

**Please Stand and be Recognized:
Examining Individuals' Attitudes and Behaviors
Regarding Colleges and Universities that Honor Veterans**

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Abstract

It is not uncommon for a retail business to honor active military and veterans by offering discounts or special treatment. Offering discounts or special treatment generates favorable feelings from both the military community as well as other patriotic consumers. However can the same positive outcome be afforded to colleges and universities that also honor active military and veterans via special treatment? With military consumer spending power estimated at \$1 trillion annually (Aiello, 2014; Military Survey Results, 2014) and their size, including families, estimated at 30 million consumers (Profile of Veterans, 2016); this target market is one to “command” attention. Yet, little research has been conducted regarding the impact of promoting support for this targeted group. This study seeks to understand if patriotic individuals would perceive colleges and universities that provide support to active military and veterans favorable and therefore lead to positive behavior intentions.

Results from an online survey using a nationwide random sample reveal that patriotism has a direct and indirect effect on behavioral intentions toward colleges and universities that honor veterans. In addition, attitudes towards organizations that honor veterans led to positive behavioral intentions from veterans and non-veteran individuals who seek to support veterans. Using the norm of reciprocity, this research demonstrates how individuals view colleges and universities that honor veterans as a means by which they can reciprocate and indirectly show their support for veterans, even though they do not personally receive the special treatment. Further, attitudes toward colleges and universities that honor veterans partially mediates the impact of attitudes toward veterans on behavioral intentions. Therefore, colleges and universities that do offer support to active military, veterans and their families should not only promote their efforts within the military community, but should do so among the general population as well. In doing so, these colleges and universities will generate support from patriotic individuals seeking a way to reciprocate their appreciation to the veterans as well.

References

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Relevance to Marketing Educators, Researchers and Practitioners: As colleges and universities are seeking more ways to positively promote themselves to consumers, this research highlights how offering discounts or special treatment to active military and veterans can be beneficial not just to those receiving the treatment but to the general public as well.

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