

Identifying Factors that Impact the Educational Success of Veterans at IUPUI

Blake K. Parrish¹, Michelle Salyers¹, Nicholas Rattray²

¹Indiana University – Purdue University Indianapolis

²Richard L. Roudebush Veterans Affairs Medical Center

Keywords: Veteran, reintegration, educational attainment, success, barriers

Increased post-secondary enrollment among US military veterans using benefits from the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008 has led to a newfound emphasis on expanded student services on college campuses. We examined academic performance, social support, and mental health through a cross-sectional survey of 101 Veterans who were enrolled in at least one course at IUPUI in the last 12 months in order to identify barriers and facilitators to academic success. In addition to educational outcomes, we also assessed a variety of measures related to community reintegration, quality of life, and resilience. We conceptualized academic success as higher GPA, student status, and lower levels of reported difficulty in reintegration, concentrating in the classroom, and completing coursework. We hypothesized that use of student services and financial aid, involvement with student affairs, perceived social support, encountered barriers, and completion of transition assistance programs were expected to influence success variables. More than half of participants reported experiencing educational barriers unique to their Veteran status, including moderate difficulties with concentration and completing tasks for school. Although high mean scores of grit, resilience, and perceived social support were recorded, high scores of reintegration difficulty suggest that the sample may be at probable risk for post-traumatic stress disorder and substance abuse. Despite these difficulties, most student Veterans did not report using Veteran specific resources, with only one in ten participants reporting any use of campus-based adaptive education services and psychological services. No significant difference was found between groups utilizing or failing to utilize 6 separate sources of financial aid, 6 services, and 9 types of student affairs. Our findings suggest potential ways to enhance current support programs. Future research that tracks longitudinal change and explores student experience in-depth may help explore mechanisms related to the academic success of military Veterans.