**MFRI_logo_forprint (2).tifFrequently Asked Questions about the Military and Student Service Members and Veterans**

*Provided by the Education & Employment initiative of MFRI*

We are frequently asked about student service members and veterans: Who they are; what they have experienced in the military; and what they need to succeed on campus. To answer these and other questions, we have prepared these FAQs based on current information and research.

For more information about the Military Family Research Institute, visit <http://www.cfs.purdue.edu/mfri/public/default.aspx>.

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**About the Military**

1. What are the differences among **Active Duty**, **National Guard, and Reserves**?

**Active Duty:** Active-duty service members essentially work full time for the military; these service members make up the permanent forces of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines and Coast Guard that are maintained both during peacetime and wartime. Although active-duty service members are essentially on call 24/7, most work a normal 40–50 hour week when not deployed. These service members are usually attached to a military installation and may live in military housing on the installation. They typically relocate to new duty stations about every three years *(http://deploymentpsych.org/training/training-catalog/military-cultural-competence, 1/5/12)*.

**National Guard:** Guardmembers work part time for the National Guard and can also hold civilian jobs. They are often referred to as “citizen soldiers.” Guardmembers normally serve one weekend a month and two weeks a year—a minimum of 39 days per year—and supplement active-duty forces. They can be called upon to provide security both at home and abroad. National Guard units are controlled by state governments but with increasing frequency are being called into action by the federal government. The National Guard has two branches: Army National Guard and Air National Guard. Many Guardmembers have been deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan.

**Reserves:** Reserve service members are also considered “citizen soldiers,” because like Guardsmen, they work part time for the military and can also hold civilian jobs. Reservists normally serve one weekend a month and two weeks a year. All branches of the military―Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines and Coast Guard―have reserve components. The Reserves are controlled by the federal government.

1. Are all **military students** veterans?

No. Many military students have completed their military service and have separated from the military. Some of these former service members, but not all, are veterans, but some are still service members. Military students can be described as follows:

* **Student service members:** Student service members are currently members of the military. They may be on active duty or members of the Reserves or National Guard.
* **Student veterans**: Although the term veteran is commonly used for anyone who has separated from military service, it is more appropriately used to refer to anyone who has served in the military under conflict conditions but no longer serves.
* **ROTC students:** The Reserve Officers’ Training Corp (ROTC) is a program that trains students during college to become commissioned officers in the Army, Navy, Marines or Air Force. The Coast Guard has a similar program called the Coast Guard College Student Pre-Commissioning Initiative (CSPI). In both programs, students may receive full or partial scholarships in return for military service. Upon graduation, they are commissioned into military service and are therefore then considered service members. Student service members and veterans, although highly respectful of ROTC students, will frequently point out this differentiation.

1. What are the different **branches** **of the U.S. military**?

The active-duty branches typically considered to be part of the U.S. military are the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, and Coast Guard. The Coast Guard reports to the Department of Homeland Security while the other branches of the military reside under the Department of Defense. All branches except the U.S. Public Health Service have a Reserve component and are under federal authority to act within and outside U.S. borders.

* The Army, which consists of more than 500,000 active-duty members and approximately 200,000 Reserve members, is the largest branch of the U.S. military. The Army is responsible for military operations on land.
* The Navy consists of more than 300,000 active-duty personnel and more than 100,000 Reserve members. The Navy supports the country’s global interests on, under and over the water.
* The Marine Corps is made up of approximately 200,000 active-duty members and 40,000 Reserve members. The Marine Corps resides under the Department of the Navy and is an expeditionary force specializing in amphibious operations.
* The Air Force consists of more than 300,000 active-duty members and 65,000 Reserve members. Its mission is to provide air operations.

The Coast Guard safeguards domestic maritime interests of the U.S. through its more than 41,000 active-duty personnel and 8,000 Reserve members.

The National Guard has two branches: Army National Guard and Air National Guard. The missions of both branches are similar: to maintain properly trained and equipped units, available for prompt mobilization for state or national emergencies, war, or as otherwise needed. These branches typically report to the governor of the state in which they reside.

Visit this website for more information on each branch and its responsibilities: <http://www.ourmilitary.mil/learn/our-services/>

1. What is the difference between **mobilization** and **deployment**?

**Mobilization:** The process by which the military (or branches of the military) are brought to a state of readiness for war or other national emergencies. Mobilization can include activating all or part of the Reserves and National Guard as well as assembling and organizing personnel, supplies and material *(*[*http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/dod\_dictionary/data/m/5590.html*](http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/dod_dictionary/data/m/5590.html)*, 1/5/12).*

**Deployment:** When a service member is called to duty somewhere other than their permanent duty station (without his or her family). Deployment lengths vary depending on the service branch, career field and amount of time needed to complete a mission but currently range from approximately 6–15 months. Service members can be deployed to conflict zones or to areas affected by major emergencies or natural disasters, such as hurricanes *(*[*http://www.essentiallearning.net/student/content/sections/Lectora/MilitaryCultureCompetence/index.html*](http://www.essentiallearning.net/student/content/sections/Lectora/MilitaryCultureCompetence/index.html)*, 1/9/12).*

1. What is the typical **deployment length?**

Deployment lengths vary depending on the service branch, career field and amount of time needed to complete a mission but currently range from approximately 6–15 months. Service members can also be deployed repeatedly within short periods of time.

1. How many Indiana National Guard soldiers have been **deployed** **to Operation Enduring Freedom** (OEF) and **Operation Iraqi Freedom** (OIF)?

At the end of 2011, 17,450 Indiana National Guard service members have been deployed to conflict zones in Afghanistan (OEF) and Iraq (OIF) since 9/11. An additional 900 Guardsmen were mobilized to support the Global War on Terrorism *(Indiana National Guard Report to the Governor, December 14, 2011).*

1. Where can I find definitions for **military terms and acronyms**?

Visit this website for an online dictionary on military terms provided by the Department of Defense (DOD): <http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/dod_dictionary/>

The Center for Deployment Psychology (CDP) offers a free online training course on military culture, which also includes a section on terminology and acronyms. Visit this website for more information: <http://deploymentpsych.org/training/training-catalog/military-cultural-competence>

1. Where can I **learn more about the military**?

Multiple websites provide detailed information on military terminology, culture, branches and ranks, including:

* The “Learn” section of the Department of Defense (DOD) website: <http://www.ourmilitary.mil/learn/our-military-families/>
* A training course on military cultural competence offered by the Center for Deployment Psychology (CDP): <http://deploymentpsych.org/training/training-catalog/military-cultural-competence>

Various books (both research based and popular), articles and even movies are available that provide information about military culture as well as military students and postsecondary education. Examples include:

**Research:**

* Zero to Three (2010). Military Family Strengths and Needs: Integrating Military Culture Sensitivity into the Research Process <http://66.104.246.25/focus/barron_military_101_ztt_template.pdf>
* Dorn, E., Ulmer, W., Collins, J., Jacobs, T. (2000). American military culture in the twenty-first century: a report of the CSIS International Security Program. Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies.
* Dunivin, K. (1994). Military Culture: Change and Continuity. Armed Forces & Society, Vol. 20 (4), 531-547.

**Popular:**

* Gallagher, M. (2010). Kaboom: Embracing the Suck in a Savage Little War. Cambridge, MA: DaCapo.
* Junger, S. (2010). War. New York, NY: Hachette Book Group.
* Marlantes, K. (2011). What it is like to go to war. New York, NY: Atlantic Monthly Press.

**Film:**

* Courtney, H. (2011). Where Soldiers Come From. A PBS Documentary. <http://wheresoldierscomefrom.com/dvd.php>.
* Junger, S., Hetherington, T. (2010). Restrepo: One Platoon, One Valley, One Year. National Geographic.

**Postsecondary Education:**

* Ackerman, R., & DiRamio, D. (Eds.). (2009). Creating a veteran-friendly campus: Strategies for transition and success. New Directions for Student Services, 126. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass
* American Council on Education Publications (available as free downloads from <http://www.acenet.edu/Content/NavigationMenu/ProgramsServices/MilitaryPrograms/index.htm>)
  + A Transfer Guide: Understanding your Military Credit Recommendations.
  + Serving Those Who Serve: Higher Education and American’s Veterans.
  + From Soldier to Student: Easing the Transition of Service Members on Campus.

**GI Bill & Other Tuition Assistance**

1. What **educational benefit** programs are available to service members and veterans?

**Veterans:** Multiple educational benefit programs are available to veterans; the programs available depend upon multiple factors, including the veteran’s status, service branch and time of service. Most educational benefit programs for veterans are implemented through the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA); the best-known programs are the Post-9/11GI Bill and Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment (VR&E), although others exist.

For more information about VA tuition assistance programs go to: <http://www.gibill.va.gov/>

**Active Duty, Reservists, and Guardsmen:** For active-duty service members, Reservists and Guardsmen, educational benefits are typically provided through the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) of the Department of Defense (DOD), although many states also provide educational assistance.

Visit this website for more information about TAP: <http://www.military.com/education/content/money-for-school/tuition-assistance-ta-program-overview.html>

Visit the website of your postsecondary institution or state for additional information.

1. Where can student service members and veterans **learn more or get help** **on using their educational benefits?**

For student service members:

* Overview of military tuition assistance programs: <http://www.military.com/education/content/money-for-school/tuition-assistance-ta-program-overview.html>
* Army tuition assistance: <https://www.goarmyed.com/login.aspx>
* Navy tuition assistance: <https://www.navycollege.navy.mil/nta.cfm>
* Air Force tuition assistance:
  + For officers: <http://www.airforce.com/benefits/officer-education/>
  + For enlisted:<http://www.airforce.com/benefits/enlisted-education/>
* Marines tuition assistance: <http://www.marines.com/main/index/quality_citizens/benefit_of_services/education>
* Coast Guard tuition assistance: <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/capemay/education/ta.asp>
* State educational assistance programs official website
* Institution’s veterans certifying official, who is typically in the financial aid office

**For veterans:**

* Educational benefit programs for veterans available through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA):<http://www.gibill.va.gov/>
* Benefit comparison tools from the VA:<http://www.gibill.va.gov/resources/benefits_resources/benefit_comparison_tools.html>
* Phone number for GI Bill assistance: 1-888-442-4551
* Institution’s veterans certifying official, who is typically in the financial aid office

1. Can service members and veterans **transfer their educational benefits to their dependents**?

Yes, in many cases, although the conditions of transferability depend on the specific program. Visit this website for a comprehensive list of benefits programs that can be utilized by military dependents: <http://www.military.com/education/content/money-for-school/military-spouse-and-family-educational-assistance-programs.html>

More information can be found through these links:

* The Post 9/11 GI Bill: <http://www.gibill.va.gov/post-911/post-911-gi-bill-summary/transfer-of-benefits.html>
* Survivors and Dependents Educational Assistance (DEA): <http://gibill.va.gov/benefits/other_programs/dea.html>
* The Military Spouse Career Advancement Account (MYCAA): <http://www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil/12038/Project%20Documents/MilitaryHOMEFRONT/MyCAA/FactSheet.pdf>
* State educational benefits: <http://www.military.com/education/content/money-for-school/state-veteran-benefits.html>

1. Does Indiana have a **tuition remission program for children of disabled veterans**?

Yes. Visit this website for more information: <http://www.in.gov/dva/2378.htm>

1. How should service members or veterans go about **choosing a postsecondary program?**

Like other students, service members and veterans should consider factors such as career interests and an institution’s programs, location and cost. However, student service members and veterans have unique needs. They may have gained extensive training and experience in a particular field during their military service; they may continue to work full time or part time, or they may have an injury as a result of their military service that alters some abilities. Service members and veterans should consider the following questions when choosing a postsecondary program:

* Does the school participate in the Yellow Ribbon Program?
  + Schools that participate in the Yellow Ribbon Program voluntarily agree to contribute a specific dollar amount to offset tuition and fee expenses for undergraduate programs that exceed the highest public in-state rates. To learn more visit: <http://gibill.va.gov/documents/pamphlets/Yellow_Ribbon_Pamphlet.pdf>
* What are the school’s undergraduate residency requirements?
  + Some schools require students to live on campus for a certain number of semesters.
* Does the school follow American Council on Education (ACE) recommendations for military credit transfer?
* Do school credits transfer to all other accredited postsecondary intuitions?
* What is the school’s graduation rate?
  + Compare the graduation rates of the schools under consideration to get an idea of how successful students are in completing degree programs at each school.
* If a trade program, what is the job placement rate?
* What is the school’s student loan default rate?
* Does the school have a veterans’ affairs office, a veterans’ coordinator, or a student veterans’ organization?

Visit the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) website for resources and tools that can help service members and veterans choose a school: <http://www.gibill.va.gov/resources/education_resources/choosing_a_school.html>

The VA also provides free educational and vocational counseling for service members transitioning from military service to civilian education and employment. Visit this website for more information: <http://www.gibill.va.gov/support/counseling-services/>

**Student Services**

1. What are the **demographics and** **characteristics** of student service members and veterans on campus?

Student service members and veterans are a unique group among the general student population. Data show that student service members and veterans are:

* More likely than the general student population to be over 24 years old when entering postsecondary education (over a third of non-combat veterans and almost 80% of those who have seen combat are 24 or older when enrolling in a postsecondary institution) *(National Survey of Student Engagement [2010]. Major differences: Examining student engagement by field of study – annual results 2010. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research.)*
* More likely to be enrolled in distance education than the general population (ibid)
* Very likely to have a spouse, a child or both (62% of military undergraduates) *(Radford, A.W. [2009]. Military Service Members and Veterans in Higher Education: What the New GI Bill May Mean for Postsecondary Institutions. Washington, DC: American Council on Education.)*
* More likely than the general student population to be male (only about one quarter of student service members and veterans on campus were female in 2007-08 compared to over half of the general student population) *(ibid)*
* More likely than their civilian counterparts to report role overload *(Whiteman, S. & Hitt, S. [2010]. Operation Diploma: Promoting the academic success of student service members and veterans. Purdue University, Felker Series. West Lafayette, IN.)*
* More likely than other students to be the first in their family to attend college *(MacLean, A. & Elder, G.H. [2007]. Military Service in the Life Course. Annual Review of Sociology, Vol. 33)*

Student service members and veterans have many positive characteristics, including maturity and focus, leadership skills and respect for authority and procedures.

1. What **unique issues** do student service members and veterans on campus face?

The transition from military life to campus life can be challenging. Student service members and veterans must adjust to academic expectations, which are very different from military expectations; balance academic requirements with other responsibilities, such as working or supporting a family; and relating to younger, less experienced classmates.

Additionally, about one third of service members returning from deployment to the recent conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq report symptoms of a mental health or cognitive condition *(Tanelian, T. & Jaycox, L.H. [2008]. Invisible wounds of war: Psychological and cognitive injuries, their consequences, and services to assist recovery. Santa Monica, CA: Center for Military Health Policy Research).* Service members and veterans with injuries, whether cognitive or physical, who enroll in postsecondary education must also manage the effects of these injuries.

1. There has been a lot of media attention devoted to veterans suffering from **TBI and PTSD**. What exactly are these conditions and what are the symptoms?

Traumatic brain injury (TBI) and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) have been named as the signature injuries of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Both are invisible wounds and may lead to behavioral changes and mental issues, although they can also create physical challenges. It is important to note that both TBI and post-traumatic stress, of which PTSD is an extreme manifestation, are almost always comorbid with visible injuries.

**Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)**

TBI is typically created by exposure to traumatic impact to the head, such as from explosions of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), which are used frequently by opposing forces in the recent wars. Effects can be physical, behavioral or cognitive and can include the following:

* Physical: Fractures, fever, difficulty eating and speaking, degraded vision, fatigue and loss of hearing and sense of touch.
* Behavioral: Anxiety, agitation, frustration, impulsiveness, repetitiveness, depression, regression (return to childlike behavior) and disinhibition (inability to control impulsive behavior and emotions).
* Cognitive: Lack of attention and concentration, memory loss, lack of judgment and communication problems.

Whether the TBI is mild, moderate, or severe, persistent symptoms can have a profound impact on the injured survivor and his or her caregivers *(*[*http://www.polytrauma.va.gov/understanding-tbi/symptoms.asp*](http://www.polytrauma.va.gov/understanding-tbi/symptoms.asp)*, retrieved January 18, 2012).*

**Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder**

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a severe manifestation of normal anxiety that results from exposure to a traumatic event. The disorder can often occur after experiencing a traumatic event involving the threat of injury or death or by witnessing an emotionally challenging event. Symptoms usually start soon after the traumatic event but in some cases may occur months or years later; they may also come and go for years. PTSD is not unique to military service. Civilians are also at risk for post-traumatic stress, including PTSD.

PTSD symptoms can fall into several categories:

* Re-experiencing symptoms: Flashbacks, upsetting memories or nightmares
* Avoidance symptoms: Emotional numbing, detachment or lack of interest in normal activities
* Hyper-arousal symptoms: Difficulty concentrating, startling easily, irritable feelings or insomnia

People diagnosed with PTSD may also have other issues as well. Many people with PTSD get better over time, but about 1 in 3 sufferers may continue to experience symptoms *(*[*http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/index.asp*](http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/index.asp)*, retrieved January 18, 2012).*

1. How can schools best serve student service members and veterans with service-related **injuries**?

It is estimated that about 2 million veterans will enroll in postsecondary education in the upcoming years. About a quarter of service members who have been deployed to the recent conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq will have some type of disability *(Tanelian, T. & Jaycox, L.H. [2008]. Invisible wounds of war: Psychological and cognitive injuries, their consequences, and services to assist recovery. Santa Monica, CA: Center for Military Health Policy Research).*

Accommodations for physical injuries and disabilities are mostly straightforward and have already been provided for by most schools; however, it is important to note that postsecondary students must make requests for accommodations according to federal law and school policy. There is a formal process that involves evaluation by licensed clinicians and review by professionals who are experienced in planning individualized accommodations.

The effects of service-related injuries, like post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety disorders and traumatic brain injuries (TBI) can be more complex, less easily apparent and less well known to educators and staff. In addition, many affected students struggle with issues of disclosure for a number of reasons.

Possible answers to those challenges are based on principles of Universal Design in curriculum and campus environment and might include the following:

* Normalize these conditions by increasing awareness of students, faculty and staff through seminars, talks or discussions.
* Familiarize faculty and staff with strategies for coping with challenges in concentration and memory not only for those who have sustained cognitive injuries but also the entire student population. Simple measures include offering quiet spaces for studying or resting, reducing distractions in the classroom and allowing students to use earplugs, headphones, dark glasses or other implements.
* Promote clarity in instruction to make it easier for students to stay focused and remember information.

For additional ideas, view *Teaching America’s Best: Preparing Your Classrooms to Welcome Returning Veterans and Service Members:* <http://www.nod.org/assets/downloads/AmericasBestTeaching.pdf>

1. What promising practices have been identified to **help student service members and veterans succeed** in postsecondary education?

As this field is still relatively new, there is limited evidence to date to indicate which measures are the most likely to support retention and degree completion. However, many researchers and practitioners agree that the following measures can be considered promising practices in assisting student service members and veterans to succeed in reaching their educational goals:

* Provide veterans with opportunities to spend time with other veterans, possibly through a veterans’ center or student veterans’ organization.
* Identify a veterans’ coordinator to serve as the primary point of contact for student service members and veterans. This person should be knowledgeable about available services, programs and resources.
* Educate faculty and staff about the attributes of and issues faced by student service members and veterans.
* Provide efficient and transparent processes and guidelines for military credit transfer.
* Ensure after-hours access to essential services for students who work during normal business hours.
* Use the standards of Universal Design (UD) to prepare classes to assist students with cognitive disabilities as well as increase all students’ chances of success. Visit this website for more information: <http://www.accessproject.colostate.edu/udl/index.cfm>

For additional ideas, view *Teaching America’s Best: Preparing Your Classrooms to Welcome Returning Veterans and Service Members:* <http://www.nod.org/assets/downloads/AmericasBestTeaching.pdf>

1. How do postsecondary institutions know which students are **service members or veterans if they do not self-identify**?

Student service members and veterans cannot be forced to identify themselves. Several ways to get to know your student service member and veteran population include:

* Have a welcome reception for service members or veterans.
* Encourage students to form a student veterans’ organization.
* Establish a veterans’ center on campus.
* Signal in institutional documents and course materials that your program or course is open and engaging to all students.
* Sponsor recognition events for dates commonly associated with the military, such as Veterans Day.

1. What do student service members and veterans on campus **want to get out of their postsecondary or academic experience?**

Student service members and veterans typically have a high respect for training and education, and they understand the benefits of training and education to their personal and career development. Most student service members and veterans want to obtain the education and credentials needed to successfully enter the civilian workforce or continue their education.

**For Faculty: Working with Student Service Members and Veterans**

1. What are the legal obligations of administration and faculty members when a **student is** **absent from school due to military service**?

Readmission requirements for service members are specified in the Code of Federal Regulations (34 CFR 668.18). The main requirement of the law is that when students must leave school for military service, institutions must readmit the service member with the same academic status as when the student last attended the institution. Visit this website for more information: <http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/cfr_2010/julqtr/pdf/34cfr668.18.pdf>

Beyond this minimum standard, organizations such as the American Council on Education (ACE), Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS) and Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (SOC) have published recommendations, and institutions have their own policies. When making the decision about how to treat a case within the framework of your university’s policies, bear in mind that such an absence is compulsory for the student and nothing he or she has any control over.

Postsecondary institutions across the country have found different ways to deal with such a situation and many will offer the student various choices. Possible options will depend upon factors such as how far the semester has progressed and the requirements of the student’s plan of study. These options might include the following:

* Allow the student to withdraw from classes and obtain a tuition refund.
* Award an incomplete and provide the student the opportunity to make up the credits later.
* Award the grade achieved so far in a course.

The following policies will support the student when he or she returns to campus:

* Do not require the student to re-apply for admission.
* Give preferential treatment for re-enrollment in courses.
* Make reasonable accommodations for changes in course offering or plans of study during the student’s absence.

To allow the student an easier transition when returning from duty, faculty members should make reasonable attempts to keep in contact with that student during deployment to answer questions about academic issues, encourage continued studies and foster social connection.

Visit the following websites for examples of deployment policies:

* University of Nevada, Reno: <http://www.unr.edu/veteran/education-benefit-programs/deployment>
* Norfolk State University: <http://www.nsu.edu/policies/militaryreinstatment.pdf>

1. What accommodations are faculty expected or required to make for student service members or veterans with **disabilities**?

The accommodations you would be expected to make for student service members or veterans with disabilities are the same as for any other student with a disability according to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and your school’s policies and procedures. However, as a group, student service members and veterans are often reluctant to request accommodations.

Note that the Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act (ADAA) of 2008 changes the scope of the term “disability.” It shifts the focus of attention from having to prove disability to preventing discrimination. It also broadens the law to include persons with psychological and cognitive disabilities who have largely been excluded previously based on mitigating effects of medication. (*Grossman, P.D. (2009). Foreword with a Challenge: Leading our Campuses Away from the Perfect Storm. Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability, 22 (1), 4–9)*.Visit the ADAA website for more information: <http://www.ada.gov/pubs/ada.htm>

Consider adopting principles of Universal Design (UD) into your teaching, as it allows students to access and provide information through many different channels. UD is a proven teaching method designed to improve academic achievement for all students but specifically support those with cognitive disabilities.

Visit the following websites for additional information:

* Universal Design: <http://www.accessproject.colostate.edu/udl/index.cfm>
* The Veterans Center of DO-IT, University of Washington:<http://www.washington.edu/doit/Veterans/>

1. What guidelines or behaviors do faculty members need to be aware of when **working with student service members and veterans**?

No special rules exist for working with student service members and veterans. Treat them as you would any other student. Give them respect, listen to them and provide academic support as needed.

However, be aware of comments, statements or questions you or your students pose about the military, politics relating to international conflicts and current wars. The feelings and possibly sensitivities of this group should be respected in the same way as those of any other group on campus.

1. How can faculty let student service members and veterans know they **support** them regardless of their personal feeling about the U.S. military actions overseas?

Give them respect, listen to them and provide academic support when needed.

1. Many student service members and veterans come to postsecondary education with considerable training and experience and do not seem to learn anything new from introductory or foundational courses. Can they be given **credit for prior learning**?

Most postsecondary institutions do give military transfer credit, although this transfer credit will likely not eliminate all introductory or foundational courses from a student’s plan of study. If the student has not already done so, encourage him or her to contact the department that handles credit transfer to see if transfer credit might be awarded.

To accommodate the rapidly growing enrollment of student service members and veterans seeking military credit transfer and to help Indiana postsecondary institutions efficiently evaluate military experience and training, the Military Family Research Institute (MFRI) at Purdue University created a searchable database linking recommendations from the *American Council on Education (ACE) Military Guide* to courses preapproved for transfer credit among Indiana schools. This guide, known as the ACE-CTL, makes it possible for Indiana institutions to provide accurate, efficient, and academically sound evaluations that recognize student achievement and may lead to increased retention.

Other alternatives include nationally standardized exams, “challenge” exams for the institution’s own courses and individualized assessments including portfolios. Visit the website of the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) for more information helping students maximize prior learning: [www.cael.org](http://www.cael.org)

**For Administrators: Working with Student Service Members and Veterans**

1. What promising practices have been identified to **help student service members and veterans succeed** in postsecondary education?

As this field is still relatively new, there is limited evidence to date to indicate which measures are the most likely to support retention and degree completion. However, many researchers and practitioners agree that the following measures can be considered promising practices in assisting student service members and veterans to succeed in reaching their educational goals:

* Provide veterans opportunities to spend time with other veterans, possibly through a veterans’ center or student veterans’ organization.
* Identify a veterans’ coordinator to serve as the primary point of contact for student service members and veterans. This person should be knowledgeable about the available services, programs and resources.
* Educate faculty and staff about the attributes of and issues faced by student service members and veterans.
* Provide efficient and transparent processes and guidelines for military credit transfer.
* Ensure after-hours access to essential services for students who work during normal business hours.
* Use the standards of Universal Design (UD) to prepare classes to assist students with cognitive disabilities as well as increase all students’ chances of success. Visit this website for more information: <http://www.accessproject.colostate.edu/udl/index.cfm>

No- or low-cost strategies include the following:

* Create a section of your school’s website specifically for student service members and veterans that includes information needed by this group, relevant policies and procedures, and the names and contact information for university personnel trained to answer questions from service members and veterans.
* Educate administrative support and reception and switchboard personnel on where to direct inquiries made by student service members and veterans.
* Waive fees for late payments due to a delay in receiving educational benefits.

For additional ideas:

* *Teaching America’s Best: Preparing Your Classrooms to Welcome Returning Veterans and Service Members:* <http://www.nod.org/assets/downloads/AmericasBestTeaching.pdf>
* Veterans and Military Programs and Services (VMPS) Standards and Guidelines from the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS): <http://www.cas.edu/index.php/updates/press-release/cas-announces-the-release-of-the-newest-standard/>
* Hamrick, F.A. & Rumann, C.B. (Eds.). (2012). Called to serve: A handbook on student veterans and higher education. Hoboken, NY: Jossey-Bass.

1. How can schools continue to fund programs and services for student service members and veterans amid **budget cuts**?

Keeping track of the number of student service members and veterans is important because it helps justify programs or services that are provided to this group on your campus. The numbers collected also show outcomes in times of budget cuts; the ability to demonstrate impact is imperative.

The work-study program of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is an excellent resource when budgets are tight. For every 100 student service members, veterans, or family member receiving educational benefits through the VA to attend your school, one work-study position can be available to you. Work performed by VA work-study students must be related to serving other service members or veterans. Visit this website for more information: <http://gibill.va.gov/resources/education_resources/programs/work_study_program.html>

1. In a 2009 report of a higher education survey conducted by the Military Family Research Institute (MFRI) statistically significant **differences** existed between the **campus services** reported by **front-line staff** and the services reported by campus **administrators**. What does this mean?

In 2009, institutions of postsecondary education in Indiana were surveyed about their policies and services for student service members in five categories: admissions, financial aid, academic affairs student services and networking. MFRI first collected information from institutional staff members via phone and then verified the findings with administrators.

In all categories, differences in the responses received from staff and administration were observed. Compared to administrators, staff members seemed to view their campuses as less aware of, less prepared for, and offering fewer opportunities for student service members and veterans.

MFRI drew the conclusion that “… staff members, who student service members and veterans turn to when they need assistance, may not be fully aware of all relevant campus policies and services.”

*(Sternberg, M, MacDermid Wadsworth, S., Vaughan, J., and Carlson, R. (2009). The Higher Education Landscape for Student Service Members and Veterans in Indiana, West Lafayette, IN: The Military Family Research Institute at Purdue University).*

1. The 2010 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) survey indicated that student service members and veterans reported meeting with faculty and academic advisors less often than civilian students. Does this mean that **military students are less engaged with their schools?**

Not necessarily. They may fulfill their campus engagement need through learning communities, student veteran organizations, campus jobs, intramural sports or any number of academic or non-academic activities that bring a campus community together.

**Military Credit Transfer**

1. What **challenges** do student service members and veterans face when attempting to transfer credits?

Military service involves extensive classroom and on-the-job training, and some of this training is comparable to postsecondary education courses. Evaluating transcripts requires knowledge of military documents and occupation and course coding systems; many postsecondary administrators have a limited background on military educational standards. As a result, student service members and veterans often find the credit transfer process to be inefficient and lack transparency. They may also be frustrated upon learning that only a few of their military credits qualify for transfer or that the credits that do transfer do not apply to their plan of study.

Additionally, some credits might not transfer between postsecondary institutions due to accreditation issues. For example, courses taken from nationally accredited institutions often do not transfer to regionally accredited institutions.

1. What resources exist to help with **efficient and effective credit transfer**?

Student service members and veterans can obtain copies of their military transcripts from the following websites:

* Army/American Council on Education Registry Transcript System (AARTS): <http://aarts.army.mil/index.htm>
* Coast Guard: <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cgi/active_duty/go_to_college/official_transcript.asp>
* Community College of the Air Force: <http://www.au.af.mil/au/ccaf/transcripts.asp>
* Sailor/Marine American Council on Education Registry Transcript System (SMARTS): <https://smart.navy.mil/smart/welcome.do>

**The Joint Services Transcript (JST) is expected to replace AARTS and SMARTS transcripts by the end of 2013:** [**http://www.acenet.edu/news-room/Pages/Transcripts-for-Military-Personnel.aspx**](http://www.acenet.edu/news-room/Pages/Transcripts-for-Military-Personnel.aspx)

The following resources can help with credit transfer:

* ACE Military Guide Online: <http://www.militaryguides.acenet.edu/>
* The Council for Adult & Experiential Learning (CAEL): [www.cael.org](http://www.cael.org)
* Servicemembers Opportunity College (SOC):<http://www.soc.aascu.org/>
* ACE-CTL searchable database developed by the Military Family Research Institute (MFRI); registration is required: <https://www.mfri.purdue.edu/resources/public/ACE-CTL-Guide.pdf>

Another good resource is information on your school’s website on transfer credit policies and procedures as well as designated staff members in admissions or the registrar’s office.

1. Do all seven regional accrediting bodies accredited by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) allow schools to **accept American Council on Education (ACE) recommendations for military credit transfer?**

Yes. All regional accreditors allow awarding of credit from non-regionally accredited sources as long as the policies under which it is awarded are publically available and consistently applied.

1. Why is it important for postsecondary institutions to **document and track** student service members and veterans?

It is important to know who is enrolling and to monitor their academic progress. The two areas of reporting go hand in glove. It is not sufficient to enroll large numbers of military students, if schools are unable to monitor the students’ progress toward academic goals. It is also important to know how student service members and veterans compare to other students. Keeping track of the number of student service members and veterans is also important because it helps justify programs or services that are provided to this group on your campus. The numbers collected also show outcomes in times of budget cuts; the ability to demonstrate impact is imperative.