

TALENT ACQUISITION GUIDE | DECEMBER 2021

“Hire” Education

Strengthening the Connections Between Employers and Student Veterans

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About this Work

With the generous financial support and collaboration of Prudential Financial, Inc., the purpose of this guide is to explore strategies used by higher education and employers to improve their connections on behalf of student veteran job seekers.¹ Specifically, this work highlights: (1) strategies used by select companies to engage and recruit student veteran job seekers, (2) strategies used by select higher education institutions to connect student veterans to employers, (3) organized collaborative efforts at the state and local level and strategies used to support and connect to student veterans, and (4) resources available to support employers looking to hire student veterans.

Acknowledgments

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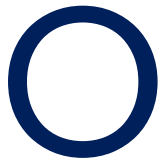
¹ We use the word employer in a broad sense to include C-suite leadership, hiring managers, talent acquisition professionals, human resources recruiters, and diversity, equity, and inclusion recruiters (DE & I), Corporate Social Responsibility professionals, and anyone else who might be involved in the employee lifecycle including those impacting the development or implementation of veteran hiring initiatives.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Over 650,000 veterans are pursuing higher education¹ often with one primary goal in mind: finding employment afterwards.² But there is often a disconnect between higher education and employers looking to hire student veterans. While veterans say that finding employment after their military transition is one of their primary concerns, except for individual schools and specific motivated career services representatives, there have been few coordinated or systematic efforts to connect student veterans to employers through university career-based services.³

This disconnect undercuts each party's goals. Rather, well developed pipelines can benefit all. Student veterans can find meaningful employment faster, universities can provide higher value thorough career placement, and employers gain access to a talent pool of candidates with distinct skillsets conferred by the unique combination of military training and a requisite college degree.^{4,5}

This guide is intended to be a hands-on product for employers and student-services professionals working with student veterans, and is the result of interviews with employers, student services professionals, and veteran serving organizations. This guide will explore and highlight strategies to improve the coordination between university campuses and employers, with the goal of connecting student veterans to employers.

OUR APPROACH

The relationship between student veterans and employers is bidirectional with supportive organizations helping to provide a bridge between employers and university career-related services. This guide addresses three key areas and perspectives.

1. employers (including leadership, talent acquisition professionals, recruiters, and diversity and inclusion professionals),
2. student services professionals, and
3. community-based coalitions and supports.

This work is based on in-depth interviews with select employers, human resources (HR) representatives, career services professionals working at higher education institutions, and student veteran organizations.ⁱⁱ The community-based organizations we interviewed included (e.g., Pittsburgh Veteran Employer Coalition (PVEC) and Virginia Values Veterans (V3), one veteran serving organization, Student Veterans of America (SVA), along with a workforce development organization (also a member of PVEC).

The stakeholders were identified through initial interviews with subject-matter-experts via veteran serving organizations (VSOs), employers, and higher education professionals. Interviewees participated in a one-hour phone interview. From these interviews, key themes were summarized and compiled.

Organizations were selected as exemplars of approaches others can draw from. We acknowledge that the groups here are a subset of organizations and coalitions that connect student veterans to employers. However, the types of connections we highlight in this paper appear to be the exception rather than the rule. Often, there are no targeted or focused efforts in place to connect student veterans with employers, and this is something we heard repeatedly during our interviews.

Combining information from a literature review and stakeholder interviews, we developed a working diagram to convey our understanding of the relationships between community-based organizations, student veterans, and employers.ⁱⁱⁱ

ⁱThe individuals we spoke with on university campuses generally fell under the university's "student services" but interviewees noted that not all campuses are organized the same way. That job function that carries the responsibility to assist veterans may not exist at all or it could be a collateral duty. Interviewees noted that such positions vary in their understanding of student veterans and when they do exist are often understaffed, underfunded, with multiple responsibilities and roles.

ⁱⁱThe Department of Veterans Affairs is integral to connecting student veterans to educational opportunities. Over 700,000 veterans and dependents attend school each year using their GI Bill Benefits which, depending on eligibility, can cover expenses including tuition and housing. While not the direct focus of this paper, we consider the Post-9/11 GI Bill as an integral component of veteran education, and recommend student services professional familiarize themselves with the GI Bill benefits. For more information about the Post-9/11 GI Bill, see <https://www.va.gov/education/about-gi-bill-benefits/how-to-use-benefits/co-op-training/>

MAPPING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HIGHER EDUCATION AND EMPLOYERS



KEY FINDINGS

1. Higher education professionals (often via career services) work directly with student veterans to connect to employers and vice versa. Our interviewees said that having someone dedicated to working with student veterans who had specific knowledge of veterans or was a veteran themselves was especially useful but noted that it was not the norm.
2. In places where community-based coalitions existed, they served as a conduit between higher education and employers, sometimes sharing job opportunities, qualified candidates, and generally providing a bridge to connect student veterans to jobs.
3. Student veterans often 'go-it-alone' when looking for a job, occasionally working with one of the entities (higher education, communities, or employers).

OVERVIEW

ORGANIZATION OF THIS PAPER

This paper summarizes the results of interviews with higher education professionals, employers, and community-based organizations.

We start by providing an overview of:

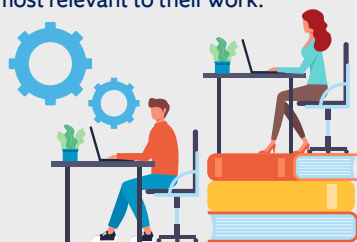
- the key issues student veterans face when seeking employment.
- the challenges employers face when connecting to student veterans.

We then share best practices and engagement strategies from:

- employers
- higher education professionals
- community and state-based initiatives.

Throughout the paper we spotlight specific organizations using innovative practices to inspire others to either emulate, modify, or expand upon.

Sections are organized by audience to direct readers to the information most relevant to their work.



^{iv}The word veteran is a legal term and is defined by the VA as “a person who served in the active military, naval, or air service and who was discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable.” How the term veteran is defined can impact eligibility for a variety of benefits including educational benefits at local, state, and federal level. For purposes of this paper, we do not use the legal definition and instead use a broader definition. We use the term veteran to include both wartime and non-wartime veterans of active duty, the Reserves, and the National Guard but also include current active-duty service members who also may be attending school regardless of deployment status or combat experience; A student veteran is any student who is a current or former member of the active-duty military, the National Guard, or Reserves regardless of deployment status, combat experience, legal veteran status, or GI Bill use.

STUDENT VETERANS AND THE WORKFORCE

Education has always served as a critical workforce readiness tool, but for veterans in particular, higher education also acts as a bridge to connect to employers and develop workforce skills for jobs outside the military.⁷ For one, a college degree is frequently required just to be considered for many types of employment in today’s workforce.⁸ Second, a degree provides workforce preparation and tangible evidence employers can use to assess a veteran’s qualifications or “fit” for a particular position or role.

For employers,^{iv} many of whom are unfamiliar with the military, the attainment of an academic degree minimizes the need to translate a military resume, establishes a level playing field, and provides a common metric to assess a prospective employees’ qualifications in comparison to others in their applicant pool.⁹

Education also represents a career preparation opportunity for veterans in several ways. First, it demonstrates a willingness to participate in job-relevant learning, upskilling, or reskilling outside the military environment. This is relevant but misunderstood; continuous learning, related to workforce preparedness, is imbued through military training. Military conferred skills are not only relevant to the workforce, but they also frequently align with the skills most sought after by employers.¹⁰ At the same time, some stereotypes portray veterans as academically inferior.¹¹ However, research shows the opposite: veterans excel in the classroom, pursue increasingly advanced education over time while demonstrating completion rates above the national average and higher than non-veteran adult learners.¹² These successes pay dividends for veterans, employers, and higher education: veterans with degrees are unemployed at lower rates, earn more, they are retained longer by employers, they are loyal and active alumni, and often serve as mentors for the student veterans that follow them.¹³

Second, a related but underexamined point is the influence of the academic environment on the student veteran. Being in the collegiate environment helps ease veteran transition because education introduces veterans to industry-related civilian terminology and jargon they may not be familiar with or exposed to during their military careers.¹⁴ This exposure, in turn, optimizes veterans’ ability to transition into new roles. In addition, college, university, technical, and vocational education expose veterans to a network of civilian mentors, colleagues, and peers, including classmates, professors and instructors, university-based career services, and employer resources, and job search tools that are devoted to preparation for civilian employment.¹⁵

Finally, many veterans report that they attend school to deliberately pursue employment in industries that either complement their prior military roles or are different from their military training entirely.¹⁶ Military service confers numerous business relevant skills that prepare veterans uniquely for the workforce.¹⁷ These same skills also prepare them to succeed academically. Together, education builds upon veterans’ prior skills and provides them with the opportunity to learn industry specific knowledge.

EMPLOYMENT CHALLENGES

Often, the employment challenges veterans describe are a result of difficulties in finding roles that are the right “fit.”¹⁸ This is one area where the connection between student

veterans and employers can be particularly valuable. For example, while veterans often seek education with post-degree employment in mind, they also may have limited information about:

- the civilian workforce or specific industries,
- how to combine their military conferred skills and their education to develop skillsets that prepare them to compete for civilian job opportunities, and
- how to tailor and translate their military resumes to successfully highlight their skills to demonstrate they are competitive for civilian employment opportunities.¹⁹

STUDENT VETERAN SNAPSHOT

Student veterans perform well in academic settings but also differ in several ways from their civilian counterparts in the following areas:

Demographics and Diversity

50%

of student veterans had one or more children and nearly half are/were married

50%

of student veterans using the post-9/11 GI bill are between 25 and 34 of age²⁰

60%

of student veterans are employed, working an average of 35 hours per week²¹



62%

of student veterans are first-generation college attendees²²

39%

of student veterans are adult learners²³

Academic and Performance

▶ **4 in 5**

student veterans attend 4-year public and private institutions²⁴



▶ **3.34 GPA**

cumulative average on a 4.0 scale (compared to 2.94 average student GPA)²⁵

▶ **13 credit hrs**

On average, student veterans take per semester; nearly two-in-three were enrolled as full-time students²⁶

Majors and Completion

▶ **54%**

Student veteran completion rate (compared to 53% nationally)



▶ **63%**

pursue majors not similar to military specialty

▶ **21%**

pursue majors similar, very similar, or the same as military specialty²⁷

Source: The Institute for Veterans and Military Families & The Student Veterans of America. (November 2019). Student Veterans a Valuable Asset to Higher Education. Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY.

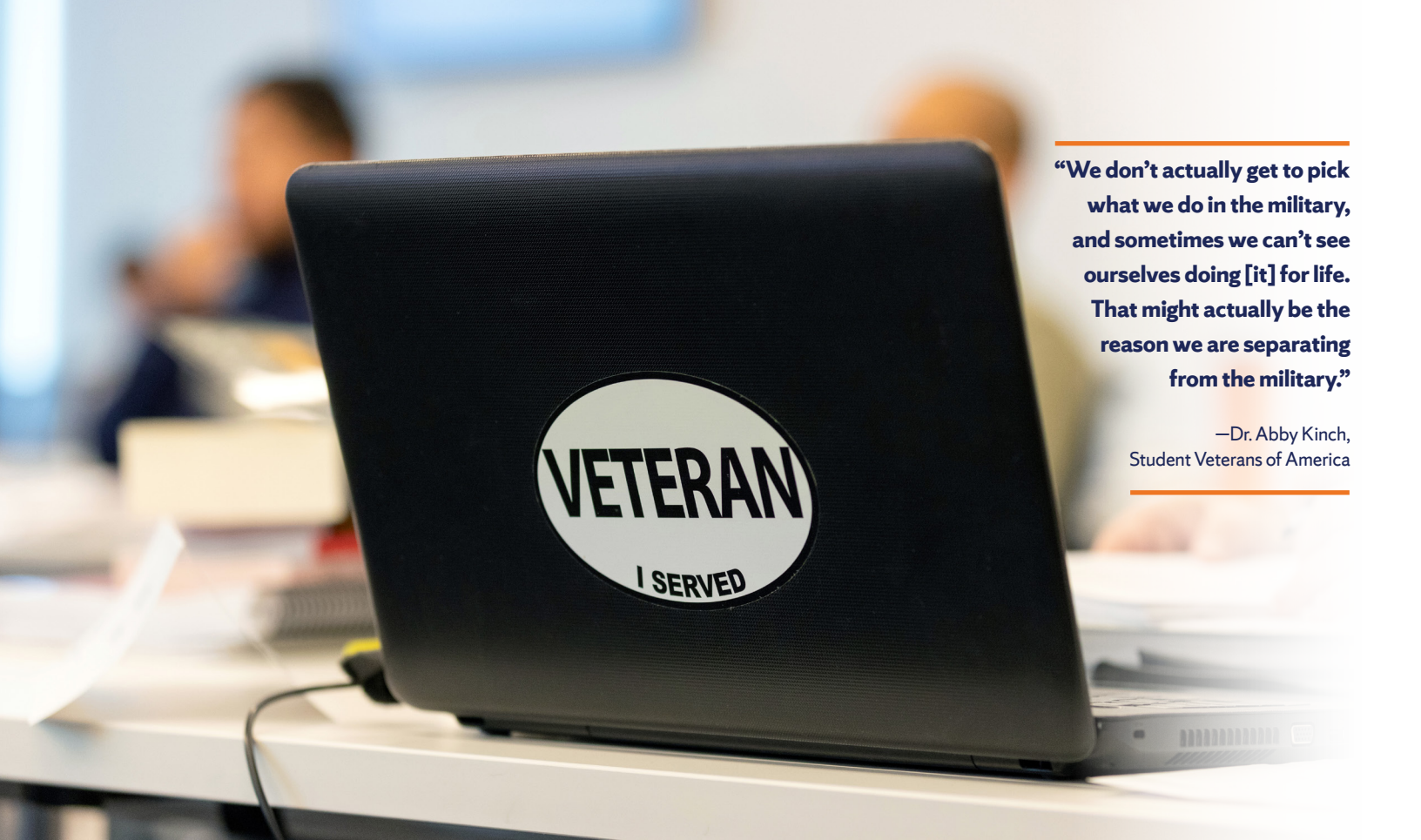
College campuses, particularly those with robust career-preparation services address precisely these issues by providing information, tools, and resources as well as employment related networking opportunities that expose student veterans to career options and opportunities. And, while these resources may benefit student veterans, they often are designed for traditional college students who are likely to be younger and have limited work experience (i.e., entry-level roles). Because student veterans share similarities to other adult learners, they may not avail themselves of these resources or see them as personally relevant unless they are tailored to meet their needs.^{28,29} For example, student veterans are more likely to be older, have families, work full-time, or have significant prior work experience.³⁰ We will provide suggestions to help tailor existing resources to meet the specific needs of student veterans.

HUMAN RESOURCES CHALLENGES

Veterans face one set of challenges but Human Resource (HR) professionals face another: finding qualified job candidates. It would be overly optimistic to conclude that hiring student veterans could instantly address these challenges. However, recruiting student veterans is one way HR can fulfill recruiting goals because student veterans will (1) either have or be in the process of completing a requisite degree, (2) may have desirable prior job experience as well as soft skills that distinguish them from their younger and less experienced civilian counterparts, and (3) are diverse and have a range of experiences that set them apart from other, traditional college graduates.³¹

When HR recruiters were surveyed in a 2020 survey conducted by the Society for Human Resources Management (SHRM), over half of the respondents said that one of the top needs was for resources to strengthen hiring and recruiting veterans.³² Specifically, they found:





“We don’t actually get to pick what we do in the military, and sometimes we can’t see ourselves doing [it] for life. That might actually be the reason we are separating from the military.”

—Dr. Abby Kinch,
Student Veterans of America

WHY RECRUIT STUDENT VETERANS?

PERFORMANCE

Partially, as a consequence of the robust educational benefits afforded by the Forever GI Bill, the Choice Act, and the Yellow Ribbon program, post-9/11 veterans have achieved even higher levels of educational attainment than earlier generations.³⁴ Likewise, they continue to outperform the general student population.³⁵ Postsecondary completion rates for veterans are positive as well. Student veterans complete their postsecondary education (54%) at rates comparable to the national average (53%) and higher than most other adult learners (39%).³⁶

TECHNICAL SKILLS

With regard to employment, the majority of student veterans pursue degrees and subsequent employment that is not directly related to their military specialization.³⁷ But military experience enhances aptitude across a wide variety of technical fields. Two-thirds report that their military specialization or job promoted their interest in STEM-related careers (14%),³⁸ as well as in high-demand areas including business (27%), and health (10%). The anticipated demand for STEM professions will only increase in the coming decades. Thus, recruiting student veterans may be increasingly advantageous for employers seeking candidates with specific training, degrees, or skillsets in these areas.

DIVERSITY

Veterans represent 3 to 4% of the entire student population in U.S. higher education institutions.³⁹ While their numbers are relatively small, research suggests they make an outsized impact through their community involvement as active alumni and through their interactions with other students.⁴⁰ Veterans also represent a range of diversity including age, disability status, marital status, and many are first-generation college students.⁴¹ Women, for example, represent nearly one-third of prior military undergraduates, a number expected to increase over time.⁴² Finally, women and minorities are much more likely to attend school using the GI Bill.⁴³

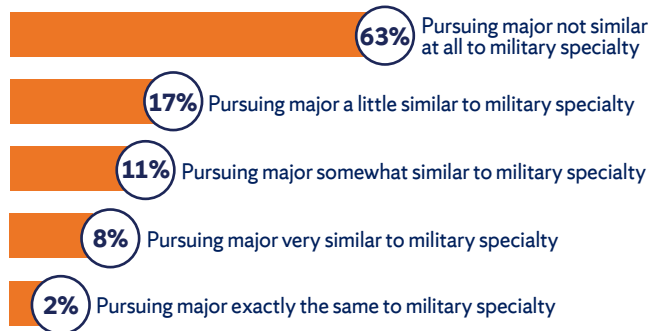


CAREER PREPARATION FOR STUDENT VETERANS

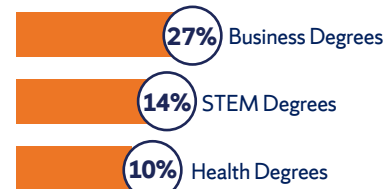
Nearly 2 in 3 student veterans' major or field of study is **DIFFERENT FROM** their military specialization



DEGREE FIELDS



Student veterans earning a degree in high-demand, high-growth fields



▶ **1 in 4**

students veterans stated they enrolled in college or university classes in order to change their career



▶ **1 in 5**

wanted to be more competitive in the job market



Source: The Institute for Veterans and Military Families & The Student Veterans of America. (November 2019).
Student Veterans a Valuable Asset to Higher Education. Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY.



EMPLOYERS

PART 1: EMPLOYERS

Even though student veterans may have unique skillsets that are attractive to employers, recruiters, and talent acquisition professionals, employers may not understand how to pursue veteran job seekers or student veterans in particular.

EMPLOYER BEST PRACTICES

The following strategies are summarized below on our employer interviews.

Develop leadership support for recruiting and hiring veterans. Buy-in from organizational leadership was a key component in connecting with student veterans. Employers indicated that leadership support was necessary to align with overall recruiting across the organization.

Integrate cultural competence training. Interviewees indicated that they combine their recruitment and talent acquisition efforts with ongoing training and education about the military and veteran community including demographics, common skill sets, and how to recruit student veterans specifically with their business strategy in mind. All indicated that their training was ongoing rather than “one and done” trainings.

Align strategy with the business case. Thoughtful, strategic, and proactive approaches to recruiting student veterans were tied to the goals of the organization. Those we interviewed said their goals were explicit so that team members were clear about the reasons for seeking student veteran employees.

Utilize existing resources. Organizations indicated that they combine their veteran recruiting with existing efforts, already in place. This, they said, included human resources, university recruiting, diversity, equity & inclusion (DE&I), or corporate social responsibility efforts. The organizational structure differed from company to company but, in all cases, student veteran recruiting was tied to an existing effort rather than an entirely new initiative.

Nurture key relationships over time. Relationships were considered central to hiring student veterans. Both the employers and student services professionals that we interviewed indicated that the ability to sustain relationships with partners was a key component to helping veterans over time. In other words, lean on SVA and other veteran serving groups that support student veterans.

Mentor and collaborate with other companies and organizations. All of the employers we interviewed participated in various collaborative efforts that included sharing information with peers, including best practices, student veteran job candidates, and successful strategies.

Think strategically about what your company has to offer. This can include non-hiring opportunities such as expertise, advice, mentorship, networking opportunities, resume assistance, or tailored networking opportunities with veteran employee resource group members (ERG).

Communicate intentions. Interviewees told us they found ways to communicate their intentions, internally and externally, through a variety of methods including their websites, job postings, social media, word of mouth, participation in local, regional, and national collaborative efforts, and through their relationships with SVA.

Address barriers. Employers indicated that they were strategic in how they marketed their job opportunities to student veterans, using language that appeals to their experience level (e.g., using the word corporate fellowship instead of internship). Other employers said they offered webinars during events after work hours to ensure veterans could balance competing demands of work, family, and school responsibilities. Some told us they intentionally held events at university career centers to drive student veterans there, sometimes offering food, resume reviews, or mentoring opportunities as incentives.

Think about employment as one of several ways to assist student veterans. Consider connecting with SVA and establishing a relationship to provide programming, mentorship, scholarships, or sponsored networking events. Employers described offering paid internship opportunities that allow veterans to participate in on-the-job training without using their GI Bill benefits (i.e., because some students lose their housing benefits when they are not enrolled full time).

THE BUSINESS CASE FOR HIRING STUDENT VETERANS

How Can Employers Access Student Veterans and Why Would they Want To?

The importance of garnering leadership support and having a clear business case was emphasized by all of our employer interviewees in relation to recruiting student veterans.

Companies offered the following strategic reasons for recruiting student veterans:

- Student veterans are well qualified; they will have their military experience as well as the training and/or degree in a companies' area of interest.
- Veterans have leadership and other soft-skills in addition to the technical skills learned via their degree program, making them highly qualified and competitive for senior roles compared to other recent graduates. This also can support a case for hiring veterans before their degree is complete.
- When student veterans are recruited from strategic geographic locations, they may be more likely to commit to positions in the same region.
- On-the job opportunities such as internships, fellowships, co-ops, and apprenticeships allow the student veteran and the company to assess whether a role is a good fit.
- Enduring relationships between employers, universities, and Student Veterans of America (SVA) chapters, that are nurtured over time create a ready pipeline of job candidates.
- Recruiting from the veteran population aligns with existing diversity, equity, and inclusion goals.
- Recruiting student veterans can dovetail with existing campus recruiting efforts, making efficient use of resources.
- University as well as SVA resources such as job boards, job fairs, along with networking and hiring events can be leveraged to advertise positions to veterans and as other students.
- Employers can recruit student veterans based on their major as well as their military experience allowing them to align the student veteran to specific roles or to make strategic hires.



To learn more about the business case for hiring veterans see

Revisiting the Business Case for Hiring a Veteran

https://ivmf.syracuse.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Revisiting-the-Business-Case_Workforce-Readiness_Executive-Summary.pdf





► HOW TO ENGAGE

Employers said they had developed strategies for engaging with campuses through trial and error, key relationships with people, and through continuous improvement strategies (e.g., trying something and improving it over time based on an assessment as to whether it was successful or not). The following list summarizes employer strategies to engage with students.

START WITH A PLAN

- Think about how you wish to engage with student veterans and come up with a plan, but don't be afraid to revise what isn't working.
- Relationships will take time and effort; be persistent and plan for the long-term.

CONSIDER THE VALUE PROPOSITION

- Consider your why? Why do you want to hire or engage student veterans?
- Think about what you have to offer student veterans on campus and at your organization and what do they have to offer you?
- Determine whether there are schools where your organization already has an existing relationship or footprint that can be leveraged (e.g., some companies already have campus recruiters, planned job fairs, or a university recruiting team or representative).
- Connect student veteran efforts to other existing efforts such as Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DE&I), talent acquisition, or university recruiting.
- Be strategic. Are there certain veterans that are of interest (e.g., certain majors, degree programs, or graduates of specific schools or program because they have needed skillsets)?

CONSIDER TRAINING NEEDS

- Align with your existing efforts including DE&I efforts.
- Utilize your employee resource group (ERG) if you have one. ERG members can serve as mentors or help answer questions from potential candidates.

CONSIDER THE BUSINESS CASE

- Consider where to find the veterans that might be a good fit (e.g., consider geographic location, skillsets, schools that offer specific degrees).
- Build a strategic veteran hiring plan based on the resources devoted to this effort (e.g., people, information, funding, networking opportunities).
- Focus on schools, geography, degree programs, or schools that connect to the business case.
- Identify alumni, especially veterans, in your own network that can help. Leverage your employee resource group if possible.
- Identify which schools serve student veterans and also match your hiring needs.

IDENTIFY ON-CAMPUS POINTS OF CONTACT

- It may take time to cultivate relationships, identify the correct person, or identify meaningful opportunities. Leverage SVA and/or other local or regional coalitions if possible.
- Determine how to connect with veterans on campus (e.g., a newsletter, Facebook group, SVA Chapter, Student Veteran Resource Center).
- Ask about the best way to communicate with student veterans (e.g., social media, webinar, office hours, trainings, and/or networking events).
- Join an existing coalition or consider starting one.
- Look for a local SHRM chapter that is interested in veteran hiring.
- Ask at the university if any local coalitions or groups exist.

SVA CHAPTER

- Connect to existing SVA chapter (or other veteran related organization).
- Identify the leader or other appropriate point of contact.
- Assess what services the local SVA offers, what events they have planned, and how your organization can contribute.
- Ask SVA what your organization can offer (e.g., jobs, mentoring, resume assistance, training, and/or exposure to job opportunities (roles, networking)).

DATA COLLECTION

- Determine how the university collects data on student veterans on campus (e.g., how many, age, major, program, graduation date, employment interest, job experience).
- Ask how you can determine when students are graduating. Which student veterans are seeking employment?

JOB POSTING

- Identify the best way to post jobs that may be of interest to student veterans.
- Determine if there is a LinkedIn page or other social media platforms employers can leverage.
- Ask if there is a specific university software platform that employers can access.

PAY STRUCTURE

- Consider whether your organization has the ability to offer a paid on-the-job opportunity.
- Consider if the opportunities your organization offers are desirable or appropriate for persons with existing job experience.

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

- Ask if the university has a method of communicating with student veterans (is there a newsletter, social media account, or regularly scheduled meeting).
- Ask if the campus has a meeting place for student veterans, and ask if you can access it.
- Leverage existing newsletters or regular events such as hiring fairs.
- Identify special events the campus offers for student veterans that involve employers, and ask if how someone can become involved.

BRANDING AND MESSAGING

- Evaluate your branding and messaging. Ask whether it resonates with student veterans.
- Assess your region, state, and locality to avoid reinventing the wheel, duplicating efforts, and ensure efforts are coordinated.



Do you need training on working with veterans, understanding veteran hiring, or learning more about best-practices

Some of The Society of Human Resource Management's (SHRM) programs and resources include:

- Veterans Ambassador Program
- The SHRM Veterans at Work Certificate Program
- Employing Veterans: Digital Toolkit

<https://www.veteransatwork.org/>



EMPLOYER SPOTLIGHT

Three companies shared innovative student veteran recruiting practices which are highlighted below.

fiserv.

- **Innovative Analyst program** Two-year program with a degree requirement, provides exposure to all aspects of the company. Includes opportunities for participants to compete for full-time roles
- **Ongoing and integrated HR cultural competence training** with clear alignment to business case and DE&I Strategy
- **Strategic relationships with vetted universities** based on location, major and degree programs that align with Fiserv's business mission; strategic focus on "Best for Vets" universities with veteran hiring as a strong business pillar
- **Sponsorship program for associates who go out on military leave longer than 90 days** If they elect to participate in the program, they are assigned a sponsor who stays in touch with them while they are gone, helping to keep them connected while away
- **Scholarship Opportunities** specifically for student veterans
- **Ongoing Student Veteran of America (SVA)** participation and sponsorship of their annual conference; founding member of the SVA's Business and Industry Roundtable, which is relaunching in 2022 (after a pause in 2021 due to COVID-19)
- **Industry Leading Guard/Reserve Leave of Absence Program** which includes: For active-duty orders, 100% pay for 24 months, then a differential pay for 36 months (up to tenure in the company). For training orders, up to 90 days of time off for training with 100% pay for first 19 days, and differential pay beginning on day 20



Newport News Shipbuilding

- **Recruiting efforts are aligned and coordinated with existing University Relations Team.** Connection to state-based workforce development and strategic connections to universities with student veteran populations
- **Training opportunities are marketed** using strategic language to attract veterans "corporate fellowship" vs. "internship"
- **Training for human resource professionals** is ongoing and tied to DE & I organizational efforts
- **Thoughtful approach to the pay-scale for student veterans** who may have prior work experience but not the precise experience in your industry or company
- **Intentional outreach:** Ongoing relationships with SVA lets student veterans know when you are on campus and partnerships with state-based V3 veteran hiring initiative
- **Paid training opportunities** in collaboration with local chamber of commerce



Prudential

- **Strategic relationships with universities** with student veteran presence; focus on finding a fit within the company rather than specific majors or programs; student veteran recruitment strategies are aligned with diversity, equity, and inclusion teams
- **Paid Prudential Student Veteran Internship Program** (name change for branding purposes) allows veterans to make efficient use of their GI Bill Benefits
- **Veterans are paired with office buddies,** providing them with a mentorship opportunity for another veteran employee. Mentorship includes pairing veteran with non-veteran mentors
- **Ongoing relationship with SVA** including sponsorship of annual conference, networking opportunities, job announcements, and provision of employment programming
- **Off-cycle hiring decision** based on exceptional performance during internship experience; decision to hire can be made prior to degree completion if the candidate is a good fit
- **Participation in collaborative organizations** to share best practices



Tip

Student veterans often navigate the challenges of balancing financial responsibilities and the demands of school, family, and employment. Because many student veterans rely on maximizing the benefits offered by the GI Bill, while generous, may not pay for all expenses, (e.g., housing expenses are not paid if a student is not attend school full-time while participating on an internship). Employers and student services professionals indicated that providing opportunities for paid internships, hiring high-performing student veterans prior to graduation, or helping connect students with benefits that cover their expenses (e.g., corporate scholarships or fellowships) while in school were particularly helpful. Student veterans who seek on-the-job experience must balance the costs, benefits, and opportunity of attending school and working.

Source: <https://studentveterans.org/research/sva-census/>.



HIGHER EDUCATION

PART 2: HIGHER EDUCATION

Based on interviews with Syracuse University (SU) as well as several Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs) focused on serving student veterans including SVA, The Warrior Scholar Project (WSP), and several higher education members of the PVEC, we compiled and summarized the best practices and engagement strategies.

HIGHER EDUCATION BEST PRACTICES

Based on the resources available to them, campuses appeared to develop their unique approach to connecting student veterans to employment and career related services.

Some of the common practices we heard from interviewees included:

Establish Buy-In and Leadership Support. Efforts are more successful when there is leadership support. This translates into dedicated resources, buy-in from across the university, and the ability to communicate a clear and consistent external message. Campuses with personnel dedicated to serving student veterans were described as being better equipped to engage with employers, VSOs, and community-based organizations.

Establish a Web Presence and Leverage Social Media. Devote a section on the career services webpage to online resources for student veterans and encourage them to take advantage of career preparation opportunities. A Facebook or LinkedIn group is another great way to share information and engage student veterans. For example, some career centers indicated they use a Facebook page to post the latest information on job/internship postings, career fairs, professional development opportunities, and events.

Engage Internally and Externally. Dedicate someone in career services who ‘gets’ the student veteran. Assign a dedicated staff member with military competency to work within your institution’s career development office. The people we talked to indicated that it was often ideal when that staff member is either a veteran or has some familiarity or interest in the military community.

Leverage Existing Systems to Share Information. Utilize existing resources where possible or adapt existing programs and services to meet the needs of student veterans and employers. This includes resources on campus as well as resources in the community (e.g., community-based services, collaborative efforts, or knowledgeable people). Where possible, leverage your institution’s information management system to track and engage student veterans. The institutions we spoke with all shared challenges with tracking data about their student veterans on campuses. However, they all noted that comprehensive data was needed in order to effectively share information about the student veteran population events and services.



► HOW TO ENGAGE

USE A VARIETY OF ENGAGEMENT METHODS INCLUDING PRINT MATERIALS, WEB-BASED MATERIALS, NEWSLETTERS, AND IN PERSON EVENTS

- Printed collateral (e.g., flyers, handouts, etc.) is another way to engage student veterans. Consider strategically placing collateral at your institution's student veteran lounge, passing it out at student veteran organization meetings, and/or providing it to your VA certifying officials, at networking events, or through other cross-campus constituents who serve veterans. Web-based materials may be the first place veterans and employers will engage with a campus or career services professional so this can also be a particularly important place to identify the services offered, points of contact, and services specific to veterans and employers.

COMMUNICATE AND ENGAGE EARLY AND OFTEN

- Share opportunities and initiatives tailored to the student veteran (e.g., Syracuse University communicates via a weekly student veteran newsletter and uses a listserv dedicated to them). Getting information to them often and in as many forms as possible is key to keeping student veterans engaged and informed about career resources available to them from the time they begin classes until they graduate. In addition, utilize existing veteran related organizations such as the SVA to share information. Several of those we spoke with in higher education also noted that employers sought out their institution because they had been recognized as a "Best for Vets" school, leading to a self-fulfilling prophecy.

DEDICATED HIRING EVENTS

- Hiring events focused on veterans, provides them with tailored face-to-face opportunities to meet with top employers, ask questions, or meet with employees who are veterans themselves.

NETWORKING RECEPTIONS

- Networking receptions provide an opportunity to connect student veterans with interested employers looking to hire them. At these receptions, the student veteran can learn about job opportunities, and explore career pathways as well as internships and mentoring opportunities. Receptions can also help student veterans build their network with industry leaders. Also, consider including employers who have demonstrated a commitment to hiring veterans. Several of the companies we spoke with indicated they were frequent sponsors of student veteran networking receptions.

VETERANS PANEL DISCUSSION

- Panel discussions are an opportunity to feature employer partners who actively recruit at your institution. Hosting the panel discussions are veterans and veteran recruiters from a variety of industries and fields. As part of the discussion, panelists have a chance to share their transition story, information on employment opportunities at their organization, and career advice.

HELP STUDENT VETERANS UNDERSTAND THE RANGE OF ROLES AVAILABLE IN YOUR ORGANIZATION

- For example, if you work for a tech company, there also may be HR, project management, communications, and marketing roles, to name a few.

OFFER EMPLOYER DROP-INS FOR STUDENT VETERANS

- As with traditional drop-ins, employer drop-ins for student veterans provide an opportunity for them to meet one-on-one with employers to discuss an array of topics. Employer-hosted drop-ins also give employers the chance to engage student veterans as part of their organization's veteran recruiting strategy and to connect them with their organization's veteran recruiter. Topics covered in these drop-ins can include resume/cover letter reviews, interview/networking tips, and information about employers and their organization.

DEDICATE FLEXIBLE TIME FOR STUDENT VETERAN DROPS-IN APPOINTMENTS

- Set aside dedicated times for student veterans to address career-related questions and create awareness of drop-in opportunities.

FLEXIBILITY TO FIT STUDENT VETERANS' NEEDS

- Many student veterans may have family commitments preventing them from being able to make day-time appointments. Times scheduled outside of regular office hours or via phone can encourage greater engagement. Talk to student veterans on your campus and find out what their needs are in order to make necessary accommodations.

Source: From "Delivering Effective Career Services to Student Veterans," National Associations of Colleges and Employers by Pluta, J. 2021, March 2. Retrieved from <https://community.nacweb.org/blogs/jennifer-pluta1/2021/02/27/delivering-effective-career-services-to-student-veterans>. Copyright (2021). Jennifer Pluta. Reprinted with Permission.



CAMPUS SPOTLIGHT





Currently, more than 1,000 veteran and military-connected students attend Syracuse University, designated as the 2021 Military Times #3 Best Private Schools for Veterans. Syracuse University has a history of supporting veterans and military-connected students, from its historical promise to educate veterans after World War II to its national presence with the Daniel and Gayle D’Aniello building, home to the National Veterans Resource Center (NVRC).

The NVRC serves as the center of veteran life on campus and includes (1) the Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF), the nation’s first interdisciplinary academic institute focused on veterans and their families, (2) the Office of Veteran and Military Affairs (OVMA), dedicated to supporting veteran and military-connected students, the Office of Veteran Success, Veteran Career Services (VCS), along with Army ROTC and Air Force ROTC.

Exclusively focused on supporting the career pathways of student veterans on campus, VCS at Syracuse University has developed and implemented strategies, programs, and processes tailored to address student veterans’ employment needs.

Below are suggestions and tips from Syracuse University’s VCS including methods they use to deliver programs and resources to their student veterans.

IDEAS FOR VETERAN-FOCUSED EVENTS, PROGRAMS, AND CLASSES

CAREER PREP LUNCHEONS

- Career prep luncheons are designed to deliver information to student veterans to help them become career ready. Topics include resume assistance, navigating career fairs, writing cover letters, applying for positions, and interviewing. Held at the university career center, they also include free lunch.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FRIDAYS

- This professional development series provides student veterans with opportunities to hear subject matter experts speak on an array of topics. University staff and faculty who are veterans, employers, and VSOs come together at a local establishment to host informal discussions. The goal is to support student veterans’ personal and professional development, support a network of peers, and to encourage a supportive veteran community across campus.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT COURSE FOR VETERANS

- This one-credit discussion style career course is designed specifically for student veterans. This class includes partner work, group activities, and lectures. It is designed to help the student veteran communicate interests and goals, and develop in-depth strategies for career decision-making while earning credit.

STUDENT VETERAN CAREER CRASH COURSE

- This one-day, career-focused event consists of a series of workshops delivered by veteran career center employer

partners to prepare student veterans for job recruiting. Held at the beginning of the fall semester, this career intensive class engages both student veterans and employers interested in hiring them. The course covers resume/cover letter writing, brand development, interviewing, internship/job search strategies, and LinkedIn use.

READY SET VET WORKSHOP SERIES

- This condensed, three-part series workshop prepares student veterans for the fall recruiting cycle. The series includes career fair prep, resume writing, and using LinkedIn. The workshops are offered twice a week for three weeks, once in the afternoon and once in the evening to maximize participation.

CAREER IMMERSION TRIP

- Immersion trips help student veterans gain a real-life understanding of the careers, culture, and inner workings of a selected city with opportunities to attend a networking reception to connect with employers/alumni, and take part in group dinners. Hosted by supporters of Syracuse University, these immersion trips give student veterans, an opportunity to take part in employer tours, and also learn about employers that hire and support veterans. Past immersion trips have included multiple-day trips to DC, NYC, and LA.

STUDENT VETERAN RESUME BOOK

- Three times a year, VCS at Syracuse University provides a veteran resume book to more than three hundred employer partners. This book includes the resumes of student veterans who are seeking a job or internship.

Source: From “Delivering Effective Career Services to Student Veterans,” National Associations of Colleges and Employers by Pluta, J. 2021, March 2. Retrieved from <https://community.nacweb.org/blogs/jennifer-pluta1/2021/02/27/delivering-effective-career-services-to-student-veterans>. Copyright (2021). Jennifer Pluta. Reprinted with Permission.



Student Veterans of America (SVA) is a chapter-based organization that student veterans can leverage to connect with one another, to seasoned mentors, as well as interested employers. SVA also provides training opportunities, career and employment resources, leadership opportunities, job boards, programming, and access to employment related mentoring events. SVA provides tailored resources to student veterans and holds an annual national conference as well as regional and local events, scholarship opportunities, job boards, resume assistance, and access to LinkedIn Premium accounts as well as training on how to leverage the LinkedIn platform to develop a professional brand. For employers, SVA can help leverage to the LinkedIn platform to connect with student veteran jobseekers both pre- and post-degree.

SVA has resources for employers as well as student veterans. Employers interested in connecting with student veterans should inquire if that campus has an SVA chapter either on campus or in their regions.

WAYS EMPLOYERS CAN CONNECT WITH SVA INCLUDE:

- Attending meetings, sponsoring targeted programming, sharing resources, and offering mentoring opportunities
- Participating in SVA's National Conference as well as chapter and regional meetings
- Becoming a mentor or offering mentoring opportunities through events such as veteran-focused job fairs, networking events, or programming at local campuses. This also might include connecting student veterans to employee resource group members (ERG) to answer questions or provide career advice
- Offer programming or information about the full range of opportunities at your company or within your industry. SVA offers opportunities for companies to become a program partner, meaning companies can sponsor programs directly to students enabling them to establish relationships and share information
- Providing scholarships or specific training opportunities. Companies can provide scholarships and/or opportunities to gain on-the-job training that gives student veterans exposure to various roles in their company. It also allows the company to determine if a veteran is a good fit for a particular role. (e.g., several employers noted the importance of considering student veterans for employment prior to completion of their degree and several pointed out the value of providing paid opportunities for student veterans)
- Posting jobs opportunities on SVA job board; SVA allows employers to post jobs free of charge
- Connect with local and regional SVA chapters both in-person and via social media—leverage the LinkedIn platform to connect directly to student veterans. Some recruiters described being able to identify student veterans early in their academic career through LinkedIn and eventually hiring them prior to graduation



Photo provided by Student Veterans of America



Photo provided by Student Veterans of America

STUDENT VETERANS OF AMERICA (SVA): A RESOURCE TO CONNECT STUDENT VETERANS ON COLLEGE-CAMPUSES

SVA can help employers connect to student veterans in the following ways:

- help student services connect with student veterans on campus
- leverage relationships with partners to sponsor “flagship” events with interested employers such as resume reviews, mentorship events, veteran-specific job fairs, and learning opportunities
- answer questions about benefits, scholarships, and other opportunities
- leverage national and regional conferences to connect with other employers, mentors, and other student veterans
- provide a connection to career services or other student veterans on campus
- amplify communications to better reach student veterans
- connect student veterans to flagship leadership program to help student veterans lead a chapter
- provide cultural competence training to on-campus-staff
- connect student veterans to other students on campus
- assist campuses in tailoring their services to veteran students through identifying ways to make programming more inclusive, impactful, and accessible
- provide internship, scholarship, mentoring opportunities, and job postings
- connect student veterans with resources to start or improve their LinkedIn account and their online brand



SVA Resources

SVA’s Career Center - Explore career resources and opportunities provided by SVA’S partners.

- Career Board
- Partner Directory
- Business and Industry Roundtable

<https://studentveterans.org/career-center/>

A smiling man with dark hair and a beard, wearing a light-colored button-down shirt and grey trousers, stands with his arms crossed in a modern office. In the background, several other people are seated at wooden tables, working on laptops and tablets. The office has large windows and modern lighting.

COMMUNITY-BASED COALITIONS

PART 3: COMMUNITY-BASED COALITIONS

Community-based organizations can serve as a connector, intermediary, and conduit between higher education institutions, employers, and student veteran job seekers. This research focused on collaborations centered on workforce development and economic opportunity. But in other locations, there may be established collaborations with another emphasis. Where possible, employers and universities should leverage the knowledge of any existing coalitions in their locations of interest. Even if employment is not the central focus of those coalitions, they may have an existing infrastructure in place to support multiple goals, understand the connections available to support veterans in the community, awareness of employers who seek to employ veterans, and have knowledge of the higher education institutions that serve student veterans.

The community-based initiatives included in this project: The Pittsburgh Veteran Employer Coalition (PVEC) and the Virginia Values Veterans (V3) coalitions were selected as examples of collaborations with established connections and relationships between higher education institutions and employers. Each collaboration conveyed a shared understanding of the value proposition for hiring veterans and offered benefits to its participants including, but not limited to, opportunities for cultural competence training, knowledge of who in the community is interested and engaged in hiring veterans, opportunities for building personal relationships, and developing trusted partnerships.

One regional coalition and one state-based coalition was highlighted. The PVEC is a regional coalition with a broad goal of employing veterans in the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania metro area. The V3 is a state-based effort, supported by the Governor of Virginia and is focused on educating and training employers throughout the state on the value of recruiting, hiring, training, and retaining veterans. V3 also connects veterans to service providers to assist them in finding employment resources and opportunities within Virginia.⁴⁴

COMMUNITY BEST PRACTICES

It is worth noting that while the initiatives included here do connect employers and higher education institutions, that is not their primary focus. Thus, the coalitions varied as to how well and how often they made these particular connections. Despite this, both of the representatives we interviewed stated that, through their coalition partnerships, the processes to connect employers, universities, and student veterans has improved. Neither was able to provide specific data, but both provided examples. For instance, both noted that the relationships established, as a result of coalition participation, had appeared to improve members' understanding of how and why employers might connect to higher education. Both coalitions were also able to provide lists of the universities they had engaged with. Finally, both initiatives utilized intermediary workforce development professionals to help facilitate connections to student veterans. For example, each had connections to local or regional Society of Human Resource (SHRM) chapters.

The activities of these initiatives related to student veterans were summarized and fell into five central categories:

CULTIVATE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

- Share job opportunities
- Share and develop on the job-training opportunities
- Respond to supply and demand in the local job market
- Identify local pathways to employment
- Foster and encourage relationships between stakeholders across sectors (e.g., nonprofit, government, higher-education, and private employers)
- Match qualified veterans to local job opportunities through partner organizations
- Provide a value proposition for employers that explains what they gain from participating and what they have to do to be successful

MINIMIZE BARRIERS

- Identify pathways for underrepresented groups and leverage group resources and knowledge of the community
- Provide flexible pathways for all students to access employment opportunities
- Share information relevant to local veterans via the network

SHARE RESOURCES

- Provide a centralized hub for distributing training, updates, and information
- Answer questions and provide expertise and consultation
- Identify successful practices that can be scaled or replicated

IMPROVE COMMUNICATION

- Share and educate participants on common lingo relevant to veterans and military students
- Bring stakeholders together on a regular basis to share information and provide training
- Identify mutual goals
- Share mutually beneficial resources (e.g., local employment data)
- Connect local programs and services to federal programs, benefits, and services

- Develop personal relationships
- Share success stories
- Develop common, shared messaging

COLLECT AND SHARE DATA

- Use data to inform decisions (e.g., where to focus resources, how to improve programming, how to increase engagement)
- Measure performance (e.g., number of veterans hired) and make improvements
- Identify (and minimize) barriers to data collection

► HOW TO ENGAGE

The following table summarizes the student veteran engagement methods used (and not used) by the community initiatives we interviewed:

DO'S & DON'TS FOR STUDENT VETERAN RECRUITING

DO

- ✓ Consider student veterans as potential employees and think beyond military specialization and previous military roles.
- ✓ Establish relationships with key higher education institutions and personnel who have already connected to student veterans on campus.
- ✓ Leverage existing resources as connectors. VSOs, Military Service Organization (MSO), and existing workforce development agencies may have established relationships with student veterans or military-connected personnel on campuses.
- ✓ Consider the language and approach you are using to market your veteran specific efforts and tailor it to the military and veteran population and student veterans specifically. For example, look at wording of job descriptions, website, and collateral material, and consider how to market them to student veteran job candidates.
- ✓ Use engagement strategies that acknowledge that student veterans may have different needs than other traditional students. Remote events or events planned around existing class schedules can attract more attendees.
- ✓ Leverage community-based resources and existing networks that connect student veterans to employers (e.g., workforce development programs, community coalitions, veteran-serving organizations, LinkedIn, and SHRM).

DON'T

- ✗ Rule out potential student veteran hires because they have not graduated. Consider off-cycle hiring, fellowships, or on-the-job training opportunities.
- ✗ Expect relationships with on-campus resources to form overnight. They take time, nurturing, and ongoing attention.
- ✗ Forget to leverage Student Veterans of America (SVA) and other supportive organizations. Many have chapters and infrastructures already established on campuses and they can help employers to connect to current students and those seeking employment.
- ✗ Forget that student veterans often have competing demands, and many are working while attending school. Many have prior (and current) work experience.
- ✗ Plan events where and when student veterans are unlikely to attend.
- ✗ Forget that many veterans are working full time jobs while they attend school, have families, and outside responsibilities.
- ✗ Work in silos or duplicate efforts. Share information, resources, and collateral to support overlapping efforts.

COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

We highlight the practices of two initiatives as examples: The PVEC (Pittsburgh) and V3 (Virginia). Both initiatives have a broad employment focus, but for the purposes of this paper we specifically explored their efforts to connect employers and higher education.





The Pittsburgh Veteran Employer Coalition (PVEC)⁴⁰ was formed in Pittsburgh, PA in 2017 through the Heinz Endowment.⁴⁵ Pittsburgh has an estimated 50,000 post-9/11 veterans and military-connected families. PVEC's goals are threefold: (1) connect veterans to corporate-sector employment opportunities based on their skills and experience, (2) recruit active-duty personnel prior to exiting the military, and (3) encourage employment retention and data-based benchmarking through collaborative data sharing.

MISSION

Led by a steering committee of their peers, local employers across industries, alongside support of the Heinz Endowments and Syracuse University's Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF), have gathered regularly to collaborate, share best practices to recruit and hire veteran and military spouse talent, maximize the value of veterans in the workplace, and leverage Pittsburgh's higher education institutions. The goal is to develop a robust military talent pipeline into the greater Pittsburgh community.

Connecting employers with student veterans is one of several strategies used by the PVEC to encourage veteran hiring. There are over 20 academic institutions that participate in the PVEC. This initiative is also connected to higher education collaborative called the western PA academic alliance (WPVAA), a partnership of academic institutions across the Western Pennsylvania region. WPVAA is committed to enriching the military affiliated student experience as they work towards achieving their educational goals. The participating institutions vary significantly in their level of participation in the PVEC.

ACTIVITIES TO CONNECTING HIGHER EDUCATION AND STUDENT VETERANS

RESOURCE SHARING

Sharing PVEC's mission to employ and serve veterans and military families, the IVMF currently offers two programs for veterans in Pittsburgh—PAServes and Onward to Opportunity (O2O). PAServes is the Greater Pittsburgh branch of the IVMF's AmericaServes network of coordinated care, connecting military veterans, service members and their families with resources specific to their unique needs, while O2O provides career preparedness training for service members leaving the military, veterans, and military spouses.^{*}

EXPOSURE TO VETERAN TALENT PIPELINES

The PVEC network includes universities within the greater Pittsburgh community and works to identify organizations with like-minded values who may have employment opportunities for veterans, including but not limited to businesses, academia, non-profit groups, and government organizations. The PVEC also established personal connections between employers and universities who can share information, qualified job candidates, and open positions. Approximately 60 businesses and 20 academic institutions participated in the PVEC in 2019-2020.

CANDIDATE SHARING

Recruiters recognize they can't hire every candidate, but they can share good candidates with other companies where there might be a good fit. The PVEC found that participating in a coalition helps recruiters establish connections with other interested employers.

CULTURAL COMPETENCE TRAINING AND EXPOSURE TO ISSUES RELEVANT TO RECRUITING STUDENT VETERANS.

The employers we interviewed indicated that their involvement in the PVEC has provided them with information about veteran job candidates, how to recruit on college campuses, which campuses have job-seeking veterans in fields or areas of interest, best practices for recruiting on campus, and veteran and military-connected networking opportunities. This is a value proposition for why recruiting student veterans is worthwhile, and an inclusive forum to answer questions.

DATA SHARING

While data sharing is one of the explicit goals of the PVEC, several members indicated that this has been a challenge for the group. Some members noted that significant data sharing had not yet occurred, but noted that this was a future goal.

^{*}AmericaServes provides veterans, transitioning service members, and their families access to a simple and effective ways to access and navigate a range of supportive services in their communities. O2O is a career skills program that provides civilian career training, professional certifications, and employment services support to transitioning service members, members of the Reserves or National Guard, veterans, and military spouses. To learn more about AmericaServes and O2O, see: <https://ivmf.syracuse.edu/apply/our-programs/>





Started in 2010, the V3 program is an initiative of the Governor of Virginia, is an official Commonwealth of Virginia program, authorized under the Code of Virginia (§ 2.2-2001.2).⁴⁶

MISSION

Among other things, V3 provides training and certification to Virginia employers on the value of hiring and retaining veterans. V3- Certified companies work with the Department of Veterans Services as well as other strategic partners to support Virginia's Veterans.⁴⁷ The program is a free training and certification program for employers to help them implement nationally recognized best practices in employment, covering recruiting, hiring, and how to retain veterans as employees. As of the time of this publication, the V3 program reported it had certified more than 1,500 companies and hired close to 89,000 veterans.⁴⁸

ACTIVITIES RELATED TO CONNECTING HIGHER EDUCATION AND STUDENT VETERANS

CULTURAL COMPETENCE TRAINING

The V3 program provides opportunities for all the state institutions of higher education to become V3 certified. The person we spoke with indicated that when V3 was originally conceptualized, the intent of the program, was that all state funded institutions become certified. The V3 Program not only aims to educate and train companies on why it is a good business decision to recruit, hire, train, and retain veterans, but also helps those committed companies meet their hiring goals.

REMINDING VETERANS AND EMPLOYERS THE VALUE OF EDUCATION

Education is a factor that helps student veterans and those who have graduated stand out to employers. That said, V3 also helps employers connect education to the skills that veterans learn from the military and why those skills help veterans stand out to employers (i.e., resiliency, leadership skills, as you grow through the ranks you get training on leadership and that is built on the whole process- built into the culture every day).

CONNECTING EMPLOYERS TO UNIVERSITY-BASED CAREER SERVICES

The V3 transition program complements student veterans education by helping them get "job-ready." For example, they provide training for veterans, but also connect employers to student services at local universities as well as SVA chapters at state schools. Finally, V3 can assist employers by tapping into their state's network of schools and career services professionals to facilitate connections between student veterans and potential employers.

Regional V3 representatives also encourage employers as well as universities to connect to V3 and complete the certification process. Once employers are certified, they can be connected with universities

and other educational institutions (e.g., community colleges) throughout Virginia. Our interviewee noted: "V3 can connect our employers with those career services within the higher education organizations as a pipeline to student veterans to employers." These connections also can include other community-based connections that support veteran hiring. He also noted that the strength of connections to universities based career services was often dependent on the the school itself, the training of particular staff, and in some cases the alumni connections V3 has with the school.

PROVIDING A VALUE PROPOSITION

Started by the governor as an economic development initiative as opposed to a jobs-program, the Department of Veterans Services intentionally conveyed to Virginia's employers that Veterans were well-educated, skilled, and possessed leadership skills and through hiring veterans, businesses could increase the productivity and efficiency of their workforce.

The V3 connects veterans to a wide range of industries across Virginia, including both small and large businesses. V3 companies demonstrated they value veterans through completion of the V3 certification, and have made a public commitment to hire veterans into their workforce. Employers demonstrate the value they see in hiring veterans when they complete the training.

The state of Virginia sees hiring veterans as a value to employers and value to the state. For instance, our interviewee indicated that by keeping veterans employed in Virginia, the tax revenue for the state increases due to the income tax veterans pay. Virginia sees economic value to the V3 program, because there is revenue tied to the number of transitioning veterans employed in Virginia. That is why, he said, he believes the program has continued and will remain sustainable.

HIGHLIGHTING SUCCESS STORIES TO HELP EMPLOYERS OVERCOME OBSTACLES

One aspect of V3's mission is to highlight success stories about how V3-certified companies can overcome obstacles to support veteran employees. The program shares stories of business's recruiting, hiring, training, or re-training processes that contribute to veteran and employer success. Similarly, the V3 training provides access to a network that allows employers to ask questions or receive help if they encounter problems.



To learn more about the Virginia Values Veteran (V3) initiative see: <https://dvsv3.com/>

Source: Adapted from Virginia Values Veterans. Retrieved from <https://dvsv3.com/>

■ SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

As we have shown here, student veterans are uniquely positioned to succeed during their higher education and afterwards.⁴⁹ The soft skills they develop in the military combined with their education are a strong asset to employers. But, in the business world, veteran skillsets may be overlooked due to a lack of awareness, stereotypes, or misunderstandings about how student veterans' military skills transfer to civilian work, the absence of knowledge about the value veterans bring, or because leadership fails to make veterans hiring a priority.⁵⁰ Higher education provides a bridge and a pathway to employment after leaving the military. However, as was reaffirmed throughout this report, that pathway could be strengthened with more intentional connections between higher education institutions and employers.

Moreover, we know that those pathways make a difference. In 2019, the unemployment rate for post-9/11 veterans was lower than that of civilians, reaching an all-time low of 3.1 percent. Partially, as a result of efforts similar to those we recommended here, the unemployment rate for veterans has declined over time. These positive trends are notable because the private sector demonstrated an enduring commitment to hiring veterans through successful, proactive, and coordinated efforts. However, while veteran unemployment numbers have improved, service members transitions will continue, and, as such, concerns about post-military employment will not cease.

Last, because veterans pursue education as one way to mitigate employment concerns, we recommend a variety of practices, services, and supports that can be implemented by both employers and higher education institutions to benefit both the veteran as well as those hiring them. The purpose of this guide was to capture and share some of the successful student veteran programs along with best practices for recruiting, retention, resourcing, graduation, and creation of employment pathways into the workforce. Higher education institutions, employers, and HR professionals may lack broad awareness of the advantages of recruiting veteran students, and how to engage to implement a purposeful strategy. Nevertheless, just as the case has been made for the direct employment of veterans in the workforce a decade ago, this awareness can be improved through intentional coordination and proactive effort from employers and higher education institutions.

NOTES

RESOURCES FOR EMPLOYERS AND UNIVERSITIES

Below are just some of the many resources available to help connect employers and universities hire more student veterans.

HIRE HEROES USA

This resource allows employers to post open positions to a job board comprised of verified veterans, or military spouses. Employers can complete training on veteran hiring and retention, discuss career opportunities with veteran and military spouse job seekers, sponsor an event to improve brand exposure, or receive prescreened resumes directly to their inbox.

NATIONAL VETERAN EDUCATION SUCCESS TRACKER: A PROMOTIONAL TOOLKIT FOR SVA CHAPTER LEADERS

This toolkit includes: talking points, fact sheets, sample social media posts and guidelines, media list tips, a customizable press release, and pitch, along with sample emails for chapter members, school presidents, partner organizations, as well as suggested events.

PSYCHARMOR ONLINE COURSES FOR EMPLOYERS WHO INVEST IN MILITARY TALENT

Psycharmor provides a variety of free web-based trainings to employers interested in learning more about the value of hiring veterans.

TRANSLATING VETERAN TRAINING INTO CIVILIAN JOB SKILLS

This resource, developed by RAND, helps provide examples of how to translate terminology to civilian workplace skills.

ESSENTIAL NONTECHNICAL SKILLS SERVICE MEMBERS GAIN DURING ON-THE-JOB EXPERIENCE: A RESOURCE FOR VETERANS AND TRANSITIONING SERVICE MEMBERS

This resource, developed by RAND, helps veterans and transitioning service members communicate to civilian employers about the skills they have developed during their time in the military, helps veterans tailor their resumes, and better translate their military experience into relevant civilian skills.

SHRM FOUNDATION'S VETERANS AT WORK CERTIFICATE PROGRAM

The Veterans at Work Certificate program—developed for HR professionals, hiring managers and front-line supervisors—is a program from the SHRM Foundation and is designed to provide actionable knowledge and tools needed to attract, hire and retain veterans and members of the military community in the workplace. The Certificate program is completely free, and you do not need to be a SHRM member or hold a SHRM credential to engage with the content, take the course, and earn the Veterans at Work certificate.

STUDENT VETERANS OF AMERICA: OPPORTUNITIES FOR EMPLOYERS

Participation in SVA's Leadership Continuum Programming

Provide training to lead, build, and grow SVA chapters through professional network and skills development and employment opportunities aligned to student veterans' career aspirations.

Business and Industry Roundtable Participation

Partner with SVA and commit to hiring student veterans by building relationships with the SVA Chapter network through education, mentorship, and career development.

National Conference Sponsorship

SVA's annual National Conference (NatCon) is the "largest annual gathering of student veterans in the world. Employers can engage with student veterans and military-connected talent.

VETERATI

The Veterati Mentorship Platform allows veterans to choose their own mentors and (as many as they would like). Employers can chat via phone on a monthly basis with veteran and military spouse mentees.

VA WORK STUDY PROGRAM

Learn about the VA's veterans work-study program and how it can help student veterans earn money while enrolled in a college, a vocational school, or professional training program.

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About Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF)

Syracuse University's Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF) is the first national institute in higher education singularly focused on advancing the lives of the nation's military, veterans, and their families. Through its professional staff and experts, and with the support of founding partner JPMorgan Chase Co., the IVMF delivers leading programs in career and entrepreneurship education and training, while also conducting actionable research, policy analysis, and program evaluations. The IVMF also supports veterans and their families, once they transition back into civilian life, as they navigate the maze of social services in their communities, enhancing access to this care working side-by-side with local providers across the country. The Institute is committed to advancing the post-service lives of those who have served in America's armed forces and their families. **For more information, please visit ivmf.syracuse.com.**

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