co-workers. It is clear that the military veteran participants had support systems in place as they transitioned to higher education.

Interview Question 2c. Question 2c asked participants if they felt their military experience primed them to perceive college differently than other students. Six females and all eight of the males believed their military experience did dispose them to perceive college differently than other students. One of the two females felt that she perceived college the same as a regular student. Of those that did feel their military experience primed them to perceive college differently than other students, several themes emerged. The main themes included being more serious and career focused, more mature level of interaction, having more sophisticated leadership traits, possessing greater appreciation for being given the opportunity to attend college, and having no financial strain.

Three female and six males felt they were more serious about their education than other students. Charles felt his military experience "gave me more insight of who or what I wanted to do with my life." The career focus, instilled in him by the military, allowed him to feel that he took his education more serious than other students. Don felt the "military gave me a broader view of what to pursue and more insight into what

business or companies out there are looking for in college students.” He felt this broader view provided him “an advantage over other students.” Through his military experience, Don felt that he was able to look at companies differently than other non-military students. Michael noted that being in the military and in college allowed him to “successfully complete the mission.” He felt this determination to succeed was based on his military experience which allowed him to perceive college differently than non-military students. Ross felt that the military allowed him to “take it [college] more serious. I think that if I’m going to come to college and I’m going to learn than I need to be here every week.” He felt that the military provided him the opportunity to be punctual as well as more serious than other students. Ross felt that his military experience provided him with the determination to be more serious about his education. He went on to say that other students did not have the drive to be a serious student who attends class regularly and in a timely fashion. Becky had attended college prior to, and after, joining the military. She felt the military provided her with life experiences other students were not afforded. She stated that some students attend college and “they don’t even know what they want to do yet. They haven’t experienced the world yet. They haven’t seen some things. They haven’t had life experiences. They haven’t failed. They haven’t been successful.” She felt that since she had the military experience she takes college “more seriously than probably a lot of other people.” It is clear that the military veteran student participants feel that they perceive college differently than nonmilitary students.

One female and one male felt that they had a more mature level of interaction with others. Janet felt that she could “judge relationships with peers and instructors” better due to her military experience. Through her military experience, she felt that she could use her military strategy technique to judge relationships. This ability to judge relationships was in relation to her military experience and allowed her to perceive college differently than other students. In contrast, Jake felt that the nonveteran students had no insight about “what the real world is... and people make very uninformed opinions.” He felt that the military prepared him to be tolerant of these uninformed individuals. Jake felt that he knew more about the real world which allowed him to perceive college differently than nonmilitary students. Marie felt that she perceived college differently stating “we have the stressors that a normal college student might not have. Incoming fire, you know, just different stuff.” She felt that she was constantly learning in the military but her additional stressors allowed her to perceive college differently than students that had not encountered her additional stressors. This more mature level of interaction perceived by the participants was a direct result of their military experiences priming them to perceive college differently than other students.

Half of the female participants, and all but one male participant, felt the military experience provided them the leadership traits that allowed them to perceive college differently than nonveteran students. These traits included appreciation and discipline. John noted that he had “been in a few conflicts and you appreciate everything once you come back here in one piece.” Being in the war allowed John the appreciation for life and the gratitude for being alive and pursuing his education. Michael noted that after

servicing in “war I would think of times we took life for granted. During my military experience I was surrounded by a lot of death.” He felt the military provided him with the appreciation of the opportunity to attend college. Being surrounded by death and making it through the conflicts alive, provided Michael with the perception that he views college differently than nonmilitary students. Shawn’s military experience provided him the opportunity to see “the other side of life.” He noted that he learned how to deal with different problems and “in going to school the only problems I have to deal with is whether I did my homework.” Ann felt the military provided her “the discipline that a lot of people don’t have” which allowed her to perceive college differently than other students. Rose felt she was more disciplined unlike those “coming from high school and thinking this is all a game.” She felt the military made her more mature allowing her to perceive college differently. Susan felt that after deployment “this is like my second go at life and a future.” Through her military experience she felt she was able to perceive college differently than other students. Many participants felt the appreciation and discipline leadership traits instilled by the military and learned through military experience allowed them to perceive college differently than nonmilitary students.

One female noted that having no debt allowed her the freedom to perceive college differently than students with debt. Becky felt that being in the military provided her with an opportunity to attend college for free. This perception allowed her to feel that she is able to perceive college differently than other students. She stated that some students “kind of put themselves in a point where they just don’t really know and then they go to school and waste thousands of dollars and now we have this issue now with all these kids

that are in debt.” She felt because of this lack of debt she is able to perceive college differently than other students.

All but two females felt the military experience allowed them to perceive college differently than other students. Leadership traits and career focused were areas where the female participants felt they were different than other students. Males perceive the military experience to affect their ability to be more serious and career focused, as well as encompassing leadership traits. Due to the traits learned from their military experience, both female and male participants felt they were able to perceive college differently than other students.

Interview Question 2d. Participants were also asked to provide input regarding how faculty, staff, and students responded to their military experience. Some of the main themes included positive, surprised, no difference, ask questions, or do not admit. Five female participants, and six male participants, found that most responses were positive. Don received positive responses from the faculty and felt that the veterans communicate with each other and provide support. Becky felt “overall it’s been positive” regarding responses by the faculty, staff, and students. She noted that the veteran’s center opening made her happy and she “thought that was really good and really important to this school as well.”

One female and one male stated that others were surprised with both participants stating they do not look the part of a military personnel member. Charles stated that “most of them are quite surprised when I tell them I served in the military.” He then noted that most then ask him to go into more detail about his experiences. Charles went

on to say that he does not look like he was in the military due to his small stature. Janet felt the responses were one of surprise “because when they look at me they don’t expect me to be in the military or they don’t expect me to say the branch that I was in.” As a small woman who served in the Marine Corps, it is understandable that others would be surprised at her military service. Two female and no male participants felt they were treated the same as nonveterans. Marie felt she was treated “the same as everybody else. It’s not really a difference. We’re not treated any differently.” This indifference was how Marie perceived others response to her serving in the military.

Two female and male participants stated that they are frequently asked questions about their military role. Becky noted that a “couple...just like one or two students ask...idiotic questions.” One question she used as an example was whether she “had to kill anybody.” Becky acknowledged that she would not even answer that question as it was none of their business. Cheryl received a lot of questions asking about her deployment. Rose felt the student’s “don’t want to hear because what they see I look like and my status right now. They kind of walk away.” Rose went on to say that she has a small circle of friends who do know about her physical limitations and help out.

Two female participants and one male participant stated that they do not admit that they were in the military. Of those that do not admit military status, Ann stated that she wanted to be treated like the others and Mark compared it to having a disease. Mark went on to state that it is not heroic anymore to be in the military and that he was establishing himself as a person and not a veteran. Mark also felt that there were “more obstacles being a veteran than being me.” No significant gender differences were noted

on other individuals and their responses to participant's military status. Morgan noted that faculty, staff, and student "don't know unless I say it." She mentioned that she does not tell people but when she did "mention it they seem supportive."

Of the participants who admitted to serving in the military, they felt that others respond positively, are surprised, are indifferent, or ask questions about their military experience. Some participants appeared to be offended by questions asked by nonmilitary students. However, the overall consensus of others responding to the participant's military experience appeared to be positive in nature.

Interview Question 2e. Interview Question 2e asked participants if they utilized any campus support services. Half of the female participants had utilized support services with the other half not utilizing support services. Of the four female participants who did not utilize support services, three were aware there were services and one was unaware support services were available. Ann was aware of support services. However, she chose not to utilize campus support services stating that "time has not permitted anything besides coming to class." Janet, who was aware of the available campus support services, noted that she had "not used any, however, I am starting to use career services. In addition, Rose, who was not aware of any support services, found them to be unhelpful as well stating that she "mostly keep[s] to myself." Susan also chose not to utilize the available services as she has her family for support.

In contrast, six male participants utilized support services and three did not utilize services. Of the three who did not utilize the services one was aware of available services while two were unaware of any support services. Charles was aware of some of

the available services stating “I’ve heard but I haven’t utilized it. Like one of the meetings they had with the military reserves here. I attended one of those but I haven’t actually looked further into it.” He did note that he should look into utilizing the support services. Jake and Mark were unaware of any support services. John also did not utilize any campus support services “because of my time schedules and stuff.” He did note that he knew support services were available.

Of those that utilized campus support services, several were cited as common. The most common campus support services utilized included the library, veteran’s center, instructor assistance, financial aid, academic management team, and the computer labs/learning resource center. Don made use of the library and found the librarian to be very helpful as “she showed me how to research...and that is one thing that I use the most.” Becky utilized instructor assistance and the library and found them helpful. Marie found “student services and the library” to be helpful. However, she noted that the veterans’ meeting was after hours and she was unable to attend due to her family obligations. Morgan also utilized the learning center, the library, the computer lab, and the instructor’s office hours and found them to be useful. Cheryl noted “the veteran’s center that opened recently” was absolutely useful. Michael admitted to being in the new veteran’s center and found them helpful in answering questions. Shawn utilized the veteran’s center referring to it as his “study hub because it’s nice and quiet in there especially when the learning resource center is crowded and packed.” Ross utilized the learning resource center, computer labs, and math instructors and found them useful.

The results indicate that more females than males utilized the library, instructor assistance, and academic team members. In contrast, more males utilized the veteran's center and financial aid. There appears to be a significant difference in gender when utilizing available support services. It is also clear that the resources available are helpful. However, not all participants were aware of the available resources.

Interview Question 2f. Interview Question 2f pertained to the transition from military to higher education and asked participant's to identify what needed to occur to help their transition be more positive. Five female and five male participants felt that nothing needed to occur as their transition was already positive or they were graduating. Other participants identified accepting others, good support system, hard work, staying positive, time management, and relaxing more as items that needed to occur to help their transition be more positive. Female participants selected acceptance of others, having a good support system, and working hard as necessary in helping their transition to be more positive. The males, on the other hand, identified with accepting others, time management, and relaxing more.

Charles felt he had already transitioned but wanted future veterans attending college to "encourage yourself mostly...as some people would try to stray you from thinking about higher education." Jake noted that "getting your priorities straight so far as scheduling your life out" would make his transition into college more positive. He felt the first year of class was difficult in scheduling "work and my personal life around my school life." Michael felt he needed to be more relaxed "and embrace the opportunities I have." Shawn needed to "stop waiting to the last minute [and] complete my work on

time” which would help his transition be more positive. Don, Mark, Ross, and John felt their transition was already positive and needed nothing additional was needed.

Ann, Morgan, Susan, and Marie felt their transition was already positive and needed to take no further action. Becky felt her transition could be more positive if there was a strong family “support system at home.” She also noted that “you do have to work for what you want. Cheryl felt staying “positively motivated; no false motivation” would help her to transition more positively into college. Janet felt she needed “to realize that everybody is not the same. Everybody is not going to come from the same background as me.” Janet went on to say that she needed to realize that everyone is different. In that manner she felt her transition to college would be more positive. Rose felt she needed to “look for more career opportunities” in order for her transition into college to be more positive. Each of the participants felt something different in regards to making the transition from the military to higher education more positive.

The transition from the military to higher education addressed challenges, support, effect of military experiences, campus support services, and how to have a positive transition. Finances, time and class management, low self-confidence, and the academic process were the most prominent challenges identified by the participants. It is vital that the college address these challenges in support of military veteran students. The proposed faculty development plan will provide faculty with the understanding of the importance of ensuring that students are aware of how to manage their time while at the same time managing their classrooms to ensure respect among the students. In addition, the participants also noted that support is not always available for military veteran

students. The transition from military to higher education questions align with research questions one, two, and three regarding problems returning veterans face as they integrate into academia, any gender differences, and understanding of resources available to military veterans.

Instructors will need to continue to be available and supportive for all students. The participants perceived college differently based on their individual military experiences. The college as a whole needs to be aware of the military veteran participant's perceptions and strategize ways to improve classroom instruction. Campus support services need to be communicated more clearly to military veteran students as many were unaware of services available. Finally, assisting military veteran student's in a positive transition from military to academia is equally important. The projected faculty development plan will allow all faculty and staff a better understanding of issues related to military veterans transitioning to higher education. Through the development program faculty and staff will be better able to assist military veteran students through reviewing and amending current strategies.

The third main question asks the participants to explain their experiences as a student on campus. Three sub-questions encompass this section and include participants adjusting completely to the role of a student, being part of the campus community, and student expectations of the college prior to enrolling.

Interview Question 3a. The first question in Section 3 asked participants if they felt that they had adjusted completely to the role of being a student versus being the military. Seven of the eight female participants, and all eight of the male participants, felt

that they had adjusted completely to the role of student versus the military role. One female participant, Rose, felt that she had not adjusted completely as the military would “always be part of life” and that she was still adjusting. She also noted that she was in the military longer than a year which made her transition more difficult. Ann also felt that she would “always take what I learned from the military with me for the rest of my life.” Becky thought that she had adjusted completely to the role of being a student in the sense that she conducts herself “in a very positive professional manner as a student.” However, she felt she had not adjusted completely as she “still [has] the mindset that’s not so much student.” Becky went on to discuss how she sits in a particular place in class and when she doesn’t get that specific seat she becomes uneasy. She stated that after her military experience she “still worries about certain things.” Janet felt she was completely adjusted as she takes initiative and works hard to complete her assignments early. Marie also noted the military is “not too much different” than college and she felt she was able to adjust completely to the role of being a student versus being in the military. Morgan noted that she had adjusted completely through “a lot of hard work.” Susan enjoys her classes and is doing well which is why she felt she has adjusted completely to the student role. As a whole the female participants felt they had adjusted completely to the student role.

Charles felt “as though I have adjusted quite well” and Don agreed as he “knows what’s expected.” Jake felt he had adjusted completely to the role of being a student “after the first year.” He also mentioned that he knows what to expect as a student and tries to complete his work in advance. John also felt adjusted but notes that “I’m still

having to sit in the back and observe the room and stuff like that.” He felt that where he sits in the classroom is due to his military experiences. Mark also felt that he adjusted completely after finishing his associate’s degree. Ross noted that he had been out of the military almost ten years which he felt helped him adjust. He also noted that he took “college level training classes” in the military which he felt helped him transition. Shawn felt little difference in college and military noting that “it’s like showing up for mustard in the military each day. I take me coming to school as going to work. I signed up for it so it’s something I have to do to finish.” As a whole the male participants felt that they had completely adjusted to the role of a college student.

The main themes noted within this adjustment include military being part of life, college being the opposite of the military, and no difference between military and student roles. Of those who did completely adjust, two male participants noted that it took them about a year to completely adjust and two female participants cited hard work and enjoying classes helped them to acclimate to the student role. There appears to be no gender difference in adjusting to college life.

Interview Question 3b. The second question asked participants if they felt that being a part of the campus community would help them to transition more positively into the role of a college student. One female participant did not feel that being a part of the campus community would help the transition to be more positive. This participant stated that she was not interested in participating in campus community events. Seven of the eight female participants, and all eight of the male participants, felt that being a part of the campus community helped them to transition more positively. For those that felt

participating in the campus community would help the transition in a positive manner, joining clubs, attending networking opportunities, and getting academic, and social support were common themes.

The results indicated that one female and one male did join clubs and felt the campus community events provided networking opportunities. These networking opportunities they felt helped the transition from military to student life. The community events identified included career and health fairs, as well as cookouts and ice cream socials. Three females and three males found the campus community provided support which also aided in a positive transition. This support included working with instructors, academic advisors, program directors, and deans in an effort to help the participants be successful academically. Military veteran staff members were also identified as beneficial in helping some participants have a positive transition.

Don felt that being a part of the campus community would help ensure a positive transition but is not currently in a club. He noted that he “would like to attend more but due to my work schedule” he was unable. Mark participated in club activities and “helped with a couple of events.” He felt that these items helped him to feel pride and “team comradery...helped me at least feel good.” Michael felt that being part of the campus community would help the transition as “everyone becomes your friend and you’re treated as though you’re family.” Ross agreed stated that “anytime you’re interacting with the other people you’re working with or going to school with it helps you transfer into it.”

Ann thought that being a part of the campus community would help the transition as that would create “a bigger support system. You can never have a big enough support system.” Susan also felt that it would help “students who might not have family or spouses to help them.” Marie is currently part of the campus by participating “in the legal club.” She noted that it takes up extra time but that it helped her to transition more positively into the role of the college student. Cheryl felt that it was up to the individual person whether or not the campus community would help the transition. The results indicate no difference in gender perceptions.

Interview Question 3c. The final question discussing student experiences on campus looked at participant expectations of the college prior to enrollment. Participants felt that the college met or exceeded expectations with several having no expectations and some expecting something different. One female and male participant felt that the college had met their expectations. Two female participants felt that the college had exceeded their expectations. Three female and five male participants had no expectations of the college and three females and one male expected something different. One female participant with no expectations felt that the college exceeded her expectations as she had no expectations prior to enrolling.

The main themes incorporated within expectations prior to enrolling at the college included help with adjusting, being student centered, unexpected program curriculum changes, and heavy academic workload. Two females cited student centeredness as one way the college exceeded expectations. Cheryl felt her expectations were exceeded as the “classes were small and the amount of instructor time on lessons is right on time.”

Susan had no expectations but was aware that “there were smaller classes and more one on one time with the teachers” which is what she expected.

Two of the three females with no expectations were looking for help adjusting and student centeredness respectfully. Becky felt that she would receive “help getting adjusted.” She noted that so far she was receiving help and was hoping the college “would give me the education that I needed to succeed.” Rose was afraid initially as she thought she “was too old, not ready, physically full of challenges and mostly just afraid of the unknown.” However, she has adjusted and is doing well in her classes.

Three other female participants expected something different, citing help adjusting, student centeredness, curriculum changes, and workload as areas that were different than expected. Marie expected more hands on classes as curriculum changes involved putting program classes online with little to no hands on training available as advertised. She stated “though I mean that was something that I was expecting and not getting. It was actually a little bit of a letdown.” Therefore, Marie found that the college was not student centered and had a different curriculum than expected. Morgan did not expect the workload of the classes to be this challenging. She “didn’t expect this work load. I never seen a college that gave you so many papers.” The male participants had similar results.

One male felt that he was getting exactly what he expected citing student centeredness to be excellent. No male participants felt that the college exceeded expectations. Michael felt intimidated but that it “panned out pretty much the way I’ve

expected.” He noted the different teaching methods keep class from being boring and the instructors were great.

Five male participants had no expectations prior to attending the college. Of those five, help adjusting, the heavy workload, and student centeredness were noted to be issues of concern. Don did not expect so much homework while Charles and Mark were nervous and anxious looking for help adjusting. Charles noted that he had “heard from previous military members how they got out and they couldn’t do anything or college wasn’t for them so they went back into the military.” Charles felt he the adjustment was difficult but he has adjusted completely. Mark was nervous and felt that “it was not something I was prepared for.” He went on to say he was nervous about “embracing and engulfing the whole collegiate experience between going to class, [and] studying for tests.” John noted that “no one had anything really bad to say about Bryant and Stratton [and] that’s pretty much why I made my decision.”

Two male participants expected something different from the college citing different curriculum as areas to improve. Both Ross and Jake wanted to learn more program concepts. Jake expected to “learn more about sociology and psychology aspects of criminal justice.” The results clearly indicated that females expected and received positive student centeredness more so than males. In addition, both genders expected, and received, positive expectations with help adjusting and incorporating the student centered approach.

Within those themes one female felt that the college was not student centered. One female and two males felt the college did not meet expectations regarding

curriculum and one female and one male participant did not expect such a difficult workload. Student experiences are critical in the overall success of the military veteran student participants. While most have adjusted completely not all of the students are involved in campus activities. In addition, student expectations were, for some participants, different from their initial belief. The campus experiences of the participants support research question one which looks at problems returning veterans face as they integrate into academia. Through the projected professional development program, faculty and staff will gain more insight into the experiences and expectations of military veteran students. This insight will allow the campus to better address the expectations of the students and help them to become more involved with campus activities.

Interview Question 4a. The final main section asked participants to describe their experiences with the college. Interview question 4a asked each participant to identify one good and one bad classroom experience. Being student center, difficulty dealing with non-serious students, having instructors working with student challenges and the overall learning of concepts had good and bad scenarios depending on the participant. Negative comments only were made by participants that identified mental or physical disability issues and those struggling with online technology.

The results indicated that three of the eight female participants had good classroom experiences regarding student centeredness and the quality of education received. Two female students identified positive experiences with other students and all female participants had positive experiences with instructors. In contrast, only one male

participant selected student centeredness as a positive experience with instructors. The quality of education was a positive experience indicator for the majority of male participants. From these results, it would appear that females had positive classroom experiences surrounding the college being student centered, instructors willing to work with students, and interactions with other students. Male participants had good experiences with instructors willing to work with students through the student centeredness approach and the quality of education provided.

Charles noted a good classroom experience with his writing class noting that the class “kind of challenged me and come to find out I actually write pretty well.” His experience was so positive that he has since started to write a poetry book. Don felt that the instructors “give more information on how to go about learning certain subjects” which was a good classroom experience. Jake enjoyed a professional fashion show to “get you ready to dress business like.” He admitted that it sounded like an odd assignment but enjoyed dressing up in a professional setting. John noted that he had several good experiences citing that “in all of my classes the instructors have the students fully engaged.” John went on to remark that the hands on learning approach enabled him to have a good experience. Mark’s good experience was an instructor who was “like Ma to me. She was hard on me but the results I had, utilizing the things that she taught me, was great.” He went on to say that the instructor was proud of him when he obtained employment. Mark noted that this particular instructor seemed to genuinely care of him which made him view his experience in a positive light. Michael felt the college student centered approach made him feel special leading to a positive classroom experience.

Ross also noted that the instructor “really want to help [and] to teach the students to succeed.” He felt that the instructors seemed to care and that provided him with a good classroom experience. Michael also “enjoyed learning from the instructors and receiving information and help from students.” He also noted that he learned not to be afraid to ask for help and felt this was a good experience as well. Shawn identified doing a current event oral report as a good experience saying “I’m not afraid to talk in front of people anymore.” The male participants cited many positive experiences with the student centeredness approach and genuine caring of the instructors, as well as the quality of education received.

Ann felt that a good experience was that the “teachers here they seem to actually care about their jobs and it shows by the way that they teach.” Becky felt that the help from the instructors with AP format, and getting good grades was a positive experience. She also felt that her ability to help other students “was a really, really, good moment for me because I not only motivated her [another student] but I kept her going.” She felt being able to help others was a good experience. Cheryl felt that the experience of the instructors providing “real life examples or situation where it happened where we can relate” was an example of one of her good experiences in the classroom. Janet felt that the “instructors here are very good at agreeing to disagree.” She felt that instructors provided opportunities to share different views which led to good classroom experiences. Marie felt like her criminology instructor, who was a reservist, was “more understandable of how regular life ties into criminology.” Her instructor “understood when I had to leave to train, or I had a Friday, Saturday and Sunday drill and I wouldn’t be in class.”

Rose identified several instructors who provided good classroom experiences by being informative and giving “us everything we needed to know from day one.” She felt it was like being in the military as far as structure, communication, and no confrontations.

Susan enjoyed her First Year Experience course and her instructor whom she found to be funny. She felt learning about becoming a college student was fun and her instructor “made it more relaxing.” The female participants found positive classroom experiences through instructors utilizing the student centered approach as well as positive social interactions with other students

Bad classroom experiences were also shared by the participants. Two female participants, with medical and physical issues, had similar bad classroom experiences. Three female participants and one male participant shared bad classroom experiences that encompassed other students and their lack of seriousness. In addition, three female and two male participants cited negative experiences with instructors in regards to working with them to be successful. Finally, online technology appeared in a negative light with two female participants and one male participant noting that the online class would not have internet access for days making it difficult to complete assignments. Only one male participant felt the quality of the education received was part of a bad classroom experience. This was primarily due to the fact that the participant was not interested in a liberal arts class and did not find the content useful. One male participant felt that there was not enough time given to the students to complete required assignments and this led to a negative classroom experience.

Charles shared that he had failed a class due to personal problems and ended up retaking a program specific class. He noted that his program class instructor lost a critical project from the previous semester. Poor communication led Charles to believe that the instructor had his final project when in fact he did not. Charles felt it was a bad experience as he “had to come up with this project again along with all my other work and internship.”

Jake’s bad classroom experience was his Ecology class in that he “hated every minute of it.” He stated that the instructor was fine but he could not get into the material. John felt the switch to blackboard and “the online experience was a bad one.”

Technological difficulties gave John the negative perception of online classes. Michael had a bad experience with a philosophy instructor stating that “his delivery is where I think he was pretty much losing the students and they tuned him out.” He noted that the experience became worse when “the instructor began personally attacking the student’s point of view.” The experience continued to turn sour when the instructor discussed his personal life more than the course materials. Michael wanted to drop the class but acknowledged that the college removed and changed the class instructor. So while Michael’s initial classroom experience was negative he did note a positive campus reaction when the instructor was replaced. Ross’ bad classroom experience concerned the disrespect of other students. He noted that students come it late or leave early from class and he thinks “it’s kind of disrespectful to the people who are there trying to learn.” He noted that this occurs in several classes and it something that really annoys him. The military provided Ross with discipline which he felt was lacking in nonveteran students.

Mark, like Shawn, had no bad experiences stating “in all honesty I have nothing but positives.”

Ann’s bad experience concerned non serious students. She noted that “not every student is as motivated and as serious about their academics such as I am.” Ann felt that students that were not serious about their education brought down the morale of the class. Becky had a bad experience dealing with her medical disability. One lab class had high stools as chairs and she needed a different chair for her medical condition. When she asked the instructor for a different chair he complied but she was then told by a manager that she could not use that particular chair in the lab. When she mentioned that she needed the chair for her medical condition, she was told by the manager to see the dean. She returned the chair and spoke with the dean of student services who made her obtain a doctor’s note. Becky was angry and felt insulted stating “I’m not asking someone to do my work. I’m not asking for a K-9 dog. I just want a chair from the empty classroom [next door].” She went on to note that she offered to retrieve and return the chair herself. She did obtain a doctor’s note and was able to utilize the new chair. Even the student’s in the class were telling her that she could not have a different chair which upset her. She noted that several other students went and retrieved similar chairs without any confrontation of which Becky felt “like that’s funny because I had to go to the doctor’s to get a chair but when you pull one in no one says nothing to you.” She was extremely angry that something this ridiculous was occurring. Becky felt that her injury from serving her country should allow her some concessions and felt that she was treated unfairly because of her disability. She also felt distinctly different from the other

students who were not military veterans making it difficult for her to relate to them at a social level.

Janet felt that some students “don’t know how to have a functional debate and sometimes it gets out of hand.” Her perception that the instructors’ lack of classroom management skills provided her with a bad experience. Marie had a bad online class experience. She noted that the internet was “glitching, not allowing me to log on, email my teacher, [or] attach documents.” She noted that even though she would be deploying in a few months she would not continue her education at the college for fear that she will not be able to log on to the internet while in the military. Morgan noted that instructors “reading straight from the power point” made up her bad classroom experience. She felt that better prepared instructors were necessary. Rose felt that the change to online classes created a bad classroom experience. When she had started at the college she was told she would not have to complete classes online. The college then changed direction and all students were required to take online classes. The schools’ directional switch provided for a bad experience. Rose also had back surgery and other health issues related to the military while being in college. She felt that she was not provided assistance and accommodations from instructors at a different campus. Her instructor was barely audible, which was difficult for Rose as she was partially deaf in one ear. Couple the poor instructor with the internet being down frequently and “it was a very bad experience for me.” She failed one online class due to the network problems and the fact that she does not have internet at home. She felt that “because the teachers weren’t willing to work with me, I’m retaking a class.” She also has to pay to retake the class and she does

not have the finances to cover the class. She felt that “as far as the school helping me last semester, [it] was not a good semester for me.” Susan’s bad experience encompasses “two students [that] almost got into a fist fight.” She noted that the instructor removed the disruptive students from the classroom and, seeing how it was the last day of class, she did not encounter them again. Poor classroom management caused Susan to have a bad classroom experience.

Both female and male participants provided examples of bad classroom experiences. Students not taking their education seriously, technology difficulties, medical issues, and instructor difficulties were the primary issues related to the participant’s bad experiences. Faculty and staff need to be made aware of the military veteran participants’ negative classroom experiences in an effort to come up with strategies to overcome these perceptions. The professional development program will aid in helping the faculty and staff be made aware of the classroom experiences perceived by the military veteran student participants.

Interview Question 4b. Participants were also asked to identify any classes offered that were especially helpful. Internship, internship prep, program classes, liberal arts courses, and first year experience were all identified as being helpful. Internship class consists of students in their last semester of their associate’s degree program. The students must complete 90 hours (160 for medical assisting) of an internship within their program of study. Ann felt that the internship “really helped in term of getting us out there.” Her internship experience helped prepare her for upcoming employment options. Shawn mentioned that his internship prep class “will help me better prepare myself for

interviews, for networking...to better sell myself.” Shawn noted that he his internship prep class was helpful in helping in market himself for employment.

The internship prep class was a class offered the semester prior to graduation of an associate’s degree. The students in the internship prep class works on resumes, as well as networking and interviewing skills. Ann noted that internship prep helped her to write a resume even though she already knew how to complete a resume. She felt that “you can never learn too much, so that was really good.” Mark found that “intern prep was actually a helpful class” and helped him to put his experience in a resume.

Program classes consisted of classes that are directly related to the students program of interest. Cheryl felt that clinicals in the medical program “were hands on and that’s what I need.” Janet felt that “criminal investigations was like critical thinking because you’re thinking outside of the box.” She felt that class helped to “guide her [to] get a broader view and different perspective of the situation.” Marie felt that her criminal courses were teaching her about the criminal justice field and that they were helpful. Morgan found “all of my health services administration classes [are] going to be helpful to me.” Rose, who was also in the medical program, found the medical terminology class helpful as “it was intriguing to find out the words and what they mean.” By understanding the medical terminology Rose felt that this better prepared her for a job. Susan found the paralegal program classes helpful because it “gives you a taste of what to expect from that program.” Jake found the Terrorism class to be helpful. He stated that he “was so interested in that class and it engaged me so much. If I want to move up in the world I want to do something in terrorism – counter terrorism.” Michael noted that

the core criminal justice classes were especially helpful. He stated that law enforcement was my career field so I love anything where I can learn crime and punishment. It is clear that many participants found their program classes to be helpful.

Of the liberal arts and sciences curriculum, the following classes were identified as helpful: math, english, ecology, sociology, psychology, literature, humanities and communications. Becky felt the public speaking class was beneficial “especially being in the military, speaking in public and the terminology and things.” She felt that the public speaking class helped her to “get all that jargon out of my vocabulary.” Becky recommended that an additional public speaking class be available. Susan liked the math class “because I’m terrible at math but I ended up getting an A in that so that was a good experience.” Charles found english to be quite helpful and is currently “writing my own book and poetry book as well.” Mark also found that sociology was helpful in “that kind of opened my eyes and helped me to put together things I had experienced.” He also enjoyed the instructor who helped make sense of certain things that he did not understand. Mark also found psychology to be interesting and “was actually thinking about getting a minor in psychology.” Shawn found the communication class to be helpful “because it gave me a better understanding of doing research.” Don found ecology to be especially helpful after realizing that he forgot about things over time. He stated that “now that we are back into college it’s all coming back to me and it’s like wow.” Many liberal arts and science classes were found to be helpful for the participants.

First year experience (FYE) was another class participants found to be helpful. FYE is a required class to introduce new students to the expectations of college. This orientation type of class touched on time management, resources, class expectations, and the financial aspect of college life. Susan “liked the FYE class because it helped prepare you to be a better student.” Becky found the First Year Experience class to be helpful, especially the “the ice breaker and groupings.” Many classes were identified as helpful for the military veteran student participants. It is important to present these findings and comments to faculty and staff to connect how a class can be beneficial to students.

Interview Question 4c. Participants were also asked to identify any programs or services offered by the college that were helpful. Participants identified financial aid, advisors, deans and program directors, veterans center, registrar, clubs, child care and staff who were military veterans. Financial aid was utilized and helpful by over half of all participants. Becky, Rose, and Cheryl found financial aid to help with the military funding paperwork. Ann stated that financial aid was helpful as well as the advisor one-on-one every semester. She felt that “they kind of give you the extra security to know that they actually care about you – the student.” Becky found the advisors to be helpful making “sure that my needs were met as much as possible.” Rose found the registrar to be helpful. Janet found the child care service to be very helpful. She also noted that she speaks with a prior military veteran in admissions and he has helped her with the military funding and rehabilitation plan. Marie found her program director to be helpful and found that issues “sometimes gets worked out a little bit sooner than with me going to the

dean.” She also noted that he was also a veteran and understands. Morgan found the deans to be helpful “just listening to my problems.”

Don found that all of the programs or services offered by the college were helpful as “all of them play a key role with assisting me to be able to go out there in the community and put into play what I have learned in school.” Jake found his advisor to be especially helpful as “she really worked with me and that is the one memorable thing about getting services from the school.” He felt that she went above and beyond to be helpful. John found the deans especially helpful noting that when he “went to veteran events and other events that the staff has provided here [they had] low turnouts. Student’s need to get a little bit more involved.” Mark found financial aid to be great as they worked with the Veterans Administration and the GI Bill. He joined a club and thought it was helpful as it “was like my first experience with a group of diverse people – non-military.” Michael found all of the services helpful with the exception of clubs. He stated that he “was afraid if I joined a club it would possibly take away from the way I do things.” Ross found the registrar and financial aid to be helpful and felt the process “was a lot easier than I thought it would be just because of their help.” Shawn found the veterans and the dean to have been helpful. He specifically noted the dean spoke with him when he “was going through some personal stuff and at the time I was ready to leave school alone.” Most participants found the financial aid office, the advisors, the deans and program directors, and the veterans center to be the most cited helpful services. It is important that faculty and staff are aware of the importance of these services and to strive to improve the overall military veteran’s perception and use of these services.

Interview Question 4d. The fourth sub-question within college experiences requested participants to recommend programs or services that they would like to see added. Half of the female participants and two of the male participants had no programs or services they would like to see added. Bachelor of nursing (BSN), student council, master's programs, military student orientation, veteran's formal study group, and volunteering services were identified as potential programs or services recommended by the military veteran student participants.

The participants provided many suggestions for additional programs or services not currently available. Morgan and Rose wanted a nursing program. Ann, Rose and Michael wanted a master's program to be made available. Michael went on to state that the college "is a leader in the employment world while preparing their students to excel in the workplace. I would like to see the college expand their college repertoire and implement master's programs." Morgan, Rose, and Becky wanted a student council program available for all students. In addition, some male participants felt a military student orientation, study groups, and volunteering services would be additional assets to the college. Charles recommended a military student orientation program to be provided to new military veteran student to inform veterans of financial aid issues. Jake suggested a formal study group for military veteran students would be helpful. Shawn suggested "more volunteering services as in book reading to school age kids." Presenting the participant's recommendations to the college administration could reveal additional opportunities to assist in the transition of military veteran students to higher education.

These opportunities may alter the colleges programs and services which would help address the academic needs of military veteran students.

Interview Question 4e. Participants were also asked to identify needs that were met, or not met, during their time at the college. Three female participants and seven male participants felt their needs were met. Of the remaining five females and one male, the needs that were not met included no nursing program, too much help provided to select students, curriculum changes, non-career oriented internships, taking unnecessary classes due to not accepting of transfer credits, and criminal justice program classes being redundant. One student noted that at times the student centered approach seemed excessive with some students receiving an overwhelming amount of help by the instructors. Becky felt the process, at times was unfair as “some students get more help than the syllabus says and they are taking advantage of the system.” While the school was meeting the needs of the students, Becky felt that at times it was excessive. Marie felt that the curriculum changes did not align with what was being advertised and admitted to being frustrated. She felt her needs were not being met as she was having to adjust her learning style to accommodate the needs of the college. Morgan felt that her internship was not relatable to the health services administration career which consequently did not meet her career needs. Rose felt that some transfer credits were not accepted making her take more classes than necessary. She felt that the “health services classes should have been geared more to health services administration...and overpaid for classes not needed.” Jake felt that criminal justice classes were “redundant and focused on academic and not on real life work.” While the majority of participants felt

their needs were met several participants felt certain needs were not met. Providing these results to the faculty and staff can hopefully present a thought provoking opportunity for the college to address some of these perceptions.

Interview Question 4f. The final interview question asked participants if they had anything else they felt was important to know regarding military veterans attending college. The female participants suggested that students get involved in campus activities, not to change individualized degree plan, and to use the GI bill and book stipend. They also wanted instructors and staff to respect different perspectives, manage class efficiently, be sensitive to veteran's issues (to include combat and medical/physical disabilities), make them feel welcome, communicate honestly with veterans, support them, and ensure they understand resources offered.

Becky stressed the diversity of veteran's and recommends that nonveterans "filter what they're going to say." She also recommended that instructors defend their positions and realize that military veteran students like structure and to try to have a more structured class atmosphere. Janet pointed out that veterans "bring a different perspective to the table" and "can bring back different cultures to the classroom to help other students understand." She also mentioned diversity noting that veterans bring cultural differences to the classroom. Marie stated that many veterans have "PTSD and don't admit it." She asked that instructors not "slam fist on the desk or make loud noises like an explosion." Marie asked that instructors be more sensitive to medical issues and the classroom environment. Stating that loud noises or a "jolt would make me [Marie] think that I was back in Afghanistan." She would also like instructors to be more sensitive to those who

have served in a deployment scene. Morgan recommended that students utilize the GI bill and the book stipend and not to “change your degree plan as it’s based on how many years you’ve been in the military.” Rose asked everyone to make veterans feel welcome and to communicate “what is offered specifically for them at the school.” Susan asked for support as she is not near family members and would like a better support system at the college.

The male participants recommended student’s use the help and resources offered by the college. Instructors and staff were asked to speak up for the veterans when other students are bad mouthing the military endeavors, respect different perspectives, be cognizant of veterans fear of failure and the unknown, as well as military transitional issues. From the male perspective, Charles felt that “the college is here to help and that they have the resources” available for veterans. He felt that it was important for other veteran students to take advantage of the help provided by the college. Jake wanted instructors to defend veterans when other students “are bashing military or what we did.” He wanted others “to understand that we don’t have a choice” and that they were doing their job. Jake would like to “tell instructors to recognize that and address it how they feel fit.” John noted that veterans strive for greater and it may add stress to some military veterans as “they can’t be on the top where they want to be” from an educational standpoint. John also felt that some veterans feel intimidated by other, younger students. Mark noted that veterans “come out not knowing what to expect, what’s available, or how to attain it.” He noted little military transitional assistance and hoped for an introductory program to acclimate veterans. Michael felt the college was military

friendly and felt that veterans tend to be “standoffish in the beginning, because it takes a lot of energy for us trying to fit in.” He also was interested in volunteering after graduating as a military veteran college alumnus. Ross wanted the college to “keep in mind...that the veterans are used to a scheduled kind of environment.” He also went on to say that some veterans, like him, “might have issues with those that don’t take the schedule seriously.” He reminded instructors to keep in mind the differences between veterans and other students, and to manage the classroom better. Shawn noted that many veterans have been out of the military for quite a while and may be “scared and nervous about attending school”. He asked that the college make them feel more comfortable and to have a veteran representative available on campus for support. These suggestions are important for all faculty and staff of the college to understand.

This study proved to be extremely beneficial in providing the college with a better understanding of recent military veteran student’s perceived educational needs. The overall college experience questions align with all three of the research questions addressing problems returning veterans face as they integrate into academia, potential gender differences, and understanding of resources available to military veterans.

Through a professional development program, the perceived needs of the participants will come to fruition with the hope that strategies will be improved in an effort to support military veteran students.

Emerging Themes

Seven major themes emerged from this study. They were as follows: academic and career focused, time management skills, leadership traits, medical issues, social

issues, and class management. A more in-depth discussion of each theme is described below.

Theme 1: Academic and career focused. There was an overarching perception that participants were more academically and career focused when compared to nonmilitary veteran students. Being prompt and classroom discussions were more productive due to their vast cultural experiences while being in the military.

Participants also acknowledged that lack of academic and career focus among civilians was extremely difficult for them to handle. They perceived civilian students as not being as focused academically and career wise and disrespectful of the education system as a whole.

Theme 2: Time management skills. Participants felt that balancing work, life, and school was difficult. Some participants felt that being in the military helped them manage their time better, allowed them to complete assignments in a timely manner, and attend class regularly. Many participants acknowledged that they had medical issues that hindered their ability to complete tasks on time. So while they had the desire and aptitude to complete the assignments on time, medical conditions acquired while in the military were limiting their ability to be successful from a time management perspective.

Theme 3: Leadership traits. The leadership traits taught by the military that participants identified included comradery, maturation, integrity, discipline, determination, and initiative. The majority of the participants felt that the leadership traits affected their college experience in a positive way as far as completing their education. The participants also felt that many nonmilitary veteran students did not have

these traits. The lack of leadership traits among many civilian students at times were challenging for military veteran students. This provided the perception that civilian students are not serious about their education or have disciplinary problems.

Theme 4: Medical issues. Participants seemed hesitant to mention their medical issues with a couple having obvious physical disabilities. Medical issues encompassed physical and mental issues. Many of the participants were on medications or have conditions that makes it difficult for them to concentrate. A few of the participants were physically handicapped and they acknowledged that it was difficult for them to receive disability accommodations from instructors and the college as a whole. Those participants were also under the perception that their disabilities affected their ability to socialize. Several participants wanted the instructors to be more cognizant of medical issues and to be more sensitive.

Theme 5: Social issues. Some participants felt the military helped them to be more accepting of others by providing them with different cultural experiences. Some perceived this unique cultural experience as an opportunity to relate better socially. However, many of the participants felt that they were unable to relate socially to non-military veterans and that they were more mature than other students. These veterans felt that civilians did not understand what military veteran students had gone through in combat and had different life experiences. The majority of the participants felt compelled to only socialize with other military veterans.

Theme 6: Class management. Many participants felt challenged by the lack of class management at the college. Lack of discipline and structure was perceived as the

reasoning behind poor class management. Participants perceived civilian students to be disrespectful while instructors were limited on how to handle behavior issues. This perception was noted several times through the study acknowledging a difference between the strict structure of the military and the free structure of the college setting. Military veterans perceived classes as being poorly managed and stressed the importance of a well-disciplined classroom in an effort to help them overcome transitional and academic challenges.

Theme 7: Student centered. Many students perceived the college and the instructors as being student centered and embraced that philosophy. Some participants perceived instructors as approachable as well as utilizing other campus resources. A few participants were concerned about the changing of the curriculum to a more online scenario which negatively affected their perception of student centeredness. Overall, the college being student centered was important to military veteran students and was one reason why they choose to attend this institution.

Evidence of Quality

To ensure quality in this study implementation, reporting, and interpretation of the findings, I enlisted the help of two prior military veterans who have worked with me for approximately 5 years. The dean of instruction and the criminal justice chair reviewed the interview questions prior to conducting the interviews. To ensure study validity, credibility, and reliability data triangulation from the interviews, field notes, and the analyzed transcripts were utilized. Sixteen participants in this study provided data from sixteen distinctive viewpoints, which provided several bases of information. In addition,

to increase validity, the data were coded, analyzed, and repeatedly evaluated. As acknowledged by Creswell (2012), the quality of a case study may be restricted to the honesty, nature, and capability of the researcher. After transcribing the interviews, summaries were provided to the participants to evaluate for member checking purposes. Two participants requested changes and the transcripts were amended as recommended by the participants.

As a direct result of the study a professional development program has been created to help faculty and staff be aware of the college's military veteran students' perceptions. Throughout the study participants discussed ways they are unique, and a desire for the faculty members to be aware of issues that surround military veteran students as they transition to higher education. Therefore, a professional development program is an appropriate project to deliver the outcomes of the study results. The professional development program is the project deliverable as an outcome of the results of the study. Section 3 will discuss the project in detail based on the findings from the research. The professional development program will help faculty and staff better understand the military veteran students at the college.

Conclusion

With large numbers of recent military veterans entering the higher education realm, colleges are striving to meet the individually perceived needs of student military veterans. The objective of this project study was to identify student veteran needs, as well as veterans' perception of social transitions and current services, while attending the college. The theoretical foundation of this study was based upon Nancy Schlossberg's

(2011) transition model as it related to recent military veterans transitioning to higher education. This approach highlighted the unique needs of recent veterans transitioning to academia, as well as their perception of social transitions. Through this study, a better understanding of serving recent military veterans, as well as filling a gap in the literature focusing mainly on public institutions, was displayed. The results will be presented to the faculty and staff enabling a review of current strategies in how the college addresses the perceived needs of military veteran students. Through the proposed professional development program, there is a potential for faculty and staff to amend current practices in an effort to assist military veteran students in the quest for higher education. This understanding will enable for-profit institutions an opportunity to assist and guide recent military veteran students.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

This section includes a description of the project and its goals, objectives, and rationale, describing the project's development as well as addressing social change. A literature review, a project implementation description, a program evaluation explanation, and implications of the project are also presented.

Description and Goals

The data analysis of the interviews of military veterans yielded several themes; if these themes were systematically addressed, better academic outcomes for these students could result. Based on the findings, then, it would be beneficial for faculty and staff to become more aware of the issues surrounding recent military veterans attending one small southeastern college. This awareness will allow faculty and staff an increased understanding of the challenges, and overall perceptions, of recent military veterans as they transition from the military to higher education. In addition, the data collection and analysis yielded a desire on the part of the participants to make faculty and staff aware of issues surrounding recent military veterans attending college. A professional development program that allows for content information, applied methodology, and overall sensitivity to military veterans will benefit all participants, as well as military veterans seeking higher education.

The project is a 3-day professional development program for faculty and staff at one small southeastern college. The primary goal of this professional development program is to educate faculty and staff on the needs of military veterans who attend the

college. This project will address the local problem, based on the results of the study, of recent military veterans not successfully completing their college education. The professional development program will provide workshop participants the opportunity to better understand military veteran students in an effort to improve school outcomes (Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1989).

The professional development training program will be titled “Recent Military Veterans: An Understanding of the Barriers to Academic Success.” It will involve the Standards for Staff Development (2001) created by The National Staff Development Council (NSDC) and described below. The professional development program will review the six core adult learning principles of andragogy, including the learner’s desire to know, self-concept, previous experiences, motivation, readiness, and orientation to learning (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 1998). The content for this professional development training program addresses the key themes that emerged through the research data analysis and develops best practices as discovered through the literature review.

The professional development program agenda involves a variety of discussions and active learning activities designed to encourage participants to collaborate, reflect, and rehearse effective teaching practices. Participants will have the opportunity to share specific ideas for improving and optimizing interactions with recent military veteran students. The 3-day professional development program will examine andragogy, experiences related to adult learning, and effective teaching methods as they relate to military veteran students and the results of the study. The training format will consist of

large group discussions, small break-out sessions, group activities, practice scenarios, social interactions, and reflection exercises.

The principal goal of this professional development program is to educate faculty and staff about the social, emotional, and educational needs of military veterans and how to assist them in overcoming potential barriers to academic success. Specific outcomes addressed in this 3-day professional development program included the following:

- Participants will identify five characteristics of military veteran students.
- Participants will be able to identify at least three challenges that military veteran students encounter in higher education and create an active learning assignment identifying five ways in which they can assist military veteran students in coping with these challenges.
- Participants will be able to report from a group discussion five ways in which military veteran students are different from nonveteran students (academically, emotionally, and medically).
- Participants will develop a lesson plan that strategizes instructional best practices to ensure that military veteran students' characteristics, challenges, and differences are considered.
- Participants will be able to report from a group discussion about Schlossberg's transitional theory the types of transitions and events, as well as the four main factors as they relate to military veteran students.
- Participants will identify three best-practice strategies that instructors can use to assist military veteran students in coping with the transition from the

military to higher education using Schlossberg's transitional theory and 4S principles.

- Participants will be able to identify five challenges that military veteran students encounter as they transition to higher education. Educators will create an active learning assignment identifying three ways in which faculty can help military veteran students overcome each of the five transitional challenges.
- Participants will be able to report from a group discussion about how military veterans' experiences affect their college experiences and identify five positive characteristics military veterans bring to the table when transitioning into the college setting (hardworking, prompt, diligent).
- Participants will develop a lesson plan design that identifies strategies to assist military veteran students in overcoming higher education transitional challenges.
- Participants will be able to develop a lesson plan from a group discussion that identifies three effective teaching principles that can be applied to their current teaching schedule that will address military veteran students' higher educational challenges.
- Participants will be able to identify, from a group discussion, three military veteran student support services available on the campus.

The successful achievement of these outcomes may lead to improved teaching strategies for faculty members. Military veteran students may see an increase in positive academic experiences and an overall increase in academic success.

Rationale

Professional development programs are extensively used at the small southeastern college. The project addresses the problem described in Section 1 through the creation of a professional development program designed to educate faculty and staff on the key themes expressed by the military veterans participating in the research study. Upon completion of the professional development program, faculty and staff will be informed of the academic needs of military veterans in an effort to motivate instructors to review current teaching strategies in an effort to help military veteran students transition more positively into academia.

The data analysis described in Section 2 provides a better understanding of the perceptions and needs of recent military veterans. These results must be shared with faculty and staff to enhance their knowledge of the issues surrounding military veterans attending college. Through this knowledge, provided via a professional development program, faculty and staff will be able to reflect on their teaching modalities and improve their overall relationships with veteran students. The research participants had comments specifically addressed to faculty and staff that need to be shared. This professional development program is a logical step to ensure that the military veteran participant results and comments are disseminated.

The professional development program will provide faculty and staff with the knowledge needed to better address military veteran students and improve instructional performance and responsibilities. This positive transfer of learning will benefit the faculty and staff and provide an opportunity to improve relationships and create positive experiences for military veteran students.

Review of the Literature

The literature review involved the use of the EBSCO databases of Walden University and the small southeastern college's virtual library. The following search terms were used: *andragogy, professional development, training, staff development, training program, academic experiences, teaching practices, effective practice, faculty development, adult learning, effective instruction, learning styles, student learning, learning strategies, faculty training, adult education, and constructivism.*

The following websites were explored: About Campus, American Association for Higher Education (AAHE), Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), *Journal of Staff Development*, Learning Forward, Academy of Management Learning and Education, National Staff Development Council Standards for Staff Development (NSDC), and Research in Higher Education. The ensuing literature review outlines the conceptual framework related to professional development programs facilitated in postsecondary institutions.

The literature review addresses the professional development program proposed on how to academically assist recent military veteran students most effectively. The main themes in this literature review consist of adult learning, effective practice, and

professional development. The professional development project will assist the faculty in understanding what the most current educational research reveals about adult learning, effective practice, and professional development. The primary objective is to improve faculty understanding of the needs of recent military veterans and improve overall academic outcomes for that target group. This will also result in a better educational experience for the students. This project provides the structure for an effective professional development program as outlined in the literature review. It also allows the facilitator the opportunity to determine the program's success through participant feedback and reflection.

Adult Learning

Andragogy. In the 19th century, the term *andragogy* was created by Kapp (Forrest & Peterson, 2006). Andragogy can be defined “as the art and science of teaching adults” (Forrest & Peterson, 2006). Knowles (1970) presented andragogy through his theory of adult learning. Andragogy was accepted in Europe prior to Knowles's discovery (Jarvis, 2009). In adult learning theory, Knowles concluded that andragogy was a model of assumptions about learners (Knowles, 1970). Knowles (1984) affirmed that adults wanted to apply the knowledge gained in their professional and personal lives. Harper and Ross (2011) used Knowles's adult learning theory principles in creating an interdisciplinary studies degree program. Harper and Ross built an adult education curriculum with Knowles's teaching principles and adult learning assumptions as the foundation. In addition, Harper and Ross found that the students responded positively to an adult educational program based solely on Knowles's (1980) adult learning

assumptions and teaching principles. Understanding adult learners is an important concept in higher education. The professional development program proposed will be directed toward faculty members and college support staff, in whom an understanding of adult learning is critical.

Constructivism. The theory of constructivism addresses how individuals learn. The characteristics of constructivism can be demonstrated through active learners, in that learning occurs in context and builds on previous knowledge (Baviskar, Hartle, & Whitney, 2009; Yoders, 2014). Through the constructivism theory new knowledge will be gained while feedback is provided to the learner (Baviskar, Hartle, & Whitney, 2009; Perkins, 1999; Yoders, 2014). According to Baviskar, Hartle, and Whitney (2009) and Yoders (2014), constructivism also acknowledges that the learner will reflect on the concepts learned. The theoretical foundation of constructivism allows for the individual identity and experiences of the learner to be considered (Fleury, & Garrison, 2014). It emphasizes the connection between individuals and experiences (Gash, 1997). The theoretical approach of constructivism reinforces the importance of life experiences (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). The constructivist model concludes that knowledge is gained through experiences being internalized and reflected (Doolittle & Hick, 2003). Doolittle and Hicks (2003) noted that experiences, and their interpretations, help make up learning within the framework of constructivism. In addition, constructivist approaches provide learners a chance to focus on past experiences with the potential to change perspectives and knowledge (Sandlin, Wright, & Clark, 2011).

The constructivist method allows students to construct their own knowledge based on intrinsic processes and individual experiences (Eret, Gokmenoglu, & Engin-Demir, 2013). In Eret, Gokmenoglu, and Engin-Demir's (2013) study of educational theories that affect student achievement, constructivism was found to provide learning opportunities that positively affected student success. The study analyzed current research on educational theories and found that constructivism was one of the most discussed approaches in education (Eret, Gokmenoglu, & Engin-Demir, 2013). The results indicated that constructivism was an effective theoretical approach to student achievement (Eret, Gokmenoglu, & Engin-Demir, 2013). In addition, using constructivist theory within instructional processes provided for a meaningful educational experience (Yoders, 2014).

Learning is achieved through the use of prior knowledge and prior experiences (Doolittle, 2014). Doolittle (2014) posited that constructivist theory emphasizes learning opportunities when experiences change, allowing new knowledge to be gained. The role of experience and knowledge gained is a primary theme in constructivism and adult education (Krajnc, 2011; Yoders, 2014). From a constructivist standpoint, educators are encouraged to provide experiences that aid students in learning new concepts (Merriam, et al., 2007). With experiences being an integral part of constructivism, adult learning has evolved to be constructive in nature with respect to andragogy. Military veteran students bring individual knowledge based on their life experiences, which help them to construct knowledge in higher education (Fleury & Garrison, 2014). In the classroom, there are many different teaching practices that encompass the constructivist view.

Constructivist theory has a strong theoretical basis to aid in learning and teaching strategies (Taylor & Hamdy, 2013). Military veteran students' experiences will allow instructors the opportunity to better understand their perceptions, which can be a guide for instructional activities.

Experiences. Knowles (1970) identified several assumptions that can be applied to adult learners. He assumed that adult learners are independent, have prior experiences, are prepared to learn, are problem centered, and are intrinsically motivated (Knowles, 1970, 1984). Knowles also affirmed that adults want to apply the knowledge they have gained in their professional and personal lives (Knowles, 1984). In order to teach adults, instructors need to understand adults as learners and how experiences affect adult learning processes.

Adult learners bring past experiences to the classroom learning process (Galbraith, 2004; Peterson & Ray, 2013). These prior experiences dictate how adults learn and influence instructional styles. Knowles (1984) concluded that adult learners were intrinsically motivated and used prior experiences to support learning concepts. He also noted that experiences provide a rich learning resource (Knowles, 1984). Adults have a large repertoire of learning experiences that they can use as an important tool in the learning process (Forrest & Peterson, 2006). Kolb and Kolb (2005) theorized about experiences in the learning process, producing the experiential learning theory model.

Kolb and Kolb (2005) concluded that four abilities were required for adult learning as it relates to experiences. The adult learner must first have a concrete experience on which he or she then needs to reflect (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). The concrete

experience is achieved through active experiences (Chan, 2012). Based on the concrete experience, the learner processes and makes a decision (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). The final two steps of Kolb and Kolb's theory are conceptualizing the experience and making a decision on how to react. Through reflecting on prior experiences, learners are able to learn and make adjustments to the decision-making process if necessary.

Mezirow (1996) asserted "that learning is the process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience" (p. 118). Learning occurred when adults make meaning of their experiences (Sandlin, Wright & Clark, 2011). This new or revised interpretation may include adjustments through learning activities which may prove meaningful to the learner (Merriam et al., 2007). As individuals grow from childhood to adulthood they are presented numerous experiences. According to Knowles, Holton, and Swanson (1998), it is through these experiences that adults can learn. In an educational setting, being provided with an opportunity to share experiences may be used as an effective teaching and learning tool. Maher (2002) also acknowledged that adult learning evolves from prior learning experiences. In his viewpoint, adult learning encompasses all life experiences and that life and educational experiences could not be separated (Maher, 2002). McGrath (2009) noted that adults must utilize prior experiences in the educational setting in order to learn. Experiences, even obtained in childhood, allow for adults to have a basis of which to draw on to increase the learning process.

In educating adult learners it is important to recall that experiences can be applied as a source for increased learning processes (Knowles et. al., 1998; Maher, 2002;

Mezirow, 1997; McGrath, 2009). Hill (2014) completed a study of 107 participants attending college to become instructors. The results showed that previous experiences effect the learning process (Hill, 2014). While the experiences will be unique to each individual student, educators can become more influential in their teaching abilities when recognizing the importance of adult learner experiences. Kenner and Weinerman (2011) posited that instructors who understand that returning Afghanistan and Iraq war veterans learn differently from other students, “can provide specific tools that help adult learners integrate into the college” environment. With life experiences affecting the adult learning process, military veteran student’s unique experiences must be considered by faculty in the adult learning process. These experiences can vary greatly among military veteran students. The experiences described by the military veteran study participants will provide faculty and staff with valuable information on how best to improve the college setting in order to help the students become successful academically. The professional development program will bridge the experiences of the southeastern college’s military veterans with the adult learning concepts. It is through this basis that the professional development program was developed.

Effective Practice

Within adult learning, principles of effective instructional practice have emerged. Understanding how adults learn is “part of being an effective instructor” (Lieb, 1991). In addition to understanding adult learning, faculty members need to be cognizant of effective instructional practices. Many theorists will be identified discussing components of effective practice within andragogical practice. Knowles (1970) acknowledged five

principles that instructors should utilize in order to be effective (Galbraith, 2004). A conducive learning environment, which involved the adult in the learning process, will help adults identify individual needs and objectives (Carpenter-Aeby and Aeby, 2013; Knowles, 1970). Galbraith (2004) also identified a conducive learning environment as one of his effective practice principles. Long (2002) recognized that a conducive learning environment was important but added that the dignity of the individual student should be considered. Knowles second principle suggested instructors encourage learners to strategize ways to obtain objectives. Long also acknowledged that goals should be identified with the learners being able to make independent decisions. Knowles third and fourth principles allowed instructors to involve the learners in development and assessing the learning process (Galbraith, 2004). The final principle for effective instructors would be to help students learn (Knowles, 1970). Knowles understood that learners were self-directed and able to decide if they wanted to learn concepts being presented. The last principle, similar to Knowles, is that self-directed adult learners should be empowered (Brookfield, 1986). Long agreed with Knowles and Brookfield's (1986) principle by recommending that instructors recognize that learners are self-directed and apply learning principles to real world events. While Galbraith agreed with learners being self-directed his principle went on to encourage the learners to be more independent.

Similarly, Brookfield (1986) proposed six andragogical principles of effective practice. The first principle allowed for students to learn as a result of individual decisions (Brookfield, 1986). Brookfield also proposed that mutual respect between

instructor and student be obtained with collaboration among other learners and instructors as his third principle of effective practice. Galbraith (2004) similarly suggests instructors reduce instructor or student behaviors that are not conducive to learning. Brookfield's fourth principle is based on a continuous process of learning, reflecting on what was learned, collaborating on new learning, and reflecting on new learning concepts. Brookfield's fifth principle of effective practice allows for adult learners to critically reflect on the learning process. Galbraith had a similar principle noting that instructors should foster critical thinking and reflection skills among adult learners.

Galbraith (2004) and Long (2002) built upon previous effective teaching principles and each created 10 principles of effective practice. While several of the principles were similar to Knowles (1970) and Brookfield (1986), there were some additional principles developed. Galbraith's principles recommended an educational philosophy to guide the learning process as well as understanding adult learners. He went on to suggest that instructors should provide a challenging teaching and learning environment so students can question and revise individual thought processes (Galbraith, 2004). The credibility of the institution also reflected on effective practice, according to Galbraith. Long acknowledged that adult learning was affected by prior life experiences, that learners should be motivated intrinsically and look to change thought, and learning processes. The final effective practice principle identified by Long noted that the learning atmosphere should be based on trust with learners who are encouraged to continue to learn from prior mistakes.

Chickering and Gamson (1987) presented seven principles of effective practice in post-secondary institutions. These seven effective practice principles, based on 50 years of educational research, guides and improves teaching and learning opportunities (Chickering & Gamson, 1987). The first principle encourages faculty and student contact. Faculty contacting students and demonstrating concern for academic success will enhance student commitment and motivation in learning (Chickering & Gamson, 1987). Hande, Kamath and D'Souza (2014) completed a study of medical students to ascertain students' perception of effective teaching practices. The results indicated that students wanted dedicated instructors to be patient and available for students (Hande, Kamath & Souza, 2014). Hill's (2014) study found that student-teacher relationships were critical to being an effective teacher. Instructors who were student centered were perceived to be more effective as teachers (Hill, 2014). Faculty providing positive contact and forming professional relationships with military veterans will enhance student learning (Hill, 2014). The second principle posits that learning is enhanced when a team approach is utilized (Chickering & Gamson, 1987). This cooperation among students promotes a collaborative working environment which may allow for deeper learning opportunities (Chickering & Gamson, 1987). Team work among veteran and nonveteran students will providing a more profound learning opportunity for the class as a whole.

In the third principle instructors are encouraged to use active learning components. Active learning utilizes discussion, reflection, and past experiences and relates them to concepts being learned (Chickering & Gamson, 1987). Active learning

would also include internships, and independent studies. Military veteran students will be better able to relate to class concepts when utilizing past experiences providing for a deeper learning opportunity. The fourth effective practice principle encompasses timely feedback. Students need to provide and receive timely feedback in an effort to improve overall learning. With this feedback students should reflect on what was learned, and what needs to be learned through varied assessments. The fifth principle addresses time management. Through allocating specific time for classroom activities instructors can provide an effective learning and teaching environment (Chickering & Gamson, 1987). A high expectation being communicated to the students is the sixth principle. Chickering and Gamson's (1987) research showed that high performance is achieved when instructors hold high expectations of the students, themselves and the institution. The final effective learning principle is to respect different learning styles (Chickering & Gamson, 1987). Students need to learn in a way conducive to their learning style. These seven effective practice principles were identified by Chickering and Gamson to improve overall post-secondary education.

Sowan and Jenkins' (2013) research study utilized the seven principles of effective teaching proposed by Chickering and Gamson (1987). The researchers designed an interactive higher educational program using the seven effective teaching principles described by Chickering and Gamson and based on the results of their study. Sowan and Jenkins noted that their program, based on Chickering and Gamson's principles, provided accessible and effective educational opportunities. Effective practice principles provide instructors with a better understanding of adult learning best practices.

Based on Sowan and Jenkins higher education program, Chickering and Gamson's seven principles was selected to be the basis for the proposed professional development program.

Professional Development

In the early 80's staff development was introduced and accepted by legislators and school administrators in an effort to improve school outcomes (Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1989). Professional development may "be defined as processes that improve the job-related knowledge, skills, or attitudes of school employees" (Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1989, p. 42). Zhao (2013) defined professional development programs "as a systematic and effective way to improve teachers' quality" (p. 1365). Professional development programs are critical to the professional growth of faculty (Guskey & Yoon, 2009; Hersi, 2010). Professional development programs provides for an increase in the quality of the teaching and student achievement (Kanuka, 2010; Smith, 2010). The goal of professional development programs is to increase expertise, competence at a professional level, as well as the effectiveness of the institution (Collin, Van der Heijden & Lewis, 2012). In one study 109 educators completed a survey about the perceived effect of professional development opportunities (Shumack & Forde, 2011). The limited study found that educators felt professional development positively affected instruction and was valuable (Shumack & Forde, 2011). Shumack and Forde (2011) also concluded that a quality professional development program improves student learning by improving overall instruction. Increasing instructor knowledge that translates into student success is the overall goal of professional development (Desimone, 2011).

Sparks and Loucks-Horsley (1989) identified five models related to staff development. The five models include individual, observation, involvement, training and inquiry (Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1989). According to Sparks and Loucks-Horsley individually-guided development programs allows for instructors to pursue development opportunities congruent to their own learning objectives. The observation model reflects individual instructor performance in the classroom and the inquiry model identifies and researches a classroom issues and amends instruction based on that specific data (Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1989). The involvement model engages instructors to develop processes to solve general or specific problems, and the training model involves individual and group instruction for instructors to acquire new knowledge. Inquiry is the final model of staff development and encourages student learning through the use of thought provoking questions (Owens, 2012).

Cooper (2004) presented four components as a model for facilitating an effective professional development program. The program should provide a theory so instructors can understand the underlying research base (Cooper, 2004). The second step for effective professional development is to demonstrate what is being taught (Cooper, 2004). The third component includes practice and feedback. Womack, Hannah and Bell (2011) completed a study measuring teacher effectiveness. The sample size was larger than 120 as well as over 400 teaching observations recorded (Womack, Hannah & Bell, 2011). The results indicated that lesson planning accounted for 41% of effective teaching. The final component for effective professional development programs is to end

with coaching and follow-up (Cooper, 2004). This step confirms that learning has taken place and helps the instructor internalize the learning concepts (Cooper, 2004).

According to Desimone (2011) a core set of five principles make up effective professional development. The effective professional development features include an emphasis on the topic and how student concepts are learned (Desimone, 2011; Knowlton, Fogleman, Reichsman, & de Oliveira, 2015). The second feature acknowledges that instructors should provide opportunities for the students to get involved creating an active learning environment (Desimone, 2011). The third feature notes that the professional development program should provide coherence among the industry (Desimone, 2011). This coherence should align with the institution, as well as the state and federal policies. The fourth feature stipulates that the professional development program be spread over time and should include in excess of 20 contact hours (Desimone, 2011). The final feature notes that faculty in similar programs should be grouped together in the activities (Desimone, 2011). This allows for a stronger learning community as a whole. It is clear that there are several characteristics that make up an effective development plan. The proposed faculty development plan will utilize all five features outlined by Desimone (2011).

Desimone's (2011) third core feature allows for the professional development program participants to be in coherence and alignment with institutional and state policies as well as other professional development knowledge. Through the use of Desimone's five core features the professional development program's effectiveness will be enhanced

with the goal of assisting military veteran student's to be successful in their academic endeavors.

Zhao (2013) studied instructor's professional development perceptions utilizing five characteristics of a professional learning environment. The five characteristics utilized in the study found that instructor's knowledge and skills were broadened and led to an effective professional development program (Hersi, 2015; Zhao, 2013). The first characteristics Zhao incorporated into the study involved leadership that was shared and supportive (Higher Education Management & Policy, 2010). A collaborative professional development program needs to involve all aspects of administrative and faculty leadership. Participants need to trust each other in order to offer and receive constructive feedback (Knowlton et al., 2015; Stewart, 2014). This feedback will increase the effectiveness of the professional development program and enhance teaching strategies (Stewart, 2014). Learning as a team, and applying concepts learned, is the third characteristic instructor's should possess in order to have an effective professional learning environment (Knowlton et al., 2015; Sicut, Kreutzer, Gary, Ivey, Marlowe, Pellegrini, Shuford & Simons, 2014; Zhao, 2013). A professional learning environment needs to be held in a supportive and favorable school environment (Zhao, 2013). Discussing current military veteran student concerns and best practices will allow professional development participants the opportunity to learn in a supportive environment. Finally, instructors should share individual practice strategies which will lead to an effective professional development program (Sicaket et al., 2014; Zhao, 2013).

The National Staff Development Council (NSDC) produced, and in 2001 revised, the Standards for Staff Development. According to the NSDC (2001), three categories should be addressed for professional staff development to be applicable. These three standards include context, process, and content (NSDC Standards, 2001). Context standards outline organizational traits that must be utilized to sustain the results of the professional development program (NSDC Standards, 2001). The proposed faculty development program is in alignment with the organizational goals, and continuous instructional improvement plan as well as availability of additional resources to complete the context standards.

Process standards discuss how to deliver the information in order to facilitate successful change (NSDC Standards, 2001). Data from the proposed research study will help to determine student needs, as well as to provide faculty improvement suggestions. Bridging the military veteran student needs and teaching strategy amendments will help to ascertain the overall success of the faculty development program. In addition, research and learning strategies, effective learning practices and collaboration among faculty will address the process standards outlined by the NSDC (2001). Content standards identify the specific knowledge or skills that educators need to maintain academic excellence (NSDC Standards, 2001). The content standards identified learning modalities, instructional strategies, and collaboration with faculty and students (NSDC Standards, 2001). Through the proposed faculty development program the content standards, as well as the context and process standards, will be achieved.

With solid standards in place for staff development, professional development programs should be constructed to provide higher standards for educators; which would have a greater, positive influence on the students (Guskey, 2005; Guskey & Yoon, 2009). Professional development must relate directly to instructors and be specific (Cooper, 2004). Cooper (2004) goes on to say that professional development should be continuous, practical, and engaging. In addition, to improve the professional development programs overall effectiveness, the “applicability of the...content and its relevance to classroom application” is important (Sabah, Fayez, Alshamrani, & Mansour, 2014). Institutions in one 2009 study cited that professional development for faculty working with military veteran students was necessary to help their overall academic success (Connelly, 2012). Faculty interacting with students had been proven by instructors and researchers to be extremely important to the development, and learning of college students (Baker and Griffin, 2010).

Project Description

Instructors will select whether or not to participate in the training program allowing for the individually-guided model. The model allows instructors “to find answers to self-selected professional problems” (Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1989). Instructors would be able to recognize areas of concern about military veterans in the classroom and participate in the professional development program to find recommendations for improvement in their individual teaching modality. The observation model will also be utilized as all classes are observed each semester for faculty performance ratings. This model will allow for faculty peer coaching and

individual faculty evaluation demonstrated through observation. Through the observation model faculty can improve overall teaching instruction through feedback of individual observations. Combining qualified teachers with ongoing staff development are key factors in developing effective learning practices (Owens, 2012). While the majority of faculty members have experience and training in their academic discipline, many have little training on andragogical and adult learning principles (Elliott, Rhoades, Jackson & Mandernach, 2015).

It is imperative that the faculty members be involved in developing practices to improve the processes that surround military veteran students. Therefore, during the professional development program instructors will become more aware of military veteran student's perspectives and differences allowing for the potential development of practices to improve learning. At the conclusion of the program instructors have the opportunity to improve individual classroom instruction in regards to military veteran students.

The research previously conducted will provide faculty the results of the data analysis. The results will be discussed and reflected upon in an effort to work together and formulate potential strategies to help strengthen military veteran students learning processes. The training model, which is the core of the professional development program, allows for faculty to acquire new knowledge through individual and group instruction (Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1989). This model allows instructors the opportunity to amend and implement new strategies. Instructors need to reflect and adapt to changes as needed to improve teaching practices (Hande, Kamath & D'Souza, 2014).

Through understanding the perceptions of the college military veteran students, instructors will have the opportunity to learn about the study results in an effort to provide additional information that may prove beneficial in updating teaching strategies.

Research demonstrating the needs of military veteran students in a for-profit setting will be introduced to the faculty in an effort to address the theory behind the study and the professional development program. The program should provide a theory so instructors can understand the underlying research base (Cooper, 2004). The professional development program will allow for faculty to practice the concepts as well as to receive peer and facilitator feedback. During the professional development program faculty will practice and revise lesson plans to incorporate concepts being taught. The follow-up component will be incorporated in reviewing the outcomes of the military veteran students as it relates to their overall academic success.

Faculty participating in the faculty development plan will be grouped according to subject matter and will have a focus on best practices for military veteran students to learn the specific subject matter concepts. The faculty will also have several opportunities to get involved during the professional development program. The professional development program will also encompass at least one complete semester allowed for online interaction providing feedback well after the program was completed. The program will include approximately 24 hours of contact time to correspond with Desimone's (2011) recommendation. Finally, the participants will belong to the same institution and be paired together by programs in creating a collaborating learning environment (Desimone, 2011).

The professional development program has support from the executive management team, the campus administrators, and the faculty and staff. In addition, instructors must have a mutual trust as they cooperate in productive teams in an attempt to improve student learning (Zhao, 2013). Instructors participating in the professional development program have peers that share the same vision and values. These similar vision and values is to better understand and instruct military veteran students in their quest for higher education. The professional development program will allow instructors the opportunity to work as a team and apply the concepts to their individual classrooms. The professional development program will allow participants the opportunity to converse, strategize, and share experiences as it relates to teaching military veteran students. These shared conversations will allow for other instructors improve overall learning for both faculty and military veteran students.

The current research project identified the most recent academic needs of military veterans and these results must be shared with faculty and staff. Professional development training for faculty and staff is essential if positive student interactions are expected. Faculty training needs to focus on the academic requirements and prior experiences of military veterans specific to a small Southeastern College. Negative classroom experiences, noted in the research study, may be a result of the lack of effective faculty training on the academic challenges of military veteran students. It is imperative that faculty become more aware of the issues and perceptions that military veterans encounter to assist in their overall educational success (Connelly, 2012). The professional development program, with the staff development standards utilized, is

needed to update educators' knowledge and skills regarding military veteran students. The following content specifically addresses the needs of the military veteran participants articulated in the study interviews. The resources necessary in order to facilitate the professional development program explained in this project study are discussed in the following sections.

Existing Supports and Needed Resources

Program implementation support will be required from one small southeastern college administrators and faculty members. With a large military veteran student population, the college's administrative support team is eager to provide professional development training for the faculty as it relates to the results of the project study. The facilitator is knowledgeable of different teaching modalities and adult instruction. In addition, the facilitator is experienced in developing and facilitating professional development programs. Understanding adult learning practices, as well as the specific needs of military veteran students, will be clearly explained. Supplemental material will be provided offering program participants the opportunity to refresh or develop their educational skills. The support system for this training would include full time, and adjunct faculty members, program chairs, and administrative deans. Faculty who participate will receive professional development credits to be applied to the required institutional policy.

Resources needed include computer access with Microsoft Power Point and Word, an overhead projector, and a printer. Copies of the presentations will be provided to all participants of the professional development program. The Power Point

presentations will be available in Dropbox so that it is easily accessible. In addition to the Power Point presentations, supplemental documents, and assessments generated on Microsoft Word will be printed and distributed to participants.

Costs

The professional development program will be sponsored by the institute where the study was conducted. Printing costs will be absorbed by the institution and considered part of professionally developing faculty. As part of their full time and contractual obligations, instructors are required to attend two professional development programs each semester. Therefore, there will be no additional costs for the faculty to attend the professional development program. In addition, the program chairs, and administrative deans are salary employees and are not compensated for working additional hours. With that in mind the only costs associated with this professional development program would be food and drinks supplied for breakfast. The total cost for the three day professional development program is \$300 and is outlined below.

Budget for 1st PD Day:

Breakfast (Doughnuts and Coffee): \$100.00

Total: \$100 for 1st PD Day

Budget for 2nd PD Day:

Breakfast (Doughnuts and Coffee): \$100.00

Total: \$100 for 2nd PD Day

Budget for 3rd PD Day:

Breakfast (Doughnuts and Coffee): \$100.00

Total: \$100 for 3rd PD Day

Potential Barriers

Lack of full administrative support could be a potential barrier towards implementation. Faculty interest and time constraints are also potential barriers. Resistance by some educators who may not want to amend teaching practices could also prove detrimental to the success of the professional development program. The facilitator is well respected by the faculty in facilitating professional development programs and will develop a schedule respectful of the barriers that may affect administrative and faculty support. It is through this collegial respect, as well as previous professional development program success, that faculty members will attend this professional development opportunity.

Proposal for Implementation Including Time Table

Implementation for this project will begin with a copy of the final doctoral study and professional development program. The professional development program has already been approved by the dean of instruction. The desired result at the conclusion of the professional development program include that faculty and staff members will gain an increased understanding of the requirements of military veteran students attending the small southeastern college and make changes in their teaching practices and methodology. I will facilitate this program at the first faculty professional development seminar in October of the 2015 winter semester academic. The faculty development program will be offered to full time and adjunct faculty, program chairs, college deans, and administrators. Six months after the program has been implemented, a meeting will

take place for full time and adjunct faculty, program chairs, and administrative deans, to discuss the strengths and limitations of the program. At that time there will also be a discussion as to whether or not to conduct an additional study. Moreover, if an additional study is recommended, suggestions as how to enhance the program will be requested.

Roles and Responsibilities

I will develop, implement, and facilitate the professional development program. I will be accountable for delivering the professional development program to key stakeholders. Faculty will be primarily attending the professional development program. Program chairs, and college deans will be accountable for distributing information to faculty who do not attend the professional development program. All faculty participants will be accountable for being an active participant and participating in the implementation and follow through of program concepts. I expect that administration, faculty, and staff participants will coordinate efforts in order to have a successful professional development program.

Project Evaluation Plan

Evaluating professional development programs is critical in order to provide evidence that can verify the overall effectiveness of the program (Guskey & Yoon, 2009). The design of the professional development program will provide faculty and staff the knowledge and better understanding of military veteran student's needs as they embrace higher education. The goal of a program evaluation is to determine if the information provided to the participants is useful and will positively affect military veteran students in higher education. Therefore, evaluating the goals of the professional development

program will be utilized in order to “judge the value, worth, and appropriateness of any professional learning activity” (Guskey, 2014). The results of the professional development program evaluation will be shared with college administrators to ascertain the extent the program met the desired outcomes.

A formative evaluation will be provided to each participant at the conclusion of each daily session. A summative evaluation will then be provided to each participant at the conclusion of the professional development program as a whole. The evaluation will consist of Likert-style questions utilizing quantitative data. Open ended questions will be included to offer participants with the opportunity to provide additional information. Analyzing the rankings and comments will yield information necessary to establish the overall effectiveness of the professional development program. The results will also allow for an opportunity for program revisions.

In addition, a student satisfaction survey will be administered at the end of the semester to obtain military student’s overall perspectives and opinions regarding faculty interactions with military veteran students. An ongoing online learning community will also be provided to the faculty to record interactions and observations throughout the semester which will be utilized to gather additional information and data. This information will be provided to administrators for future professional development program planning. At the conclusion of the semester, a focus group of the professional development participants will help to provide feedback as a tool for evaluating the program. This feedback will aid in planning and amending future professional development programs.

Project Implications

The research participants in the project study provided critical information about perspectives and insights regarding their academic needs. This data resulted in the professional development program to be offered to faculty and staff in an attempt to improve military veteran students' overall college experience. Social change can be improved through this project study by improving military veterans' college experience and transition. Improving faculty training can positively affect military veterans' academic success which may lead to improved job opportunities. While this study is designed to address only one for-profit college, it has the potential to meet the needs of any military veteran student attending college. The conclusion could be military veteran students who have a positive educational experience and faculty who are better trained to instruct military veteran students.

Project Importance

This project study, and professional development program, will assist faculty and staff to better understand military veteran's academic needs by providing a framework to be utilized. The results of the professional development program will provide faculty the ability to amend teaching strategies and techniques to improve the overall interaction with military veteran students. These improvement will serve as a strong foundation for establishing relationships with military veteran students resulting in an overall positive college experience for the students. This overall positive college experience may propel military veteran students towards being academically successful. This academic success

will lead to positive social change shared by the faculty, staff, students, and society as a whole.

Interactive activities for faculty and staff will be part of the professional development program. These activities will allow for participants to examine current teaching modalities and amend teaching strategies to accommodate the needs of military student veterans. The professional development program will be useful to the faculty through increase learning and implementing new strategies into the classroom to positively affect military veteran students.

Conclusion

The professional development program was developed and designed to clarify the needs of military veteran students to faculty and staff at one small southeastern college. The basis was formed with respect to the perceptions and opinions of military veteran students who participated in the case study. While the project study was developed specifically for one small southeastern college, it could be adjusted to fit the needs of any for-profit higher educational facility. This project was developed with social change as a motivational factor at the local level in an effort to improve overall military veteran academic success. The potential for social change at a higher level could be achieved through improving instructional modalities using the content knowledge provided within this project study.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Introduction

For this project study, I investigated military veteran students' perceptions as they transitioned to higher education, their understanding of the resources available to them, and gender differences in those perceptions. The case study examined the experiences and comments of 16 military veteran participants who served in either the Iraq or the Afghanistan conflict. The data obtained from in-depth interviews and current research were used in developing a professional development program for college faculty and staff designed to inform them of the experiences and perceptions of military veteran students currently attending a for-profit institution. This will create an improved learning environment for these students and enable them to complete their degrees and begin their nonmilitary careers.

Project Strengths and Limitations

The strengths of this project study include the military veteran students who elected to participate. The in-depth interviews provided unique perceptions on military and academic experiences as these students transitioned to a higher educational environment. The data collected were critical in providing specificity and detail to the professional development program.

The results revealed that the participants wanted faculty, students, and staff to be aware of their experiences and challenges. The project study research data, as well as Sparks and Loucks-Horsley's (1989) five models of staff development, guided the development of the professional development program.

An additional strength of this project is the flexibility of the professional development program. This flexibility allows other campuses, as well as institutions working with veterans, the ability to amend the program to meet their specific needs. This amendment will allow administrators to limit costs associated with implementation and provide evaluation tools for adjustments as required. There is a commitment on the part of the institution to continue professional development regarding military veteran students. This strong commitment strengthens all aspects of the professional development program.

The first limitation to this project was that the sample was small and taken at one specific institution. Little research has been done surrounding military veteran students' perceptions at for-profit colleges. Therefore, while this study was small, it could be representative of military veteran students at other for-profit institutions. Another limitation to this study was the inability to predict whether professional development participants will actually use the concepts learned and adjust their teaching styles to accommodate the needs of military veteran students. While the program evaluation is an excellent tool for evaluating the program itself, participants will be held responsible for making the necessary changes within their teaching strategies. Therefore, the overall success of the professional development program will be dependent on individual instructors, administration, and an ongoing faculty blog. Feedback, online discussions, and reflective journals by professional development participants may assist in identifying and ultimately rectifying this limitation.

Other limitations may be identified upon program implementation. The project study data will be used to address the needs of military veteran students in order to have a successful program implementation. This project study and the professional development program are specifically designed for the college but may be amended as needed with input from college administrators and faculty.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

In meeting the challenge of improving academic success among military veterans, this study could be completed at all of the specific institution's campuses. With 20 campuses nationwide, the sample size would be greater, allowing for some generalization to occur. The results would be generalizable and provide solid data for the research community and other for-profit institutions as well. In addition, the college as a whole would have an overall understanding of the needs of military veteran students.

A second recommendation would be to conduct this study on an annual basis to provide for ongoing training and updated research data. The fluctuation of military veteran students is ongoing. Conducting the study annually would allow for a better understanding of the current needs of military veteran students. An annual study would also allow faculty and staff the opportunity to amend current teaching practices in working with current military veteran students.

Another recommendation for alternative approaches would be to provide professional development training in an online format. This would allow for all instructors to benefit from the study results even if they are unable to attend the campus-based professional development program. The online component could include a focus

group, a blog, and online discussions, allowing for continued growth of the faculty as they enhance their instructional skills. Having instructors share instructional experiences would enhance the instructors' overall professional development and growth and would benefit the military veteran student community in the quest to be academically successful. In addition, faculty would be able to provide feedback about changes made to individual teaching practices that were beneficial in accommodating the needs of military veteran students. These alternative approaches are potential means of addressing the study problem with the overall goal of helping military veteran students be academically successful.

Scholarship, Project Development, and Leadership and Change

Scholarship is a process that includes questioning and evaluating information during learning. Through the scholarship involved in this study, I learned to use multiple modes of organization, accept constructive criticism while making numerous corrections, and adjust to unexpected directional changes throughout a research project. In addition, I came to appreciate the necessity of consulting current peer-reviewed research in education with regard to whatever projects I develop in the future. I now understand that the scholarship of teaching and learning available in current peer-reviewed educational research has a large role to play in the development of my future projects. Through hard work and determination, I developed the ability to develop, design, and implement scholarly research from beginning to end. I know now that I genuinely have the personal tenacity to be a successful researcher.

The meaning of *scholarship* was apparent in the proposal phase of the doctoral process. Through various setbacks and the removal of my committee chair, frustration led me to develop a determination to succeed. As I was challenged to improve and persist, my course learning came into play through clarification of the study. During the actual research phase, the doctoral process became clearer. Scholarship is applying learning to a project that can be used in a real work environment, with social change as an indicator. In addition, I developed an understanding of the importance of tenacity through this scholarship.

This process has afforded me the opportunity to development and implement a project at a scholarly level. The professional development program originated from data collected during the research stage of this process. During the project development phase, I achieved an increase in the depth of inquiry, analysis, and evaluation. Guidance from professional literature helped me in analyzing and reporting data objectively. The professional development program I created has the ability to be amended and used continually, allowing for lifelong learning. This lifelong learning journey will be shared by myself, faculty, students, and the college as a whole.

The evaluation plan will help to determine the success of the professional development program. A strong evaluation plan will allow the participants to provide feedback to aid in the evaluation and success of the program. In the actual project stage, the benefits of the doctoral process became apparent, and my colleagues and administrators gained a new found respect for my professionalism.

Through this process, I have improved my leadership abilities and changed personally and professionally. The process of the doctoral study provided a roadmap for success and improved my overall confidence and self-esteem. Through persistence, required for success in the doctoral program, I can now demonstrate a strong connection between identifying a problem at a local level, designing and implementing a scientific research design to collect valid and reliable information about that problem, and creating a project to implement a change to benefit society. The changes I observed through this experience afforded me stronger leadership abilities, stronger communication skills, and a higher level of respect from my professional colleagues. The skills I learned throughout this doctoral process have enhanced my change leadership at an intrinsic and a professional level.

The intrinsic change is demonstrated by the overall improvement of my self-confidence. I have become more confident in myself with the realization that I can successfully attain goals. The doctoral program provides attainable goals along with guidance on achieving them. The drive to complete my goals and be successful was encouraged and nurtured by the doctoral process. This process has empowered me with the knowledge that I can make a difference in the educational arena for military veteran students. On a professional level, my staff, peers, and upper management team now come to me for guidance on military veteran students and overall academic issues. The confidence they have displayed in my knowledge has enhanced my work relationships and earned me respect among my peers. The doctoral process has provided me with the educational knowledge needed to be successful in the academic arena. As a subject

matter expert, I find that other campus directors are asking me to complete studies at their sites. My professional career can only blossom from the experience and knowledge I have gained from the doctoral process.

Scholar Self-Analysis

My scholarly growth during the doctoral study journey is apparent in several areas. I have a deeper appreciation for others who have completed the doctoral process and provided professional literature. Throughout this study process, I have honed my creative thinking and problem-solving skills while growing in my determination and persistence to overcome challenges. I have also found a strong network with other scholars, which has helped me to improve my collaboration and communication skills. Qualitative research has taught me how to provide a deep and enriching story about a study group. I also realize the importance of researching peer-reviewed literature, which is vital to understanding a problem to be studied. As a scholar, I am now able to effectively evaluate and develop stronger educational projects. My research skills, including peer-reviewed article analysis as well as data collection, analysis, and reporting, have all been enhanced.

In the future, I will be completing a similar military veteran study at other campuses for my current institution. These studies will begin immediately after I complete the doctoral process. I have already received approval for completion of a similar study and will proceed using the same ethical and scholarly process. Completing this study has helped me to realize the importance of maintaining a highly ethical study in order to protect the participants' perceptions. It was through this ethical standard that my

participants provided me detailed and rich information in a genuine fashion. In order for my studies at other campuses to be equally successful, I will need to maintain high ethical standards to ensure high-quality research. At the same time, my data collection and analysis skills have been strengthened through this study. I am more confident in my data collection strategies and will be more comfortable in data collection techniques in the future. Data analysis will be an element of my future studies, and accuracy is vital in ensuring a better understanding of military veteran participants' perceptions. It is my hope that I can complete my study at all of the institution's campuses, which should provide for a publishable research project to benefit for-profit institutions as a whole. In addition, I will continue to mentor other instructors and staff on working with military veteran students. Professional development programs on military veterans' academic issues will be provided for other campuses as well. I will be working with directors at other campuses, mentoring them in facilitating faculty development programs on military veteran students. At the same time, as a non-military member, I have been accepted into the college military community, and students come to me for assistance with their issues as veterans. Overall, this study process has enabled me to become a stronger, more confident scholar and professional with the tenacity to succeed and overcome obstacles.

Practitioner Self-Analysis

The doctoral process has led me to make a stronger connection between theory and practice. Developing skills associated with theoretical research, such as creative thinking and critically locating professional literature, has provided me the opportunity to grow tremendously in my research abilities. I have also learned the importance of using

current research to solidify questions and answers concerning issues that support adult learning. The ability to research and analyze professional literature has made a positive impact on me professionally. I am now considered a subject matter expert in locating current research to address and enhance learning strategies. Developing my problem-solving skills and strengthening my already strong determination have provided opportunities for me to be a better administrator and instructor.

Through the doctoral process, I have been able to look at issues from several different angles. The research completed in this process has afforded me current results that are helpful in addressing my administrative challenges. In addition, I am able to connect current administrative issues with the research completed for this project. This connection between research and the workplace allows me to develop various solutions to academic administrative problems. The doctoral process has also helped me to improve my instructional techniques. With solid research completed, I am able to recognize, apply, and amend teaching practices in order to effectively teach veteran and nonveteran students. I have felt a deeper connection to my military veteran students through this doctoral process.

In addition, I am considered an expert in working with the academic process of military veteran students. This consideration has afforded me recognition from top college executives. The doctoral process has been a benefit not only on a professional level, but also on a personal level. My self-confidence and overall drive for success have allowed me to become a stronger critical thinker, analyst, and professional.

Project Developer Self-Analysis

The project study experience has allowed me the ability to approach issues from different perspectives. These different viewpoints allow me to share varied ideas to faculty and staff. Developing the professional development program has made me more respected in my field by my colleagues. In addition, faculty were excited to attend the program confident in my professional and scholarly abilities to produce a meaningful program. The knowledge I gained from the research and data collection and analysis were utilized for the professional development program development. The research study as a whole has provided me with an opportunity to develop and facilitate a professional development program addressing the academic needs of military veteran students. While the professional literature outlined some of the same experiences shared by the study participants, new ideas and comments were also provided to help faculty and staff better assist military veteran student's academic needs. These new ideas will allow faculty and staff to amend current strategies in an effort to help military veteran students. In addition, these new ideas may be beneficial to other institutions and research as a whole.

The project also provided me with a better understanding of how to implement and evaluate a professional development program implementation. Both of these components are critical as I continue to update the current program and develop future professional development programs. In addition, future studies and professional development programs are within my scope of understanding allowing me to be a more effective trainer and mentor, as well as increase my potential for professional advancement.

Reflection on the Importance of the Work

By studying military veteran student's attending a for-profit institution, this project will help to bridge the professional literature gap which currently demonstrates minimal studies regarding for-profit institutions. Through developing a professional development program I am able to provide instructors with a better understanding of military veteran students which will allow for amendments to current teaching strategies. The knowledge that I gained from the study and the doctoral process as a whole will be shared with the faculty and staff through the professional development program. Amendments to teaching strategies and an improvement on student relationships will be a direct result of my hard work and knowledge gained during the doctoral process.

Positive social change will be apparent as military veteran students succeed academically. Student and faculty relationships and experiences will be enhanced with an end result of greater satisfaction of collegiate experiences among military veteran students. Allowing for other institutions to utilize this project as a basis of improving military veteran students' academic needs could potentially impact numerous higher education institutions. Through this study, connecting research and analytical skills to a professional development program has provided an opportunity for all educators to positively affect the overall academic experience of military veteran students.

Professionally this process will improve my academic status and respect as a colleague and practitioner. In addition, career advancement will be elevated. The opportunities as a faculty member, administrator, professional development developer, and facilitator will be increased through the knowledge obtained during the doctoral

process. Finally, the personal achievement for persistence to graduation has increased my overall self-confidence in myself as an individual and a professional.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

The case study examined responses from 16 recent military veteran students attending a for-profit higher educational facility. The eight females and eight males provided comments and perceptions on transitioning to higher education as well as an understanding of available resources. The participants provided comments to be shared to faculty and staff resulting in a professional development program. The results indicated that the participants wanted an overall change in instruction to include consideration for the experiences of military veteran students. These potential instructional changes will assist in promoting the academic success among military veteran students.

Future research would allow for continued exploration of military veteran students and their academic challenges. This future research will be conducted at the original research site and additional campus locations within the current institutions framework as needed. Future research could be more specific to include identification of issues related to financial aid, college preparation, and support systems currently in place. In addition, further inquiry into military veterans' academic issues relating to career aspirations could lead to improved work opportunities and overall working relationships.

A follow up to the study, and effectiveness of the professional development program, will also be implemented. A review of internal academic reports showing the overall success rates of military veterans, as well as new military veterans enrolled, will

be utilized in an effort to follow up on the success of the study, professional development program, and amendments to instructional strategies. The quantitative institutional reports will be generated every six months to identify increases in military veteran students' success rate as well as an increase in enrolling new military veteran students. These reports will be analyzed and future research projects developed based on the reporting data.

Conclusion

This case study will provide assistance in bridging the literature gap regarding military veterans attending for-profit higher educational institutions. I gained insight into the perceptions and challenges of military veteran students as they transitioned from military to higher education. Each of the 16 study participants provided honest and thought provoking responses to questions in an effort to better understand military veterans at the southeastern college. Through the participants responses a professional development program was made available for faculty and staff in an effort to amend and improve the overall academic experience of recent military veteran students. The impact of improving military veteran student's academic experience will be beneficial socially, professionally, and economically. In addition, this study will help new military veteran student's enrolling at the southeastern college, a better opportunity for success.

The doctoral process has enabled me to focus on future research and professional development program opportunities. The lessons learned from this process will provide both professional and personal growth at a higher level. It is with great excitement that

new career opportunities to make positive social changes are available as a direct result from the doctoral process.

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Appendix A: The Project

The project is a three-day professional development program for faculty and staff at one small Southeastern college. The primary goal of this professional development program is to educate faculty and staff on the needs of military veterans who attend the college. The professional development program will provide participants the opportunity to better understand the military veteran students at this specific institution. The content for this professional development training program addressed the key themes which emerged through the research data analysis and developed best practices as discovered through the literature review. The professional development program examines andragogy, experiences related to adult learning, and effective teaching methods as it relates to military veteran students and the results of the study.

Specific outcomes addressed in this three-day professional development program include identifying military veteran student characteristics, their challenges in higher education, a unique difference from non-veteran students, and the support services available on campus. Participants will also develop lesson plans that utilizes best practice strategies, effective teaching principles, and Schlossberg's Transitional Theory as it relates to military veteran students transitioning to higher education.

Recent Military Veterans: An Understanding of the Barriers to Academic Success**Schedule for 1st PD Day***Understanding Military Veteran Students***7:30 a.m. – 8:00 a.m.:**

Breakfast (coffee and doughnuts)

8:00 a.m – 8:30 a.m.

Facilitator will already have designed groups and tables for each specific program.

Participants will be separated into groups of four within their specific programs of study (i.e. liberal arts, legal, medical, and business). Participants to complete "Academic Needs of Military Veteran Student's Assessment" which focuses on specific areas of concern relating to the military veteran study completed at One Southeastern College.

8:30 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.:

Introduction of Dean of Instruction and facilitator. Facilitator led discussion of the Academic Needs of Military Veteran Student's Assessment completed by faculty. Open discussion on assessment with question responses to be displayed on whiteboard for discussion, reflection and future reference.

9:00 a.m – 10:30 a.m.:

Research study problem statement clearly described to ensure faculty understand and commit to address. Panel Discussion of the problem statement.

10:30 a.m. - 10:45 a.m.: BREAK**10:45 a.m – 12 p.m.:**

Watch and discuss the videos:

1. “Student Veteran Experiences” (Frederick Community College, 2013) 5:32
2. “Student Veteran Profile: Kevin Eady” (Florida State University, 2013) 3:22
3. “Student Veterans and Their Stories of Growth” (Make the Connection, 2013) 4:30
4. “Academic Life After Military Deployment” (pennstateoutreach, 2012). 2:54

Educators, separated into four member cooperative learning groups, will answer the following questions:

****Key questions that must be answered by each educator:**

1. Identify 3 characteristics of military veteran students.
2. Identify 3 challenges that military veterans experience in the classroom.
3. Explain how military experiences may affect college experiences.

12:00 p.m – 1:00 p.m:

Lunch (On your own) - Supervisor will suggest that educators discuss military veteran student challenges during their lunch period.

1:00 p.m – 2:00 p.m:

Facilitator to provide a synopsis of the study, the participants, the interview process, the data analyses and the results.

2:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.:

Regroup and discuss military veteran students in the classroom.

Activity: Assign groups of 4 educators to identify 3 characteristics of military veteran students. Educators will then discuss examples of military student veteran challenges faculty members have experienced within their classrooms, or that were discussed in the

videos or study, and identify 3 challenges military veterans experience in the classroom.

Educators will then brainstorm to determine 5 ways military veteran students are different than non-veteran students (academically, emotionally and medically). Educators will create a lesson plan that incorporates amending teaching practices to ensure that military veteran student characteristics, challenges and differences are considered.

*Group Lesson Plan design that revolves around understanding military veteran students, their challenges, how their military experiences affect their college experience and how they are unique from non-military veteran students. The Lesson Plan must be completed by the end of the session to receive PD credit.

3:00 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.:

Reflection of Lesson Plan and military veteran student's uniqueness in the higher educational classroom. Question-Answer session/closing remarks.

MATERIALS FOR DAY ONE

1. WhiteBoard, LCD projector, screen, sound system, Internet access, desktop computer for the facilitator.
2. Academic Needs of Military Veteran Student's Assessment
3. "Student Veteran Experiences" (Frederick Community College, 2013).

https://video.search.yahoo.com/video/play;_ylt=A2KLqINWdV5VbVEAdYIsnIQ;_ylu=X3oDMTByZ2N0cmxpBHNIYwNzcgRzbGsDdmlkBHZ0aWQDBGdwb3MDMg--?p=military+veterans+CHALLENGES+higher+education&vid=a2a0628c78f73807c625920444c9399e&l=5%3A32&turl=http%3A%2F%2Fts1.mm.bing.net%2Fth%3Fid%3DWN.C0vhWlXphEPJ12TorRH9Aw%26pid%3D15.1&rurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.youtube.com%2Fwatch%3Fv%3DxFMStXlqEjw&tit=Student+Veteran+Experiences&c=1&sigr=11bfl9ric&sigt=10rj4qk74&sigi=11vv8o151&age=1379426347&fr2=p%3As%2Cv%3Av&fr=yhs-mozilla-004&hsimp=yhs-004&hspart=mozilla&tt=b.

4. Student Veteran Profile: Kevin Eady (Florida State University, 2013)

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[m%2Fwatch%3Fv%3DOBU60AFepUw&tit=Student+Veteran+Profile%3A+Kevin+Eady&c=2&sigr=11b5324gn&sig=1134cpegp&sigi=11vqne97e&age=1362428138&fr2=p%3As%2Cv%3Av&fr=yhs-mozilla-004&hsimp=yhs-004&hspart=mozilla&tt=b.](https://video.search.yahoo.com/video/play;_ylt=A2KLqIE2F15VyK0A8RcsnIIQ;_ylu=X3oDMTByMjBzZmhtBHNIYwNzcgRzbGsDdmlkBHZ0aWQDBGdwb3MDNg--?p=student+veteran+experiences&vid=7758406142f14c7159bdddcdc4f7cd98&l=4%3A30&turl=http%3A%2F%2Fts1.mm.bing.net%2Fth%3Fid%3DWN.hNeLTPUIhQYY2vUB9kb5zw%26pid%3D15.1&rurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.youtube.com%2Fwatch%3Fv%3DjIjKev7-Wmw&tit=Student+Veterans+and+their+stories+of+growth&c=5&sigr=11bakpo9m&sig=11cvсібaj&sigi=11vm0uvl4&age=1361896870&fr2=p%3As%2Cv%3Av&fr=yhs-mozilla-004&hsimp=yhs-004&hspart=mozilla&tt=b)

5. Student Veterans and their stories of growth (Make the Connection, 2013).

https://video.search.yahoo.com/video/play;_ylt=A2KLqIE2F15VyK0A8RcsnIIQ;_ylu=X3oDMTByMjBzZmhtBHNIYwNzcgRzbGsDdmlkBHZ0aWQDBGdwb3MDNg--?p=student+veteran+experiences&vid=7758406142f14c7159bdddcdc4f7cd98&l=4%3A30&turl=http%3A%2F%2Fts1.mm.bing.net%2Fth%3Fid%3DWN.hNeLTPUIhQYY2vUB9kb5zw%26pid%3D15.1&rurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.youtube.com%2Fwatch%3Fv%3DjIjKev7-Wmw&tit=Student+Veterans+and+their+stories+of+growth&c=5&sigr=11bakpo9m&sig=11cvсібaj&sigi=11vm0uvl4&age=1361896870&fr2=p%3As%2Cv%3Av&fr=yhs-mozilla-004&hsimp=yhs-004&hspart=mozilla&tt=b

6. Academic Life After Military Deployment (Pennstateoutreach, 2012).

https://video.search.yahoo.com/video/play;_ylt=A2KLqIBvF15V3QwAW0gsnIIQ;_ylu=X3oDMTBzdmtvYW9lBHNIYwNzcgRzbGsDdmlkBHZ0aWQDBGdwb3MDMjA-?p=student+veteran+experiences&vid=dfbf24d141ff29c1e77e9768d148e80d&l=2%3A54&turl=http%3A%2F%2Fts2.mm.bing.net%2Fth%3Fid%3DWN.KBeGrYmsTCPp17vecewadw%26pid%3D15.1&rurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.youtube

[com%2Fwatch%3Fv%3DYVFWFQxertI&tit=Academic+Life+After+Military+D
ployment&c=19&sigr=11b8n573u&sigt=117e6gdt9&sigi=11vhicph6&age=133
8563065&fr2=p%3As%2Cv%3Av&fr=yhs-mozilla-004&hsimp=yhs-
004&hspart=mozilla&tt=b.](#)

Academic Needs of Military Veteran Student's Assessment

1. Why do you feel military veterans attend this institution?
2. Do you feel military experiences affect student's college experiences? How?
3. Do you feel that military veteran students are more prepared for college? Explain.
4. What challenges do you perceive military veteran students encounter as they transition into being a college student?
5. Do you feel that military veterans have support as they transition to college? Why or why not.
6. Do you feel military veteran students perceive college differently than other students? Explain.
7. How do you respond to students who say they are military veterans?
8. How do you believe other faculty, staff and students respond to military veteran students?
9. What campus support services are available for military veteran students?
10. How can you help military veteran students transition positively into the college setting?

Recent Military Veterans

An Understanding of the Barriers to Academic Success

Doctoral Project Study

- ▶ **Problem:** low success rate among recent military veteran students.
- ▶ **Study:** looked at the academic needs of recent military veterans attending a for-profit, post-secondary organization located in the southeastern United States
- ▶ **Purpose:** to identify student veteran issues, gender experience differences, as well as veterans' understanding of current available resources as they integrate into academia.
- ▶ **Research Questions**
 - ▶ What problems do returning veterans face as they integrate into academia?
 - ▶ Do female and male military veterans experience a different set of problems as they integrate into academia?
 - ▶ Do military veterans understand the resources available to them as they interface with the for-profit institution?

Subnotes:

Problem: Veterans who attended college from 2000 to 2009, only 18% completed college and graduated with an undergraduate degree in 2009 (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2011).

The local culture consists of an area highly populated with military veterans. At a local, for-profit college, 65% of campus-based students are veterans (T. LeGrand, personal communication, November 3, 2013). The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (2011) cited that 82% of veterans will not complete an undergraduate degree within five years. The overall graduation rate, calculated as completing an undergraduate degree in no more than five years, for undergraduate veteran students at one for-profit college is 15% (T. LeGrand, personal communication, December 10, 2013).

Study: This project study, identifying the needs of military veterans transitioning to academia in a for-profit institution, would help to close the gap between research studies completed in public vs. for-profit institutions as the majority of studies currently conducted are at public or private institutions (Ackerman et al., 2009; Brown & Gross, 2011; DiRamio et al., 2008).

Purpose: To identify military veterans' academic problems, the understanding of available resources, and potential differences in experiences based on gender as they integrate into academia, and attend a for-profit, post-secondary institution. While Military veterans have provided selfless service to defend our country they should be afforded every opportunity to be successful.

Research Questions: Research questions

RQ1: What problems do returning veterans face as they integrate into academia? RQ2: Do female and male military veterans experience a different set of problems as they integrate into academia? RQ3: Do military veterans understand the resources available to them as they interface with the for-profit institution?

Project Study Design

- ▶ Qualitative Method
- ▶ Case Study Design
- ▶ Qualitative Methodology
 - ▶ focused, in-depth interviews
 - ▶ gender experiences
 - ▶ knowledge of resources available.

Subnotes:

Qualitative method: used to develop a deeper understanding based on participants' views and experiences (Creswell, 2009).

Case study design: the researcher provided an in-depth analysis of military veteran's experiences as they integrated into academia, and allowed for a deeper insight into military veteran's perceived problems as they integrate into academia. Focuses on an in-depth analysis of an activity, experience or process within a specific time or place (Creswell, 2012). Allows for more detail and depth occurring at a particular time, and within a specific context (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Qualitative methodology and consisted of: focused, in-depth interviews of military veteran students centered on identification of academic needs; gender experiences, and knowledge of resources available. Is appropriate in this study as a means to ascertain perceptions of academic needs, experiences and resource knowledge. It will also enhance current literature, which would generate a primary base of knowledge for further studies on for-profit, post-secondary institutions.

Participants

- ▶ **Purposeful and Homogeneous Sampling**
- ▶ **Phases of the Study:**
 - ▶ permission from institution and Walden University IRB
 - ▶ identification of military veterans who completed at least one tour in Iraq or Afghanistan,
 - ▶ currently enrolled at the selected proprietary school in one southeastern state
- ▶ **Participant List Obtained from Institutional Reports**
 - ▶ 94 military veterans attended the institution
 - ▶ Dean of Instruction emailed veteran students
- ▶ **Sample Size of 16 Participants.**
 - ▶ random selection of eight male and eight female participants

Subnotes:

Participants: recent military veterans, having served in the Iraq or Afghanistan conflicts, and attended Bryant and Stratton College, Hampton campus.

Purposeful sampling: intentionally selecting individuals from a specific, for-profit institution to understand their academic needs. Purposeful sampling is based upon sites and participants that can help identify a central experience (Creswell, 2009). In addition, homogeneous sampling will be used, allowing for selection of “certain sites or people because they possess a similar trait or characteristic” (Creswell, 2009, p. 208). The selection included participants that are similar in that they all attend one specific for-profit, post-secondary institution, and are Iraq or Afghanistan conflict veterans.

Participant list: The first phase of the study involved permission from the Walden University IRB (IRB approval #01-06-15-0235569), and institutional approval from the post-secondary institution, identification of military veterans who completed at least one tour in Iraq or Afghanistan, and are currently enrolled at the selected proprietary school in one southeastern state. Currently, there are 94 military veterans attending the for-profit postsecondary institution (T. LeGrand, personal communication, January 21, 2014). All selected students were contacted by the Dean of Instruction through email correspondence and a second follow up email was sent 2 weeks later.

Project study with a sample size of 16 participants. Of the 16 participants, random selection of eight male and eight female participants were selected. While not a large selection, a deeper understanding of the individual participants were obtained.

Data Collection

- ▶ **Pre-Interview Process**
 - ▶ Signed consent forms
 - ▶ questions answered prior to participation
 - ▶ participant anonymity, and confidentiality through the use of pseudonyms
- ▶ **Interview Process**
 - ▶ 16 one-on-one focused in-depth interviews were conducted
 - ▶ semi-structured in nature,
 - ▶ questions were amended as needed during interview progression
 - ▶ audio taped interviews included open-ended questions, researcher and interview transcription notes
 - ▶ voluntary participation
 - ▶ no risks of harm or compensation

Subnotes:

Pre-Interviews process: students completed appropriate consent forms which were signed and questions were answered prior to participation in order to strengthen the researcher-participant working relationship. A positive researcher-participant working relationship developed due to the assurance of participant anonymity, and confidentiality. Through the use of pseudonyms, all information identifying the participant was removed from the interview transcripts to ensure individual anonymity.

Interview process: 16 one-on-one focused in-depth interviews were conducted at the institution lasting approximately 45-60 minutes each. The interviews were digitally audiotaped and transcribed by the researcher with the transcripts sent back to the participant for verification and member check. The interviews, semi-structured in nature, provided the participants with questions that were amended as needed during the progression of the interview. One-on-one audio taped interviews included open-ended questions, researcher notes, and interview transcription notes. Participation was voluntary and no risks of harming participants were identified. In addition, compensation was not provided and no identifiable participant personal data was made publicly available.

Data Collection

- ▶ Random Gender Assignments
 - ▶ 8 male and 8 female participants
 - ▶ 16 participants
- ▶ Anonymous participation
- ▶ Copies of the purpose of the study

Subnotes:

Random Gender Assignments: The military veterans who responded to the email were randomly assigned to gender groups drawing names from a hat. Random assignment is the process of placing potential participants into groups (Creswell, 2012). From the gender groups, male and female, eight participants from each group were randomly selected.

Anonymous participation: All participants remain anonymous with the data collected maintaining strict confidentiality.

Copies of the study: The participants received copies of the purpose of the study, confidentiality statements, ethical concerns, and consent documents. In addition, all participants will be provided a copy of the completed project.

Data Analysis Steps

1. Organizing and Preparing Data

- ▶ transcribing interviews
- ▶ reviewing field notes
- ▶ sorting and categorizing the data into similar types
- ▶ transcribed interviews presented to participants for member checking verification.

2. Exploring and Analyzing the Data

- ▶ Transcription review.
- ▶ initial note taking review
- ▶ reading the transcripts no less than 3 times
- ▶ development and streamlining of emerging themes

Subnotes:

The first step organizing and preparing data: This included transcribing interviews, reviewing field notes, and sorting and categorizing the data into similar types (Creswell, 2009). A copy of the transcribed interviews was presented to each participant for member checking verification. During this process, participants were given two weeks to read the interview transcript and edit as necessary.

Exploring and analyzing the data: reflecting on the overall context. Transcription review, as well as initial note taking, was followed by reading the transcripts no less than three times to insure understanding, as well as the development and streamlining of emerging themes.

Data Analysis Steps continued

3. Categorize and Code Data

- ▶ Use emerging themes
- ▶ No more than seven themes were identified

4. Interpret and Report Data

- ▶ Review of findings
- ▶ Limitations
- ▶ Suggestions for future research
- ▶ Report data

Subnotes:

The third step was to categorize and code the data using emerging themes (Creswell, 2009). No more than seven themes were identified in an effort to provide the detailed description of the research data.

The final step was to interpret and report the data (Creswell, 2009). Interpretation will encompass a review of the findings as it relates to the research questions, limitations and suggestions for future research.

The strengths of this project study include the military veteran students who elected to participate. The in-depth interviews provided unique perceptions on military and academic experiences as these students transitioned to a higher educational environment. The data collected was critical in providing specificity and detail to the professional development program. The data results showed that the veterans wanted faculty, students and staff to be aware of their experiences and challenges.

Limitations include that the sample was small and taken at one specific institution. Little research completed surrounding military veteran students' perceptions at for-profit colleges. Therefore, while this study could be representative of military veteran students at other for-profit institutions, the study was too small to be generalized. Another limitation includes the inability to predict whether professional development participants will actually utilize the concepts learned and adjust teaching styles to accommodate the

needs of military veteran students. Other limitations may be identified upon program implementation.

Future research: this study could be completed at all of the specific institutions campuses. The college could also conduct this study on an annual basis to provide for ongoing training and updated research data. The flux of military veteran students change frequently. Conducting the study annual would help to understand the current needs of military veteran students. The annual study would also allow for faculty and staff the opportunity to amend current teaching practices in working with current military veteran students. The college could also provide the professional development training in an online format to allow for all instructors to benefit from the study results if they were unable to attend the campus based professional development program. The online component could include a focus group, blog and online discussions allowing for continued growth of the faculty as they enhance their instructional skills.

Reporting data: the results of the study will be provided to administrators, participants and additional research portals. A follow up to the study and effectiveness of the professional development program will also be implemented. A review of internal academic reports showing the overall success rates of military veterans, as well as new military veterans enrolled, will be utilized in an effort to follow up on the success of the study, project and amendments to instructional strategies. The quantitative institutional reports will be generated every six months to identify increases in military veteran student's success rate as well as an increase in enrolling new military veteran students. These reports will be analyzed and future research projects developed based on the reporting data.

Data Analysis Results

- ▶ **Females Served:**
 - ▶ Air Force – 1 Army – 3 Marine Corps – 1 Navy – 3
- ▶ **Males Served:**
 - ▶ Air Force – 0 Army – 3 Marine Corps – 1 Navy – 4
- ▶ **Average Time Served**
 - ▶ Females 4.875 years with 10 years being the longest served
 - ▶ Males 11.5 years with 4 serving 14 years or more
- ▶ **6 females served in Iraq and 3 served in the Afghanistan conflicts**
- ▶ **8 males served in Iraq and 4 also served in the Afghanistan conflict**
- ▶ **Average time out of the military prior to attending college**
 - ▶ Female participants were out 3.5 years
 - ▶ Male participants were out 7.5 years

Subnotes:

Average: Females had an average of 4.875 years serving in the military with 10 years being the longest served. Males, on the other hand, had an average of 11.5 years serving in the military with half of the male population serving 14 years or more.

Conflicts Served: Of those service years, six female participants served in the Iraq conflict and three served in the Afghanistan conflicts. Only one female served in both the Iraq and the Afghanistan conflicts. In contrast, all of the males served in the Iraq conflict and four also served in the Afghanistan conflict.

Time Out of Military: Approximately 3.5 years was the average time the female participants were out of the military prior to attending One Southeastern College. The

male participants were out of the military, on average, almost 7.5 years.

Interview Questions

- ▶ 4 Main sections
 - ▶ Current College Experiences
 - ▶ Military to Higher Education Transition
 - ▶ Student Experiences on Campus
 - ▶ College Experiences.

Subnotes:

The four sections investigated included participant's current college experiences, military to higher education transition, student experiences on campus and college experiences.

The four main sections related directly to the research questions being studied. The four sections investigated included participant's current college experiences, military to higher education transition, student experiences on campus and college experiences.

College Experiences

► Decision to attend

- Convenience
- Military Friendly
- Student Centered
- Career oriented
- Referred

"it was a small environment (and) the curriculum...was very focused."

"student to instructor ratio for me was perfect."

the college "was more focused on the student and helping them succeed."

"wanted a private school where I could have one on one time with the instructor and the instructor actually knows my name."

"friend that was a student here and she said nothing but good things."

Subnotes:

Decision to Attend:

Convenience/military friendly tied 3:3

Student centered – more females than males 4:1;

Career Oriented – more females than males 4:3

Referral – 5 males – no females 0:5 – Over half of the males came to the college due to referrals

The results indicate that males are more likely to select the college based on friend referral rather than its convenience, military friendliness or student centeredness. In addition, females are more likely to select a college oriented towards being student centered and availability of a specific career.

College Experiences

"how different the interaction is in the civilian setting of college. Compared to what my military setting interacting with people."

"the advisors are willing to work with you. The professors are willing to work with you. You get a lot of face-to-face training."

"because I'm inquisitive and people always take the time out to answer the questions...and to help you achieve those answers."

► Overall College Experience

- Good
- Great
- Enjoy
- Mixed
- Enlightening

"when I came back on active reserve is where I had run into problems with the institution."

Subnotes:

Overall college experience:

Good 3:3

Great 2:3 – more males than females

Enjoy 2:1 – more females than males

Mixed – 1:0 – female

Enlightening – 0:1 – male

The results indicate that males are more likely to select the college based on friend referral rather than its convenience, military friendliness or student centeredness. In addition, females are more likely to select a college oriented towards being student centered and availability of a specific career.

Military Experiences Affecting College Experiences

Overall Military Experiences

- ▶ **Academic/Career Focused**
- ▶ **Time Management**
- ▶ **Leadership Traits**
- ▶ **Medical Issues**
- ▶ **Social Issues**

"I'm accustomed to the orderly fashion where you either raise your hand or you stand to speak. There were times when that became a little overwhelming."

"when it comes to discussions I feel like my thoughts and my ideas are a little bit more educated." She went on to say that sometimes she does not speak up during class because she felt "like it's going to take so much more effort to try to explain myself and it's just going to fall on deaf ears."

"better prepared for the scheduling of college... perseverance"

"because it taught me to take the initiative " instead of to wait or even procrastinate on doing stuff. [To] go ahead and get it done."

"being a person with PTSD and adjustment mental disorder, someone that can have an effect on school work, and trying to accomplish [assignments] on time"

Subnotes:

Female: Military experience affect college experience:

Yes – 7
No – 3
Yes/No – 2

Male: Military experience affect college experience:

Yes – 7
No – 2
Yes/No – 1

Becky also felt the military affected her academic and career aspirations. She felt that "when it comes to discussions I feel like my thoughts and my ideas are a little bit more educated." She went on to say that sometimes she does not speak up during class because she felt "like it's going to take so much more effort to try to explain myself and it's just going to fall on deaf ears." Marie felt that all of the students were "learning at the same time [and that] nobody's too far ahead of the other person." Marie felt there was no difference between military veterans and non-military veterans in regards to her military experience and her college experience. However, military veteran participants felt that the military provided them with academic and career focus that were not necessarily present in non-veteran students. Military veteran participants felt that the military

provided them with academic and career focus that were not necessarily present in non-veteran students.

The Military Strategic Leadership Competencies, Competency Models, and Skills identified leadership traits that were relatable to all military branches. The leadership traits identified by the participants included comradery, maturation, integrity, discipline, determination, and initiative (Air University, 2014). “I’m accustomed to the orderly fashion where you either raise your hand or you stand to speak. There were times when that became a little over whelming.” He went on to note that students that spoke out in class and interrupted was overwhelming to him as he was used to the military structured environment. In addition, Becky found it difficult to relate to other students who are younger and have different life experiences. She felt that “a lot of people they just know what’s on the TV and they don’t really know on the inside what’s really going on. So I feel like for me and my perspective I do kinda know a little bit more.”

Participants felt strongly that their military experiences affected their ability to socially interact with other students. It was clear that some participants found it difficult to relate socially to non-veteran students.

Military Experiences Affecting College Experiences

College Preparation

“The military is all about out of the classroom type things.”

- ▶ **Academic/Career Focused**
- ▶ **Time Management**
- ▶ **Leadership Traits**
- ▶ **Medical Issues**
- ▶ **Social Issues**

“It’s the life outside of the military that they don’t prepare you for. You’re trained to be in the military, but once you’re out you have to learn how to deal with family [and] with non-military people.”

“with taking the initiative and not waiting. Taught me how to manage my time more wisely [and] more efficiently.”

“time management [and] the attitude that once you start something [to] complete it.”

Subnotes:

All female participants agreed that the military experience did adequately prepare them for college with two participants also selecting, and discussing, the areas where it did not adequately prepare them for college. In contrast, six male participants felt they were prepared for college, and two male participants did not feel that they were prepared for college due to their military experiences.

Negative: He noted that the military was more “comradery or on the job training type deal” and that to “pull out a book and read through the manual didn’t happen a whole lot” while in the military. Becky also felt the military did not prepare her for college because non veteran students have a different mindset. She explained “I have friends and family who have served and there are things that are way more important than what Beyonce is doing on TV. It’s not worth even entertaining because to me that’s just stupidity.” Becky went on to state that she thought she would “probably be like them [civilian students] if I didn’t have life experiences” from the military.

Positive: Susan felt the military adequately prepared her for college through being prompt in class and with assignments as well as respect for others. The majority of the participants felt that the military did prepare them for college. The results indicate that leadership traits affected males more than females with academic and career focus and time management skills also affecting college preparation.

Military to Higher Education Transition

► Transitional Challenges

- Finances
- Time Management
- Academic Process
- Class Management
- Self Confidence

“one of the biggest challenges is that I have a full time job and balancing work with classes and required homework and papers... [is] the biggest challenge Juggling all of that at once.”

“when I got out of the military I was no longer working and the only thing that I was getting was a GI bill.”

“understanding the process again and knowing that if we are talking with someone and give somebody the paperwork [that] they’re taking care of it or what’s the next step for us to do.”

“the biggest thing too, for me, I was scared of falling.”

“the difference between the atmosphere of the military where you have that discipline and you come to your other peers in college and some are a little bit disciplined and you have to learn to accept that and adapt.”

Subnotes:

The first sub-question asked participants to identify the challenges they encountered as they transitioned into being a college student. The main themes identified included finances, time management, academic process, class management, and self-confidence.

Finances included the VA education benefits and personal financial issues.

Time management focused on balancing work-life-school issues as well as completing assignments on time.

The academic process included college expectations and the process of enrolling, registering and other paperwork affiliated with attending college.

Class management included discipline, structure, and non-serious students within the classroom.

Self-confidence included fear of the unknown, increase stress, apprehension and adaptability.

Military to Higher Education Transition

"the majority of my teachers have been quite supporting."

"it feels like the military don't give you no kind of support."

"the support I have from family members, my wife [and] kids...help me a lot for my issues."

"family has been one of the hardest things to adjust to as far as college"

"I'm in law enforcement so they were - when I talked to them about an achievement certificate, they're really supportive and their like 'way to go' "

► Transitional Support

- College
- Military
- Family
- Other Students
- Employer

Subnotes:

Participants were also asked if they felt they received support from the military, college, family members, or friends as they transitioned to the college setting. All but one female received support either from the college, family or peers. One female felt that she received no support overall and cited the military as definitely being unsupportive. She felt the military misled her by promising her a job once out of the military. She was

unable to obtain employment which led her to attend college. All of the males agreed that they received some sort of support as they transitioned to college. The support systems included the college, military, family, other students and employment.

Transitional Support

College 5:7 females/males

Military 0:1 females/males

Family 3:3

Other Students 1:1

Employer 0:1 females/males

None of the females and only one male participant felt any support was received from the military. The majority of participants did not mention receiving or not receiving support from the military in their academic journey. Support from peers and co-workers was acknowledged with a few participants. The participants definitely felt support from the campus community as they continued their education. The campus community included instructors, advisors, and additional support staff. Some participants found support from the military, family, peers and co-workers. Military veteran participants did have some a support system available.

Veteran Perceptions with Non-Veteran Students

- ▶ **Perception Differences**
 - ▶ **Serious/Career Focused**
 - ▶ **More mature level of interaction**
 - ▶ **Leadership Traits**
 - ▶ **Appreciation**
 - ▶ **No Debt**

some students "kind of put themselves in a point where they just don't really know and then they go to school and waste thousands of dollars and now we have this issue now with all these kids that are in debt"

"take it [college] more serious. I think that if I'm going to come to college and I'm going to learn than I need to be here every week."

Jake felt that the non-veteran students had no insight about "what the real world is... and people make very uninformed opinions"

the discipline that a lot of people don't have" which allowed her to perceive college differently than other students

"been in a few conflicts and you appreciate everything once you come back here in one piece"

Subnotes:

The main themes included being more serious and career focused, more mature level of interaction, having more sophisticated leadership traits, possessing greater appreciation for being given the opportunity to attend college and having no financial strain.

Participants perceive college differently

Serious/Career Focused 3:6 female/male

Social Relationships 1:1

Leadership Traits 4:7 female/male

Appreciation 4 male only

No Debt 1 female only

Six females and all eight of the males believed their military experience did dispose them to perceive college differently than other students. This more mature level of interaction perceived by the participants was a direct result of their military experiences priming them to perceive college differently than other students. These traits included appreciation, and discipline. She felt because of this lack of debt she is able to perceive college differently than other students.

All but two females felt the military experience allowed them to perceive college differently than other students. Leadership traits and career focused were areas where the female participants felt they were different than other students. Males perceive the military experience to affect their ability to be more serious and career focused as well as encompassing leadership traits. Due to the traits learned from their military experience, both female and male participants feel they are able to perceive college differently than other students. It is clear that the military veteran student participants feel that they perceive college differently than non-military students.

Responses to Military Status

"most of them are quite surprised when I tell them I served in the military."

"because when they look at me they don't expect me to be in the military or they don't expect me to say the branch that I was in."

"example just like one or two students ask 'idiotic questions'."

"don't want to hear because what they see I look like and my status right now. They kind of walk away."

"more obstacles being a veteran than being me."

"the same as everybody else. It's not really a difference. We're not treated any differently."

► Military Status Responses

► Positive

► Surprised

► No Difference

► Ask Questions

► Do not admit

Subnotes:

Some of the main themes included positive, surprised, no difference, ask questions or do not admit. Five female participants, and six male participants, found that most responses were positive.

Military Status Responses

Positive 5:6 female/male

Surprised 1:1

No Difference 2 female only

Ask Questions 2:2

Do not admit 2:1 female/male

Five female participants, and six male participants, found that most responses were positive.

Of the participants who admitted to serving in the military, they felt that others respond positively, are surprised, are indifferent, or ask questions about their military experience. Some participants appeared to be offended by questions asked by non-military students.

However, the overall consensus of others responding to the participant's military experience appeared to be positive in nature.

Campus Support Services

▶ Female Participants

- ▶ 4 use campus support services
- ▶ 4 do not use campus support services
- ▶ 3 are aware of services and do not use them
- ▶ 1 was not aware of any support services

▶ Male Participants

- ▶ 6 use campus support services
- ▶ 2 do not use campus services
- ▶ 1 is aware of services and does not use them
- ▶ 1 was not aware of any support services

I've been told I haven't utilized it. I'm not sure if that's true, but I feel like I should have used it. I don't know if I have or not, but I've heard of it.

Subnotes:

The fifth sub-question asked participants if they utilized any campus support services. Half of the female participants had utilized support services with the other half not utilizing support services. Of the four female participants who did not utilize support services, three were aware there were services and one was unaware support services were available. In contrast, six male participants utilized support services and three did not utilize services. Of the three who did not utilize the services one was aware of available services while two were unaware of any support services.

Females:

4 Females use campus support services

4 females do not use campus support services

3 are aware and do not use

1 was not aware and does not use

Males:

6 Males use campus support services

2 Males do not use campus support services

1 is aware and does not use

1 was not aware and does not use

The most common campus support services utilized included the library, veteran's center, instructor assistance, financial aid, academic management team and the computer labs/learning resource center. The results indicate that more females than males utilized the library, instructor assistance and academic team members. In contrast, more males utilized the veteran's center and financial aid. There appears to be a significant difference in gender when utilizing available support services. It is also clear that the resources available are helpful. However, not all participants were aware of the available resources.

Campus Support Services Utilized

the librarian to be very helpful as "she showed me how to research...and that is one thing that I use the most."

"the veteran's center that opened my eyes."

veteran's center referring to it as his "study hub because it's nice and quiet in there especially when the learning resource center is crowded and packed."

► Support Services Utilized

- Library
- Veteran's Center
- Instructor Assistance
- Financial Aid
- Academic Team
- Computer Labs/Learning Resource Center

Subnotes:

Support Services Utilized

Library 3:1 female/male

Veteran's Center 2:3 female/male

Instructor Assistance 2:1 female/male

Financial Aid 3 male only

Academic Team 2:1 female/male

Computer Labs/Learning Resource Center 1:1

The results indicate that more females than males utilized the library, instructor assistance and academic team members. In contrast, more males utilized the veteran's center and financial aid. There appears to be a significant difference in gender when utilizing available support services. It is also clear that the resources available are helpful. However, not all participants were aware of the available resources.

Transition from Military to Academia

► **Participants recommend the following for a positive transition**

- **Accept others**
- **Good support system**
- **Stay positive**
- **Time Management**
- **Relax**
- **Engage in the campus community**

"encourage yourself mostly...as some people would try to sway you from thinking about higher education "

"stop waiting to the last minute [and] complete my work on time "

*"to realize that everybody is not the same
Everybody is not going to come from the same
background as me "*

"you do have to work for what you want. "

Subnotes:

The final sub-question in section two asked participant's to identify what needed to occur to help their transition be more positive. Five female and five male participants felt that nothing needed to occur as their transition was already positive or they were graduating.

Other participants identified accepting others, good support system, hard work, staying positive, time management and relaxing more as items that needed to occur to help their transition be more positive. Female participants selected acceptance of others, having a good support system, and working hard as necessary in helping their transition to be more positive. The males, on the other hand identified with accepting others, time management, and relaxing more.

7 female and 8 males felt that they had adjusted completely to the role of student versus the military role.

To have a positive transition military veteran students should

Accept others 1:1 female/male

Good support system, and hard work 1 female

Stay positive 2 females

Time management 2 males

Relax 1 male

Question two asked participants if they felt that being a part of the campus community would help them to transition more positively into the role of a college student.

Clubs 1:1

Networking 1:1

Support 3:3

The transition from the military to higher education addressed challenges, support, effect of military experiences, campus support services and how to have a positive transition. Finances, time and class management, low self-confidence and the academic process were the most prominent challenges identified by the participants.

Adjusting to Role of the Student

▶ Participants adjusted completely

- ▶ College opposite military
- ▶ No difference

"always take what I learned from the military with me for the rest of my life."

"I'm still having to sit in the back and observe the room and stuff like that."

"It's like showing up for mustard in the military each day. I take me coming to school as going to work. I signed up for it so it's something I have to do to finish."

▶ Be part of the community

"anytime you're interacting with the other people you're working with or going to school with it helps you transfer into it."

"everyone becomes your friend and you're treated as though you're family."

"team comradery...helped me at least feel good."

Subnotes:

Seven of the eight female participants, and all eight of the male participants, felt that they had adjusted completely to the role of student versus the military role. One female participant, Rose, felt that she had not adjusted completely as the military would "always be part of life" and that she was still adjusting.

The main themes noted within this adjustment include military being part of life, college being the opposite of the military, and no difference between military and student roles. Of those who did completely adjust, two male participants noted that it took them about a year to completely adjust and two female participants cited hard work and enjoying classes helped them to acclimate to the student role. There appears to be no gender difference in adjusting to college life.

Question two asked participants if they felt that being a part of the campus community would help them to transition more positively into the role of a college student. One female participant did not feel that being a part of the campus community would help the transition to be more positive. This participant stated that she was not interested in participating in campus community events. Seven of the eight female participants, and all eight of the male participants, felt that being a part of the campus community helped them to transition more positively. For those that felt participating in the campus community would help the transition in a positive manner, joining clubs, attending networking opportunities, and getting academic and social support were common themes.

The results indicated that one female and one male did join clubs and felt the campus community events provided networking opportunities. These networking opportunities they felt helped the transition from military to student life. The community events identified included career and health fairs, as well as cookouts and ice cream socials. Three females and three males found the campus community provided support which also aided in a positive transition. This support included working with instructors, academic advisors, program directors and deans in an effort to help the participants be successful academically. Military veteran staff members were also identified as beneficial in helping some participants have a positive transition. The results indicate no difference in gender perceptions.

Participant Expectations

▶ Positive Expectations After Enrolling

- ▶ Help Adjusting
- ▶ Student Centered

in general, the amount of time was great.

"classes were small and the amount of instructor time on lessons is right on time "

▶ Negative Expectations After Enrolling

- ▶ Student Centered
- ▶ Curriculum Changes
- ▶ Workload

Jake expected to "learn more about sociology and psychology aspects of criminal justice."

Marie expected more hands on classes as curriculum changes involved putting program classes online with little to no hands-on training available as advertised. She stated "though I mean that was something that I was expecting and not getting. It was actually a little bit of a letdown."

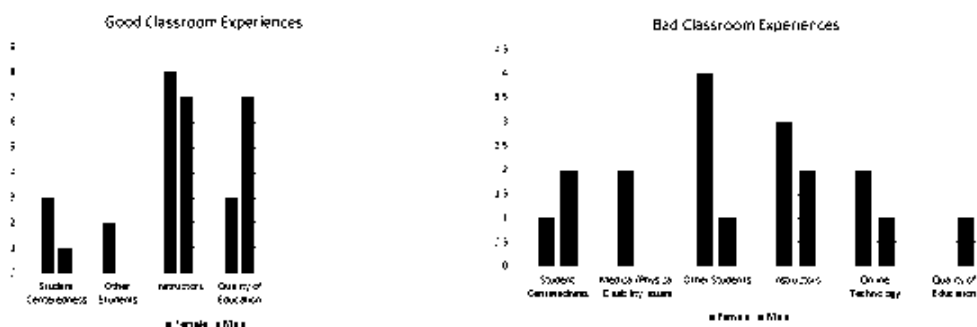
"didn't expect this work load. I never seen a college that gave you so many papers "

Subnotes:

The final question discussing student experiences on campus looked at participant expectations prior to enrollment. Participants felt that the college met or exceeded expectations with several having no expectations and some expecting something different. One female and male participant felt that the college had met their expectations. Two female participants felt that the college had exceeded their expectations. Three female and five male participants had no expectations of the college and three females and one male expected something different. One female participant with no expectations felt that the college exceeded her expectations as she had no expectations prior to enrolling. The main themes included help with adjusting, being student centered, unexpected program curriculum changes, and heavy academic

workload. The results clearly indicated that females expected and received positive student centeredness more so than males. In addition, both genders expected, and received, positive expectations with help adjusting and incorporating the student centered approach.

College Experiences



Subnotes:

Good experiences

Student centeredness

Other students

Instructors

Quality of Education

Bad experiences

Student Centeredness

Disabilities

Other students

Instructors

Online Technology

Quality of Education

The final main section asked participants to describe their experiences with the college. The first sub-question asked each participant to identify one good and one bad classroom experience. Being student center, difficulty dealing with non-serious students, having instructors working with student challenges and the overall learning of concepts had good and bad scenarios depending on the participant. Negative comments only were made by participants that identified mental or physical disability issues and those struggling with online technology. The results indicated that 3 of the 8 female participants had good classroom experiences regarding student centeredness and the quality of education received. Two female students identified positive experiences with other students and all female participants had positive experiences with instructors. In contrast, only one male participant selected student centeredness as a positive experience with instructors. The quality of education was a positive experience indicator for the majority of male participants. From these results, it would appear that females had positive classroom experiences surrounding the college being student centered, instructors willing to work with students and interactions with other students. Male participants had good experiences with instructors willing to work with students through the student centeredness approach and the quality of education provided.

Good Experiences

"in all of my classes the instructors have the students fully engaged."

"is everything we needed to know from day one."

"teachers here they seem to actually care about their jobs and it shows by the way that they teach"

"instructors here are very good at agreeing to disagree."

"real life examples or situation where it happened where we can relate"

"really want to help {and} to teach the students to succeed."

instructor who was "like Ma to me. She was hard on me but the results I had, utilizing the things that she taught me, was great."

"I'm not afraid to talk in front of people anymore."

Subnotes:

Good experiences

Student centeredness

Other students

Instructors

Quality of Education

The female participants found positive classroom experiences through instructors utilizing the student centered approach as well as positive social interactions with other students. The male participants cited many positive experiences with the student centeredness approach and genuine caring of the instructors, as well as the quality of education received.

Bad Experiences

"not every student is as motivated and as serious about their academics such as I am."

Rose also had back surgery and other health issues related to the military while being in college. She felt that she was not provided assistance and accommodations from instructors at a different campus.

"his delivery is where I think he was pretty much losing the students and they tuned him out." He noted that the experience became worse when "the instructor began personally attacking the student's point of view."

instructor "reading straight from the power point" made up her bad classroom experience

students come in late or leave early from class and he thinks "it's kind of disrespectful to the people who are there trying to learn"

"like that's funny because I had to go to the doctor's to get a chair but when you pull one in no one says nothing to you."

John felt the switch to blackboard and "the online experience was a bad one." Technological difficulties gave John the negative perception of online classes.

Subnotes:

Both female and male participants provided bad classroom experiences. Students not taking their education seriously, technology difficulties, medical issues and instructor difficulties were the primary issues related to the participant's bad experiences. Participants should be made cognizant of the military veteran participant's negative classroom experiences in an effort to come up with strategies to overcome these

perceptions. Two female participants, with medical and physical issues, had similar bad classroom experiences. Three female participants and one male participant shared bad classroom experiences that encompassed other students and their lack of seriousness. In addition, three female and two male participants cited negative experiences with instructors in regards to working with them to be successful. Finally, online technology appeared in a negative light with two female participants and one male participant noting that the online class would not have internet access for days making it difficult to complete assignments. Only one male participant felt the quality of the education received was part of a bad classroom experience. This was primarily due to the fact that the participant was not interested in a liberal arts class and did not find the content useful. One male participant felt that there was not enough time given to the students to complete required assignments and this led to a negative classroom experience. Both female and male participants provided bad classroom experiences. Students not taking their education seriously, technology difficulties, medical issues and instructor difficulties were the primary issues related to the participant's bad experiences.

Helpful Classes, Services & Programs

▶ Helpful Classes

- ▶ Internship
- ▶ Internship Prep
- ▶ Program Classes
- ▶ Liberal Arts/Sciences
- ▶ First Year Experience (FYE)

▶ Helpful Services and Programs

- ▶ Financial Aid
- ▶ Advisors
- ▶ First Year Experience (FYE)
- ▶ Deans/Program Directors
- ▶ Veteran's Center
- ▶ Registrar
- ▶ Clubs
- ▶ Childcare
- ▶ Military Veteran Staff

Subnotes:

Classes military vet students found helpful:

Internship 2:1 female/male

Internship Prep 2:2

Program Classes 6:3 female/male

Liberal Arts/Sciences 3:5 female/male

First year Experience (FYE) 1 female

Internship class consists of students in their last semester of their associate's degree program. The students must complete 90 hours (160 for Medical Assisting) of an internship within their program of study. The internship prep class, offered the semester prior to graduation of an associate's degree, works on student's resumes, as well as networking and interviewing skills. Program classes consisted of classes that are directly related to the students program of interest. Of the Liberal Arts and Sciences the following classes were identified as helpful: Math, English, Ecology, Sociology, Psychology, Literature, Humanities and Communications. First year experience (FYE) was another class participants found to be helpful. FYE is a required class to introduce new students to the expectations of college. This orientation type of class touched on time management, resources, class expectations and the financial aspect of college life.

Helpful Programs

Financial Aid 5:5

Advisors 2:3 female/male

First Year Experience (FYE) 2:4 female/male

Deans/Program Directors 2:4 female/male

Veteran's Center 1:3 female/male

Registrar 1:3 female/male

Clubs 3 males

Childcare 1 female

Military Veteran Staff 2 females

Participants were asked to identify any programs or services offered that were helpful. Participants identified financial aid, advisors, Deans and Program Directors, Veterans Center, Registrar, Clubs, Child care and staff who were military veterans. Financial aid was utilized and helpful by over half of all participants. Most participants found the financial aid office, the advisors, the Deans and Program Directors, and the Veterans Center to be the most cited helpful services.

Recommendations & Comments

- | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Program/Services recommend ▶ Bachelor of Nursing (BSN) ▶ Student Council ▶ Master's program ▶ Military Student Orientation ▶ Veterans formal study group ▶ Volunteering services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Comments ▶ Respect Different Perspectives ▶ Sensitive to Veterans Issues ▶ Utilize Veteran Resources ▶ Provide Support |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Subnotes:

Program/Services military veterans recommend adding:

Bachelor of Nursing (BSN) 3 females

Student Council 1 female

Master's program 1:1

Military Student orientation 2 males

Veterans formal study group 1 male

Volunteering services 1 male

Respect different perspectives 2:2

Sensitive to veterans issues 1:2 female/male

Utilize veteran resources 2:3 female/male

Provide support 2:2

The fourth sub-question requested participants to recommend programs or services that they would like to see added. Half of the female participants and two of the male participants had no programs or services they would like to see added. Bachelor of Nursing (BSN), Student Council, Master's programs, military student orientation, veteran's formal study group and volunteering services were identified as potential programs or services recommended by the military veteran student participants. Some male participants felt a military student orientation, study groups and volunteering services would be additional assets to the college.

Unmet Needs

Jake felt that criminal justice classes were "redundant and focused on academic and not on real life work."

"health services classes should have been geared more to health services administration...and overpaid for classes not needed."

Marie felt that the curriculum changes did not align with what was being advertised and admitted to being frustrated

Becky felt the process, at times was unfair as "some students get more help than the syllabus says and they are taking advantage of the system"

► Not Met

- no nursing program
- too much help provided to select students
- curriculum changes
- non-career oriented internships
- taking unnecessary classes due to not accepting of transfer credits
- program classes being redundant

Subnotes:

Participants were also asked to identify needs that were met, or not met. 3 female participants and 7 male participants felt their needs were met. Of the remaining five females and one male, the needs that were not met included no nursing program, too much help provided to select students, curriculum changes, non-career oriented

internships, taking unnecessary classes due to not accepting of transfer credits and Criminal Justice program classes being redundant. One student noted that at times the student centered approach seemed excessive with some students receiving an overwhelming amount of help by the instructors

Recommendations/Suggestions

- ▶ **Veterans** "bring a different perspective to the table" and "can bring back different cultures to the classroom to help other students."
- ▶ instructors **not** "slam [their] fist on the desk or make loud noises like an explosion [which] would make me think that I was back in Afghanistan...be more sensitive to medical issues and the classroom environment.
- ▶ **Rose** asked everyone to make veterans feel welcome and **to communicate** "what is offered specifically for them at the school."
- ▶ **Jake** wanted instructors to **defend** veterans when other students "are bashing military or what we did...to understand that we don't have a choice"
- ▶ **Mark** noted that veterans "come out **not** knowing what to expect, what's available, or how to attain it." He **noted little** military transitional assistance and hoped for an introductory program to acclimate veterans.

Subnotes:

The final sub-question asked participants if they had anything else they felt was important to know regarding military veterans attending college. The female participants suggested student's get involve in campus activities, not to change individualized degree plan and to use the GI bill and book stipend. They also wanted instructors and staff to respect different perspectives, manage class efficiently, and be sensitive to veteran's issues (to include combat and medical/physical disabilities), make them feel welcome, communicate honestly with veterans, support them and ensure they understand resources offered. The male participants recommended student's use the help and resources offered by the college. Instructors and staff were asked to speak up for the veterans when other students are bad mouthing the military endeavors, respect different perspectives, be cognizant of veterans fear of failure and the unknown, as well as military transitional issues. They asked that the college make them feel more comfortable and to have a veteran representative available on campus for support.

Instructors and staff were asked to speak up for the veterans when other students are bad mouthing the military endeavors, respect different perspectives, be cognizant of veterans fear of failure and the unknown, as well as military transitional issues.

Conclusion

- ▶ **Study Benefits**
 - ▶ Understanding military veterans educational challenges and needs
 - ▶ Understanding military veterans educational transitional processes
 - ▶ Understanding of serving military veteran students
 - ▶ Helping to fill a literature gap
 - ▶ Professional development program

Subnotes:

This study proved to be extremely beneficial in providing the college with a better understanding of recent military veteran student's perceived educational needs. Through a professional development program, the perceived needs of the participants will come to fruition with the hope that strategies will be improved in an effort to support military veteran students. The objective of this project was to identify student veteran needs, as well as veteran's perception of social transitions and current services. Through this study a better understanding of serving recent military veterans, as well as filling a gap in the literature focusing mainly on public institutions, was displayed.

Questions



Recent Military Veterans: An Understanding of the Barriers to Academic Success**Schedule Day Two*****Transition to Higher Education*****7:30 a.m. – 8:00 a.m.:**

Breakfast (doughnuts and coffee)

8:00 a.m – 10:30 a.m.:

Regroup with participants separated into groups of four within their specific programs of study (i.e. liberal arts, legal, medical, and business). Facilitator led discussion of Schlossberg's Transitional Theory as it relates to military veteran students. Handout to be provided to participants to assist in answering key questions.

Watch the video:

1. "Schlossbergs Transition Theory" (Weinandt, 2012). (8:58)

Key questions, as outlined in the handout that must be answered by each educator:

1. What is a transition?
2. Define the 3 types of transitions:
 - a. Type of a transition
 - b. Context of a transition
 - c. Impact of a transition
3. Define the 3 **types** of events:
 - a. Anticipated event
 - b. Unanticipated event
 - c. Non-event

4. Identify the 4 classification of non-events
 - a. Personal
 - b. Ripple
 - c. Resultant
 - d. Delayed
5. List the parts of the transition process:
Moving in Moving through Moving out
6. List the 4 Major factors that influence one's ability to cope with a transition (4S's)
(situation, self, support, strategies).

Discuss.

*Key questions revolve around understanding transitions and how people cope with transitions.

10:30 a.m – 10:45 a.m: BREAK

10:45 a.m – 12:00 p.m:

Regroup and have a facilitator led session about teaching military veterans in college.

Watch the Videos:

1. "Teaching Student Veterans workshop at Elgin Community College w/Ryan Frey" (CETL ECC, 2012). 4:11
2. "Student Veterans Transition into College" (The Orion, 2014). 9:27
3. "Military vs College Academics" (Uvize, 2014). 2:16

Discuss.

Educators will answer the following key questions:

1. Identify 5 challenges student veterans face when transitioning into the college setting.
2. Identify 3 ways faculty members can help military veteran students overcome each of the 5 transitional challenges?
3. Identify 5 positive characteristics military veterans bring to the table when transitioning into the college setting (hard working, prompt, diligent).

12:00 a.m – 1:00 p.m:

Lunch (On your own). The facilitator will encourage educators to discuss teaching military veteran students during their time away from the session).

1:00 p.m – 3:00 p.m:

Educators will continue to be separated into four, program specific, member cooperative learning groups to answer the following questions:

1. List the 4 Major factors that influence one's ability to cope with a transition (4S's) (situation, self, support, strategies).
2. Using each of Schlossberg's 4S's (situation, self, support, strategies) transition principles identify how military veterans transition from military to academic life.
3. With Schlossberg's transitional theory and 4S principles identify 3 best practice strategies instructors can utilize to help assist military veteran students in coping with the transition from the military to higher education.

From the questions participants will design a group lesson plan. The group lesson plan design revolves around understanding transitions and how it affects military veteran students. The lesson plan will incorporate the transitional theory and principles to

identify 3 best practice strategies for instructors to implement immediately. The Lesson Plan must be completed by the end of the session to receive PD credit.

3:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Reflection of Schlossberg's Transitional Theory as it relates to military veteran students and Question-Answer session/closing remarks.

MATERIALS FOR DAY TWO

1. WhiteBoard, LCD projector, screen, sound system, Internet access, desktop computer for the facilitator.

2. Schlossbergs Transition Theory (Weinandt, 2012). Retrieved from https://video.search.yahoo.com/video/play;_ylt=A2KLqIW7O15VfwUAB6MsnIIQ;_ylu=X3oDMTByZWc0dGJtBHNIYwNzcgRzbGsDdmlkBHZ0aWQDBGdwb3MDMQ--?p=schlossberg%27s+transition+theory&vid=66c4e804e16a5e705207281aea647e64&l=8%3A58&turl=http%3A%2F%2Fts3.mm.bing.net%2Fth%3Fid%3DWN.8kiH%252fi4OGpGbxEERGkOXIA%26pid%3D15.1&rurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.youtube.com%2Fwatch%3Fv%3Dq9RciZiJ8Oo&tit=Schlossbergs+Transition+Theory&c=0&sigr=11bb894re&sig=10u4s8spr&sigi=121ejae4r&age=1355466954&fr2=p%3As%2Cv%3Av&fr=yhs-mozilla-004&hsimp=yhs-004&hspart=mozilla&tt=b.

3. Teaching Student Veterans Workshop at Elgin Community College w/Ryan Frey (CETL ECC, 2012). Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TPkwmqRAwJs>.

4. Student Veterans Transition into College (The Orion, 2014). Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vqpIaDJPgZg>.

5. Military vs College Academics (Uvize, 2014). Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zEUa8DxV5fg>.

Key questions that must be answered by each educator:

1. What is a transition?
2. Define the 3 types of transitions:
 - a. Type of a transition
 - b. Context of a transition
 - c. Impact of a transition
3. Define the 3 **types** of events:
 - a. Anticipated event
 - b. Unanticipated event
 - c. Non-event
4. Identify and describe the 4 classification of non-events
5. List and explain the parts of the transition process
6. List the 4 Major factors that influence one's ability to cope with a transition (4S's)
(situation, self, support, strategies).

Recent Military Veterans: An Understanding of the Barriers to Academic Success**Schedule Day Three***Effective Practice and Resources***7:30 a.m. – 8:00 a.m.:**

Breakfast (coffee and doughnuts)

8:00 a.m – 8:30 a.m:

Facilitator will already have designed groups and tables so that each program is represented at each table. Welcome, review of day 1 and day 2 and prior lesson plans objectives.

8:30 a.m – 10:30 a.m:

Facilitator led session about Effective Practice Principles.

Watch the videos:

1. Mobile Learning: 7 Principles: Chickering & Gamson's 7 Principles of Effective Practice (Winegar, 2012). 4:06

Discuss.

2. Video: Effective Practices Principle 1 – Chickering and Gamson (Lippe, 2013). 1:07

Discuss.

Activity: Assigned groups of 4 educators apply principle 1 of Chickering and Gamson's effective practices to military students. Educators to identify 3 ways instructors can encourage student and instructor contact with military veteran students.

3. Video: Develop Reciprocity & Cooperation Among Students (Facit Media, 2011). 4:19

Activity: Assigned groups of 4 educators apply principle 2 of Chickering and Gamson's effective practices to military students. Educators to identify 3 ways instructors can encourage cooperation among military veteran students and non-veteran students.

4. Video: Active Learning Classroom encourages teamwork (Washington University in St. Louis, 2013) 2:16

Activity: Assigned groups of 4 educators apply principle 3 of Chickering and Gamson's effective practices to military students. Educators to identify 3 ways instructors can encourage active learning among military veteran students.

5. Video: Take 5 – Prompt Feedback (Facit Media, 2011). 4:55

Activity: Assigned groups of 4 educators apply principle 4 of Chickering and Gamson's effective practices to military students. Educators to identify 3 ways instructors can provide prompt feedback to military veteran students.

6. Video: Take 5 – Emphasize Time on Task (Facit Media, 2011). 4:49

Activity: Assigned groups of 4 educators apply principle 5 of Chickering and Gamson's effective practices to military students. Educators to identify 3 ways instructors can emphasize time on task for military veteran students.

7. Video: Best Practices 4 Communicating High Expectations (Winegar, 2012). 3:25

Activity: Assigned groups of 4 educators apply principle 6 of Chickering and Gamson's effective practices to military students. Educators to identify 3 ways instructors can communicate high expectations to military veteran students.

8. Video: Take 5 – Respect Diverse Talents and Ways of Learning (Facit media, 2011). 4:37.

Activity: Assigned groups of 4 educators apply principle 7 of Chickering and Gamson's effective practices to military students. Educators to identify 3 ways instructors can respect varied abilities and learning methodologies among military veteran students.

10:30 a.m. – 10:45 a.m. - BREAK

10:45 a.m.– 12:00 p.m:

The educators will discuss the use of 7 effective practice principles to overcome the specific military veteran student challenges addressed previously. Activity: Assigned groups of 4 educators will apply each of the 7 effective practice principles to military student veterans. Educators will then brainstorm to determine best practices on using the 7 effective practice principles to help military veteran students. Each group will create a lesson plan from the discussion that identifies at least 1 teaching strategy that addresses each effective teaching principle that can be applied to their current teaching schedule.

The lesson plan will address and create a lesson plan incorporating effective teaching principles to be applied to military veteran student's higher educational challenges.

*Group Lesson Plan design that revolves around amending current teaching strategies to assist military veteran students overcome challenges as they transition to higher

education. The Lesson Plan must be completed by the end of the session to receive PD credit.

12:00 a.m – 1:00 p.m:

Lunch (On your own) - The facilitator will encourage educators to discuss military veteran student issues during their time away from the session).

1:00 p.m – 2:00 p.m:

Introduction of the One Southeastern College Director of Veteran Services as the guest speaker. The director will lead a discussion on the resources available for military veteran students. These resources will include both on-campus and off-campus opportunities. Opportunity for questions and discussion will allow instructors a better understanding of available resources for military veteran students. Feedback from the instructors will allow the college to potentially improve communication to instructors and military veteran students about available resources.

2:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m:

Activity: Assigned groups of 4 educators will identify, from the group discussion, 3 military veteran student campus support services that they feel would most benefit the current student's in their classroom. The educators will also identify, from the group discussion, 3 military veteran student off-campus support services that they feel would most benefit the current student's in their classroom. Educators will also identify when to introduce each of the selected support services to the military veteran students, or to the class as a whole.

3:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Self -Evaluation Paragraph- How can you immediately incorporate the above 7 effective practice principles in overcoming military veteran student challenges within your classroom?

MATERIALS FOR DAY THREE

1. SMARTBoard, LCD projector, screen, sound system, Internet access, desktop computer for the facilitator's.
2. Mobile Learning: 7 Principles: Chickering & Gamson's 7 Principles of Effective Practice (Winegar, 2012).
https://video.search.yahoo.com/video/play;_ylt=A2KLqIXo1wBVuwEADED7w8QF;_ylu=X3oDMTBzZWc0dGJtBHNIYwNzcgRzbGsDdmlkBHZ0aWQDBGdwb3MDMQ--?p=chickering+effective+practice&vid=f781082345471187aa8ac6739f684969&l=4%3A07&turl=http%3A%2F%2Fts1.mm.bing.net%2Fth%3Fid%3D%3D608026748088484236%26pid%3D15.1&rurl=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.youtube.com%2Fwatch%3Fv%3Dd7snj0KxXys&tit=Mobile+Learning+%3A+7+Principles&c=0&sigr=11ab2mqsh&sig=10utjf1bg&sig=11rs59gv1&age=1342636383&fr2=p%3As%2Cv%3Av&hsimp=yhs-002&hspart=mozilla&tt=b.
3. Develop Reciprocity & Cooperation Among Students (Facit Media, 2011). Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EPM3PWKTi9w>.
4. Effective Practices Principle 1 – Chickering and Gamson (Lippe, 2013). Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yGA1TcPAK5s>.
5. Active Learning Classroom encourages teamwork (Washington University in St. Louis, 2013). Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j6C4dSFldvI>.
6. Take 5 – Prompt Feedback (Facit Media, 2011). Retrieved from <https://vimeo.com/17008713>.
7. Take 5 – Emphasize Time on Task (Facit Media, 2011). Retrieved from

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9eT6hFQHMM>.

8. Best Practices 4 Communicating High Expectations (Winegar, M. 2012). Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P7pO1t-qOII>.

9. Take 5 – Respects Diverse Talents and Ways of Learning (Facit media, 2011). Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-4KRgPHa48>.

TRAINING PROGRAM EVALUATIONS

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Recent Military Veterans

An Understanding of the Barriers to

Academic Success

EVALUATION: DAY 1

Please select the appropriate rating:

A. Content	1 Adequate	2	3	4 Outstanding
Material was valuable				
Material was realistic				
Material was well organized				
Material was well-paced				
Material included effective activities				
Material had appropriate supplemental documents				
B. Presentation				
Facilitator's concept knowledge				
Facilitator's presentation style				
Facilitator explained material				
Facilitator's provided feedback				
Facilitator interacted appropriate with participants				
C. Areas of improvement				

D. Additional comments
E. Overall program rating
<input type="checkbox"/> INADEQUATE <input type="checkbox"/> AVERAGE <input type="checkbox"/> RESPECTABLE <input type="checkbox"/> OUTSTANDING

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Recent Military Veterans

An Understanding of the Barriers to

Academic Success

EVALUATION: DAY 2

Please select the appropriate rating:

A. Content	1	2	3	4
	Adequate	←	→	Outstanding
Material was valuable				
Material was realistic				
Material was well organized				
Material was well-paced				
Material included effective activities				
Material had appropriate supplemental documents				
B. Presentation				
Facilitator's concept knowledge				
Facilitator's presentation style				
Facilitator explained material				
Facilitator's provided feedback				
Facilitator interacted appropriate with participants				
C. Areas of improvement				

D. Additional comments
E. Overall program rating
<input type="checkbox"/> INADEQUATE <input type="checkbox"/> AVERAGE <input type="checkbox"/> RESPECTABLE <input type="checkbox"/> OUTSTANDING

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Recent Military Veterans

An Understanding of the Barriers to

Academic Success

EVALUATION: DAY 3

Please select the appropriate rating:

A. Content	1 Adequate	2	3	4 Outstanding
Material was valuable				
Material was realistic				
Material was well organized				
Material was well-paced				
Material included effective activities				
Material had appropriate supplemental documents				
B. Presentation				
Facilitator's concept knowledge				
Facilitator's presentation style				
Facilitator explained material				
Facilitator's provided feedback				
Facilitator interacted appropriate with participants				
C. Areas of improvement				

D. Additional comments
E. Overall program rating
<input type="checkbox"/> INADEQUATE <input type="checkbox"/> AVERAGE <input type="checkbox"/> RESPECTABLE <input type="checkbox"/> OUTSTANDING

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Recent Military Veterans

An Understanding of the Barriers to

Academic Success

FINAL EVALUATION

Please select the appropriate rating:

A. Overall Program Evaluation	1 Disagree	2	3	4 Agree
This activity increased my knowledge and skills in the area of understanding military veteran students.		←	→	
The relevance of this activity to teaching military veteran students was clear.				
The activity was facilitated by a subject matter expert.				
The presentation and material was organized, and easily understood.				
The activity included discussions, analysis and application of program concepts.				
B. The highlights of this program include:				
C. Areas for improvement include:				
D. Additional comments:				

E. Overall, how would you rate today's workshop?
<input type="checkbox"/> INADEQUATE <input type="checkbox"/> AVERAGE <input type="checkbox"/> RESPECTABLE <input type="checkbox"/> OUTSTANDING

Facilitator Notes for Professional Development Sessions

BY
YVONNE R. ROSS

Facilitator Notes – Day One

- ▶ Participants to locate program specific tables and groups of 4.
- ▶ Introduction of Dean of Instruction and facilitator. Dean of Instruction to welcome participants and explain importance of program from a college standpoint.
- ▶ Academic Needs of Military Veteran Student's Assessment – Open discussion. The Academic Needs of Military Veteran Student's Assessment will decide participants understanding of current military veteran students.
- ▶ Facilitator to write problem statement on whiteboard and state the problem statement clearly for an open panel discussion.
- ▶ Facilitator to use the computer, Internet, overhead projector and screen to watch and discuss student veteran's academic issues videos.
- ▶ Participants will answer key questions within individual group.

Subnotes:

Written on whiteboard and discussed: Problem Statement: One problem at a for-profit college in the southeast of the United States is a low graduation rate for military veterans. The overall graduation rate, calculated as completing an undergraduate degree in no more than five years, for undergraduate veteran students at one for-profit college is 15% (T. LeGrand, personal communication, December 10, 2013). At a local, for-profit college, 65% of campus-based students are veterans (T. LeGrand, personal communication, November 3, 2013). The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (2011) cited that 82% of veterans will not complete an undergraduate degree within five years.

The facilitator will show the videos:

1. "Student Veteran Experiences" (Frederick Community College, 2013) 5:32
2. "Student Veteran Profile: Kevin Eady" (Florida State University, 2013) 3:22
3. "Student Veterans and their stories of growth" (Make the Connection, 2013) 4:30
4. "Academic Life After Military Deployment" (pennstateoutreach, 2012). 2:54

Key Questions the facilitator will impose for educators to answer:

1. Identify 3 characteristics of military veteran students.
2. Identify 3 challenges that military veterans encounter in higher education.
3. Explain how military experiences may affect college experiences?

Day One Continued

- ▶ Facilitator to provide synopsis of the study, the participants, the interview process, the data analysis and the results.
- ▶ Educators will identify 3 characteristics of military veteran students, discuss examples of military student veteran challenges faculty members have experienced within their classrooms, or that were discussed in the videos or study, and identify 3 challenges military veterans experience in the classroom.
- ▶ Educators will brainstorm to determine 5 ways military veteran students are different than non-veteran students (academically, emotionally and medically).
- ▶ Educators, in assigned groups of 4, will create a lesson plan that incorporates amending teaching practices to ensure that military veteran student characteristics, challenges and differences are considered.
- ▶ Facilitator will collect the lesson plans at the end of the session and award each participating participant with professional development credit.
- ▶ Participants will complete and turn in Workshop Evaluation Form: Day One.

Subnotes:

Facilitator to provide synopsis of study (see power point) and discuss military veteran students in the classroom.

Facilitator to ensure that participants understand the importance of the study and how it can benefit them and the students in the classroom. Facilitator to demonstrate a need for change from current practices in teaching military veteran students.

Educators to lead group discussion leading to revised lesson plans.

Facilitator to summarize day events and allow for participant reflection through completion of the Workshop Evaluation Form: Day One. Facilitator to record PD credit through review of revised lesson plans.

Facilitator Notes – Day Two

- ▶ Participants to locate program specific tables and groups of 4.
- ▶ Facilitator to use the computer, internet, overhead projector and screen to watch and discuss Schlossberg's Transition Theory.
- ▶ Participants will individually answer key questions, using facilitator provided handout, regarding Schlossberg's Transition Theory .
- ▶ Facilitator to provide handout and lead discussion about key questions, understanding transitions, and how people cope with transitions.
- ▶ Facilitator to use the computer, internet, overhead projector and screen to watch and discuss teaching military veterans in college.
- ▶ Educators to answer key questions about military veteran students transition to higher education.

Subnotes:

The facilitator will show the videos:

1. “Schlossberg’s Transition Theory” (Weinandt, 2012) 8:58

Key Questions the facilitator will impose for educators to answer via handout:

1. What is a transition?
2. Define the 3 types of transitions:
 - a. Type of a transition
 - b. Context of a transition
 - c. Impact of a transition
3. Define the 3 **types** of events:
 - a. Anticipated event
 - b. Unanticipated event
 - c. Non-event
4. Identify the 4 classification of non-events
 - a. Personal
 - b. Ripple
 - c. Resultant
 - d. Delayed
5. List the parts of the transition process:
Moving in Moving through Moving out
6. List the 4 Major factors that influence one's ability to cope with a transition (4S's) (situation, self, support, strategies).

The facilitator will show and discuss the following military veterans in college videos:

1. Teaching Student Veterans workshop at Elgin Community College w/Ryan Frey, (CETL ECC, 2012). 4:11
2. Student Veterans Transition into College (The Orion, 2014). 9:27
3. Military vs College Academics (Uvize, 2014). 2:16

Educators to answer the following key questions:

1. Identify 5 challenges student veterans face when transitioning into the college setting.
2. Identify 3 ways faculty members can help military veteran students overcome each of the 5 transitional challenges?
3. Identify 5 positive characteristics military veterans bring to the table when transitioning into the college setting (hard working, prompt, diligent).

Day Two Continued

- ▶ Educators, in groups of 4 program specific participants, collaborate to answer key questions about military veteran students transition to higher education.
- ▶ Educators, in assigned groups of 4, will create a lesson plan that incorporates the transitional theory and principles to identify 3 best practice strategies to be implemented immediately.
- ▶ Facilitator will collect the lesson plans at the end of the session and award each participating participant with professional development credit.
- ▶ Participants will complete and turn in Workshop Evaluation Form: Day Two.

Subnotes:

1. List the 4 Major factors that influence one's ability to cope with a transition (4S's) (situation, self, support, strategies).
2. Using each of Schlossberg's 4S's (situation, self, support, strategies) transition principles identify how military veterans transition from military to academic life.
3. With Schlossberg's transitional theory and 4S principles identify 3 best practice strategies instructors can utilize to help assist military veteran students in coping with the transition from the military to higher education.

Educators will create a lesson plan that incorporates the transitional theory and principles to identify 3 best practice strategies to be implemented immediately to help military veteran students transition to higher education.

Facilitator Notes – Day Three

- ▶ Participants to locate program specific tables and groups of 4.
- ▶ Facilitator to review Day One and Day Two concepts.
- ▶ Facilitator led discussion about Effective practice principles.
- ▶ Facilitator to use the computer, internet, overhead projector and screen to watch and discuss Effective Practice Principles Videos.
- ▶ Participants will collaborate in assigned groups to identify 3 ways instructors can utilize each of Chickering and Gamson's effective practices when instructing military veteran students to correspond with videos.
- ▶ Educators will brainstorm to determine best practices for each of the 7 effective practice principles in an effort to better instruct military veteran students.
- ▶ Educators, in assigned groups of 4, will create a lesson plan that incorporates each of the 7 effective practice principles best practices.
- ▶ Facilitator will collect the lesson plans at the end of the session and award each participating participant with professional development credit.

Subnotes:

Facilitator to review day 1 and day 2 concepts.

Facilitator to watch and discuss the following effective practice principle videos with activities following each video:

1. Mobile Learning: 7 Principles: Chickering & Gamson's 7 Principles of Effective Practice (Winegar, 2012). 4:06
2. Video: Effective Practices Principle 1 – Chickering and Gamson (Lippe, 2013). 1:07
3. Video: Develop Reciprocity & Cooperation Among Students (Facit Media, 2011). 4:19
4. Video: Active Learning Classroom encourages teamwork (Washington University in St. Louis, 2013) 2:16
5. Video: Take 5 – Prompt Feedback (Facit Media, 2011). 4:55
6. Video: Take 5 – Emphasize Time on Task (Facit Media, 2011). 4:49
7. Video: Best Practices 4 Communicating High Expectations (Winegar, 2012). 3:25
8. Video: Take 5 – Respect Diverse Talents and Ways of Learning (Facit media, 2011). 4:37

Day Three Continued

- ▶ Introduction of Director of Veteran Services as guest speaker. Director to lead a discussion on military veteran resources available both on and off campus.
- ▶ Educators will identify, through group discussion, 3 military veteran on campus and 3 military veteran off campus support services they feel would most benefit current students.
- ▶ Educators will also identify when to introduce availability of military veteran support services to military veteran students or to the class as a whole.
- ▶ Participants will complete a self-evaluation paragraph outlining how the 7 effective practice principles will help military veteran students overcome academic challenges.
- ▶ Participants will complete and turn in Workshop Evaluation Form: Day Three and Overall Workshop Evaluation Form.

Subnotes:

Director of Veteran Services – Lee Hicklin – to lead the discussion about available resources for military veteran students.

Educators will identify, through group discussion, 3 military veteran on campus and 3 military veteran off campus support services they feel would most benefit current students.

Appendix B: Recruitment Email

Dear Student,

My name is Yvonne R. Ross and I am completing a Doctorate of Education degree at Walden University. As the Program Director for the Business Department at Bryant and Stratton College, Hampton, Virginia campus, I am currently working on my dissertation project study identifying the academic needs of recent Iraq and Afghanistan war military veterans. The purpose of my research project is to provide Bryant and Stratton College, as well as other colleges across the United States, with a deeper understanding into the perceived academic needs of veterans.

I would like to invite you to participate in my study. In order to participate, you would need to be a military veteran who served in the Iraq or Afghanistan conflicts and are currently enrolled at the Hampton campus. The study will include a face to face interview, which will last approximately 60 minutes and will be audio recorded. My research study is intended to discuss in detail your academic needs as a military veteran.

If you are interested in participating in this study, and meet the above requirements, please contact me directly to schedule an interview at a time and location of your choice. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Yvonne R. Ross
Walden University Doctoral Candidate
Business Program Director
yrross@bryantstratton.edu
757-896-6001 x313

Appendix C: Interview Guide

Topic: Perceived Academic Needs of Military Veterans within a For-Profit Post-Secondary Institution

The **purpose** of this study is to identify military veterans' academic problems, the understanding of available resources, and potential differences in experiences based on gender as they integrate into academia, and attend a for-profit, post-secondary institution.

Research questions

- RQ1: What problems do returning veterans face as they integrate into academia?
- RQ2: Do female and male military veterans experience a different set of problems as they integrate into academia?
- RQ3: Do military veterans understand the resources available to them as they interface with the for-profit institution?

Participant

A recent military veteran, having served in the Iraq or Afghanistan conflicts, and attends Bryant and Stratton College, Hampton campus.

Interviewer and Transcriber

Yvonne R. Ross

Time and Duration

There will be four background information questions and five academic questions in which the interviewer will ask several follow up questions.

Method

The semi-structured interview will occur at a convenient time for the participant and researcher in a public place to ensure comfort. The interview will be audio recorded.

Informed consent

The participant will be required to sign an IRB approved informed consent form in order to participate in the study. A copy will be provided to the participant.

Background Information

1. Date and time
2. Pseudonym identifier
3. Gender
4. Military experience
 - a. Branch

- b. Dates served
- c. Iraq or Afghanistan war
- d. What length of time were you out of the military prior to beginning Bryant and Stratton College?

Academic Information

1. Please describe your current college experiences.
 - a. Why did you decide to attend this institution? RQ#1
 - b. How would you describe your experience at this institution? RQ#2
 - c. Do you feel your military experiences affected your experiences as a college student? Explain. RQ#1; RQ#2
 - d. Do you feel your military experiences adequately prepared you for college? How so? RQ#1; RQ#2

2. Please explain your transition from military to higher education.
 - a. What challenges have you encountered as you transition into being a college student? RQ#1; RQ#2
 - b. Do you feel you have had support as you transition to the college setting? Why or why not? RQ#1
 - c. Do you feel your military experience allows you to perceive college differently than other students? Why or why not? RQ#1; RQ#2
 - d. How do faculty, staff, and students respond to your military experiences? RQ#1
 - e. Have you utilized any campus support services? Which services did you use and were they useful to you? RQ#3
 - f. What do you feel you need to do to help your transition into college be more positive? RQ#1;

3. Please explain your experiences as a student on campus.
 - a. Do you feel you have adjusted completely to the role of being a student versus being in the military? Why or why not? RQ#1
 - b. Do you feel that being a part of the campus community would help you to transition more positively into the role of college student? RQ#1
 - c. What did you expect of Bryant and Stratton College before you enrolled? RQ#1

4. Please describe your experiences with the college.
 - a. Share your classroom experience(s) (prompt for good or bad). RQ#1; RQ#2
 - b. Were any classes offered by Bryant and Stratton College especially helpful to you? How were they helpful? RQ#1

- c. Were any programs or services offered by Bryant and Stratton College especially helpful to you? (Student Veterans Association, First Year Experience, advising, financial aid, clubs, registrar, deans). How were they helpful? RQ#3
- d. Are there any programs or services that you would like to see added that are not currently offered? RQ#3
- e. What academic needs do you feel were met, or not met, during your time at Bryant and Stratton College? RQ#1; RQ#2
- f. Is there anything else you feel may be important to know regarding military veterans attending college? RQ#1

Thank you for meeting with me and being interviewed regarding your perception of your academic needs. Your thoughts and experiences are very valuable to me as a researcher, and to the college as a whole. I will send you a copy of the transcription for you to read. If you feel there are any changes that should be made, please let me know.

[End recording and turn off recorder.]

Appendix D: Consent Form

You are invited to take part in a research study of the academic needs of military veterans who attend a for-profit college. The researcher is inviting recent military veterans who served in the Iraq or Afghanistan conflicts to be in the study. This form is part of a process called “informed consent” to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Yvonne Ross, who is a doctoral student at Walden University. You may already know the researcher as a Program Director for the Business Department at Bryant and Stratton College, but this study is separate from that role.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to identify military veterans’ academic problems, the understanding of available resources, and potential differences in experiences based on gender as they integrate into academia, and attend a for-profit, post-secondary institution.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

- Complete a face to face interview, which will be recorded, lasting approximately 60 minutes.
- Review and amend transcripts from the interview to ensure accuracy.

Here are some sample questions:

- How would you describe your experience at this institution?
- Do you feel your military experiences affected your experiences as a college student? Explain.
- What challenges have you encountered as you transition into being a college student?
- Do you feel your military experience allows you to perceive college differently than other students? Why or why not?
- How do faculty, staff, and students respond to your military experiences?
- Have you utilized any campus support services? Which services did you use and were they useful to you?
- Were any programs or services offered by Bryant and Stratton College especially helpful to you? (Student Veterans Association, First Year Experience, advising, financial aid, clubs, registrar, deans). How were they helpful?

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

This study is voluntary. Everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you choose to be in the study. No one at Bryant and Stratton College or Walden University will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to join the

study now, you can still change your mind during or after the study. You may stop at any time.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

Being in this type of study involves some risk of the minor discomforts that can be encountered in daily life, such as becoming upset or added stress.

This study will foster better awareness of the needs of recent military veterans and allow for a greater array of programs and amenities to accommodate this population. This, in turn, will give military veterans a greater opportunity for transitional and academic success. By addressing the needs of this diverse population, the college can create and amend military veteran programs and services. These programs would provide a benefit to the veterans, the institution, and society.

Payment:

Compensation will not be provided and participation is voluntary.

Privacy:

Any information you provide will be kept anonymous. The research documents will be held on a password protected computer within a locked office. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. Data will be kept secure by being in a locked office and will only be accessible to the researcher and the transcriptionist. Interview audio files will be destroyed after the dissertation is defended. However, transcription and additional data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university.

Contacts and Questions:

You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via 757-510-8135 or yvonne.ross@waldenu.edu. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is 1-800-925-3368, extension 1210. Walden University's approval number for this study is 01-06-15-0235569 and it expires on January 5, 2015.

A copy of the informed consent form will be provided by the researcher to each participant.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By signing below I understand that I am agreeing to the terms described above.

Printed Name of Participant

Date of consent

Participant's Signature

Researcher's Signature
