

PRESS RELEASE
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Majority of Post-9/11 Veterans Attending School on GI Bill Complete Higher Education

First-time study of veterans' education benefits shows progress, challenges for these nontraditional students

WASHINGTON—A Student Veterans of America (SVA) report combining data on U.S. college degree attainment with information on veterans who have used Montgomery and Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits shows that 51.7 percent have received a postsecondary degree or certificate, a completion rate similar to traditional college students, and greater than other nontraditional students.

In recent years, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has processed more than 4 million education claims for student veterans. Until now, there has been no tracking of degree completion rates. The just-released report, part of the Million Records Project, an initiative of SVA, measures for the first time how the most recent generation of veterans perform in higher education.

Among the study's top findings: Although many take longer than traditional students to graduate, most student veterans complete their initial studies and often earn additional higher level degrees as well. Their delayed time-to-completion is due in large part to the unique challenges facing student veterans who are atypical of traditional college students, including age differences, and sometimes pausing their studies to serve in the military—including going overseas.

“Americans have invested substantial dollars in giving our veterans an opportunity to further their education and this report shows many positive signs that they are doing just that,” said Wayne Robinson, SVA president and CEO. “The majority of student veterans accessing their GI Bill benefits are completing degrees and showing unparalleled determination to do so, despite many unique barriers. A single deployment can interrupt a student veteran's education for at least nine to 13 months, but they're returning to the classroom and completing.”

For this first phase of the Million Records Project, SVA partnered with VA and the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) to match two sets of data: a randomly selected sample of approximately 1 million Montgomery and Post-9/11 GI Bill veteran education beneficiary records from 2002 to 2010, and U.S. student postsecondary enrollment and

MILLION  RECORDS
PROJECT

Research from Student Veterans of America

completion records collected by the NSC. VA and the NSC removed all personal and institutional identifying information, and duplicates caused by students accessing more than one education benefit. A total of 788,915 records were analyzed, representing approximately 22 percent of the student veteran population receiving GI Bill benefits for that period.

Google, The Kresge Foundation, Lumina Foundation and Raytheon awarded SVA more than \$2.2 million in grants to support the project.

The report shows the majority of students complete a bachelor's degree within four to six years; associate degrees within four. Unsurprisingly, many of these veterans do not typically follow the path of traditional college students. Some enroll in college after high school graduation, withdraw to join the military, then re-enroll after military service. Other veterans enroll in postsecondary institutions after they complete their military service; still others earn college credit before, during and after military service but may need to repeat some coursework that was lost due to deployments.

Fields of study

Student veterans are pursuing degrees that allow them to obtain in-demand careers. At the associate level, the five degree fields most often pursued were in liberal arts and sciences; business; homeland security; law enforcement and firefighting; and health professions. The top five bachelor's degree fields were business; social sciences; homeland security; law enforcement and firefighting; and computer and information sciences.

Type of school

Most student veterans who complete school enroll in (79.2 percent), and earn degrees (71.7 percent) from, public schools. The remaining students enroll in private nonprofit or proprietary (private for-profit) institutions. Just more than 15 percent obtain degrees from private nonprofit institutions and 12 percent from proprietary institutions. The study also shows that a majority of public and private, nonprofit sector enrollees graduate, but some transfer out of that sector to complete their education.

Degree obtained

The data show that many student veterans achieve higher levels of education: 31.3 percent of the sample who initially earned a vocational certificate, 35.8 percent of the sample who initially earned an associate degree and 20.8 percent of the sample who initially earned a bachelor's degree went on to also earn a higher degree.

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About Student Veterans of America

SVA is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit coalition of 985 student veteran organizations on college and university campuses globally. SVA's mission is to provide military veterans with the resources, support, and advocacy needed to succeed in higher education and following graduation.