The number of military and veteran students entering higher education continues to grow rapidly; nevertheless, there is a paucity of institutional research from which to draw recommendations about how the college transition translates to academic success and persistence. The purpose of this study was to identify the demographic characteristics, financial, academic, and personal experiences and campus relationships during military and veteran students’ transitions to a college or university that predict grade point average (GPA) and intent to return. This study utilized a cross-sectional, non-experimental survey design to determine the relationship between study factors, cumulative GPA, and the level to which these factors can be used to predict academic success as measured by GPA and continued commitment to the institution based on intent to return to the institution. The results of the study indicated that multiple, but different, factors predict academic success as measured by GPA for community college and four-year institution students. Intent to return could not be predicted utilizing the study model for four-year institution students; however, the perception of being academically prepared to enter the institution was a key factor in influencing academic success. Practitioners could consider was to address academic success and academic self-efficacy early or prior to the matriculation process. Bureaucratic processes such as determining military academic credit or determining benefits eligibility should be streamlined and/or explained as thoroughly as possible early in the matriculation process to avoid those processes being a larger stumbling block academically than they need to be. Finally, in terms of research, this study revealed the many research needs that still exist. For those engaged in research or considering research, I outline some of the many opportunities there might be to learn more in terms of serving our students.

**Brief Bio:** Dr. Denise Williams-Klotz earned her Ph.D. from Iowa State University in 2015 and currently serves as the assistant director of Multicultural Student Affairs at the same institution. Denise grew up in a multigenerational Air Force family and spent the last 3 years researching the transition experiences of military-connected students to college. Along with Dr. Ann Gansemer-Topf, she has a forthcoming article on this topic on the Journal of First-Year Experience and Students in Transition about transition experienced for newly matriculated military-connected students. The pair was also recently awarded a NASPA Large Foundation Grant to study the experiences of military connected students of color at a variety of institution types.
University of Massachusetts Lowell pro-actively serves Military Connected Students and employs a comprehensive strategic, research-based approach to providing support to these students and their families. Their Student Veterans Organization participates in Student Veterans of America’s NATCON and SVA Leadership Conferences each year and placed third in the national business plan competition last year. Student Veterans benefit from active Alumni support, a Military Alumni Hall of Fame and a 0% loan fund for those facing financial difficulties.

Additionally, UMass Lowell was the first nationally chartered chapter of SALUTE National Honor Society. The University established both a Veterans Office and Lounge in 2011 and enrollment has increased from 510 to over 1200 Military and Veteran Students currently. The Office of Veterans Services and the Student Veteran Lounge is located within the new Student Center on campus, University Crossing, and enjoys a panoramic view of the Merrimack River and campus. Included in the space are areas for study, small meetings, socializing and TV/gaming. In addition to referral to on-campus resources, the Office services range from assistance with homelessness, VA Compensation and Pension and Vocational Rehabilitation applications, VA Educational benefits processing, referral for medical and mental health care, peer mentoring and tutoring, peer support and career employment programming.

Upcoming initiatives for veterans and their families

Points of Light’s Military Initiatives is launching **YEAR TWO** of the AmeriCorps Program – **FRONTLINE FAMILIES**. This program is designed to create a pipeline of volunteer leaders to support ANY program within an organization. Organizations do not need an existing military program or implement a new one to participate in this program. We want to leverage the skills, commitment, and experience of the MilVet population to support your organization’s current GOALS and MISSIONS.

Service members, veterans and their families have traversed this world to protect the civil liberties that our nation promised. As service members transition they are seeking opportunities to serve in another capacity. Frontline Families is a national service program that inspires veteran families to serve on the frontline of their communities as part of their reintegration process. AmeriCorps members will train veteran families as volunteer leaders to increase volunteer capacity for local organizations.

Our next cohort will begin November 2016. Please visit [http://www.pointsoflight.org/programs/military-initiatives/frontline-families](http://www.pointsoflight.org/programs/military-initiatives/frontline-families) to apply for the program.

Feel free to reach out to militaryinitiatives@pointsoflight.org for additional inquiries.
A Holistic Look at Removing Barriers and Increasing the Student’s Return on Investment

Tanya Ang, Director, Veterans’ Programs

On April 14 and 15, 2016, the American Council on Education’s (ACE) Veterans’ Programs hosted its second Service Member and Veteran Academic Advising Summit in Arlington, VA. This two-day summit brought together experts on the topics of military-connected students, admissions and academic advising, veteran employment, and transition assistance to discuss promising practices for increasing the number of students making better informed decisions when it comes to the pursuit of post-secondary education. The goals of the summit were to:

1. identify concrete actionable items based on the five themes identified at the first summit hosted by ACE in 2014 for better supporting military-connected individuals in the application and admissions process;
2. carefully examine the relationship between education and employment and ways in which those providing academic advisement on post-secondary education for military-connected students can help these potential students navigate their education to accomplish career goals;
3. mobilize a national campaign to increase and enhance localized support networks in communities throughout the country utilizing existing networks and resources to increase partnerships between educators, employers, and other key stakeholders to aid in a smooth transition from the military into education and civilian employment.

During the summit participants heard from military-connected students about their experience through the application and admissions process. Other panels included representatives from federal agencies, institutions of higher learning, and employers highlighting some of the work they do to help create better informed consumers of post-secondary education. These representatives also shared ways they were actively engaged within the local community to create collaborative relationships that effectively meet the holistic needs of their students including addressing challenges with child care, transportation, and healthcare. The final panel focused on highlighting successful examples of community collaborations and the impact on increased academic retention and completion due to these partnerships.

In addition to hearing from these five panels, participants were divided into two groups for participant brainstorming sessions. The group focused on increasing the pipeline from education to employment identified challenges and obstacles veterans, institutions of higher learning, and employers face in helping with the transition from military service into higher education and ultimately the civilian workforce. This group then worked to identify ways to overcome some of these obstacles in order to increase attainment of both academic and career goals.

The other group, focused on community collaborations, spent their time identifying the many resources currently available to military-connected individuals. They then mapped out ways in which institutions could collaborate with these resources on a local, state, and national level to address various risk factors that would inhibit military-connected students from attaining post-secondary goals.

As an outcome of the summit, ACE plans to release a list of these identified resources for institutions of higher learning to make it easier for them to partner with external organizations in order to meet the different needs of their students. ACE also plans to continue its effort to build out and enhance community partnerships including partnerships between employers and educators to ease the transition from education into the civilian workforce.
What I Wish I Knew - Doh! Looking Back at Three Years of False Assumptions and Mistakes

Highlights of a session presented at the NASPA Military-connected student conference in February:

· Most programs WANT to be “veteran-friendly” but do not know what that means
· Colleague departments may NOT be too-friendly
· Faculty, staff, and administration have little exposure and understanding of military service, transition issues, and support opportunities available
· Importance of distinguishing veteran resource center and student veteran organization for both student veterans and community supporters
· Many veterans are not interested in the traditional college experience and therefore do not engage in veteran-specific programming held on campus
· Establishing multiple communication platforms, i.e. email, social media, flyers across campus, provide an opportunity to connect with student veterans, though many do not utilize their provided campus email
· To grow buy-in from student veterans, campus’ must provide timely responses to student veteran questions, connect with new veteran students early, and provide a safe space on campus for current and former service members to engage with one another

Dr. Michael Kirchner is the first director of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee’s Military and Veterans Resource Center (MAVRC). MAVRC is the campus’ lead supporter for all student veteran related initiatives, including new student orientation, Veterans Week, the Milwaukee Veterans Ball, Military and Veteran Graduation Ceremony, and the Veteran’s Corporate Partners Program. Kirchner is a published author on topics ranging from student veterans to leadership training and Army leader development and recently earned his doctoral degree in Adult, Continuing, and Higher Education Leadership. Kirchner can be reached at kirchne3@uwm.edu.

Military Culture Corner: Did you know?

All enlisted men and women recite the same oath at the culmination of their basic training. You can see it happen here.
UPCOMING EVENTS - MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

DAV- Disabled American Veterans
Conference Name: 95th DAV/DAVA Conference
Conference Location: Atlanta, GA
Conference Dates: July 31st – August 3rd, 2016
Link to Registration

The Texas A&M University System
Conference Name: 8th Annual Military and Veteran Education Support Symposium
Conference Location: Prairie View A&M University
Link to Registration
When proposal submissions are due: Oct 7, 2016

HACCC, Houston Area Consortium of Career Centers
Conference Name: 21st Annual Drive – In Conference
Conference Location: University of Houston – Clear Lake
Conference Dates: July 29, 2016
Link to Registration

Noda
Conference Name: 2016 Orientation Professionals Institute
Conference Location: JW Marriott Indianapolis
Conference Dates: November 3, November 5, 2016
Link to Registration

NASPA
Conference Name: AAWHE-NE’s 14th Annual Conference
Conference Location: Dartmouth College (Hanover, NH)
Conference Dates: August 4, August 5, 2016
Link to Registration

NASPA
Conference Name: 2016 NASPA Western Regional Conference
Conference Location: Seattle, WA
Conference Dates: November 09 - November 12, 2016
Link to Registration

SDVOB
Conference Name: 13th annual National Conference
Conference Location: San Antonio, TX
Conference Dates: August 24-25 2016
Link to Registration

NASPA
Conference Name: UTAH NASPA Conference
Conference Location: University of Utah, Salt Lake City
Conference Dates: September 30, 2016
Link to Registration

NASPA
Conference Name: NASPA Region I Conference
Conference Location: Burlington, VT
Conference Dates: November 13 to 16 2016
Link to Registration

Conference Name: 2016 NASPA Region IV-West/East Conference
The VKC would like to congratulate the newly appointed VKC Advisory Board. The full Advisory Board Roster can be found HERE!

Chair – Lauren A. Runco, Military Family Research Institute at Purdue University
Past Chair – David T. Vacchi, University of North Carolina at Charlotte
Vice Chair – Ken D. McRae, Mississippi State University
Research Co-Chairs – Amber Mathwig, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; Kiersten Downs, University of South Florida
Communications Co-Chairs – Chelsea M. O’Brien, Rochester Institute of Technology; Christine M. Black, Marywood University
Supra Et Ultra Liaison - Bob Heckrote, Bloomsburg University
Women Military-Connected Representative – Virginia Jasmin Linares, Austin Peay State University
Sponsored Programs Liaison – Kim B. Sibson
Allies and Advocates Representative – Tanya Ang, American Council on Education
Student Veteran Representative – Jorge Hernandez
History Co-Chairs – Julie Shank, George Mason University; Tamela Evans, Georgia Southern University
Conference Events Liaison – Cody Nicholls, University of Arizona
Mental Health/Disability Chair – Janine Jackson Wert, University of Massachusetts Lowell
Region I Representative (term ends 3/06/18) – Nikki Cole, University of Connecticut
Region II Representative (term ends 3/14/17) – Dwight Boddorf, Department of Veterans Affairs
Region III Representative (term ends 3/14/17) – Denny Powers, Coastal Carolina University
Region IV East Representative (term ends 3/14/17) – Barton Buechner, Adler School of Professional Psychology
Region IV West Representative (term ends 3/06/18) – Crisann Hanes, Oklahoma State University
Region V Representative (term ends 3/14/17) – Damien Pitts, University of Utah
Region VI Representative (term ends 3/06/18) – Tammy Oluvic, Azusa Pacific University

UPCOMING EVENTS - MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

**NASPA VKC**

Conference Location: Historic Union Station: St. Louis, Missouri
Conference Dates: November 15 - November 17, 2016
Link to Registration
When proposal submissions are due: June 6th

Conference Name: 2016 Women’s Leadership Institute
Conference Location: Dana Point, California
Conference Dates: December 6, December 9, 2016
Link to Registration

Organization Acronym and Full Name of Org: NASPA
Conference Name: 2016 Leadership Educators Institute
Conference Location: Long Beach, California (Renaissance Long Beach Hotel)
Conference Dates: December 11 – December 13, 2016
Link to Registration

Call for Nominations!

**VKC Supra Et Ultra Award Nomination** – The nomination form for the 2016 Supra Et Ultra Award is here. All completed nomination forms are due to Bob Heckrote, Supra Et Ultra Liaison by November 15th! You can email completed forms to rheckrote@bloomu.edu.

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