MILITARY & VETERANS PROGRAMS

Beyond Thank You for Your Service

Nick Anderson
Director, Military & Veterans Programs


THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA IN HUNTSVILLE
MILITARY & VETERANS PROGRAMS

What is a Veteran?

Military Service & Participation by Era

Conflict Era

WWII

Total Serving

16.4M

16.4 million

Participation Rate

15% - 35%

Conflict Era

Vietnam

Total Serving

9.09M

9.09 million

Participation Rate

~30%

Conflict Era

Gulf War

Total Serving

695K

695,000

Participation Rate

~32%

Conflict Era

GWOT

Total Serving

3.0M

3 million

Participation Rate

—

Military Service & Participation by Era

Conflict Era

WWII

Total Serving

16.4M

16.4 million

Participation Rate

15% - 35%

Conflict Era

Vietnam

Total Serving

9.09M

9.09 million

Participation Rate

~30%

Conflict Era

Gulf War

Total Serving

695K

695,000

Participation Rate

~32%

Conflict Era

GWOT

Total Serving

3.0M

3 million

Participation Rate

~80%

How are GWOT Vets different and why does it matter?

GWOT Veterans

All Volunteer Force

17% Female

11% LGBTQ+

60% Under the age of 35

7,057 vs. 30,000

Racial Diversity

GWOT Share vs. (Overall Veteran Baseline)

White

61.8% (72.2%)

Black / African American

14.4% (12.4%)

Hispanic

14.0% (8.6%)

Multiracial

9.9% (6.7%)

Barriers to Education

- Inadequate Finances
- VA Benefit & Administrative Delays
- Cultural Isolation
- Mental Health & Physical Disabilities
- Credit Transfer Issues

Inadequate Finances

Key financial obstacles and obligations impacting student persistence:

Socio-Economic Pressures

Financial pressures and lingering socio-economic difficulties create continuous economic stress.

Student Loans

Educational debt and loan repayment burdens remain a major financial barrier throughout academic studies.

Work & Family Obligations

External family commitments and job demands compete directly with coursework and degree progress.

VA Benefit & Administrative Delays

Key administrative and policy challenges impacting veteran educational support:

Bureaucratic Hurdles

Complex administrative processes and documentation hurdles slow down essential benefit approvals.

Slow Stipend Processing

Delayed tuition and housing stipend payments through the VA create direct financial strain for students.

36-Month GI Bill Limit

Strict statutory limits on Post-9/11 GI Bill benefit duration impose severe ongoing logistical constraints.

Cultural Isolation

Key cultural and social friction points facing veteran students on campus:

Environment Shock

Transitioning from a tightly structured, mission-first military operational setting to an unstructured civilian environment.

Peer Relatability

Frequently struggling to connect or relate to younger, traditional college students due to stark differences in life experience.

Campus Integration

Experiencing alienating "culture shock" that hinders sense of belonging and full participation in campus life.

Mental Health and Physical Disabilities

Key health challenges and campus environment factors impacting veteran student persistence:

Psychological Burden

PTSD, anxiety, and depression present severe ongoing psychological hurdles during college transition.

Campus Triggers

Trauma-induced triggers stemming from unstructured campus environments heighten stress and disorientation.

Academic Persistence

Interferes with academic focus, classroom engagement, and long-term retention and completion rates.

Credit Transfer Issues

Key barriers in evaluating and applying military training and experience toward college degrees:

Military Training

Universities frequently struggle to properly evaluate specialized military coursework and service training programs.

Occupational Skills

Extensive real-world occupational experience and leadership gained during active service are rarely translated into course equivalencies.

Degree Application

Accepted credits are often applied only as general electives rather than satisfying major degree requirements, delaying graduation.

What Can We Do?

Centralized Support and “One-Stop” Shops

Veterans Resource Centers (VRCs)

Colleges establish physical on-campus spaces that consolidate services. These centers act as a single point of contact providing free resources, a place to study, and peer-to-peer networking to reduce cultural isolation.

Dedicated Advisors

Staffing centers with military-affiliated or culturally trained counselors ensures that academic advising, mental health resources, and career counseling are handled by professionals who understand military transitions.

Streamlining Finance and VA Benefits

Dedicated VA Certifying Officials

To prevent administrative delays that leave veterans without tuition or housing stipends, schools employ staff solely focused on processing Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits.

Emergency Relief Funding

Many schools bridge the gap during VA bureaucratic delays by establishing temporary gap funding or institutional scholarship pots.

Priority Registration

Providing veterans with early course registration ensures they can enroll in required courses sequentially, maximizing their 36-month GI Bill limit before funding expires.

Flexible and Accelerated Academic Framework

Military Credit Articulation

Institutions utilize tools like the American Council on Education (ACE) Military Guide to evaluate prior military occupational specialties and training, converting them seamlessly into civilian college credits.

Deployment Interruption Policies

Schools establish fair, flexible withdrawal and re-enrollment policies that protect a student-soldier’s GPA and financial standing if they are suddenly deployed or called to active duty mid-semester.

Campus Integration and Cultural Competency

Faculty and Staff Training

Professional development sessions educate civilian professors on military culture, "culture shock," and how to manage trauma-induced triggers or PTSD in an academic environment.

Early Alert Systems

Implementing proactive tracking mechanisms lets advisors identify and step in with academic or financial counseling before a student veteran becomes overwhelmed.

Peer Mentorship Programs

Partnering incoming veterans with older student veterans—often through chapters of national organizations like Student Veterans of America (SVA)—helps them build immediate community.

You Are “The One”



Be The Greater Fool