

IPCN

Indiana Pathways to College Network

Pathnotes, Vol. 30, No. 3

State Perspective on Student Veterans - Mary Ellen Hamer, Independent Colleges of Indiana, Moderator; Jeff Spalding, Indiana Commission for Higher Education; Kim Bennett, Trine University; Shelley MacDermid Wadsworth, Military Family Research Institute; and Fred Major, Indiana Department of Veterans Affairs State Approving Agency

Today's veterans are generally older than veterans from previous generations, and have higher levels of education. Most have at least a high school diploma or equivalent, and many have some college experience.

The majority of student veterans are currently enrolled at for-profit colleges and community colleges, unlike veterans of World War II, who primarily attended four-year institutions.

Community colleges offer veterans a convenient, cost-efficient route to a postsecondary degree, and similarly, for-profit institutions can provide flexibility and accessibility, with the added advantage of generous policies enabling easy transfer of military credits.

Four-year colleges in Indiana are also working to attract and serve student veterans.

- Indiana State University is offering a \$3,000 tuition stipend for Fall of 2009 to assist with housing, books, fees, etc., and has formed a [partnership](#) with the Community College of the Air Force (CCAF), enabling CCAF students and graduates to qualify for special transfer programs, including bachelor degree-completion programs offered on the Indiana State University campus and via distance learning.
- Vincennes University is offering the [VU Plus](#) program with special course blocks to meet the unique needs of students in each branch of the military.
- The University of Indianapolis has instituted a [UIndy grant program](#) that supplements federal education benefits, enabling veterans returning from the field to attend the University of Indianapolis

tuition-free.

- Purdue University is engaged in a statewide effort to direct veterans toward its [College of Technology](#), believing these programs to be well-suited to the interests and experiences of many veterans.
- Trine University offers veterans a \$1000 service award, and also offers an [Iraq/Afghanistan Veteran Scholarship](#) program providing recipients with up to 24 credit hours tuition-free, in addition to any other benefits they may receive. A program is also in place to assist with the college expenses of children of veterans who died while serving in active duty.

The Military Family Research Institute at Purdue University has conducted a survey of Indiana postsecondary institutions, asking questions that a prospective student veteran might ask, and checking the accuracy of the answers they received with the campus provost. The report can be downloaded from their website at http://www.mfri.purdue.edu/content/Higher%20Education%20Landscape_web.pdf.

Types of questions contained in the survey include:

- Does the institution award credit for military experience?
- Are resources available for student veterans' organizations on campus?
- Is the institution prepared to serve students with military service-related injuries or disabilities?

For about 1 in 5 campuses it was difficult to obtain answers to these questions, however the results from the remaining campuses suggest that in general, large, public institutions and those offering graduate degrees offer more services than small or private institutions or those not offering graduate degrees, and are also more likely to participate in networks of campuses.

Few student veterans organizations exist on Indiana campuses, and some disconnect seems to exist between administrators (who were more likely to give affirmative answers to survey questions) and their staff members (who were either unaware of resources and policies related to student veterans or were operating under misconceptions).

Findings from the survey indicate administrators may be overestimating the resources available to student service members and veterans and thus underestimating their unmet needs.

Panelist Fred Major, from the Indiana Department of Veterans Affairs State Approving Agency, emphasized that the Post 9/11 GI Bill is expected to be difficult to “roll-out” and implement, and the US Department of Veterans Affairs is the ONLY official voice on matters related to the GI Bill and veterans benefits.

Major recommends that 2-year institutions enroll students in Chapter 30, rather than Chapter 33, as the latter won't pay for apprenticeship programs after a 2-year program.