2018 Student Veteran Survey Results_FINAL_10.25.18

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2018 STUDENT VETERAN SURVEY RESULTS
BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY
In an effort to quantify some of the issues that were identified during focus groups conducted with student veterans last year, as well as help prioritize solutions, we developed an online survey. This survey was sent to both student veterans and those who receive veteran benefits. However, the vast majority of questions were only relevant to the former group and only posed to them.

Approximately 90 student veterans responded to the survey. Due to the relatively low response rate, the margin of error is ±9%.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Student veterans were primarily drawn to WVU because the University offered their desired field of study. Proximity to home and affordability/scholarships were cited as well, but by far fewer students. The vast majority of student veterans failed to consider WVU campuses outside of Morgantown when they decided to attend WVU.

Most found transitioning from the military life to student life at WVU challenging to some extent, albeit not a major struggle. Academic challenges, financial obligations, physical/mental health issues and/or running low on benefits were the primary causes of a notable number of veterans to consider leaving the University. However, their sheer determination to earn a degree is primarily what kept them here.

Recommendation: It’s very important to have a liaison on campus who deals exclusively with veteran issues and career advisers who can instruct veterans how to judiciously and strategically use their benefits in order to graduate on time.

WVU currently offers a limited number of student veteran-focused resources, but veterans believe it’s important that additional resources be added. Most prize an intermediary whose expertise is geared toward veteran-specific issues, as well better guidance and advice regarding careers, networking events, a VA-certified counselor who can expedite their schedule, opportunities for more veteran interaction and better communication from the University.

Recommendation: Veterans are primarily concerned with being able to quickly get a job after graduation. Thus, it’s important that they receive effective career advice and guidance, as well as networking opportunities that might lead to gainful employment. It’s also paramount that veterans have a place to interact with each other to share their experiences and advice.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There are other things the University can do to improve student veterans’ experience - first and foremost ensure that they receive credit for classes they took while in the military. They’d also like assistance in ensuring they are taking full advantage of their educational benefits and scholarships and using them judiciously. In terms receiving recognition for their status at WVU, the majority believe a special tassel for graduation is appropriate. Other types of recognition most would appreciate are getting a reduced membership at the Rec Center in the summer and designated parking spots.

Recommendation: Veterans should be given a special tassel at graduation that exemplifies the fact that they have served our country. Also, it would be helpful to provide veterans – who don’t like to ask for preferential treatment because of their status – with small, but invaluable optional benefits that might make their day-to-day college life somewhat easier.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Far more student veterans were in the Army than any other branch of the military. The vast majority are 21-44 years of age, and over half have a household size of two or more. The majority do not have children but most of those who do, have children who are at least five years of age.
DETAILED FINDINGS
COLLEGE SELECTION

About seven in ten (69%) chose to attend WVU because the school offers their major. About four in ten (42%) chose it because it was close to home, and about one-third (32%) indicated the University’s affordability/scholarships were important.
COLLEGE SELECTION
Just nine percent took WVU Institute of Technology and/or WVU Potomac State College into consideration, as well as WVU Morgantown, when they were considering which college to attend.

Q. When choosing WVU in Morgantown, did you also consider WVU Institute of Technology or WVU Potomac State College?
COLLEGE ADJUSTMENT
Most student veterans (43%) found it “somewhat difficult” to adjust to student life at WVU. Less than two in ten (13%) acknowledged having an extremely or very difficult time. Over four in ten (43%) had little, if any, difficulty adjusting.
Q. Do you know where to go on campus if you have questions regarding veterans’ services?

COLLEGE ADJUSTMENT
Nearly two in ten (18%) do not know where to go on campus if they have questions regarding veterans’ services.

Knowledgeable

Yes, 82%

No, 18%
At least half of the veterans would like a liaison who only deals with veteran issues (56%), special career advisers for student veterans (56%) and VA-certified counselors on campus (53%). Just over half (53%) believe it would be valuable to have student veterans resource room in each of the colleges.
COLLEGE ADJUSTMENT

Those resources deemed most valuable for student veterans are being able to meet with academic advisers (76%), having the opportunity to speak with other veterans (70%) being able to meet with Veterans Certifying Officials (65%) having a place where veterans can decompress (58%), and receiving mental health counseling (58%).

Q. Which of these resources would be most valuable to you or future student veterans? (Check all that apply)
COLLEGE ADJUSTMENT
Of seven possible choices of the actions WVU should take regarding student veterans, those that rose to the top are having WVU assign staff who specialize in veterans’ financial-related issues (92%), career networking opportunities (87%), credit hours for military service (82%), training for faculty/staff and students on veterans’ issues and needs (71%) and relax attendance policies for special circumstances (68%).
RECOGNITION
The majority of these veterans (70%) would like to be recognized by a special tassel for their graduation cap, a reduced membership fee at the Rec Center in the summer (66%) and designated parking spots (64%). Slightly more than four in ten (44%) would like the opportunity to earn challenge coins and about as many (43%) want to see student veteran profiles featured on WVU’s veteran website.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Desired Recognition</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A special tassel for graduation caps</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduced membership fee at Rec Center during the summer</td>
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<td>Designated parking spots</td>
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<tr>
<td>Challenge Coins</td>
<td>44%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student veterans profiles featured on WVU’s veterans website</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition during special WVU events (e.g. Homecoming, etc.)</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition at athletic events beyond the annual football game...</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other

“Although it is nice. Soldiers don't need something for recognition. That's not what being a soldier is about.”

“Obviously we can go without special recognition, but the more support, the better the morale will be of fellow veterans.”

“Veterans should have RED WHITE and BLUE ropes for graduation!”

“Reduced textbook fees; veteran’s discount.”
VETERANS NEWSLETTER
About six in ten (58%) acknowledged receiving the student veterans e-newsletter from the Office of Veterans Affairs. About two in ten either do not receive it (23%) or are uncertain as to whether they do (19%). Thirty-one students requested that they receive the newsletter going forward.
**VETERANS NEWSLETTER**

These student veterans would like the student veterans e-newsletter to include information on the following:

- Upcoming events for veterans (and family members)
- Resources/programs for veterans
- Scholarship information

### Verbatims include:

- "Any new resources or information regarding student-veterans is beneficial"
- "Additional benefits available to student veterans"
- "Becoming more involved in different things. It’s nice to see what times things happen to plan what I can do and participate in."
- "Campus events that would interest Veterans"
- "Career fairs. Campus activities."
- "Events/dates"
- "Upcoming events"
- "Information pertaining to events"
- "New scholarships or programs for financial help"
- "Programs available to veterans"
- "Scholarships"
- "Success stories - career development"
- "The events and resources being offered to veterans"
- "Veteran’s discounts, opportunities"
- "The important stuff is what is going on in the WVU Veteran Community which I think veteran's office is starting to do."
- "Upcoming events and more information about staff assistance"
- "Veteran students who are going above and beyond in their community"
- "What events are going on for veterans and family members"
Just over four in ten (43%) entertained the thought of leaving the University. Of those, most cited academic challenges (42%), financial obligations (39%) and/or physical/mental health (34%), and running out of benefits (34%).

- Transphobia and homophobia from other vets
- A longer MBA program than other schools have. Several classes were redundant to their undergrad degree
- Wants to live in Alaska
- Being a decade older than fellow students

- Morgantown is not a clean town
- Admittance to a service academy
- Unwelcoming Veteran Affairs Office on campus
- Could have gotten a better education elsewhere
- Almost a decade older than my fellow students
RETENTION

When asked what contributed to the student veteran staying enrolled at WVU, they identified the following factors:

- Desire to finish degree (15)
- Affordable (3)
- Easier to stay than move (2)
- Lease
- Loves it at WVU
- Partner attends WVU
- Professors were accommodating
- Family

“I have left twice and returned now a 3rd time. It all started because my GI benefits were late or my situation with the WVU was handled poorly and I was not certified correctly or in an acceptable time.”
“Really needing a degree and not having money to go elsewhere.”
“It’s just easier to stay and deal with the BS than to pick up and move.”
“Too far into major; commuted to other organizations that made me want to stay (ROTC).”
SUGGESTIONS

Student veterans said are the most important things WVU can do to enhance their experience and ensure they receive their degree on time are:

- Give credit for classes already taken in the military (5)
- Better guidance and advising regarding benefits/career (4)
  - Have a VA benefits specialist
  - Advisers should…
    - be familiar with the GI Bill and Voc Rehab
    - provide advice on what each student needs to graduate
- Improve communication/outreach (3):
  - have a place for veterans to relax between classes
  - have veteran group meetings
  - encourage veterans to attend sporting events
  - more one-on-one interaction with professors
- Offer tutoring for more advanced courses (2)
- Give veterans special recognition at graduation
- More veterans activities, veterans networking activities
- Provide scholarships for veterans who have exhausted their benefits

“Be helpful with benefits. Also at the college I attend at Potomac State University we do not have a VA certifying official. We need one desperately. It is very difficult to get anything done regarding the post 911 GI Bill without a certifying official.”

“Translate ALL certified military experience as described on a DD214 to college course credit. I’m an online student and many colleges reached out to me for acceptance and were willing to give me more credit hours of acceptance off my DD214. I had previous college credit, so that’s the reason I chose WVU.”
SUGGESTIONS

Here are some additional verbatims that explain how WVU can better support student veterans:

“Don’t allow the English department to have the 3 missed class policy. It caused my grade for the class to drop due to missing class for drill and appointments.”

“I would like to hear from my advisor more often. See if I have any questions or maybe some advice on getting to where I need to be such as if I am on pace to graduate on time. I wouldn’t mind having a specific counselor assigned to me that specializes in Veteran needs and is in constant contact to make sure I am on the right path. I am an online student veteran, and it is rare that I am on campus to utilize the Veteran programs provided so it would be great to have a liaison for Veteran online students as well not just those that are on campus.”

“Help me put all that I have learned into getting a job once I get out of college. Help me build a resume, teach me what my options are, help me figure out my future. Right now I am just doing it by myself.”

“Offer a way to those who are utilizing GI Bill benefits additional options to pay their tuition, if they have not received funds from the VA by the tuition payment deadline.”

“Possibly have more veterans and service member outreach. Walking around the campus, I notice that there is a fairly large veteran community, but I feel that there’s nothing really to bring that community together. So I feel that it would be a big morale boost and great way for people coming back from training to make good connections. My other concern is to make faculty more aware of certain considerations that should be made in regards to attendance and class registration. Coming back from OSUT Training I had an extremely hard time with the admittance department and getting registered for classes due to me missing a lot of the deadlines for the fall semester due to training. Also, while I haven’t had any negative experiences yet, I am fearful of staff unwilling to work with me around my National Guard Training such as Drill and Annual Training.”

Q. What is the most important thing the University can do to enhance your student experience or help ensure you receive your degree on time?
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Q. What is the most important thing the University can do to enhance your student experience or help ensure you receive your degree on time?
COMMUNITY RESOURCES

In terms of community resources, nearly six in ten veterans (58%) take advantage of the Office of Veterans Affairs. Far less utilize the Morgantown Veterans Center (20%), and even fewer engage with the Veterans of Foreign Wars (12%). Less use other available resources. In fact, 34% said they don’t take advantage of any community resources for veterans.

- Office of Veterans Affairs: 58%
- Morgantown Veterans Center: 20%
- Veterans of Foreign Wars: 12%
- Operation Welcome Home: 8%
- I do not take advantage of community resources for veterans: 34%
- Other: 5%
  - American Legion
  - Veterans resource center at Health Sciences campus
  - Recruiters at Stansbury
  - Veterans Upward Bound: 0%
Q. How would you prefer to receive information related to veterans-specific events on campus?

COMMUNICATION

The majority of student veterans (77%) prefer receiving information regarding veteran-specific events on campus via the WVU student veterans e-newsletter.

Preferred Communication

- WVU student Veterans e-newsletter: 77%
- Other: 9%
- Recurring meeting with other student veterans: 7%
- WVU veterans website: 3%
- Social media: 3%
ACTIVE STATUS
Fourteen percent of student veterans at WVU are on active status for military duty. Fifteen percent of those have been deployed while at the University. One of the two who were redeployed recounted that faculty was not very supportive. Here is what he struggled with:

“I felt as though no one cared if my paperwork was processed for me to return to class.”

Q. Are you currently on active status for military duty? Q. Have you been deployed during your WVU college career?
MILITARY BRANCH

Most of the student veterans who responded to the survey were/are in the Army (43%). One-fifth and 18% were/are in the Navy and Air Force, respectively. Another 16% were/are in the Marines.
Nearly eight in ten (89%) of veterans who responded to the survey have been with the military for ten or fewer years.
STATUS

All but 8% of the students who completed the survey were student veterans. They represented a variety of classes. Nearly half (49%) were freshmen, sophomores or juniors. About one-quarter (24%) were seniors and slightly more (27%) were graduate/professional students.

Q. Which best describes you? What is your class status?
GENDER & AGE

Two-thirds (67%) of the survey respondents were male. Three in ten (30%) were female, and 4% self classified as “other.” Looking specifically at student veterans, most (62%) are between 21-34 years of age.
**CHILDREN**

Of the total respondents, the majority (78%) don’t have children. The same is true of student veterans; nearly eight in ten (79%) do not have children.
CHILDREN

Sixty percent of student veterans have at least two in their household. Nearly four in ten (37%) have children who are younger than five years of age.