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## SUPPORTING FIRST-YEAR VETERAN STUDENTS' TRANSITION TO COLLEGE

Willene Boyd

wboyd4@students.kennesaw.edu

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**SUPPORTING FIRST-YEAR VETERAN STUDENTS' TRANSITION TO COLLEGE**

BY

WILLENE "LISA" BOYD

A Thesis

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for the

Degree of

Master's of Science in First-Year Studies

Faculty of First-Year and Transition Studies

Accepted by:

Dr. Ruth Goldfine, Committee Chair

Dr. Linda M. Lyons, Committee Member

Professor Natasha Habers, Committee Member

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Kennesaw State University

Fall 2019

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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study was to determine if Georgia State University is meeting the needs of its first-year veteran student population and providing an effective level of support to these students with their transition to college. Georgia State University is committed to supporting veteran students by offering three veteran student support programs, Military Outreach Centers on each campus, Veteran Upward Bound, and the Student Veteran Association program. This study reviewed these current services provided to veteran students to determine whether those services are effective in supporting veterans with making a smooth transition to college as a first-year student. The research question for this study is, “Does Georgia State University provide sufficient support for veterans transitioning from the Military to the Classroom?”; which directly relates to the current services and the services that are needed at Georgia State University. The data was collected through face-to-face interviews with veteran students who have experienced the transition from the military to the Georgia State University college campus. The collected data was analyzed by comparing the interview answers provided by veteran students for commonalities and beliefs. The study proved that the current veteran student support programs are effective in helping first-year veteran students transition to Georgia State University. However, based on the results of the participant interviews, more programs are needed to fully meet the needs of first-year veteran students.

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

A veteran is defined as a person who has served actively in the military and has been discharged. The number of veteran students on college campuses continues to rise, and this increase brings to campus special challenges that some first-year veteran students face when transitioning from the military to the college. Once a veteran student leaves the military, the transition to a civilian community such as a college campus is quite a different adjustment than adapting to a new military assignment or military classroom because the student must create a new type of social community with others that may not share the same military beliefs of duty, honor, faith and allegiance. The transition to the college campus can be specially challenging if the veteran has suffered psychological or physical injuries. Some first-year veteran students may suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or have a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) as well as depression, anxiety and even anger issues and these conditions can make attending college a challenge. A TBI may cause cognitive deficits and, if first-year veteran students experience cognitive deficits, they may feel embarrassed, and this is something not easily shared with a traditional first-year college student right out of high school. Because of the unique challenges faced by first-year veteran students transitioning from the military to colleges, veteran support programs have become common on college campuses and studies have shown it is necessary for colleges and universities to offer specialized programs to aid veterans with their transition to college. These programs include specialized orientation programs, military outreach centers, veteran association organizations, veteran academic advising, and specialized veteran training for faculty and staff who work with and teach first-year veteran students.

The federal government awards eligible veteran education benefits to cover or offset the cost of attending college and most veteran students use VA educational benefits and financial aid

to cover their college tuition. The U. S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2011-2012) revealed that 89% of veterans applied for financial aid, and of those, 85% received financial aid. Of the financial aid received, 59% was in the form of veteran education benefits, and \$9,900 was the average amount veteran students received in financial aid. Part of helping first-year veteran students make a smooth transition from the military to college is ensuring these students have the information they need to apply for VA education benefits and get started at college. Georgia State University has specific guidelines and instructions on how veterans using VA educational benefits initiate the usage of these benefits. It is possible that first-year veteran students may not receive information pertinent to their unique educational and financial needs if they attend a traditional new student orientation session. This is yet another reason first-year veteran support programs, such as an orientation session specifically for first-year veteran students is necessary to help veteran students transition to college.

The purpose of this study was to determine whether Georgia State University is meeting the needs of its first-year veteran student population and providing an effective level of support to these students with their transition to college. The anticipated benefit of the research is to improve support programs for first-year veteran students.

### **Statement of the Problem**

First-year veteran students need help transitioning from the military to their new college environment. This transition not only includes adjusting to a new civilian college environment, but it also includes knowing how to fund their education using VA education benefits and other financial aid. For example, a first-year veteran student may apply and receive different types of financial aid, such as federal student loans and the HOPE scholarship. Veterans may also apply for and receive outside scholarships and sometimes these scholarships have restrictions such as

covering tuition and fees only. A first-year veteran student receiving scholarships and other federal financial aid needs to know how receiving these funds could impact their benefits, so it is important these students receive information pertinent to their specific educational and financial needs. The most common problem that a first-year veteran student may face is receiving Post 9/11 VA education benefits when they have been granted an outside scholarship that covers tuition and fees only. When a student is receiving Post 9/11 VA education benefits and a scholarship designed to cover tuition and fees only, the Post 9/11 benefits will only cover any remaining balance not covered by the scholarship. A first-year veteran student is usually unaware of this stipulation and may expect to receive a refund after the scholarship and the Post 9/11 VA payment have been applied to their account. Colleges can only submit a request to the VA to cover tuition and fees for the net cost of in-state tuition and fees after the application of any waiver, scholarship, or assistance the first-year veteran student has received (other than federal student loans and the Pell grant). VA benefits are provided directly to the institution and are specifically designated for the sole purpose of defraying tuition and fees (U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2019). Sixty-five percent of the veteran students using VA education benefits at Georgia State University are using Post 9/11 benefits and this is approximately 700 students each semester. At least 40% of these students have applied and received some type of financial aid in addition to those Post 9/11 benefits.

Veteran students need to know where to go to get this VA specific financial aid information. They also need to know where to go if they have questions about the resources available to veteran students on the college campus such as counseling services and all veteran student support groups if they suffer from PTSD or have a TBI. PTSD is a mental health issue that can have an effect on academics as well as on the ability of first-year veteran students to

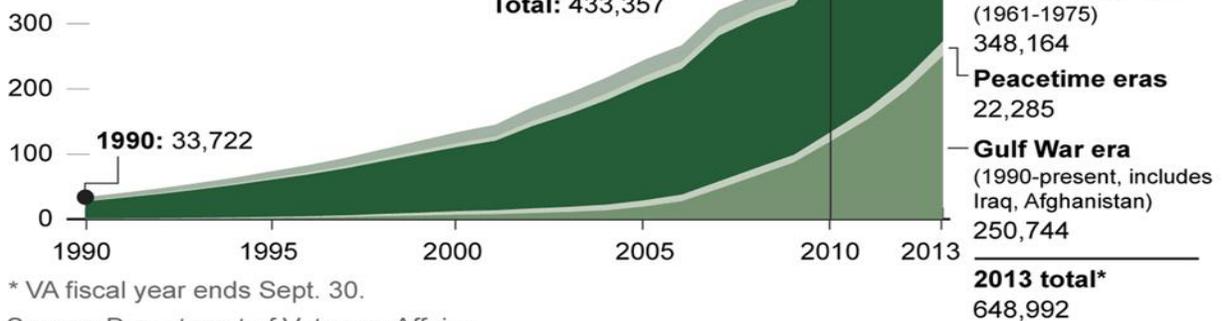
establish a new social environment. Figure 1 below shows just how much PTSD is on the rise, based on an August 2014 *Los Angeles Times* report (Alan Zarembo, 2014), so it is important that Georgia State University take this mental health issue into consideration when creating programs for veteran students. Some of the major hallmarks of veterans with PTSD are problems with cognitive skills, judgment, and concentration/memory; difficulty coping under pressure; difficulty interacting with others and responding appropriately to social cues; problems with authority figures; problems with negative and constructive feedback; and unpredictable absences (Church, 2009).

## A steep rise in PTSD

The number of veterans on the disability rolls for post-traumatic stress disorder has nearly quintupled since 2000.

### PTSD disability cases

(In thousands)



\* VA fiscal year ends Sept. 30.

Source: Department of Veterans Affairs.

Graphics reporting by Alan Zarembo

Thomas Suh Lauder / @latimesgraphics

Figure 1. A Steep Rise in PTSD (Zarembo, 2014 August 4).

Literature has shown an increase in the number of universities providing support services for first-year veteran students. This includes dedicated spaces and offices where veteran students can start building their new social network with other students who may share some of the same experiences. This type of dedicated space may help first-year veteran students gain a sense of belonging. Many veterans have spoken about the sense of alienation they feel upon beginning

classes and often allude to feeling confused and overwhelmed during their first term because they aren't sure where to turn for assistance (O'Herrin, 2011). Having dedicated spaces and clearly defined support services for first-year veteran students is crucial for helping these students transition smoothly to the college campus.

For veterans with mTBI—mild traumatic brain injury—there are complicating factors related to the service environments, specific assessments, and the transition from military to civilian life and this transition can be intense; affecting all facets of life, such as social interactions, personal relationships, and vocational demands which requires new learning and may exert increased cognitive demands resulting in a more pronounced presentation of subtle symptoms (Gallagher & Azuma, 2018). When first-year veteran students start to experience cognitive deficits because of a mTBI or for other reasons, colleges need to be prepared with support services such as counseling, tutoring, and knowledge of outside resources to help veteran students address their challenges and succeed academically.

### **Background and Need**

In 2013, over 1,000,000 veteran students were using Government Issue (GI) benefits to pursue advanced educational opportunities, with 79% of those veteran students using GI benefits to attend public schools and the remaining 21% equally split between non-profit private schools and proprietary schools (VA Campus Toolkit, n.d.). As of 2015, more than 2.7 million post-9/11 veterans had returned from active duty and in Fiscal Year 2016, about 790,000 veterans received education benefits under the Post-9/11 GI Bill with a total payment of US \$11.6 billion (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2017). There has been a steady climb in the number of veteran students on college campuses and these increased numbers have created the need for specific support programs to serve this population of students. More than five million post-9/11 service

members are expected to transition out of the military by 2020, and since the enactment of the Post-9/11 GI Bill in 2008, Americans have invested more than \$42 billion on educating many of these transitioning service members (American Council on Education, 2015). However, the needs and characteristics of this growing student population are still not completely understood by colleges and universities.

First-year veteran students are not strangers to training or classrooms, but military classrooms are usually more structured with a rigid hierarchy. This structure and hierarchy are typically not present in classrooms outside of the military. Consequently, veteran students reported difficulties transitioning from a military style of technical learning and a hierarchical organizational structure to a university learning environment (Postsecondary National Policy Institute, 2018). In 2016, more than 340,000 veterans completed a postsecondary degree or certificate, and in 2015, 44% of veteran students enrolled in bachelor's degree programs, and 54% enrolled in associate degree programs or certificate programs. Of these, 79% attended public schools, and 21% attended nonprofit private schools or proprietary institutions (Postsecondary National Policy Institute, 2018). This increase in the veteran student population cannot be ignored by colleges and universities and with the increasing number of veterans comes the responsibility of ensuring college campuses are prepared to help first-year veteran students transition successfully to college. Some of the difficulties first-year veteran students can experience are; connecting socially, dealing with post-traumatic stress, coping with feelings of isolation, and difficulty developing an identity as a first-year civilian student. These difficulties may be enhanced if the veteran student has a traumatic brain injury. Persons with TBIs can experience challenges with perceiving and using feedback and social cues, resulting in socially

inappropriate behavior and a feeling of not fitting in (Carulli, Degeneffe, Olney & Conrad, 2018).

While in the military, veteran students were accustomed to changing duty stations and relocating their families all over the world. This was usually a smooth transition because when service members and their families moved, they were moving to another military community that shared similar military backgrounds. Once service members leave the military, they find that the transition to a civilian community is quite a different adjustment because they must now create a new type of social community that may not share the same military beliefs or culture. Consequently, veterans may have difficulties with their transitions and not be able to adjust to the civilian culture in which they find themselves (Ainspan, Penk, & Kearney, 2018). The transition from the military classroom to the civilian classroom is yet another transition that requires the veteran student to acclimate into a new social environment that has students straight out of high school who are likely significantly younger than the veteran. Veterans who are accustomed to military orderliness and respect get frustrated when younger classmates goof off (Giffey, 2012). Additionally, a student who just graduated from high school may not recognize the inappropriateness of asking a veteran student about the experience of being in combat. These types of questions could bring back memories a veteran may not want to discuss and may cause the veteran to be very uncomfortable. Furthermore, social interactions in the classroom are important in helping students to establish a sense of belonging among their classmates and their institution. Strayhorn (2012) defined a sense of belonging as students' perceived social support on campus, a feeling of sensation of connectedness, the experience of mattering or feeling cared about, accepted, respected, valued by, and important to the group (e.g., campus community) or others on campus (e.g., faculty, peers; p. 3).

Veteran students may find it difficult to interact with younger students who do not share the same life experiences due in part to intrusive questions on the part of their civilian peers, who may convey little knowledge or concern about the current conflicts overseas, ask inappropriate questions (e.g., if the veteran killed someone while deployed), or express a lack of military appreciation (e.g., lack of observance of Veterans Day) (Borsari, Yurasek, Miller, Murphy, McDevitt-Murphy, Martens, & Carey, 2017). In at least one qualitative study, veterans reported that the transition from active warrior to college student was the most difficult aspect of the overall adjustment to civilian life (Ackerman, DiRamio, & Mitchell, 2009).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to determine whether Georgia State University is meeting the needs of its veteran student population and providing an effective level of support to first-year veteran students with their transition to college. The anticipated benefits of the research are to improve first-year support programs for veteran students in college. Georgia State University is committed to supporting veteran students by offering three veteran student support programs: Military Outreach Center, Veteran Upward Bound, and the Student Veteran Association program. This study reviewed the current services provided to veterans at Georgia State University to determine whether those services are sufficient in helping veterans make a smooth transition to college as first-year students.

### **Research Questions**

The research question driving this study is, “Does Georgia State University provide sufficient support for veterans transitioning from the Military to the Classroom?” To answer this

question, the current services at Georgia State University will be examined and needed services will be identified.

### **Current First-Year Veteran Student Programs Offered**

#### **Military Outreach Center**

The Military Outreach Center at Georgia State University is in place to guide first-year veteran students in the right direction for all their needs related to admissions, financial aid, scholarships, student advisement, counseling, disability services, and testing. Veteran students are also able to get information about resources outside of the institution, such as veteran groups and counseling. The Military Outreach Center provides first-year veteran students the opportunity to meet other veteran students in a military-friendly environment.

#### **Veteran Upward Bound Program**

Georgia State University offers a free Upward Bound Program for veteran students to help them transition more successfully from the military to the college campus. This program is one of eight federal TRIO programs and what makes this program unique is that it is a pre-college program designed to help first-year veteran students strengthen their academic skills prior to college acceptance so they are better prepared for postsecondary education. The Upward Bound Program helps veteran students with basic computer skills, academic planning, psychological and mental health referrals, career exploration, and strengthening their math, English, and science skills.

### **Student Veteran Association**

The Student Veteran Association at Georgia State University was developed to help veteran students with their transition from the military to college life. There are more than 1500 veteran students on campus, and the association gives them a social environment of their peers, a support system for their studies, and help building a social network in their new civilian environment. Veteran students not only have the opportunity to build a network of support while attending college by joining the Veteran Association Organization, but hopefully this support will also continue after the student has graduated from college.

### **Disability Services and Counseling**

Georgia State University does not have counseling services designated specifically for veteran students. However, the Counseling and Testing Center does see veteran students and help them get organized with school work while balancing emotional pain. They help the veteran student population deal with their new social environment and help them with developing techniques to adjust to their new civilian world. They also work on helping the veteran students with problem-solving skills, dealing with depression, stress, anxiety, and even substance abuse. Veteran students may also receive accommodations for testing such as extra time and technology who have been diagnosed with physical and mental disabilities.

### **Significance to the Field**

The short-term benefits gained from this research include determining which first-year veteran-student programs are successful at Georgia State University, the types of programs that need to be developed, and which first-year veteran-student programs need to be revised. The long-term benefits of this research are the ability to assist future first-year veteran students in

smoothly transitioning from the military to the college campus. Introducing first-year veteran students to military-friendly offices and campus veteran organizations may give veteran students greater confidence and connect them with the resources they need to be successful. Knowing where to go to meet people that may share some of the same experiences can help first-year veteran students feel less alienated.

### **Definition of Relevant Terms**

The following terms are key terms used in this study.

**American Council on Education (ACE):** The major coordinating body for the nation's colleges and universities, is a membership organization that mobilizes the higher education community to shape effective public policy and foster innovative, high-quality practice.

**mTBI:** Mild traumatic brain injury (mTBI), or concussion, is the most common type of traumatic brain injury with symptoms that include headaches, fatigue, depression, anxiety and irritability, as well as impaired cognitive function (McInnes, Friesen, MacKenzie, Westwood, & Boe, 2017).

**PTSD:** Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is a mental health problem that some people develop after experiencing or witnessing a life-threatening event, like combat, a natural disaster, a car accident, or sexual assault (U. S. Department of Veteran Affairs, 2019).

**TBI:** Traumatic Brain Injury is a disruption in the normal function of the brain that can be caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head, or by a penetrating head injury.

**Veteran:** Title 38 of the Code of Federal Regulations defines a veteran as a person who served in the active military, naval, or air service and who was discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable (VA.org, 2019).

### **Limitations**

The limitations that may affect the validity of this study are the number of available participants compared to the number of veteran students on campus, participant psychological health, outside pressures of home life, very little available research data, or limited prior research on the topic. Some veteran students may not wish to self-identify as a veteran and this also affects the number of available participants. Limitations also included the lack of support from the Georgia State University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB at GSU placed limitations on how students were recruited advising not to send mass emails to veteran students or posting flyers on the college campus. Access to veteran students was also limited to the one campus instead all six campuses.

There are approximately 1,500 veteran students at Georgia State University, yet only 15 of those participated in the study. The 15 study participants represented less than 1% of the total veteran student population. Such a small sampling of the total veteran student population does not allow for confidence in asserting that the findings of the study are representative of all veteran students at the institution. Thus, the small sample size is a limitation of the research study.

Participants' psychological changes as a result of military experience or combat and the transition from the military to college could have an effect on participant responses. Some veterans have depression, anxiety and even anger issues that may have contributed to an

unsuccessful transition to college. Attrition may have threatened the research if participants decided the transition to college process was weakened by outside home life pressures such as family obligations and lack of support programs on the college campus.

In 2009, there were approximately 500,000 veteran students receiving VA education benefits; in 2013, over 1,000,000 student veterans were using Government Issue (GI) benefits to pursue advanced educational opportunities. This increase is most likely due to the enactment of the Post 9/11 GI Bill in 2008. The Post 9/11 GI Bill was enacted eleven years ago, so colleges are still making changes to create military friendly environments and research is ongoing for veterans transitioning from the military to the college campus. Research may also be limited, so data availability may constrain the scope of research analysis and this deficiency opens the door for future research on the topic.

### **Ethical Considerations**

All participants signed a consent form which was kept secure. Participants were given a complete description of the research study as well as an explanation of the procedures used for gathering data.

## **CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

The increase in first-year veteran students on campus cannot be ignored by colleges and universities. In response to this increase, new programs specifically for first-year veteran students are being offered on many college campuses. First-year veteran students transitioning to college face not only the common challenges faced by all first-year students, but also have the additional challenge of transitioning to civilian life. There must be a clear understanding of how veteran students integrate to the college campus, in order to create successful veteran student support programs. Cook and Kim (2009) performed a study of programs and services being offered by institutions and used focus groups of military students to gauge the effectiveness of these programs. The results of their study clearly show how colleges and universities are trying to serve the increased population of first-year veteran students on campus. However, comments from veterans who attended the June 2008 American Council on Education (ACE) presidential summit, “Serving Those Who Serve: Higher Education and America’s Veterans,” revealed an occasional disconnect between the programs and services that campuses create to assist veterans in their transition to the college environment and what veterans actually need or want (Cook & Kim, 2009).

### **Common Challenges of First-Year Students Transitioning to College**

In 2018 the Postsecondary National Policy Institute reported more than 340,000 veterans completed a postsecondary degree or certificate in 2016, so first-year veteran students are not strangers to training or classrooms, but military classrooms are usually more structured with a rigid hierarchy – a structure and hierarchy that is typically not present in classrooms outside of the military. This is one of the difficulties veteran students reported as they transition from a military style of technical learning and a hierarchical organizational structure to a university

learning environment (Postsecondary National Policy Institute, 2018). “Understanding the Student Veterans’ College Experience: An Exploratory Study” (Olsen, Badger, & McCuddy, 2014) discussed the transition for the military to the college campus from the veteran student’s perspective. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with participants collecting data on perceived strengths from being in the military, transition to college challenges, and perceived social and academic support from colleges. The veteran student participants in the study unanimously reported difficulty with creating a new college social environment. One participant stated the bond shared with service members did not exist in the civilian college environment and it was like being on an island. The participants spoke about having different maturity levels with classmates and the lack of commonalities which created social barriers. Some of the participants described their difficulties in leaving leadership or management roles in the military to assume the role of a new student and others described how the nuances and cultural norms of military environments were different from those in a college setting and that they had to be intentional about interacting with others appropriately by not speaking directly and assertively to others because that type of interaction could be perceived as rude or aggressive in college (Olsen, Badger, & McCuddy, 2014). The data collected from the study concluded and supports the need for veteran students to have a designated space on campus where they can connect with other veteran students for camaraderie, sense of belonging and social support.

### **Challenges as a Non-Traditional Student**

First-year veteran students would be considered non-traditional students because they are usually older than the traditional first-year student right out of high school. The veteran student may also lack the continuous building of academic knowledge in general education skills such as math and English. On average, at the start of their postsecondary education, veterans are 25 years

old and come from diverse backgrounds (American Council on Education, 2015), so it was important to research if the classroom environment was supportive of first-year veteran students being in the classroom with younger students. A 2016 research study by Rebecca McMenamini “How are Institutions of Higher Education Implementing First-Year Transition Courses for Veterans?” addressed student veterans being nontraditional and the knowledge gap in the time between high school and college that may not be experienced by a traditional college student right out of high school. For example, a student veteran may need a refresher to build academic skills in math and English. Student veterans are likely to have a gap of three or more years in their formal education due to their service in the military and would benefit from relearning positive academic habits including time management, classroom skills, test taking skills, writing college papers, study strategies, etc. (Cass, 2012; Vacchi, 2014).

In addition to the need to build academic skills, the study also identified a student veteran’s need for veteran-specific new student orientation to learn how to navigate campus and find out about veteran-specific resources such as mental health counseling, support staff specifically for student veterans, and veteran peer groups for support and to foster a sense of belonging. This study supports the need for colleges to address a student veteran’s need to build new social environments, veteran-specific orientations for introducing veteran specific programs and resources, and support from other veteran students. The study suggested one way to help veterans with their transition to the college campus is by offering veteran-specific first-year study courses to help student veterans with student identity, refreshing academic skills, and academic goal setting. According to O’Herrin (2011), many veterans do not transition out of the military in time to attend traditional orientation sessions, which often take place several weeks before a term begins, so they may miss the basic introduction to the campus and resources that

other incoming students receive and veterans also require specific information on benefits and other resources, which is not typically included in the orientation for incoming students.

Orientation is crucial to acclimating new students to campus and informing them of the resources available to them to help them be academically successful. An orientation dedicated to veteran students would also give new student veterans the opportunity to meet other veteran students which will start the process of building new social environments. An article written by Kirchner (2015) states that orientation sessions aimed to meet the needs of student veterans can alleviate some concerns and offer financial, education benefits, and health benefits information and coping strategies as well as connect students to community groups. This type of support would not only help veteran students with getting acclimated to the college campus, but veteran-specific orientation programs are designed to reduce new veteran student anxiety as well as lessen the intimidation veterans may experience about transitioning to a new civilian college environment. Veteran students need to know where to go to get veteran student specific financial aid information as well as where to go if they have questions about the resources available to veterans on the college campus such as counseling services and veteran student support groups which is extremely helpful and needed if the veteran student suffers from PTSD or have a TBI.

### **First-Year Veteran Students Dealing with TBIs and PTSDs**

“Veterans’ Mental Health in Higher Education Settings: Services and Clinician Education Needs” (Niv & Bennett, 2017) discussed the gaps of mental health services and resources available on college campuses to aid veteran students. The article revealed that combat veterans who pursue higher education are at increased risk of psychosocial, academic, and mental health difficulties. A survey of 525 student veterans found that nearly half showed significant symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), a third suffered from severe anxiety, and a

quarter experienced severe depression. Additionally, the PTSD symptoms were associated with greater alienation on campus, problematic drinking, smoking, suicide attempts, and high-risk behaviors such as fighting (Niv & Bennett, 2017). This study supports the need for services and programs designed for first-year veteran students to help these students with their transition from the military to the civilian classroom. This research study also revealed that most counseling services for veteran students are through off-campus referrals and although counseling is typically available on college campuses, the staff may lack the training to deal with the mental health problems of veterans who suffer from PTSD or TBI.

“The Long and Winding Road to Postsecondary Education for U.S. Veterans with Invisible Injuries” (Rattray, True, Natividad, Salyers, Frankel, & Kukla, 2019) discussed the difficulties of veteran students transitioning to higher education and civilian life. The study reviewed how veteran students try to balance both establishing a new civilian life while trying to pursue a college degree and the barriers these veteran students faced while dealing with an invisible injury or disability such as a traumatic brain injury or mental illness. It was a mixed method research study including 38 veterans being interviewed and answering questionnaires. Participants reported significant challenges with mental and physical health while attending courses and pursuing academic degrees such as anxiety and depression as a result of having PTSD and these symptoms could be exacerbated during academic activities interacting with civilian students and faculty when class discussions addressed moral issues related to the military or entailed self-disclosure of Veteran status (Rattray et al., 2015). One participant reported experiencing cognitive problems and not being able to focus. Another participant stated the transition was like starting life over again and being in crisis at the same time. The results of the study concluded colleges and universities have made improvements on having a better

understanding of some of the difficulties veteran students may face when transitioning from the military to college; however, some veterans are still struggling when interacting with classmates, staff, and faculty.

Another research study revealed the need for specialized support programs for student veterans (Norman, Rosen, Himmerich, Myers, Davis, Browne, & Piland, 2015). This study discussed barriers such as PTSD and TBI disorders that may interfere with a student veteran's ability to achieve academic goals. Data in this study, collected from the Department of Defense, suggested that more than 17% of returning veterans may experience mental and physical health disorders, which can negatively affect school performance. The results from this research indicated the need for larger studies and program development efforts aimed at enhancing academic outcomes for Veterans (Norman et al., 2015). Of the 31 student veterans in this research study, who participated in focus groups and individual interviews, nearly half (48.4%) admitted to physical or mental health as being an obstacle to reaching academic goals.

The need for support services that promote psychological and emotional well-being as veteran students work to transition from the military to college is evident based on the results of these studies. With the increasing numbers of veteran students on campus, the need for these support services is critical.

### **Challenge of Negotiating VA Education Benefits**

The transition from military life to the college campus environment not only includes adjusting to a new civilian college environment, but also requires that veteran students know how to fund their education using VA education benefits and other financial aid. First-year veteran students need to receive information pertinent to their specific educational and financial

needs. A first-year veteran student needs to know how to get VA education benefits started at Georgia State University and how those benefits work. A veteran student may receive scholarships and other federal financial aid and they need to know how receiving these funds could impact their VA education benefits. A common problem for veteran students understanding how Post 9/11 VA education benefits are affected if they also receive approved tuition assistance from the Department of Defense or a scholarship designated to cover tuition and fees only. Public Law 111-377 changes the amount of tuition and fee charges that should be reported to VA by stipulating that schools only submit the actual net cost for in-state tuition and fees assessed by the institution, which means aid or assistance that is designated for the sole purpose of reducing a student's tuition and fee cost should be deducted from the net in-state charges reported to VA (U. S. Department of Veteran Affairs, 2019).

### **Challenge of Navigating the College Campus and Finding Support Services**

Cook and Kim (2009) performed a study of programs and services being offered by institutions and used focus groups of military students to gauge the effectiveness of these programs. The primary goal of their study was to see if colleges and universities were equipped to handle the influx of the veteran student population and how veteran students perceived the support services being offered. One point made during this study was how important it is for colleges and universities to have dedicated spaces and offices for veteran students. The study used focused groups to collect data from participants. One participant talked about how veteran students know they have education benefits, but how to get those benefits and using those benefits is where there is a lack of knowledge and when starting college, there is no one place to go to get help. The findings discussed in their study supports the need for colleges and universities to understand and get a sense for what veteran students experience on the college

campus to include creating successful social environments and academic success. The conclusion of their study revealed colleges and universities can do more to support first-year veteran students and one good way to do this is by making sure new veteran students know what resources are available and this starts with publicizing.

A disconnect presented in the study by Cook and Kim (2009) was the lack of direction to veteran students regarding how to use their VA education benefits. Veterans also believed schools and universities should do more to publicize veteran support services instead of veterans finding out by chance or navigating aimlessly to find things out themselves. The results from the study reveal the need for student veteran support programs on campus. Creating new social environments through campus activities and designated student veteran spaces, such as military outreach centers, is a start to helping this student population. Thus, it is important for higher education professionals who serve veteran students to also emphasize integration with the broader academic and social community present on campus (Schiavone & Gentry, 2014).

Western Kentucky University is an example of a college recognizing the importance of having a military friendly college to help veteran students transition from the military to the college campus. Support services offered by WKU are helping students apply for VA education benefits and financial aid, financial planning, a Golden Retriever service dog to help veteran students with anxiety, a dedicated military friendly space for veterans, a veteran upward bound program, and partnering programs within the community such as ALIVE Center for Community Partnerships which offers family support, helping veterans find internships and even therapy. WKU also works with two local Wounded Warrior programs that use horses as part of the process of emotional and physical healing from war injuries and the college is home to the

Preston Family Acquired Brain Injury Resource Program which offers support and services to veterans with brain injuries (Wilson, 2014).

The implementation of the Post 9/11 GI Bill in 2009 contributed greatly to the increase in first-year veteran students on college campuses. Cole and Kim (2013) performed a study titled “Student Veterans/Service Members’ Engagement in College and University Life and Education,” and the purpose of the study was to define who veteran students are, their engagement in college, the preparedness of colleges to handle this new first-year student population, and the programs and services colleges have implemented to aid this student population with academic success. This study, in response to the influx of veteran student enrollment, brought together a group of higher education associations and veterans’ organizations in 2009 and 2012 to determine whether institutions had geared up campus programs and services specifically designed to support the unique needs of veterans. The results indicated that administrators had indeed increased support levels, sometimes by quite significant margins (Cole & Kim, 2013). In fact, the data showed based on the institutions participating in the study, as the number of veteran students increased on campus so did the veteran student support programs such as peer support groups, and veteran-specific financial aid counseling.

### CHAPTER 3: METHODS

First-year veteran students need help adjusting to college life to ensure they are academically successful, and this can only be accomplished if the college has supportive programs that are veteran-specific. This study investigated the veteran services provided by Georgia State University to determine whether those services are effective at meeting the needs of first-year veteran students attending Georgia State.

The data for this study was collected through face-to-face interviews with veteran students who have experienced the transition from the military to the Georgia State University campus. The collected data was analyzed to identify commonalities and common beliefs held by this population of students.

The participants were 15 (10 males, 5 females) current first-year undergraduate veteran students attending Georgia State University that had transitioned from the military to the college classroom. The participants ranged in age from 25 to 30 years old and were from different ethnic backgrounds (i.e., ten Caucasians and five African Americans). The veteran students were in various degree programs and were recruited through the Student Veteran Association and the Military Outreach Center. The research was conducted at Georgia State University in a private office setting in the Military Outreach Center. Other interviews were conducted in the Registration and Compliance Office – Veteran Services, also in a private office setting.

All data was collected through face-to-face interviews in a private office setting. The interviews did not exceed one hour, and all participants were asked the same ten questions. The interviewees were instructed to answer all questions openly and honestly. All veteran students signed a consent form and were advised that their privacy would be protected. Students were also informed that the reason for conducting the research was to ensure Georgia State University was

providing effective support services to help first-year veteran students transition more smoothly from the military to the college campus.

The qualitative instrument used in the study was a list of ten interview questions (Appendix A) on which the responses from veteran students were recorded by hand-written notes. The questions were presented to participants in order of importance, based on the researcher's expectation of what would help veteran students successfully transition to the classroom and be academically successful. The individual face-to-face interview method was selected to give participants privacy in order to encourage them to speak freely. The questions used in the interview process were developed based on the perceived needs of the growing numbers of veteran students on the college campus and published research identifying the needs of veteran students as they transition from the military to college. First-year veteran students face several challenges such as alienation, social identity, and stress, so the face-to-face interview method was the optimum means to invite open discussion about the veteran students' experiences transitioning to college using the services offered at Georgia State University. In developing the interview questions, the researcher also relied on input from personnel administering the current veteran support programs offered at GSU: Student Veteran Association, Military Outreach Centers on each campus, and the Veteran Upward Bound program. These programs connect first-year veteran students with other veterans and help veteran students establish a sense of camaraderie and belonging in the college environment in order to facilitate the establishment of a new social environment.

The responses were analyzed manually looking for commonalities in veteran student responses as well as obvious differences. All interview sheets were reviewed and the responses to each question were compiled to get a clear picture of all commonalities and differences.

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to determine if Georgia State University is providing an effective level of support to first-year veteran students with their transition to the college campus. A veteran is a person who has served actively in the military and been discharged. Studies have shown that colleges and universities need to offer specialized programs to aid veterans with their transition to college due to the unique needs and special circumstances of first-year veteran students, such as psychological concerns (e.g., depression, anxiety, anger issues), VA education benefits, and adapting to civilian life. These programs include specialized orientation programs, military outreach centers, veteran association organizations, veteran academic advising, and specialized training for campus faculty and staff who work with veteran students.

To qualitatively measure the effectiveness of the current support programs for first-year veteran students at Georgia State University, 15 veteran students participated in face-to-face interviews, and their responses were analyzed for commonalities as well as any significant differences. The research question focused providing sufficient support for first-year veteran students transitioning from the military to the college campus. The consensus of the participants was that a veteran-specific orientation would provide more direction on the veteran services available on campus because the traditional new student orientation did not address veteran services at all. The participants were able to locate the Military Outreach Center easily, and the staff in the center provided detailed information regarding the support services offered to veteran students. The research also addressed the effectiveness of academic advising for first-year veteran students. Participant responses indicated that academic advising for first-year veteran

students was adequate. The table below summarizes the research findings in more detail based on participant responses. The results in the table are based on the consensus of all participant responses.

Table 1.

*Research Findings*

<b><i>Questions</i></b>	<b><i>Results</i></b>
<b>1. <i>As a first-year veteran student, how was your new student orientation experience and did it meet your needs as a veteran student?</i></b>	The consensus was that a veteran specific orientation would provide more information about the first-year veteran support services available at GSU. The current new student orientation does not cover any veteran information, such as support services or veteran educational benefits.
<b>2. <i>How effective was your academic advisor and was she/he able to help you with VA education benefit questions?</i></b>	14 of the 15 study participants (94%) believed that academic advising was adequate.
<b>3. <i>How was your classroom experience with younger first-year students?</i></b>	5 of the 15 study participants (34%) claimed they struggled initially with younger classmates and stated it was difficult to make social connections due to different points of view and maturity levels.
<b>4. <i>Did you feel it was necessary for instructors to know you were a first-year veteran student? If so, why?</i></b>	The consensus from the participants interviewed was that it was not necessary for instructors to know veteran students were in the classroom.
<b>5. <i>Was the Student Financial Management Center able to answer questions regarding how financial aid could impact your VA education benefits?</i></b>	14 of the 15 participants visited the Student Financial Management Center. Only one of the 15 was satisfied with the financial aid information he/she received. The others were either referred to Military Outreach or given incorrect information.
<b>6. <i>As a first-year veteran student, was classroom size an issue?</i></b>	All 15 participants (100%) reported no difficulty or concerns with classroom size.
<b>7. <i>Do you feel the college should offer new student orientation specifically for veteran students?</i></b>	All 15 participants (100%) answered <i>yes</i> to the need for a new first-year veteran student orientation.
<b>8. <i>Are you a working adult?</i></b>	13 of the 15 participants (87%) worked either part-time or full-time.
<b>9. <i>Do you feel veteran students require more flexibility with course scheduling?</i></b>	13 of 15 participants (87%) did not believe flexibility in course scheduling was necessary.

**10. *When did you find out about the Military Outreach Center and the resources they offer?***

Participants reported that they either learned about the Military Outreach Center on the GSU website or from another student after starting classes.

Question one used in the research study was “As a first-year veteran student, how was your new student orientation experience and did it meet your needs as a veteran student?” The purpose of this question was to research the need for student veteran specific orientation sessions. The consensus among all 15 research participants was that an orientation specifically for veteran students would help their transition to the college campus go more smoothly. A response from one participant was, “The new student orientation was information overload that did not cover any veteran specific information, so I had to seek out information on my own by making phone calls and visiting the college’s website.” Another participant stated he asked questions about benefits for veterans and he was directed to the Military Outreach Center. These responses prove there is a need for a student-veteran specific orientation to assist this student population with getting their VA education benefits started in a timely manner, meeting more veteran students to build relationships and find out about other veteran resources such as what the Military Outreach Center support student veterans.

Question number two, “How effective was your academic advisor and was she/he able to help you with VA education benefit questions?” was developed to gather information on how well academic advisors were meeting the needs of the veteran student population. According to participant results, academic advising is efficient in helping student veterans meet their academic needs and goals. One participant found academic advising was very knowledgeable and found the academic process very easy to navigate. One other participant found academic advising help with course registration and although the advisor was not knowledgeable about VA education

benefits, the advisor did know where to refer the student for the information needed. There was only one participant in the study who was not satisfied with academic advising. This participant stated that academic advising was not helpful at all and had no knowledge of VA education benefits. Overall, 94% of the participants were satisfied with academic advising.

Question number three, “How was your classroom experience with younger first-year students?” This was an important question because student veterans will be older than the traditional first-year college student right out of high school, so the research question focused on getting an understanding of the veteran student experience in the classroom with younger students. It is important for student veterans to establish new social environments on the college campus, and this usually starts in the classroom, but was this possible having younger students in the classroom. One participant found it challenging having younger students in class because of viewpoint differences, life experiences, and overall maturity of younger students. Another participant stated younger students at times could be disruptive in the classroom. Other participants found it easy to adjust by keeping the focus on learning instead of socializing in the classroom.

Question number four was “Did you feel it was necessary for instructors to know you were a first-year veteran student? If so, why?” This question was developed to gather information regarding veteran students who may have special needs due to a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) or Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Both of these conditions may cause cognitive deficits and the veteran student may require special accommodations. It addressed the need for instructors to know if veteran students were in the classroom, especially if the veteran student needed had special requirements. The consensus was it was not necessary for instructors

to know veterans were in the classroom. One participant stated there was no need for instructors to know about veteran status because of unnecessary attention or bias. Another student stated it was not necessary for instructors to know about students' veteran status because it does not pertain to learning activities in the classroom and veterans were in college to learn.

Veteran students do apply for and receive other financial aid as well as VA education benefits. It is important for these students to know how receiving different types of financial aid may affect their VA education benefits, so student veterans frequently visit the Student Financial Management Center. Question number five was "Was the Student Financial Management Center able to answer questions regarding how financial aid could impact your VA education benefits?" and it addressed the ability of the Student Financial Management Center's ability to effectively answer questions regarding how financial aid could impact a student's VA education benefits. The results of the study revealed that Georgia State University was lacking in this area. Only one participant in the study was satisfied with the service received at the Financial Management Center. One student stated, "Student Financial Management center had a bit of trouble with coordinating benefits for veterans in general." Another student stated, "The Student Financial Management Center has a lack of knowledge at it is best to avoid them." Not all veteran students work, so it is important to ensure these students receive all financial aid funds awarded to them.

Question number six was "As a first-year veteran student, was classroom size an issue?" and participants in the research study reported no difficulty with classroom size for any of their classes. The purpose of asking participants question six regarding classroom size was geared toward PTSD and veterans who may have a TBI. These conditions may cause anxiety, depression, and even cognitive learning disabilities. Large classroom sizes may intensify some of

these conditions which may create the need for student veteran support services such as tutoring and counseling. One participant stated classroom size was not a problem as long as they were able to sit near a wall. Another participant stated large classroom sizes were common in the military, so GSU classroom sizes were comfortable because they are usually no more than 25 students per class.

Question number seven was, “Do you feel the college should offer new student orientation specifically for veteran students?” The purpose of question seven was to find out if a veteran-specific new-student orientation would help student veterans with their transition from the military community to the college community. All 15 participants believe Georgia State University should offer orientation specifically for new veteran students. Ten out of the 15 participants stated financial aid, veteran benefits and Military Outreach Center services should be covered in the veteran-specific orientation. One participant stated veteran students should be told about student veteran associations such as the Student Veteran Association and any other peer support groups. One participant stated, “Student orientation is needed and there should be a focus on the financial aid process regarding VA benefits, other federal financial aid, and the deadline information for both.” Another veteran student stated, “Veteran students need to know what services are provided to them at GSU.”

Question number eight was, “Are you a working adult?” First-year veteran students will typically be older than the traditional first-year student entering college directly from high school. Most first-year veteran students will also have defined family roles and responsibilities that differ from those traditional students. To examine the impact of these differences, question eight asked veterans if they were working adults, which led to question nine, “Do you feel

veteran students require more flexibility with course scheduling?” Georgia State University offers priority registration to veteran students, so this gives veteran students the opportunity to have a good selection of open courses when they register. One participant did believe course scheduling accommodations should be given if a veteran student has a special need. Another participant stated, “There was no need for flexibility in scheduling because veterans have better time management skills.”

Question number ten was, “When did you find out about the Military Outreach Center and the resources they offer?” The last question was developed to find out if Georgia State University is doing enough to promote the student veteran support services offered on campus. The Military Outreach Center is the main office on campus directing veteran students to the veteran student resources on campus, so veteran students should know where this office is located. Not one participant was contacted by the Military Outreach Center prior to starting classes. Participants either found out by individual search or from another student veteran after the start of classes.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Once veterans leave the military, they enter civilian life and must adapt to a very different social environment in a community that likely does not share the same military background and experiences, such as combat. Veterans who enroll in college have an additional challenge of joining a campus community filled with students who are very different from the peers they knew in the military. The transition to college can be especially challenging if a first-year veteran student has suffered psychological or physical injuries. Some veteran students may suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or have a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI); additionally, they may be experiencing depression, anxiety, and even anger issues - and these conditions can make it difficult for them to succeed in college.

To assist veteran students, Georgia State University has three veteran student support programs designed to help with this transition, and the institution has attempted to assist veteran students in creating a new social environment by helping them make connections with other veteran students and guiding them to appropriate resources for assistance with admissions, financial aid, scholarships, student advisement, counseling, disability services, and testing centers. The purpose of this study was to determine whether these existing veteran support programs at Georgia State University are meeting the needs of its veteran student population and providing an effective level of support veteran students as they transition to college.

The ten questions used in the qualitative research study were specifically designed to gain more insight regarding the experiences of first-year veteran students. The more insight it has into the experiences of first-year veteran students; the more effective Georgia State University will be with improving existing first-year veteran programs and creating new programs in the future.

Colleges and universities must remember veteran students are not the traditional students entering college directly from high school and will have more life experiences than the traditional first-year college student. The life experiences and challenges of a first-year veteran student were considered when this qualitative research study was developed. This research study focused on how veteran-student specific programs help veteran students get acclimated to the college campus sooner, and learn about veteran specific resources available on campus, and jump start the establishment of a new civilian social environment. Veteran students are typically older, have real-world work experience, and are likely to have a specialization in a particular field and because of this, college is perceived by many transitioning veterans as simply a means for greater career advancement (Dillard & Yu, 2016).

Based on the findings of this study, the current veteran student support programs are effective with helping first-year veteran transition to Georgia State University. The 15 participants were asked specifically about the efficiency of academic advising and 14 out of 15 (94%) first-year veteran student participants believed academic advising was adequate. The participants were also questioned about classroom size for first-year veteran students and all 15 participants reported that they did not have difficulty with classroom size; thus, Georgia State University sufficiently manages classroom sizes to meet the needs of veteran students. Monitoring classroom sizes will continue in the future and Georgia State University does make registration adjustments for veteran students if the student requires an accommodation due to a military service-connected disability. The Military Outreach Centers were also efficient at connecting students to experts in the Office of Admissions, Student Financial Aid Management, and other support services such as the Veteran Upward Bound program. However, based on the participant interviews, more programs are needed to fully meet the needs of first-year veteran

students. The current programs offer the camaraderie of other veteran students in a military friendly environment, and students receive information needed to help them with admissions, financial aid, scholarships, student advisement, counseling, disability services, and testing centers. However, veteran students typically found out about these programs on their own or simply by chance. For example, when Participant 3 was asked, “When did you find out about the Military Outreach Center?” the response was, “After starting classes, I found out from a classmate.” If there was a veteran-specific orientation, first-year veteran students could be introduced to the Military Outreach Center before starting classes. The consensus from the participants was that a veteran specific orientation would provide more direction on the first-year veteran support services at GSU; the current new student orientation did not cover any veteran information such as support services or veteran educational benefits. All 15 participants (100%) answered *yes* to the need for a new first-year veteran student orientation. The first-year veteran students believed a veteran-specific orientation would be a great help with making connections with other veteran students earlier and learning more about on-campus and off-campus veteran specific resources, such as the Military Outreach Centers. Furthermore, by having a veteran-specific orientation program, the university may be able to determine what other veteran specific resources may be required to meet the needs of this student population.

## **Recommendations**

The goal of the veteran mentoring program would be to help first-year veteran students with the transition from the military to college by pairing them with other veteran students who have already made the transition. The mentor program is intended to give the new veteran student direct support for his or her transition (Summerlot, Green, & Parker, 2009). Based on the

findings of the research, a veteran student mentoring program is recommended to assist veteran students with their transition to college. The participants of this study noted that they either learned about the Military Outreach Center on the GSU website or from another student after starting classes, and all participants noted they would have benefited from a veteran-specific orientation. If veteran students were introduced to veteran mentors at a veteran-specific orientation, they might learn more about support programs sooner, such as the Military Outreach Center. A veteran mentor program on the college campus would also help first-year veteran students meet other veteran students, make a smoother transition to their new civilian campus community, and make connections to start building a supportive environment. A veteran student mentor would be a junior or senior veteran student who have successfully transitioned to GSU and this veteran student would be able to refer students to resources on campus, suggest veteran associations, and help first-year veteran students adjust to their new civilian and college environments.

All participants of the study stated they would benefit from a veteran-specific orientation. A VA student orientation program could introduce first-year veteran students to the campus culture at Georgia State University, direct them to veteran student organizations, and welcome first-year veteran students to the college. The program could include specific information about VA education benefits and provide answers to first-year veteran students regarding how these benefits work and whether the benefits will be affected by other federal financial aid. A veteran-specific orientation could provide veterans with benefit information they need in a timely manner and could reduce any gaps in receiving VA education benefit payments. All 15 participants in the study believe a veteran specific orientation is needed to ensure veteran students find out about veteran specific resources and to start establishing a new social environment.

## **Conclusion**

While the current programs for veteran students at Georgia State University are effective in providing support to new veteran students with their transition from the military to the college classroom and civilian college environment, additional support programs are needed. Military Outreach Centers on all six GSU campuses provide veteran students with a military friendly environment and a place to create their new social environment and are in place to connect first-year veteran students with experts in admissions, financial aid, scholarships, student advisement, counseling, disability services, and testing. Veterans Upward Bound is a pre-college program designed to help first-year veteran students strengthen their academic skills prior to college acceptance so they are better prepared for postsecondary education. First-year veteran students also have the opportunity to build a network of support while attending college by joining the Veteran Association Organization. The implementation of a veteran-specific new student orientation and a veteran mentor program will improve these GSU veteran student support programs by connecting students to the programs sooner.

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## Appendix A

### Interview Questions

1. As a first-year veteran student, how was your new student orientation experience and did it meet your needs as a veteran student?
2. How effective was your academic advisor and was she/he able to help you with VA education benefit questions?
3. How was your classroom experience with younger first-year students?
4. Did you feel it was necessary for instructors to know you were a first-year veteran student? If so, why?
5. Was the Student Financial Management Center able to answer questions regarding how financial aid could impact your VA education benefits?
6. As a first-year veteran student, was classroom size an issue?
7. Do you feel the college should offer new student orientation specifically for veteran students?
8. Are you a working adult?
9. Do you feel veteran students require more flexibility with course scheduling?
10. When did you find out about the Military Outreach Center and the resources they offer?

## **Appendix B**

### **Participant Consent Form**

**Title of Research Study:** Supporting First-Year Veteran Students Transition to College

**Researcher's Contact Information:** Name, Telephone, and Email

Lisa Boyd, 404-725-2758, wboyd@students.ksu.edu

#### **Introduction**

You are being invited to take part in a research study conducted by **Lisa Boyd** of Kennesaw State University. Before you decide to participate in this study, you should read this form and ask questions about anything that you do not understand.

#### **Description of Project**

The purpose of the study is to determine if Georgia State University provides effective and an efficient level of support to first-year veteran students with their transition to college.

#### **Explanation of Procedures**

Participants will be asked to answer questions regarding their first-year college experience at Georgia State University.

#### **Time Required**

All face-to-face interviews and focus group sessions will not exceed 1 hour.

#### **Risks or Discomforts**

There are no known risks or anticipated discomforts in this study.

#### **Benefits**

There will be no direct benefit for participants. The benefits will be for future first-year veteran students with improved first-year support programs.

#### **Compensation**

There will be no compensation for participants.

**Confidentiality**

The results of this participation will be confidential by using pseudonyms when referring to participants. All data collected will remain in a locked office at Georgia State University.

**Inclusion Criteria for Participation**

The age range of participants will be 25-45 and the estimated number of participants is 10.

**Signed Consent**

I agree and give my consent to participate in this research project. I understand that participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw my consent at any time without penalty.

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Signature of Participant or Authorized Representative, Date

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Signature of Investigator, Date

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PLEASE SIGN BOTH COPIES OF THIS FORM, KEEP ONE AND RETURN THE OTHER TO THE INVESTIGATOR

Research at Kennesaw State University that involves human participants is carried out under the oversight of an Institutional Review Board. Questions or problems regarding these activities should be addressed to the Institutional Review Board, Kennesaw State University, 585 Cobb Avenue, KH3403, Kennesaw, GA 30144-5591, (470) 578-2268.