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Title Integrative Leadership In Higher Education: Meeting The Needs Of Student Veterans
Department Interdisciplinary Leadership Studies
Degree Doctor of Philosophy

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______________________________
Jamie Elizabeth Earls

November 2, 2015
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“An Army in College with Math Book”

By Colton Earls, Age 6
Abstract

Since the attacks on September 11, 2001, over two million men and women have deployed as part of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), and Operation New Dawn (OND). In 2011 there were more than half a million veterans of OEF/OIF enrolled in college. Soldiers face many issues when returning home from war. This qualitative multi-site case study explored the experiences of student veterans in higher education through semi-structured interviews using currently enrolled combat veterans and veterans’ services coordinators at three post-secondary institutions in Arkansas. The literature suggested veterans needs vary based upon their individual experiences; however, the underlying conclusion of the interview data in this research study is that higher education is poised to provide a structure through which to meet the needs of student veterans. The findings produced four major categories that revealed the needs and challenges student veterans face; resources and sources of support for student veterans; suggestions for improvement; and interactions of the student veterans with the campus community. Administrative support, advocates, and community participation are needed to provide comprehensive services for student veterans. Implications suggest higher education should work with community stakeholders, including government, private, and nonprofit organizations, in the reintegration of combat veterans and further recommend the establishment of a Veterans Center at each university as well as an orientation program, faculty and staff awareness training, and a student veteran organization.

Keywords: OIF, OEF, veteran, military, student, higher education, reintegration, leadership, integrative leadership
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Chapter 1 Introduction

As a military spouse, I have strong convictions about the service and needs of our returning combat veterans. I started dating the man who would eventually become my husband just before the fourth of July. He had recently returned from his first deployment to Iraq. I can still remember the look on his face, like his heart had dropped into his stomach, when the first fireworks of the holiday went off unexpectedly. It was a combination of fear and anxiety as he grasped for his rifle, which was no longer by his side. This is but one personal example of the issues that veterans, such as my husband, face as they reintegrate following combat. He is not alone.

Since the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, and the thwarted attack by the passengers of United Airlines Flight 93 on September 11, 2001, which has been forever memorialized as “9/11,” over two million men and women have deployed as part of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), and Operation New Dawn (OND), many of which are Guard and Reservists (Hinojosa & Hinojosa, 2011; Ostovary & Dapprich, 2011; Resnik et al., 2012). Although Operation Iraqi Freedom has officially ended, and Operation Enduring Freedom appears to be subsiding with the drawdown of forces in Afghanistan, there are still a large number of soldiers who will return from combat.

According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), as of 2013, Arkansas was servicing 250,095 veterans, from all wars (2014). VA education benefits, including the GI Bill® and others, are used by 9,784 veterans in Arkansas (VA, 2014). Additionally, Arkansas has approximately 10,000 soldiers and airmen who serve in the Arkansas National Guard, not to include Reserve Units, 81% of which are part time
There are over 100 National Guard units. Two major Arkansas National Guard training sites bring in military personnel from across the nation (ARNG, 2012). Arkansas is also host to an active duty Air Force base that has approximately 6,300 active duty personnel (Military One Source, 2014).

The world is a different place in the United States because of the events of 9/11. In an address to a joint session of Congress days after the attacks, President George W. Bush said:

The only way to defeat terrorism as a threat to our way of life is to stop it, eliminate it, and destroy it where it grows. Many will be involved in this effort, from FBI agents, to intelligence operatives; to the reservists we have called to active duty. All deserve our thanks, and all have our prayers. And tonight a few miles from the damaged Pentagon, I have a message for our military: Be ready. I have called the armed forces to alert, and there is a reason. The hour is coming when America will act, and you will make us proud. (Transcript, 2001)

The quality of life of Americans changed following 9/11, and specifically that of the military. A different population, the military, rather than traditional law enforcement, has been called upon to play a larger role in protecting what is most important, which is the safety and security of the American family and the protection of the Constitution and the freedoms it represents. This had unforeseen implications as Guard and Reservist units were being increasingly called to support overseas contingencies due to the overall reduction in national forces with the move to an all-volunteer force post-Vietnam.

Many people think we are living in a new world Post 9/11, but America has dealt with war and the return of the soldier before. This is not a new phenomenon; it has
occurred following numerous conflicts. The difference between the OEF/OIF/OND conflicts, as compared with World War II (WWII) or Vietnam for example, is that conscription did not occur. Additionally, this was only the second major attack on U.S. soil, the first being Pearl Harbor during WWII. The number of veterans is expected to grow by another million or more in the coming years (Sander, 2012b). As these combat veterans reintegrate into civilian society, they bring with them a complex set of issues, and though some are visible, such as dismemberment and disfiguration, many are not, including *post-traumatic stress disorder* (PTSD) and *traumatic brain injury* (TBI) (Lafferty, Alford, Davis, & O’Connor, 2008).

Based on the number of veterans in Arkansas, any improvement of the services provided to them would improve the quality of life not only for the veterans, but for their families which they support and which are supporting them. Education is an entitlement that the U.S. has deemed earned by our veterans, which is evident through the passage of the GI Bill® and its numerous revisions over the years that continue to provide veterans with educational benefits as well as other privileges. As such, higher education is in a unique position to provide veterans with access to services and benefits that would increase their reintegration back into society, in turn contributing exponentially to the quality of life of veterans and their families. This allows for their contribution back to society, which in turn increases the quality of life for all Arkansans, and thusly the nation as a whole.

Researchers in thousands of studies have examined reintegration issues surrounding combat veterans (e.g., Brenner et al., 2008; Collinge, Kahn, & Soltysik, 2012; Demers, 2011; Hinojosa & Hinojosa, 2011; Ostovary & Dapprich, 2011; Resnik et
al., 2012). However, researchers in less than 10 percent of those studies investigated reintegration associated with higher education, most of which typically focused on veterans with disabilities (DiRamio & Spires, 2009; Ostovary & Dapprich, 2011; Smith-Osborne, 2012; Vance & Miller, 2009). Twenty-one studies were reviewed by May 2014 that included reintegration in higher education; of these seven dealt with collaboration, the foundation of integrative leadership. Five of the collaboration-based articles were qualitative (Ackerman, DiRamio & Mitchell, 2009; DiRamio, Ackerman & Mitchell, 2008; Rumann & Hamrick, 2010; Vance & Miller, 2009; Zinger & Cohen, 2010), one was quantitative (Lokken, Pfeffer, McAuley, & Strong, 2009), and one was conceptual (Ford, Northrup, & Wiley, 2009).

Several research articles helped to provide direction to this study (DiRamio et al., 2008; Rumann & Hamrick, 2010; Zinger & Cohen, 2010). DiRamio et al. (2008) interviewed combat veterans and discussed the issues they face when entering the college environment following a combat tour. In a follow-up article, they discussed five guiding principles for colleges and universities to consider when developing or enhancing campus resources and policies regarding combat veterans, including creating policies and programs that reflect sensitivity to the needs of veterans and sharing best practices with other universities in order to promote academic achievements of veterans (Ackerman et al., 2009).

Another important study, aimed at affecting policymaking, program development, and restructuring efforts in universities, was conducted by Zinger and Cohen (2010). They examined the challenges veterans face transitioning to college. Zinger and Cohen reviewed information from the participants regarding their service, post-deployment
thoughts and issues, and their experiences at the college. The findings of Zinger and Cohen’s study are very beneficial, including the recommendation to have a Veterans Center on campus, to host veteran clubs, to provide sensitivity training to faculty and students, and to train campus health and counseling personnel on the unique needs of veterans; however, there are several limitations. First, the study centered on one college in New York. Second, Zinger and Cohen placed an emphasis on the disabilities of the student veteran; this limitation comes in part because it is nearly impossible to discuss a veteran coming home from today’s conflicts without addressing disabilities.

The lived experiences of student veterans were examined in one phenomenological study as the student veterans transitioned from a combat environment back into a college environment; a series of interviews were conducted with six participants to gain in-depth understanding of their experiences (Rumann & Hamrick, 2010). Rumann and Hamrick (2010) advised that rather than duplicating services, universities should create partnerships with community and government resources to provide services to student veterans. The limitations of this study include the fact that not all branches of the military were represented and that all participants originally were enrolled as traditional-aged students prior to deployment.

DiRamio et al. (2008), Zinger and Cohen (2010), Rumann and Hamrick (2010), and Vance and Miller (2009) discussed the need for collaboration in higher education for the benefit of veterans. Integrative leadership promotes cooperative action across sectors to accomplish mutual goals (Crosby, 2008), which are needed for building coalitions (McMullen & Adobor, 2011) that can help veterans reintegrate back into society. Thus, integrative leadership holds promise as a theoretical framework for the study of higher
education’s enhancement of services and resources provided to student veterans to meet the needs they have as they reintegrate into society and higher education.

**Problem Statement**

The experiences of *student veterans* are a growing area of concern as the number of veterans entering higher education continues to rise as OIF/OEF/OND veterans are reintegrating (Ryan, Carlstrom, Hughey, & Harris, 2011). Currently, higher education is challenged to find a solution to the issues student veterans face. Research in this arena will broaden the understanding of the issues faced by student veterans and inform universities in ways to further enhance the reintegration of veterans.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of combat veterans in higher education institutions in Arkansas, explore how integrative leadership could assist in the reintegration of OEF/OIF/OND combat veterans in institutions of higher education in Arkansas, and recognize what higher education can do to assist student veterans.

**Research Questions**

The guiding research question for this study is, “How do veterans describe their experiences in higher education in Arkansas, and what fostered and/or hindered the reintegration process?” Based upon this question, the following research questions and sub-questions were developed:

1. What are student veterans’ needs in higher education in Arkansas (i.e., emotional needs, physical needs, educational needs, psychological needs)?
2. How is higher education anticipating the needs of student veterans, and how is higher education responding?
a. What structures are in place to assist veterans?
b. What services are being provided by the university?
c. How accessible are the resources?

3. How well is higher education addressing the needs of veterans?
   a. What has fostered veterans’ reintegration through higher education?
   b. What has hindered veterans’ reintegration through higher education?

4. Given the stated need for collaboration in the literature, how is the use of integrative leadership evident in Arkansas as expressed by the needs of veterans?
   a. Based on the structures that are in place, would integrative leadership prove useful to assist combat veterans entering higher education?

A qualitative phenomenological case study was conducted in order to understand participants’ perceptions of the reintegration process along with the programs, services, and understandings of the universities. Epistemologically, I lean toward the social constructivist worldview, which is consistent with the qualitative phenomenological case study approach I employed. Phenomenological research focuses on rich descriptions of lived experiences and meanings (Creswell, 2009; Smith, 2008). It involves attempting to explore personal experiences of the participants and is concerned with their perception or interpretation of an event. Case study research is a way by which to understand the problem by investigating it from multiple perspectives (Merriam, 1998). It involves an
attempt to gain an in-depth understanding of the case or phenomenon with the intent to understand a specific issue, problem, or concern (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 1995). The combination of these two qualitative traditions, phenomenology and case study, helped to ensure a better understanding of the issues higher education is facing in assisting student veterans with reintegration because it allows for a more complete description of the phenomenon of student veterans in higher education. Additionally, case study research works well with interviews, wherein multiple sources of data are used; this led to the development of two interview groups.

The first interview group consisted of nine student veteran participants. Veterans’ service coordinators and/or military personnel prequalified the participants. Participants, in order to qualify, must have been enrolled in a four-year college or university in Arkansas; they must have served in combat in Iraq or Afghanistan as a member of the armed forces. They also must be separated from active duty, although membership in the National Guard or Reserves did not disqualify them. The second interview group consisted of at least one administrator from each university to be interviewed. The participants were either veterans’ service coordinators, the equivalent if not available, or their designee. There were no disqualifiers, but preference was given for administrators who worked directly with military personnel that meet the above criteria for inclusion of veterans. Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained prior to data collection (see Appendix A).

Significance of the Study

According to Crosby and Bryson (2010), “integrative public leadership [is] defined as bringing diverse groups and organizations together in semi-permanent ways,
and typically across sector boundaries, to remedy complex public problems and achieve the common good” (p. 211). The findings of this study provide colleges and universities in Arkansas with information to assist veterans in their transition from combat into the classroom. These findings suggest fostering collaboration with government, private, and nonprofit groups to further enhance the reintegration of veterans based on the integrative leadership model. Further, the findings of this study may inform colleges and universities of the needs of student veterans so they can enhance the services provided. This could aid in the reintegration of student veterans into society as well as the retention of student veterans in the college environment. Student veterans may also benefit from this research because of the potential for change in the college environment to their advantage.

A list of key terms used throughout this study can be found in Appendix B. If a common acronym is associated with the term (for example, “OIF” for Operation Iraqi Freedom), you will also find that acronym. Key terms will be in italics the first time they are used in the text or at the point they are defined; after that the acronym or term will be used without italics.

**Summary**

This study examines the experiences of nine student veterans in three Arkansas higher education institutions and the challenges they faced reintegrating into these institutions. Furthermore, it explores the resources and services available to student veterans at their respective institutions. The findings of the study offer the integrative leadership model as a way to meet the needs of student veterans in higher education.

Chapter 2 contains a review of the literature and involves five major areas. It begins with a discussion of combat veterans, including motivation to enter the military
and reintegration issues, followed by veterans in higher education, their characteristics, and challenges. Then integrative leadership theory and collaboration are examined. Student services in higher education are explored, including collaboration in higher education and the challenges and examples of effective collaboration. Chapter 2 closes with an evaluation of ways integrative leadership may be used in higher education to ease the transition to college for student veterans.

Chapter 3 presents the topics of paradigm, epistemology, and ontology of the researcher and links them to the chosen methodology. The methodology and methods are discussed including the pilot study, data collection process, and data analysis process. The chapter concludes with a discussion of positioning, biases, and ethical issues, including the researcher’s role, and trustworthiness and credibility of the research methods.

Chapter 4 discusses within-case analysis. The process of member checking is explained, and a discussion of the major categories occurs. Interviews were reviewed to identify patterns within the organization. An analysis was written for each participant based upon the categories. The participants were viewed in light of each other within their group, either student veterans or veterans’ services coordinators, and then also across groups to identify patterns within the case. A case summary was then written for each case, comparing the descriptions received from university personnel with that of the student veterans.

Chapter 5 focuses on cross-case analysis, where themes were developed across all cases. Thematic analysis was used to review themes across cases. Specific examples were pulled from the interviews to illustrate each theme explicitly. In addition to the categories
discussed in Chapter 4, an additional category emerged: interaction, referring to the
interactions of the student veterans with the campus community.

Chapter 6 concludes this research study. The findings produced four major
categories that revealed the needs and challenges that student veterans face; resources and
sources of support for the student veterans; suggestions for improvement; and
interactions with others. Recommendations encourage higher education to collaborate
with community stakeholders in the reintegration of combat veterans and further suggest
the establishment of a Veterans Center, a student veteran organization, a faculty and staff
training program, and an orientation course at each university. Additionally, future
research ideas, limitations, and implications are discussed.
Chapter 2 Review of Related Literature and Conceptual Framework

Since 9/11 there has been an increase of military forces, with over two million members of the armed forces deploying to combat arenas. Of those who have deployed to Afghanistan or Iraq warzones, 57% have since discharged from the military and assumed veteran status (Sayer et al., 2011). These veterans bring many issues with them as they reintegrate back into society.

The structure of the reviewed literature for this study involves five major areas: (a) combat veterans, including motivation to enter the military and reintegration issues; (b) veterans in higher education, their characteristics and challenges; (c) integrative leadership theory and collaboration; (d) higher education student services, and collaboration in higher education; and (e) integrative leadership as a potential lens for understanding how to ease the transition to college for student veterans.

The University of Central Arkansas library website was used to access the EBSCOhost and ProQuest databases. Comprehensive searches of peer-reviewed articles in all databases within both EBSCOhost and ProQuest were conducted that included numerous combinations of search terms including: veteran, military, student, “higher education,” “student services,” “student affairs,” college, university, “integrative leadership,” collaboration, Afghanistan, Iraq, OIF (Operation Iraqi Freedom), OEF (Operation Enduring Freedom), OND (Operation New Dawn), and other variations. All dates were considered, though articles written after 2001 were preferred. Additionally, similar searches were done on Google and Google Scholar to see if any alternate sources could be identified.
**Combat Veterans**

According to Vacchi (2012), a *veteran* is “any current or former member of the active duty, National Guard, or Reserve military regardless of deployment status or combat experience” (p. 17). The term *combat veteran* tightens the definition given by Vacchi to additionally require deployment to a combat arena. This study focuses on former members of the active duty military, or current or former members of the National Guard or Reserve military who have deployed to a combat arena in support of OEF/OIF/OND. Additionally, in order to receive veterans benefits, an honorable or general discharge must have been given at time of separation.

**Motivation to Enter the Military**

A number of factors motivate citizens to join the military. Duty to country, response to the attacks on 9/11, patriotism, and educational benefits are a few of the reasons (Ackerman et al., 2009). Furthermore, in a national Naval Institute survey, respondents listed “training, gaining new skills/experience, patriotism, and economic-factors…[as well as] educational benefits and lateral entry pay [as] powerful incentives” to join the military (Borack, 1982, p. 7). The GI Bill® and other educational benefits have made enlistment enticing to students, especially into the National Guard and Reserve units (Rumann & Hamrick, 2010). Considering these motivations is helpful in expanding the understanding of the experiences of student veterans and the issues they face because through understanding what led them to join, one can begin to understand the essence of their experience in the military and subsequently in higher education.
Reintegration Issues

The Department of Defense (DoD) does not provide a consistent definition of reintegration. Resnik et al. (2012) provided several definitions for reintegration including: veterans returning to participate in life roles, returning from deployment, returning to community life after a period of separation, and adapting to a culture that is different from the military culture. Sayer et al. (2011) discussed reintegration issues faced by soldiers who completed their questionnaire; they noted reintegration difficulties were reported more often by non-White veterans. No significant difference in difficulty was noted between active duty as compared with National Guard or Reserve components or between veterans at different education levels (Sayer et al., 2011).

In general, soldiers face many issues when returning home from war (Demers, 2011), including both mental and physical injuries (Resnik et al., 2012). Doyle and Peterson (2005) added that reintegration issues might also include hyper-vigilance while driving and lack of sleep, with or without nightmares. Since many veterans do not use the VA, attempts need to be made to partner with civilian, private, and nonprofit organizations to further reduce reintegration issues veterans face (Ritchie, 2007); integrating families and communities into the reintegration process are also important considerations (Doyle & Peterson, 2005). Researchers have historically concentrated on the psychosocial reintegration of war veterans. The armed forces now consider the deployment cycle to include reentry and reintegration (Bragin, 2010). National Guard and Reserve veterans have unique reintegration issues as there is a lack of comprehensive services directly available, and many are removed from their veteran counterparts (Collinge et al., 2012; Hinojosa & Hinojosa, 2011). Common stressors that challenge the
reintegration of veterans include economic strains, chronic debt, income shortfalls that can increase interpersonal violence, differences in deployment, increases in the frequencies and length of deployment, and injuries sustained (Demers, 2011; Ostovary & Dapprich, 2011).

According to Demers’s (2011) qualitative study, “Veterans [in focus groups] described three key challenges to returning home: lack of respect from civilians, holding themselves to a higher standard than civilians, and not fitting into the civilian world” (p. 170). Perceived burdensomeness and failed sense of belonging contribute to the despair of veterans (Brenner et al., 2008). The strongest relationship a veteran can form is with another military member; these relationships can affect how well a veteran handles the stress of reintegration (Hinojosa & Hinojosa, 2011). Many veterans feel alone and that only fellow veterans understand them (Bragin, 2010).

The reintegration issues veterans face can also be different based upon the arena into which the veteran is transitioning. Transitioning back into a civilian workforce versus into an educational setting can generate different challenges. Success in education is one measure of a positive transition to civilian life (Smith-Osborne, 2009).

**GI Bill®**

The Serviceman’s Readjustment Act of 1944, commonly referred to as the GI Bill®, was passed by President Truman to help veterans of World War II settle back into civilian life (Smith-Osborne, 2009; White, 2004). This allowed veterans, who may not have been able, the opportunity to attend college which expanded the middle class and opened up higher education to all. Veterans accounted for about 70% of male enrollment following WWII; this brought a noticeable effect of the attainment of higher education
among veterans (Bound & Turner, 2002). Since its inception, over 21 million veterans have utilized the GI Bill® (White, 2004).

When originally instated, the GI Bill® not only covered the cost of college, but provided a stipend to offset the costs associated with pursuing college, such as the inability to hold full-time employment (Bound & Turner, 2002). Over time, the cost of college grew, and with it so did the GI Bill®. The most notable update to the GI Bill® came in 1984 with the introduction of the Montgomery GI Bill® (All-Volunteer Force Educational Assistance Program of 1984, 2014). For a complete description of the various versions of the GI Bill® refer to Appendix C.

The majority of today’s veterans attend college under the Post-9/11 GI Bill® (Post-9/11 Educational Benefits of 2009, 2014), which provides the most expansive benefits to date (Smith-Osborne, 2009). With the implementation of the new GI Bill®, higher education should be compelled to develop programs that assist veterans in entering and succeeding in college (Vance & Miller, 2009). Currently, OEF/OIF conflict veteran enrollments in college reflect the highest numbers since the post-World War II era (Ostovary & Dapprich, 2011), with over half a million veterans enrolled in college (Sander, 2012a). A growing number of veterans will be looking to higher education because of the education benefits of the Post 9/11 GI Bill®, and considering 90% of service members do not have a bachelor’s degree upon entry into the military, education could greatly improve their reintegration and quality of life upon returning to society (Ryan et al., 2011).
Veterans in Higher Education

As of 2008, students with military connections accounted for approximately 4% of college students nationwide (Bonar & Domenici, 2011). In 2011, more than half a million veterans of OEF/OIF were enrolled in college (Sander, 2012a). This is in reality a large minority group on college campuses. The number of veterans utilizing the benefits of the GI Bill® is likely to increase with the ongoing operations in Afghanistan and the potential for conflicts in other parts of the world. Veterans’ needs are becoming a priority at many colleges and universities as the number of military-affiliated students continues to rise (Ford et al., 2009).

Very little has been done to measure the success rate of student veterans. Only one report was found where the success of student veterans was researched (NASPA, 2013). According to their reports, the VA spends nearly $9 billion annually on education benefits on approximately 600,000 students. There are no accurate counts of the number of student veterans attending colleges, and there is very limited information on success rates; nearly three-quarters of institutions (who responded to their survey) have veteran-specific resources; and few institutions are tracking veteran success rates. During the course of their research, the National Association of Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA, 2013) identified several misconceptions about student veterans: (a) student veterans have lower success rates – there is insufficient information to confirm or dispel this statement; (b) student veterans are less prepared to succeed – in reality, they are often among the best-prepared students; (c) student veterans are resistant to support – they are no less likely to seek support than traditional students, as long as it is presented in a success-oriented format rather than a remediation format; (d) student
veterans are more likely to complain about their educational experience – because of their training, they are more likely to hold their concerns which could hinder their educational goals. These misconceptions require higher education to seek a better understanding of student veterans.

**Characteristics**

Student veterans have characteristics that differ from traditional students. Veterans in higher education tend to be older than traditional college students. A myriad of terms have been used to describe this population including military-affiliated students, military students, veteran students, military undergraduates and student veterans (Vacchi, 2012); the most widely used term is student veterans. Their combat experiences along with their age differences, though sometimes negligible, contribute to a sense of maturity as compared to their civilian counterparts (Rumann & Hamrick, 2010). Student veterans also are more likely to be married or partnered than typical college students. Females account for approximately 20% of the veterans on campus (Bonar & Domenici, 2011), though they account for approximately 8% of the veteran population (Sander, 2012a). As many as 40% of veterans enrolled in higher education institutions may have some type of disability (Ostovary & Dapprich, 2011). Student veterans “aspire to the same challenges and academic standards as all students and do not want their military service to be a detractor to their educational experience” (Vacchi, 2012, p. 21). Although 71% of veterans use part of their GI Bill®, only 6% deplete their benefits (Ryan et al., 2011); however, it is still impossible to know the true rate of degree attainment, since most colleges and universities do not disaggregate graduation data by veteran status (NASPA, 2013).
Challenges

Deployment, reintegration, and military and academic issues are common challenges veterans in higher education face (Bonar & Domenici, 2011). Additionally, according to Black, Westwood, and Sorsdal (2007), student veterans may be facing physical and psychological injuries, family discord, difficulties with authority, issues of perceived support, and identity issues while learning how to function in a non-structured environment. The differences in student veterans’ military experience, length of service, rank, and training create unique challenges for each veteran that cannot be generalized (Black et al., 2007). Nonetheless, there is a relationship between the experiences of deployment and service in a war zone and the effects that has on reintegration and participation in higher education (Ackerman et al., 2009). Many veterans experience a type of culture shock as they transition from combat to campus (Bonar & Domenici, 2011). Stressors associated with the transition from military life to college may interfere with the veteran’s ability to recognize deficits or disabilities (Ostovary & Dapprich, 2011; Rumann & Hamrick, 2010). Accelerated enrollments, academic demands, socialization with peers, and limited access to higher education institutional services are common challenges veterans face (DiRamio et al., 2008; Ostovary & Dapprich, 2011). Other challenges include the payment of educational benefits, credit for military training, relearning study skills, anger, and stress. In short, although all veterans go through reintegration, veterans reentering into the college campus have a unique set of concerns.

According to a study by Kim and Cole (2013), “Student Veterans/Service Members and Nonveteran/Civilian Students Over 25 Share Similar Experiences, with
Some Exceptions” (p. 14). Kim and Cole (2013) showed similarities between student veterans and non-traditional students:

- Student veterans are just as unlikely “to be engaged with faculty members on activities other than coursework” as non-traditional students (p. 14).
- Student veterans are almost as likely “to have worked with other students on projects during class as non-traditional students” (p. 14).
- Student veterans “are equally likely to have talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor as non-traditional students” (p. 14).
- Student veterans spend “similar amounts of time preparing for class” as non-traditional students, which is distinctly different from traditional students (p. 14).

Though student veterans and non-traditional students have similarities, they are not the same in all areas. Kim and Cole (2013) showed differences between student veterans and non-traditional students:

- Student veterans are less likely than non-traditional students “to have worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments” (p. 16).
- Student veterans are less likely than non-traditional students to “indicate that they spend as much time discussing ideas from readings or classes outside of class with others” (p. 16).
- Student veterans are more likely than non-traditional students to have had “serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than their own” (p. 17)
• Student veterans are more likely than non-traditional students to have had “serious conversations with students who are very different from them in terms of their religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values” (p. 17).

• Student veterans report lower gains than non-traditional students in working effectively with others; writing clearly and effectively; and solving complex real-world problems.

• Student veterans “reported higher-quality relationships with the administrative personnel and offices on their campus” than non-traditional students (p.17).

The differences between student veterans and non-traditional students “may be a manifestation of veterans and service members’ unique backgrounds, which make the transition from the military to academia indeed challenging….These results…show that the experiences of student veterans…cannot be assumed to be the same” as non-traditional students (Kim & Cole, 2013, p. 17). Although student veterans share some similarities to non-traditional students, it is imperative to not indiscriminately group these two distinct types of students together.

In addition, many student veterans face issues similar to transfer students transitioning from one academic setting to another. Issues that frequently affect the success of transfer students include institutional support, finances, and student goals (Duggan & Pickering, 2008). Support systems and the ability to balance the multiple roles of the student, including parent and worker, are also connected to the success of transfer students.

called “Moving In, Moving Through, Moving Out” (see Figure 2.1). In this model, they explained the process of moving into the military included a person deciding to join, learning that they were to be deployed, and serving overseas. Moving through the military consisted of the time they spent on active duty through combat and other experiences. Moving out of the military was the point when they separated from active duty. For active duty military members, moving out of the military is being discharged from the military; for National Guard and Reserve soldiers, moving out of the military is coming home from an operation (such as combat). Moving out of the military, for those who chose to utilize their educational benefits, begins the process of moving into college.

“Moving in” to the college setting includes the veterans making connections with their peers. For some veterans this also includes assimilating to the college environment. Faculty, campus veterans’ offices, and finances are all issues veterans deal with when entering college (DiRamio et al., 2008). Veterans with mental health issues and PTSD, as well as other disabilities had additional concerns (DiRamio et al., 2008). DiRamio et al. stopped the process with moving in to the college setting. Although this is a critical transition, it fails to ensure true reintegration by not focusing on the moving through process in the college setting, and ultimately moving out of the college setting and into the workforce.
Disabilities. College administrators who wish to increase veteran enrollment must be prepared to deal with an increase of students with physical disabilities as well as mental health issues. Campus faculty and administrators must understand that many veterans have more than one difficulty or disability (DiRamio & Spires, 2009). PTSD and TBI are signature wounds of OEF/OIF veterans (Ostovary & Dapprich, 2011). Determining whether or not to disclose disability is perhaps the greatest challenge of veterans entering higher education (Ostovary & Dapprich, 2011). Disclosure of disabilities is viewed as weakness by many veterans. Many students have disabilities that need to be disclosed; this is not unique to the veteran population. What tends to be

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**Figure 2.1.** Themes of Transition for Student-Veterans. Adapted from “From Combat to Campus: Voices of Student-Veterans,” by D. DiRamio, R. Ackerman, and R. L. Mitchell, 2008, NASPA Journal, 45(1), p. 80. Reprinted with permission.
different is their resistance to disclose. Most veterans view any illness, injury, or
disability as a sign of weakness, and any sign of weakness in the military is very much
discouraged. This prevents a lot of military from going to sick call when they are really
sick, and carries over to their civilian life when the leave the military causing many
veterans not to seek benefits. The VA confirms this with a report that only 47% of the
service members, from the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts, leaving the military have
of students will delay declaration of disability until the start of classes with others waiting
even later in the course, some as late as final exams.

Disabilities traditionally have been conceived as visible: mobility, visual, and
medical; however, with combat veterans many of the disabilities they face are invisible
(DiRamio & Spires, 2009). Veterans commonly have difficulty hearing and suffer from
depression, PTSD, and TBI. In addition, many times veterans have learning disabilities
that may not have been present before combat such as difficulty concentrating and short
attention span, loss of study skills, and impatience. For students with a disability,
transition from military service can potentially be even more overwhelming (Taylor et al.,
2010).

Transitions can be stressful for any student when moving to a full-time university
from secondary education, another college or university, or work setting, including
military service. Taylor et al. (2010) discussed that embarrassment could occur if
disabled students are unnecessarily separated from their mainstream counterparts. This
separation could draw undesirable attention to them and cut them off from other students,
a negative effect considering the need for social interaction for successful reintegration (DiRamio et al, 2008).

**Social interaction.** Veterans are socialized into military culture through basic and advanced training; the military culture is markedly different from the culture in higher education (Vacchi, 2012). According to Brenner et al. (2008), veterans in their qualitative study emphasized during interviews that the experiences they shared during deployment and common values gave them a connection to other veterans and a disconnection from non-military civilians. The transition from combat to college for many is the most difficult transition of all. Specifically the loss of camaraderie and the difficulties in translating “warrior ethos” to new social groups is a challenge for OEF/OIF veterans (Brenner et al., 2008). The warrior ethos includes the values of duty, honor, loyalty, self-sacrifice, discipline and obedience, and commitment to comrades, unit, and nation (Demers, 2011). Veterans groups on campus could help to reinforce comradeship and support effective coping; these groups could also increase veterans’ socialization. Groups that include veterans and nonveterans could help to promote this socialization (Brenner et al., 2008; DiRamio et al., 2008). Connecting with peers is an important step in the reintegration to academia for veterans (DiRamio et al., 2008). TBI and PTSD can make participating in large group activities difficult for some veterans, which can cause connecting with peers to be more challenging; nonveteran students may not understand why these difficulties exist. This can cause nonveteran students to speculate as to why veteran students are not participating. Hence, there is a need for leadership to meet the needs of student veterans and help them reintegrate, which may include education of faculty, staff, and students on the characteristics and needs of the student veteran.
Faculty and student attitudes and perceptions. There is a cultural divide between veterans and their civilian counterparts that is exacerbated by the move to an all-volunteer military where most Americans lack understanding of military issues (Demers, 2011), which can breed stereotypes about veterans: why they enlisted, who they are, and what they did (Sanders, 2012a). According to Vacchi (2012), “the quality of contact between faculty and student veterans may be the most important nonfinancial key to ensuring the persistence of student veterans” (p. 20). Frustration mounts among veterans with civilian peers because civilian students appear to lack concern for others based on inappropriate use of cell phones, disruption of class, and discussion of trivial issues (Demers, 2011; DiRamio et al., 2008). Veteran students often downplay their military background to avoid negative reactions from their civilian peers (Ackerman et al., 2009; Rumann & Hamrick, 2010). Student veterans can feel disconnected from other students since the other students likely do not understand their previous experiences (Ryan et al., 2011). Because of this, it is equally important to educate traditional students about the needs veterans face.

Determining if and when to reveal their veteran status can be challenging for some veterans (Rumann & Hamrick, 2010). Based on the themes identified by DiRamio et al. (2008) in their grounded theory study, veterans consistently desired faculty to recognize their status as a veteran and to make an effort to understand them not only as a student but also as a population. It is imperative that faculty meet student veterans “where they are—academically, socially, and psychologically” (Stevenson, Buchanan, & Sharpe, 2006, p. 145).
In sum, veterans must tackle many different types of issues when facing reintegration. No two veteran experiences will be the same, creating a unique challenge of its own. In addition, student veterans are a distinct subset of veterans who have an additional layer of need. Therefore, colleges and universities are in a unique position to provide assistance for these transitioning veterans; consideration of integrative leadership theory may illuminate ways of assisting these veterans.

**Integrative Leadership Theory**

Integrative leadership theory could provide a framework for the collaboration and sector planning that is required for a public problem such as veteran reintegration. “Integrative leadership…fosters collective action across many types of boundaries in order to achieve the common good. It brings together leadership concepts and practices rooted in five major sectors of society—business, government, nonprofits, media, and community” (Crosby, 2008, para. 1).

Empirically, integrative leadership theory is in its infancy. It was first introduced in 1992 by Bryson and Crosby; in 2010, Crosby and Bryson also dubbed it *integrative public leadership*, in which diverse groups and organizations are brought together to resolve complex public problems to enhance society as a whole. Crosby (2008) discussed the theoretical foundations of integrative leadership in a feature article in the *Integral Leadership Review* in which the importance of cross-sector leadership is discussed as being one level of analysis of leadership research. Integrative leadership moves beyond leadership of the individual, team, or organization, to include leadership between those levels as well as inter-organizational, community, and national cooperation. Integrative leadership focuses on the partnerships, networks, and collaborations as well as the people
who are involved in the processes (Crosby, 2008). Crosby recommended that to advance integrative leadership theory, studies need to be done that help expand the understanding of the bridging process by leaders, whereby leaders create direction and commitment that span across divides or boundaries, such as between groups, and how individuals can develop to lead in such a way.

Bryson, Crosby, and Stone (2006) explained that cross-sector collaboration, the principle that integrative leadership is formed on, is set on the middle of a continuum, where to one extreme lies organizations that fail to relate to each other and the other extreme where organizations merge into a new one (see Figure 2.2). Of the approximately 550 articles and books that have currently cited Bryson, Crosby, and Stone, less than 50 have the integrative leadership framework cited, of which approximately 30 are empirical; less than 10 of these empirical articles deal with student issues, and four with veterans, but none appear to address the growing public concern that encompasses the needs of student veterans. Of the four articles and books that discuss veterans and integrative leadership, two articles briefly mention the DoD or VA as a means to public collaboration (Fernandez, Cho, & Perry, 2010; Ingraham & Getha-Taylor, 2004), one article discusses collaboration among Veterans as a generation (1920-1944) with other generations (Perumal, 2008), and one book discusses the need for diversity among student populations, with veterans as a means to diversity (Williams & Wade-Golden, 2013).
Empirical articles on integrative leadership tend to look at creating cross-sector collaborations (Bryson, Quick, Slotterback, & Crosby, 2013; Crosby & Bryson, 2010, 2014; Lemaire, 2012; Morse, 2010; Ospina & Foldy, 2010; Ward, Blenkinsopp, & Smith, 2010). A few articles examine civic engagement or capacity building (Crosby & Bryson, 2014; O’Leary & Vij, 2012; Sun & Anderson, 2012). Social change is another topic for which the use of integrative leadership has been explored (Mishan & Prangley, 2014; Ospina & Foldy, 2010; Redekop & Olson, 2010). Public policy is yet another area where the use of integrative leadership is growing (Bryson, Quick, Slotterback, & Crosby, 2013; Crosby & Bryson, 2014; Gollagher & Hartz-Karp, 2013; Guarini, 2012; O’Leary & Vij, 2012). In short, integrative leadership has been applied across multiple sectors; integrative leadership in higher education for the benefit of student veterans would fall into the categories of cross-sector collaborations and policy changes at public universities.

Some scholars view integrative leadership as a meshing of multiple leadership theories such as task-oriented, relations-oriented, change-oriented, diversity-oriented, and integrity-oriented leadership into one (Fernandez, Cho, & Perry, 2010) or the expansion of another leadership theory such as transformational leadership (Silvia & McGuire,
2010; Sun & Anderson, 2012) or shared or distributed leadership (Bryson & Crosby, 1992). Using the Federal Human Capital Survey, Fernandez et al. (2010) ran statistical analysis to determine goodness-of-fit of the five dimensions (task-oriented, relation-oriented, change-oriented, diversity-oriented, and integrity-oriented), which was supported. This is important because it indicated that integrative leadership has a sizeable, positive effect on performance in the public sector.

To maximize the benefits of public problem solving, sponsors (i.e., those with formal leadership roles) and champions (i.e., those with informal leadership roles) of policy must collaborate with associates in other sectors (Crosby, 2010; Crosby & Bryson, 2005). Champions drive change, requiring involvement of other leaders and followers and typically emerge as a result of motivation rather than role (Taylor, Cocklin, Brown, & Wilson-Evered, 2011). Program organizers should offer opportunities to promote between sector/culture/region collaboration, which is necessary due to the increased necessity to lead across sectors, cultures, and regions (Crosby, 2010). Collaboration between and within these various sectors is successful when the people involved trust in the process (Lee et al., 2012). Conversely, when trust does not exist, collaborative efforts can fail or flounder.

Leadership has become more difficult in recent times through the same shared-power environment that improves many aspects of social equality (Wart, 2003). Collaborations are both challenging and highly beneficial. Through collaboration knowledge and resources are shared and formed (Baker, Kan, & Teo, 2011).
Collaboration

Collaboration is the keystone of the integrative leadership process, and it can occur at many different levels. According to Kolk, van Dolen, and Vock (2011), there are three primary levels at which collaborations can occur: macro, meso, and micro. At the macro level, goals for the common good, such as reduced suicide rates, cures for cancer, or poverty alleviation are examined. The meso level includes cross-sector collaborations, such as collaborations between government, nonprofit, business, etc. (Kolk et al., 2011; Crosby, 2008). At the micro level, individual collaborations, such as employees, managers, and customers are identified. Collaboration can occur in between and/or within each level; integrative leadership falls into the meso level primarily as cross-sector collaboration is the primary goal (Crosby, 2008; Kolk et al., 2011).

Collective actions are needed to bridge, or connect, diverse views by building coalitions and alliances (McMullen & Adobor, 2011). Leaders must be capable of setting aside their own beliefs to allow for others’ insights. Leaders in bridging organizations are similar to the champions described by Crosby (2010) and Crosby and Bryson (2005) in that they have no real power over the stakeholders they work with. This can make leadership among these constituents challenging (McMullen & Adobor, 2011).

Morse (2010) compiled data to form three case studies that show integrative public leadership in action. They vary in the nature of public value creation via public-private partnerships, stakeholder buy-in, and citizen-government relations. The implications of this research are that boundary spanners play a critical role in visualizing potential public value through partnerships. Similarly, Page (2010) explored leadership challenges in dealing with cross-sector collaboration in a case study of several initiatives.
in Seattle. Page proposed a framework of tactics and constructs that in combination could allow diverse stakeholders to align on controversial issues allowing for collaboration; this framework showed potential for both scholars and public leaders. The identified leadership tactics included framing the agenda, organizing the stakeholders, and structuring discussion. In order to organize the stakeholders and structure discussion, the stakeholders must understand the importance of the issue, believe there is transparency and fairness in the process, and have a sense of equitable distribution of costs and benefits across stakeholders (Page, 2010). When leadership tactics and stakeholders combine, collaboration has the possibility to occur and create results that provide public value in political will, civic capacity, and policy performance (Page, 2010).

Integrative leadership occurs through collaboration, which can develop at various levels and between various organizations and types of organizations. Collaboration exists in various forms and places, from the nonprofit sector to the private sector, from government organizations to philanthropic organizations, from educational institutions to emergency management; all types of entities can benefit from collaborative efforts. To meet the needs that student veterans face in higher education, collaboration can be used to enhance the current services provided by higher education student affairs and services.

**Higher Education Student Affairs and Services**

Student affairs in higher education has existed as long as higher education itself (Doyle, 2004); however, it was not until 1937 that the first mission statement was created (Doyle, 2004; Barham & Scott, 2006; ACPA & NASPA Task Force, 2010). At that time student services, or student affairs, was defined as having the role of delivering services that positively contribute to the students’ educational experiences while providing added
institutional and societal value (Barham & Scott, 2006; ACPA & NASPA Task Force, 2010). Table 2.1 provides a sample of some of the services that institutions may offer and a related activity. In the late 20th century, the mission of the institution became more important, and a shift toward student learning and away from student development occurred (ACPA & NASPA Task Force, 2010). Many of the foundational documents of student affairs express that student affairs are expected to be responsible for the learning and success of college students; hence, there was a call to substantiate that student affairs contribute to student success (ACPA & NASPA Task Force, 2010).

Modern trends in student affairs are directed by the reality that “current and emerging societal changes press higher education to fulfill its role in securing social and economic justice, sustaining natural resources, and perpetuating democracy” (ACPA & NASPA Task Force, 2010, p. 4). Additionally, the demand for higher education as shown by increased enrollment has added pressure on college infrastructures. This pressure has caused student affairs to realize that breaking down the silos that exist in higher education to create and enhance on-campus partnership is essential and challenging. To best meet the needs of students, collaborations must “move beyond the campus to form partnerships with community agencies, government entities, and private industries” (ACPA & NASPA Task Force, 2010, p. 9), for example, creating campus services by working with local social service agencies such as food banks and child care centers. Partnership creation is required to meet the needs of students and institutions, and they must extend beyond local, state, and national borders. NASPA (2004) recommended both senior academic and student affairs officers must expect and reward collaborations for student learning among faculty members, student affairs professionals, and academic advisors.
### Table 2.1

**Examples of student affairs/services specialty units.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Typical Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic advising</td>
<td>Assisting students in the selection of courses and other educational experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admissions</td>
<td>Receiving, processing and evaluating applications from prospective students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult/non-traditional student services</td>
<td>Working with faculty to understand the different approaches that may be necessary when teaching adult students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus activities/student organizations</td>
<td>Carrying out recreation programs and services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career service</td>
<td>Organizing activities such as job fairs, and classes on career planning and job searches.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child-care</td>
<td>Providing, on demand, a variety of care including infant/pre-school care.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community-service learning</td>
<td>Designing service-learning opportunities to match academic programs through co-operative efforts with the faculty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counseling services</td>
<td>Engaging in brief individual psychotherapy, crisis intervention, etcetera as needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developmental learning centers</td>
<td>Providing a service to individuals seeking assistance with academic tasks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability services</td>
<td>Serving as the official institutional/agency office and mediator that assists students in acquiring classroom and other accommodation as necessary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial aid/student employment</td>
<td>Providing assistance to student and families in completing various financial aid applications and forms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health services</td>
<td>Providing outpatient, primary care with diagnosis, treatment, and consultation on most general health care needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New student programs and services (orientation)</td>
<td>Explaining faculty, staff and student roles, responsibilities, and expectations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student registration and records</td>
<td>Having contact with all students every academic term regarding enrollment, registration, academic evaluation (grades) and class schedules.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* This is not a comprehensive list of student affairs specialty units, and only provides one example of a typical activity for each unit. For a complete list of units, their purpose/functions, and typical activities, please refer to the manual. Adapted from “The role of student affairs and services in higher education: A practical manual for developing, implementing and assessing student affairs programmes and services,” by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2002, pp. 25-49. Copyright 2002 by UNESCO.
Higher Education Collaboration

Collaboration exists in higher education in various forms and for many reasons. Knowledge creation and research, student learning, and improved organizational functioning are few of the examples of the value and importance that collaboration can bring to higher education (Colwell, 2006; Kezar, 2005b, 2006). Additionally, Eddy (2010) discussed seven themes that explain motivations for the creation of partnerships in higher education: educational reform, economic development, dual enrollment or student transfer, student learning, resource savings, shared goals and vision, and international joint ventures. Veterans’ services would fall into the theme of resource savings. By creating partnerships with existing community, government, and/or nonprofit organizations that provide services for veterans, the university could save valuable resources to provide services, such as academic advising and tutoring, that existing organizations do not provide.

There are two types of collaboration: internal and external (Amey, Eddy, & Ozaki, 2007; Kezar, 2005b, 2006). Internal collaboration involves collaboration within the university system: student-student, student-faculty, faculty-faculty, cross-disciplinary research, cross-disciplinary learning, cross-institutional (such as student and academic affairs), etc. (Kezar, 2005b, 2006). External collaboration is that between the university and local business, industry, government, and nonprofit entities. There are many reasons for external collaboration, but research findings indicate that most of the external collaboration is for student access (i.e., internships and jobs), faculty recruitment, K-16 partnerships, economic development, and steering committees (Kezar, 2005b, 2006). Though great benefits exist for collaboration, institutions are not usually structured to
support it (Kezar, 2005b); therefore, many challenges to collaboration in higher education exist.

**Challenges to collaboration in higher education.** Though partnerships are becoming more common, formal and sustained partnerships at universities are not widespread (Duffield, Olson, & Kerzman, 2013). There are several challenges to collaboration.

The development of partnerships takes time and relationship building (Duffield et al., 2013). The type and depth of a partnership should be determined by the anticipated goals. A partnership can be transactional or transformational (Duffield et al., 2013). Additionally, some partnerships are established to sustain, while others are established to dissolve after a problem is solved. Relationship building is so important, that a missing relationship can cause a partnership to fail. Additionally, a bond of trust can be established if the development of the partnership is successful in negotiating roles between partners.

The purpose and goals must be set for the mutual benefit of all participants (Amey, et al., 2007). If one partner is benefiting significantly more than the other, incentive to maintain the partnership can change. This does not require equality rather that all partners should contribute and benefit (Duffield et al., 2013). Additionally, the benefits must be realized, which will lead to sustainability. In order to be sustainable, the outcome should offer partners more than could be accomplished independently.

Though partnerships exist between organizations, it is people who are actually involved (Duffield et al., 2013). Involvement takes time in addition to normal duties. Release from responsibilities is vital to prevent burnout of individual members.
Additionally, the partnership should have a champion that advocates for the initiative and believes in the partnership, while not diminishing from the organizational role of the partnership (Amey, et al., 2007).

The culture of the university, along with silos that exist, whether real or perceived, add to the challenges of collaboration (Kezar, 2005b; Perini, 2013). Additionally, bureaucratic or hierarchical administrative units and unions, or other rigid structures, can create barriers to collaboration (Kezar, 2005b).

**Enabling collaboration.** In order to enable collaboration, Kezar (2005a; 2005b) stated eight elements need to exist, “(1) mission; (2) integrating structures; (3) campus networks; (4) rewards; (5) a sense of priority from people in senior positions; (6) external pressure; (7) values; and (8) learning” (p. 833). Kezar (2005b) used a combination of interviews, document analysis, and observation coupled with models of collaboration from business, to develop a model of collaboration in higher education (See Figure 2.3).

![Figure 2.3. Stage model collaboration in higher education. Adapted from “Redesigning for collaboration within higher education institutions: An exploration into the developmental process,” by A. Kezar, 2005, Research in Higher Education, 66(7). Reprinted with kind permission from Springer Science and Business Media.](image-url)
Using the model presented by Kezar (2005a), there are three stages to enable collaboration. Stage 1 is building commitment. In order to do so, it helps to have an external group (such as an accrediting agency, foundation, or coordinating board) placing pressure to do so. Additionally, campuses that are student-centered seem to foster collaboration more easily, as do those that are innovative. Learning the benefits of collaboration is also helpful to building commitment, and as with every stage, having a network of people or groups that are interested in accomplishing a goal is needed. Stage 2, commitment, also necessitates having a mission that encourages collaboration, and understanding it is essential to have commitment from all parties (Kezar, 2005b; Perini, 2013), especially having a sense of priority among senior positions. Sustaining the collaboration, stage 3, requires that structures exist to foster the continued collaboration; three structures presented by Kezar (2005a) include “a central unit in charge of fostering collaboration; cross-campus institutes and centers; and new accounting, computer and budgetary systems” (p. 54). These three stages, each with multiple components, help to enhance understanding of the steps necessary to enable successful collaboration.

Additional components to collaboration were described by Whipple, Solomon-Jozwiak, William-Kecksel, Abrams, and Bates (2006), who discussed a list of five components that foster interdisciplinary collaboration: interdependence, newly created professional activities, flexibility, collective ownership of goals, and reflection on process. According to Whipple et al. (2006), this is the first of a two-part model, the second of which “consists of four influences on collaboration: professional roles; structural characteristics; personal characteristics; and a history of collaboration between the organizations” (p. 94). Additionally, Mattessich and Monsey (1992; as cited in Bragg
& Russman, 2007) identified six categories of factors that influence the success of collaborations: environment, membership, process and structure, communications, purpose, and resources. Although various components and categories exist, there is crossover among the various terminologies. For example, purpose, collective ownership of goals, mission, and values all refer to the collaborative, and the individuals within, having a sense of ownership and buy-in to the reason for the establishment of the collaborative. Overall, Kezar (2005a), Whipple et al., and Mattessich and Monsey have several common components to collaboration: (a) a favorable political and social climate, a history of collaboration, or external pressure for collaboration can build commitment to the collaboration; (b) mutual respect, understanding, trust, networks, personal characteristics, and flexibility can influence the collaboration and commitment of its membership; (c) sharing a stake in processes and outcomes, integrating structures, and structural characteristics can contribute to the commitment of the collaboration; and (d) collective, concrete, attainable goals, mission, values, rewards and objectives, a shared vision, and a unique purpose can impact the sustainability of the collaboration.

**External collaboration for student services.** Little research has been done on external collaboration for enhanced services to students, and what has been researched is usually dealing with disabilities and counseling. Disabilities and counseling are two of many important services at the university that veterans need. Kitzrow (2003) conducted a study of counseling centers, and reported that 90% of centers “reserve the right to deny services to students whose mental health needs exceed the center’s treatment resources” (p. 176), yet only 41% refer to off-campus resources. This great disparity is but one reason for collaboration with external sources such as community-based counselors and
therapists. Similarly, in a study by Cawthon, Nichols, and Collier (2009), out of 78 universities with disability information online, only 10 refer students to other community resources for issues such as mental health.

In another study on collaborative efforts in student services, a survey of 100 community colleges, found administrators were concerned about substance abuse and have implemented programs and collaboration efforts to address them (Chiauzzi et al., 2011). They suggested campus-community coalitions are an area where colleges could gain resources to deal with substance abuse; only 30% of their respondents are currently using campus-community coalitions. Chiauzzi et al. (2011) concluded there is a need for improved collaboration by researchers, clinicians, state authorities, and institutions of higher education.

The Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD) approved a set of 27 program standards for disability services in 1999. Shaw and Dukes (2001) discussed the program standards that were designed to facilitate equal access to higher education for students with disabilities. There are only two standards that are labeled under collaboration; however, eight have collaborative undertones (see Table 2.2).

Disability is a primary theme among examples of external collaboration. A new collaboration process between university and human services agencies was created to help students become more independent and reach individual academic goals; this came out of one graduate student’s request for collaborative planning as a mechanism to address his intervention needs (Lechtenberger, Barnard-Brak, Sokolsky, & McCrary, 2012). This process included the following five major steps, (1) creating the team, (2) understanding the strengths and challenges of the student, (3) prioritizing actions, (4)
gaining support from the collaborative partners, and (5) receiving needed support (Lechtenberger et al., 2012). The results of this case study created the wraparound planning process, which shows the clear benefit that collaboration can achieve for student success.

Table 2.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AHEAD Program Standards where collaboration is implicit or specified.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Serve as an advocate for students with disabilities to ensure equal access.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Provide disability representation on relevant campus committees (e.g., academic standards, policy development).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Provide referral information to students with disabilities regarding available campus and community resources (e.g., assessment, counseling).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Provide consultation with faculty regarding academic accommodations, compliance with legal responsibilities, as well as instructional, programmatic, physical, and curriculum modifications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Provide consultations with administrators regarding academic accommodations, compliance with legal responsibilities, as well as instructional, programmatic, physical, and curriculum modifications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Provide individualized disability awareness training for campus constituencies (e.g., faculty, staff, and administrators).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2 Coordinate services for students with disabilities through full-time professional.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.2 Provide services by professional(s) with training and experience working with college students/adults with disabilities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. 1.1 and 1.2 listed under the heading “1. Consultation / Collaboration / Awareness” all others were listed under various headings, but the intent requires collaboration.

Another example of external collaboration for the benefit of students is exemplified in Adair (2001), where faculty and administrators worked with legislators and local welfare offices in order to create policies that will help to encourage single mothers to attend college. According to Adair (2001), “Collaborations between policymakers and postsecondary institutions are crucial to efforts to ensure that poor single mothers are able to access post-secondary education and its rewards” (p. 230). Additionally, there is a need for comprehensive social, academic, personal, family, and
career services in order to create an environment where they can succeed, which is best achieved through collaboration.

The above cases are examples that illustrate how collaboration between universities and external agencies, such as counselors, rehabilitation services, human services agencies, and others, may provide the extra support needed by students to be successful in the university system (Dillon, 2007). Additionally, Bernacchio, Ross, Washburn, Whitney, and Wood (2007), explained in their qualitative case study how faculty collaboration could be used as a tool to increase equity and access to higher education: “Our collaboration has forced each of us to make explicit what we teach, why we teach, and who might find our courses inaccessible…our collaboration led us to question taken-for-granted notions about academic standards, processes, goals, and collegial relationships” (p. 60). In other words, though traditions of higher education work within silos to education students and work to meet the needs they face, collaboration can breach these boundaries to make higher education accessible to more students.

As higher education institutions realize the importance and benefits of collaboration, including community partnerships, relationships will have to be developed with the stakeholders of the collaborative unit (Kezar, 2005b). The development of the collaborative unit will be the key to creating and retaining successful collaboration. Campus leaders will need to play a key role in fostering an environment where collaboration can occur.
Integrative Leadership to Address Student Veterans Needs

Colleges and universities need to address the needs, both unique and traditional, of student veterans. The goal of student affairs is to promote student success by supporting the needs of special populations within the student body (DiRamio et al., 2008). As more combat veterans are enrolling in college following service in OEF/OIF/OND, the need for support services is likely to grow. Colleges and universities can lead the initiative for veterans, and by ensuring their success in academia can catalyze a successful reintegration into civilian life as well (DiRamio & Spires, 2009).

There is currently no model for what universities should do to ease the transition of student veterans. Veterans offices on university campuses were one of the original institutions created to assist veterans returning from World War II to the college campus. Initially, funding from the Veterans Administration created the offices, and though many stayed even after the funding dried up, nearly as many closed. Student veteran organizations are also becoming more common on college campuses today as the number of student veterans continues to rise. Though no model exists, several studies seek to explore what colleges could do to support student veterans.

DiRamio et al. (2008), Rumann and Hamrick (2010), Vance and Miller (2009), and Zinger and Cohen (2010) discussed the need for collaboration in higher education for the benefit of veterans. Since integrative leadership promotes cooperative action across sectors to accomplish mutual goals (Crosby, 2008), which are needed for building coalitions (McMullen & Adobor, 2011), it can be used as a conceptual lens to determine how to assist student veterans as they reintegrate back into society and the university.
A holistic approach was recommended by DiRamio et al. (2008), suggesting that identifying veterans was key to coordinating services across campus departments; they also suggested that a mandatory orientation developed specifically for veterans should be utilized. Having a formal return process at the university or orientation for student veterans, both new and returning, would be of great benefit (Bauman, 2009).

Consequently, integrative leadership provides the conceptual framework to make these holistic approaches feasible, by coordinating across the campus and the community.

Rumann and Hamrick (2010) suggested student veterans could have better success in academia through seeking the company of other veterans, forming student groups, and accessing campus-based services; campuses cannot meet all student veteran needs in-house, rather they should initiate working partnerships with government or community resources. Collaboration between universities and nonprofits, government agencies, and others are helping to address many of the challenges that veterans face (Sander, 2012b). Informational social networks need to be encouraged (Smith-Osborne, 2009). In short, a more proactive method for identifying veterans and their disabilities is needed over the current reactive (self-identification) method (Vance & Miller, 2009).

Additional recommendations came from a study by Zinger and Cohen (2010). According to the study, recommendations were made to build a Veteran Center that would provide a central location for veterans to get information. Zinger and Cohen stated

This office could be partially staffed by student veterans and could be a storehouse of information pertinent to veterans, i.e. scholarship information, health benefits, etc. Veterans could get help filling out various forms from staff
members or get referrals to offices such as the counseling department, tutoring
department, or outside agencies. (p. 47)

They also recommended that student organizations or support groups should be
advertised and meet regularly. Counselors and health officials need to be trained and can
be pivotal in reintegration. Zinger and Cohen further suggested sensitivity training
workshops for students and faculty. In all, these recommendations emphasize the need for
higher education to enhance a range of services and resources available for student
veterans. These recommendations may or may not be consistent with the findings of the
present study.

Based on the above recommendations, student veterans should be proactively
identified in the university setting. By identifying veterans’ individual needs can be
assessed. Veterans could be enrolled in an orientation program that was specific to them.
For universities that already have an orientation program, setting aside specific sections
for veterans could be an option. Having a faculty member as an advisor could act as a
sounding board for veterans and may help to identify issues that veterans are facing
before they become major problems. A meaningful and lasting impression on the
experience of student veterans could be created by one individual connection (Bauman,
2009).

Through orientations and an advisor, veterans could be directed to benefits that
specifically meet their needs. Financial aid, counseling, disability support services,
academic advising, and institutional research offices should all be familiar with the needs
veterans may have in their departments, and the resources that they could provide to
veterans; for a sample list of resources available to veterans, see Appendix D. Student
organizations are also important resources for veterans. Veterans should be informed of
organizations related to their field of study as well as any veteran organizations that may
exist on campus.

Many recommendations have been made for higher education in addressing the
needs of student veterans (DiRamio et al., 2008; Rumann & Hamrick, 2010; Vance &
Miller, 2009; Zinger & Cohen, 2010). Though none uses the terminology “integrative
leadership,” it is clear that to implement a majority of these recommendations, integrative
leadership would be an ideal framework. Whether it is internal collaboration (e.g.,
between various departments, student and academic services, faculty and students, etc.)
or external collaboration (e.g., referral to outside entities such as the VA, counseling, or
disability support services), integrative leadership could allow higher education to meet
more student veteran needs with fewer resources. Additionally, through integrative
leadership, formal and informal leaders involved in student veterans’ services can work
to better the experiences of veterans in higher education.

Summary

Combat veterans have various reasons for joining the military, and even more
varied experiences; this creates unique reintegration issues upon their return from
combat. In higher education, veterans have unique characteristics that set them apart from
the traditional student, as well as challenges that are specific to their veteran status.
Integrative leadership theory is a process in which diverse groups and organizations are
brought together to resolve complex public problems. Higher education is already
participating in collaborative efforts for other student populations (e.g., disability student
services and counseling). Integrative leadership can be used in higher education to
collaborate between higher education and public, private, and nonprofit agencies, such as the VA, counselors, and Wounded Warriors®, in order to meet the needs of student veterans. In light of the need for collaboration, a study detailing the experiences of student veterans and the services being provided by the university is necessary, which is detailed in Chapter 3.
Chapter 3 Research Perspective, Methodology, and Methods

This chapter presents the topics of paradigm, epistemology, and ontology of the researcher and links them to the chosen methodology. The methodology and methods are discussed including the pilot study, data collection plan, and data analysis plan. The chapter concludes with a discussion of positioning, biases, and ethical issues, including my role as the researcher, and trustworthiness and credibility of the research methods.

As a military spouse, I believe the needs of our returning combat veterans need to be addressed. The purpose of this study is “to understand the experiences of combat veterans in higher education institutions in Arkansas, explore how integrative leadership could assist in the reintegration of OEF/OIF/OND combat veterans in institutions of higher education in Arkansas, and recognize what higher education can do to assist student veterans.” The research questions considered were:

1. What are student veterans’ needs in higher education in Arkansas (i.e., emotional needs, physical needs, educational needs, psychological needs)?
2. How is higher education anticipating the needs of veterans and responding?
   a. What structures are in place to assist veterans?
   b. What services are being provided by the university?
   c. How accessible are the resources?
3. How well is higher education addressing the needs of veterans?
   a. What has fostered veterans’ reintegration through higher education?
   b. What has hindered veterans’ reintegration through higher education?
4. Given the stated need for collaboration in the literature, how is the use of integrative leadership evident in Arkansas as expressed by the needs of veterans?

a. Based on the structures that are in place, would integrative leadership prove useful to assist combat veterans entering higher education?

Crosby and Bryson’s (2010) definition of integrative public leadership led to the development of research question four in order to address the complex public problem of veteran reintegration in order to achieve the common good. In 1965, Pope Paul VI, in the Gaudium et spes, stated that the common good is the “conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfillment…[and that] every social group must take account of the needs and legitimate aspirations of other groups” (Vatican Council, 1965, no. 26). The primary application of integrative leadership to this study occurs in Chapter 6 during the discussion of the thematic analysis in relation to the literature.

I lean toward the social constructivist worldview, which is consistent with the qualitative phenomenological case study approach I employ. In this chapter I discuss paradigm, epistemology, and ontology as they relate to me and my research. I also discuss the methodology and methods that I employ, including data collection and analysis processes, and positioning, biases, and ethical issues related to this study. This chapter concludes with a discussion of trustworthiness and credibility as related to data collection and analysis.
Paradigm, Epistemology, and Ontology

A paradigm involves issues related to ontology and epistemology that combine to guide the researcher to the research question and methods selected for a study; the pursuit of knowledge that is defined by the philosophy of science incorporates these beliefs or assumptions (Mack, 2010; Ponterotto, 2005). To understand the interactions that occur between ontology, epistemology, and paradigm, it is crucial to understand the meanings behind each of these words. For my purposes, I define ontology as “one’s view of reality and being…[in other words] what we mean when we say something exists” (Mack, 2010, p. 5); epistemology is “the study of understanding how we know what we know” (Capella, n.d.), and paradigm, using Filstead’s definition (as cited in Ponterotto, 2005, p. 127), is a “set of interrelated assumptions about the social world which provides a philosophical and conceptual framework for the organized study of the world.”

A research paradigm creates the framework for the study. According to Ponterotto (2005), in order to conceptualize their research, researchers must realize and incorporate a “paradigmatic schema” (p. 128). I hold an interpretivist paradigm, also referred to as constructivism. Interpretivists emphasize the construction of meaning at the individual and collective levels (Mack, 2010). The goal of research from an interpretivist’s paradigm is to understand meaning as created by the research participants rather than to collect objective facts (Loseke, 2013), by which the researcher attempts to understand the experiences of the participants.

Similarly, from an epistemological perspective, interpretivists maintain that reality is socially constructed (Ponteroto, 2005). Epistemologically, I lean toward the social constructivist worldview, which is consistent with the qualitative
phenomenological approach I employed. According to Creswell (2009), “Social constructivists hold assumptions that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work” (p. 8). Social constructivism is also explained in the Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy as a view that “claim[s] that knowledge is the product of our social practices and institutions…[whereby] social factors shape [our] interpretations of the world” (Audi, 1995, p. 855). It is my belief that knowledge is subjective, and the “truth” that is one’s belief lies in the social boundaries vis-à-vis individual experiences. In other words, people, including my participants, construct meaning of a particular experience based on past experiences, social influences, culture, and interactions with the world; the experience one holds today may be viewed differently tomorrow. Therefore, statements on what is believed to be true or false are bound by context, space, and time (Chilisa, 2012).

According to Cohen et al. (as cited in Mack, 2010, p. 8), the role of the qualitative researcher is to “understand, explain, and demystify social reality though the eyes of different participants,” whereby the process is focused on gaining a deeper understanding of the experiences of the participants, rather than to explain why they had the experiences. Knowledge is gained from personal experiences, inductively, and from situations allowing for multiple people to have different interpretations of the same event, and though experiences are shaped by society, individuals still must create meaning in their environments (Loseke, 2013; Mack, 2010).

Ponterotto (2005) recommended the researcher must state their guiding paradigm, methodology and personal experience and expectations in order for the study to be effectively evaluated. I seek to learn veterans’ experiences in higher education in
Arkansas, what universities are doing to meet the needs that student veterans face, and subsequently, how integrative leadership can be used to assist higher education with meeting the needs of student veterans. The goal of the research is to draw from the views of the participants of the study (Creswell, 2009). By this, I attempt to gain understanding of the experiences of veterans in the college and university environment in Arkansas as well as an understanding of the services and resources available at the universities. From this, I made recommendations to colleges and universities about additional programs and services that could be offered through collaboration to better assist veterans in the transition from combat to campus.

**Methodology and Methods**

This study employed a qualitative research design. There are many definitions of qualitative research; for this study I will use a definition provided by Creswell (2014):

*Qualitative research* is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures; collecting data in the participants’ setting; analyzing the data inductively, building from particulars to general themes; and making interpretations of the meanings of data. The final written report has a flexible writing structure. (p. 4)

Qualitative research typically focuses on words rather than numbers. Additionally, philosophical assumptions, research methodology, and research methods show clear distinctions between qualitative and quantitative research (Creswell, 2014).

Phenomenology is the study of phenomena, literally “appearances as opposed to reality” (Smith, 2013, From Phenomena to Phenomenology section, para. 2). Latin and
German versions of the word were introduced as early at the 16th century; however, pieces of the philosophy can be traced back to Descartes’ ideal that the mind rationally creates “clear and distinct ideas” (as cited in Smith, 2013, From Phenomena to Phenomenology section, para. 5). Although the roots of phenomenology can be traced back to Descartes, phenomenology did not become prominent until the 20th century.

Phenomenology as a research perspective was introduced by Edmund Husserl at the turn of the century, when he combined the philosophical and psychological theories of phenomenology. Husserl developed the method of epoché (bracketing) that is widely used in phenomenology today, by which one must bracket their experience to the experience itself and not to the world, because one does not know that the world exists, nor do they know if their experience actually existed within the world (Beyer, 2013; Smith, 2013). Husserl (1913) defined phenomenology as “the science of the essence of consciousness” (as cited in Smith, 2013, The History and Varieties of Phenomenology section, para. 4).

The latter half of the 20th century is viewed as the time when phenomenology developed and was recognized as a research methodology. There have been challenges to overcome in gaining this recognition. Van Manen (1990) summarized these challenges by comparing them to the quantitative method of research that pervaded the time. He stated that precision, exactness, and rigor are elements of research that must be met regardless of the type of research employed or the methodology used. It has been the work of scholars such as Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Heidegger, Sartre, and others, who have given shape to phenomenology, and established it beyond an element of philosophy to a method of discovery. Moustakas (1994) has perhaps the most beneficial description of how
phenomenological research can be done empirically. He refers to it as transcendental phenomenology, and details it in his book *Phenomenological Research Methods*. Moustakas leaned heavily on the philosophical underpinnings that were established at the turn of the century by Husserl and Merleau-Ponty. According to Moustakas, the phenomenological approach involves reflecting upon experience, which provides the basis for reflective analysis in order to understand the essences behind those experiences. The process seeks to explain the phenomenon based on the current perceptions (meaning the perceptions may change over time) of the participants. This process helps us understand what an experience means for the person who experienced it, so that it may be described completely.

In Moustakas’ method after the primary data is collected, typically through interviews, thematic analysis is done in a continuous cycle of writing, reflecting, and rewriting. The cycle is intended so that the researcher may attempt to grasp the meaning that is given to the experience by each participant. It is important that researchers maintain their orientation and understanding of their relationship with the subject while considering not only the parts of the phenomenon, but the experience as a whole as well.

Phenomenology was the best methodological lens for this study. Coupling phenomenology with the case study methodology helped to ensure a better understanding of the issues higher education is facing in assisting student veterans with reintegration. The selection of a case study design was based on “the nature of the research problem and the questions being asked” (Merriam, 1998, p. 41). Due to the desire to understand a specific issue, problem, or concern, the intent of the study showed the need for an instrumental design (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 1995). In this study, the problem is that
higher education needs to find a solution to addressing the issues that student veterans face.

Case study research is a way by which to understand the problem by investigating it from multiple perspectives (Merriam, 1998). It involves an attempt to gain an in-depth understanding of the case or phenomenon with the intent to understand a specific issue, problem, or concern (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 1995), which led to the development of two interview groups: student veterans, to understand the problem of reintegration, and veterans’ services coordinators, to understand what steps are being taken to address the problem of reintegration.

This study is a descriptive case study aimed at presenting a complete description of the phenomenon of student veterans in higher education (Yin, 2014). Additionally, this study can be classified as a collective or multi-site case study (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2014) wherein three separate sites (universities) were studied (See Figure 3.1). This allowed for both within-case and cross-case analysis. (For further elaboration, see Data Analysis Procedures later in this chapter.)

Case study research began in the 1920s in the fields of anthropology and sociology (Creswell, 2013). According to Creswell (2013), Yin, Merriam, and Stake are the pivotal works by which case study research should be understood. Case study design has had popularity in psychology, medicine, law, political science, anthropology, and sociology.

According to Yin (2014) after the collection of data, in this case interviews, thematic analysis is done. This is consistent with the phenomenological method presented by Moustakas, with the addition of a case description. This was to further enhance the
understanding of the phenomenon. Additionally, after the completion of the within-case analysis cross-case analysis can occur—this allows for a richer exploration of the phenomenon as analysis moves from the particular of each case to more general understanding.

![Case Study Design](image)

*Figure 3.1. Case Study Design.*

**Pilot Study**

With IRB approval, I was granted permission to complete a pilot study. (The IRB approval, the interview protocol, and the informed consent for the pilot study can be found in Appendix E.) Through the pilot study, three interviews were conducted with combat veterans at a single state university, Allegiant University. A signed informed consent was obtained prior to each interview. Participants included one female and two males; two were enlisted in the Marine Corps, and one was enlisted in the Army. Transcription, coding, and analysis revealed several themes, including: the need for social interaction among veterans, a sense that their experiences are not those of other veterans, and that age rather than combat experience led to their college experiences.
Social Interaction

All three participants noted that there was a need for increased social interaction, particularly with other student veterans. Sarah stated, “In the Marine Corps you always had your battle buddy …now I’m in my apartment by myself with my dog, and it took me a long time to [get used to being alone]. I was scared because I’m not used to walking into a living room and it being empty or walking into the kitchen and it being empty. There was always somebody in every room, and you feel, you have that camaraderie.” She also said, “I think that as far as the networking with the military on campus, because there are so many, I think that should have been stronger.” According to Chris one of the things he has done to overcome the challenges he has faced as a student veteran was to “meet other veterans, and just kinda see….you cross paths with other veterans, and then y’all can together have a bond of friendship. You can tackle things together.” Justin feels like he is anti-social. Upon discussing the student veterans association that is present at Allegiant, Justin said he doesn’t “have the want to go to those” because “[he’s] anti-social real bad. I get nervous in crowds still. I always sit in the back of the classroom.” In short, veterans need interactions and typically feel more relaxed around other veterans, but a challenge still persists in helping them to feel comfortable reaching out.

Exclusive Experience

The participants in this study seemed to feel that even though there are numerous other combat veterans in college today, the experiences they are having at the university are unique only to themselves and do not apply to other combat veterans. For example, when asked about if his needs as a veteran were being met, Chris said, “Sure, yes. I’m local so I have. I go home to my parents’ house after class every day. I don’t stay on
campus. I don’t live in the dorms, so I don’t have that connection to the campus as much as if I went to school in the place that I have no ties to.” Similarly, when asked if the University could do something to help in the transition, Justin stated, “I don’t think so really. It’s just kind of a personal issue you know, unless you could just put a class with all combat veterans or something but that would never work, or veterans period.” Sarah said, “I didn’t know anybody, so it took me a long time to make friends because I thought I was different than everybody I guess, so it took me a long time to [make friends].” Overall, participants in the pilot study did not feel like their veteran status caused them to have unique needs or challenges, but rather that was just created because of their personal circumstances or personalities.

**Age versus Combat**

All participants believed age was a bigger factor in the differences they felt with traditional students rather than combat experience. Justin said his experience as a college student post deployment was “hard. I don’t know if it’s necessarily post deployment or just my age now after the military. I think that deployment matures you too, faster than obviously not. And me being 25 now, with a combat deployment, it just makes me feel like, I…I’m separated a lot from the students here.” Chris said that his needs are unique, less because of his veteran status, and were based “more age wise. You’re older. You’re probably going to be married with kids. I’m not saying everyone’s that way. That’s the biggest difference I’ve seen, that I’ve noticed that some of them are—we come back with baggage. It’s basically the baggage of a family, or God forbid disabilities.” Thus, there remains a consistent thread where participants did not consider veteran identity as a factor in their educational experiences.
Modification of Interview Protocol Based on Lessons Learned

The results and analysis of the transcripts have led to some revision of the interview protocol. Questions added include the following:

1. To preserve your anonymity, I will assign you a pseudonym instead of your given name. What would you like that pseudonym to be? Tell me why you chose that particular name.

2. Do you identify yourself as a veteran when interacting with other students, faculty, or staff on campus? Why/Why not?

3. Has there been a time since you enrolled at college when someone on campus said something about the military that offended you or you disagreed with? Tell me about this experience.

It has also become apparent that participant selection is crucial. I personally knew two of the participants, and that seemed to stifle discussion rather than enhance it. I believe that is because the participants felt like I already knew part of the information that I was asking and neglected to repeat it on the record. The remaining participant is in my spouse’s unit. I believe this may have hindered his openness with me, for fear that I would report any negative findings to his command. Because of this it became vital that participants understand my relationship to the military while making sure I do not have a direct connection to them.

Data Collection Procedures

In order to develop an in-depth understanding of the case, the researcher cannot rely on a single source of data, so multiple forms were used (Creswell, 2013). This led to the development of two interview groups: student veterans, to understand the problem,
and veterans’ services coordinators, to understand what steps are being taken to address the problem. Interview data were collected through the use of notes and audio recording of each interview. A semi-structured interview took place; lasting approximately thirty minutes to one hour (see Appendices F and G for the interview protocols). The data were then fully transcribed by Vanan Services for further analysis following the protocol set forth by Moustakas (1994).

The interview protocol for student veterans grouped questions into two primary sections, a description of service section as background and to connect with the participant, and a college experience section to gain insight into the perceptions of the participants regarding the needs they had beginning with the enrollment process through the present. The interview protocol for veterans’ services administrators was grouped into two primary sections, a description of structures and services offered at the university and a section on personal experience with veterans to gain insight into the perceptions of the needs that veterans face through the lens of a higher education administrator.

The literature and integrative leadership defined several of the research questions and the interview protocols. The student veteran interview protocol was primarily developed from the literature and focused on the experiences of student veterans, their needs, available resources, and suggestions. The veterans’ services coordinators interview protocol was developed as a complement to the student veteran’s and additionally incorporated aspects of collaboration related to integrative leadership, advocates for student veterans, and accessibility to resources. For example, integrative leadership specifically defined the veterans’ services coordinators question: “What services provided are a result of collaboration with entities outside the university?” Furthermore,
the question “What types of things could the university do to help meet some needs that student veterans face” prompted discussion of the need for both internal and external collaboration.

Participants, Population, and Sampling

The site for the study included three 4-year public universities in Arkansas. The sites included one university each from central, eastern, and western Arkansas. Each of the sites has hosted an Army Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) program, though only two currently host one. Additionally, all of the sites are considered “medium” universities, defined as having between 5,000 and 15,000 students (College Size, n.d.).

There were two separate groups of participants, student veterans and veterans’ services coordinators.

For the first group, nine student veterans were interviewed; an attempt was made to obtain three at each site. However, due to availability and willingness of students, the sites had two, three, and four student veterans, respectively. The interviews lasted between 30 minutes and one hour initially with follow-up discussions occurring as needed. The participants were prequalified by veterans’ service coordinators.

Participants, in order to qualify, must have been enrolled at one of the three 4-year universities in Arkansas included in the study; they must have served in combat in Iraq or Afghanistan as a member of the armed forces. They also must be separated from active duty, although membership in the National Guard or Reserves did not disqualify them. Additionally, branch of service, rank or grade, and student classification, undergraduate or graduate, were not cause for exclusion. The interviews occurred at the school in which the student was enrolled.
Non-probability purposive sampling was used to select the research participants of the first group (Trochim, 2006). This is to ensure that the participants meet the qualifications of the research project, including but not limited to combat service and separation status. In order to gain access to the individuals, key officials at the various educational institutions were used to identify participants who meet the qualifications. In order to gain access to the student veterans, identifying key officials who are viewed as trusted sources helped to open communication lines.

As part of the second participant group, at least one administrator from each university was interviewed. The participants were either veterans’ service coordinators, the equivalent if not available, or their designee. There were no disqualifiers, but preference was for administrators who have worked directly with military personnel that meet the above criteria for inclusion of veterans.

Non-probability purposive sampling was used to select the research participants of the second group (Trochim, 2006); since the group has been predefined as administrators or officials responsible for assisting veterans with benefit obtainment. This was to ensure that the appropriate people at each institution are chosen. These were some of the same officials who helped identify participants in the first group.

**Data Analysis Procedures**

Analysis began as transcripts became available. Figure 3.2 shows the multiple levels of analysis that were completed. Within-case analysis was conducted first, including student veterans for each case (university) as a group, followed by an analysis comparing student veterans with the veterans’ services coordinators at the respective university. This was done independently for each case (university) (see Chapter 4).
Cross-case analysis considering student veterans and Veterans’ Services Coordinators across all cases or universities was conducted (see Chapter 5). Finally, a discussion of the overall picture, including both interview groups and all case sites occurred (see Chapter 6).

Research question one, “What are student veterans’ needs in higher education in Arkansas? (i.e., emotional needs, physical needs, educational needs, psychological needs)” is addressed during both within-case and cross-case analysis using the voice of the veteran. Additionally, Veterans Services Coordinators may provide additional insight.
into the needs of student veterans. The second research question on the response to the needs of student veterans by higher education, along with the sub-questions on structures, services, and resources is also addressed during both within-case and cross-case analysis. The third and fourth research questions are addressed when the study as a whole is considered in Chapter 5. The fourth research question, in particular, is discussed in Chapter 6.

Initially, within-case analysis was done where student veterans’ stated needs and the perceived shortcomings of the university’s provision of those needs were compared to the stated services and resources provided by the university per the veterans’ services coordinators. Subsequently, cross-case analysis was done. The phenomenological methodology is focused on what case study methodology would call cross-case analysis where themes are developed across all cases.

Case study analysis took place including within-case and cross-case analysis; cross-case analysis followed the phenomenological process of Moustakas. According to Moustakas (1994), data analysis is a five-stage process:

1. horizonalize the data
2. list meaning
3. cluster into themes
4. create textural descriptions of the experience
5. support with specific examples

The first stage of the analysis process in phenomenology is done using complete transcripts for each participant. Every relevant expression of the experience is recorded; Moustakas calls this process *horizonalization*. Horizonalization is process where the
researcher places equal value on every statement (Merriam, 2009; Moustakas, 1994). The understanding is that every time an experience is relived, a different view of the experience is created; the meaning that is extrapolated by the researcher is then listed. To assist with this process, inductive data analysis was used to condense raw text data into a summary format. After reviewing the audio recordings and interview transcripts several times, I wrote a comprehensive summary for each participant, noting the needs of the student veterans and ways they believed the university helped, could help, or could improve.

The second stage in the data analysis process includes bracketing and phenomenological reduction; horizons that represent invariant constituents are created. Invariant constituents are participants who share similar themes. Invariant constituents must give enough detail to understand the experience while also being able to summarize and label it. The third stage is clustering of invariant constituents to form themes (Moustakas, 1994), and extracting general and unique themes from all of the interviews to make a composite summary (Groenewald, 2004). Both themes that held true across all or most participants and unique themes were used to make a composite summary for each case and each category.

In addition to the process associated with phenomenology, thematic analysis further allows for a social constructivist to articulate meaning in a way that “description of social ‘facts’ or observations seem to emerge” (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 144). Thematic analysis is a process for encoding information from qualitative research (Boyatzis, 1998). The data were initially themed based on categories developed from the research questions, with the allowance of additional themes to emerge.
The fourth stage of the analysis process is to create *individual textural descriptions* and *individual structural descriptions* (Moustakas, 1994). Imaginative variation was used to seek possible meaning of the themes by varying the frames of reference and approaching the phenomenon from various perspectives. The process of imaginative variation enables the researcher to derive structural themes from the textural descriptions (Moustakas, 1994). Textural descriptions are text-based depictions of the experiences; structural descriptions try to explain why or how feelings regarding the experience exist; together the textural-structural description represents the meaning and essence of the experience. Imaginative variation allowed me to imaginatively vary the experience, in this case of student veterans, based on the understanding of the experiences of the participants I examined. This allowed me to achieve a full range of the types of experiences of student veterans. The fifth stage involved the construction of the meanings and essences of the experience for each participant individually as well as a composite description for the group as a whole. This was then reconsidered in light of the within-case analysis for validity. Specific examples were pulled from the interview transcripts to demonstrate themes explicitly. Analysis enabled clear links between the research objectives and the summary to be established.

Since this research involves human subjects, Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained prior to the start of data collection. According to documents provided by the IRB at UCA, “Research activities that (1) present no more than minimal risk to human research participants, and (2) involve only procedures listed in one or more of the following categories may be reviewed by the Institutional Review Board through the expedited review procedure.” The IRB further defines minimal risk as the expectation
“that the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research are not greater in and of themselves from those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests.” Based on the descriptions provided by the University of Central Arkansas IRB, this study qualified for expedited review because it does not exceed the minimal risk definition, and the procedures followed meet the requirements listed in category 7, specifically, “research employing…interview methodologies.” A signed informed consent (see Appendices H and I) was obtained from all research participants, which included the voluntary nature of participation and the right to stop at any point, the purpose and procedures for the interview including confidentiality, and the risk/benefits of participation. Additionally, institutional approval was obtained for each university involved in the study.

Data will be kept in a secured location, in the LEAD office at the University of Central Arkansas, for at least three years following the completion of this study. Electronic records will be kept in a secure, password-protected environment and paper records, when necessary, will be kept in a locked file drawer. Only the researcher and necessary advisors will have access to raw data. Upon determination that the data are no longer necessary, paper records will be shredded and destroyed, and electronic records will be securely and permanently deleted.

**Positioning, Biases, and Ethical Issues**

I am in a unique position with regard to this study, in that it is neither emic nor etic research but both at the same time. As a military spouse, I am not a true insider to the world of the combat veteran; however, because I have lived through a deployment and the return of my spouse, I am not considered an outsider to the combat veteran either.
From the emic point of view, I must remain careful to put aside any assumptions I may have and allow the participants and data to speak. From the etic point of view, I use existing theory and conceptual frameworks to see if they apply to the setting of the student combat veteran. I also work with student veterans on a regular basis as an academic advisor in one program at a four-year institution in Arkansas; however, I am not privileged to the view of the veterans’ services coordinator, as I do not work with students regarding services and resources available to them outside of the departmental academic environment. My work as an academic advisor has provided insight into some of the difficulties that student veterans face at four-year public institutions in Arkansas.

Additionally, my work with veterans through various community organizations has allowed me to see the importance of collaboration between all parties. Because of this I believe that I will find a need for integrative leadership. I must remain cognizant of any assumptions I may have and continually set them aside in order to allow the participants and data to speak for itself.

In consideration of ethical concerns with the research participants, their identity will remain confidential. Each participant as well as each university has a pseudonym in order to best protect the identity of the participants. Additionally, careful review of the informed consent with each participant helped them to understand the study, the expectations, and reduce potential for misrepresentation on the part of the researcher.

**Trustworthiness**

Each interview, after transcription, was summarized and then validated by the participant, with modification made when necessary; verbatim transcripts were not given to the participants for validation, but rather a summarization was offered that reflected the
researcher’s understanding of the experiences of the participant. Reliability of the research included checking and rechecking the transcripts against the recordings and continually checking code definitions. Validity of the research is accomplished using rich, thick descriptions of the findings, including discrepant information, and the use of an external auditor.

**Triangulation**

Environmental and data triangulation were employed. According to Guion, Diehl, and McDonald (2011),

[environmental] triangulation involves the use of different locations, settings, and other key factors related to the environment in which the study took place…The key is identifying which environmental factors, if any, might influence the information that is received during the study. These environmental factors are changed to see if the findings are the same across settings. If the findings remain the same under varying environmental conditions, then validity has been established. (p.2)

As such, different locations (i.e., institutions of higher education) were used to validate the data. Additionally, data triangulation was used. Data triangulation uses different sources (i.e., multiple groups) to review areas of agreement or divergence (Guion et al., 2011). In this study, the two groups were the student veterans and the veterans’ services coordinators.

**Summary**

Higher education has a growing necessity to understand the needs of student veterans as more veterans are choosing higher education following military service in a
combat arena. With the limited resources available in public higher education, collaboration with existing entities must occur in order to ensure student veterans’ needs are being met. Through this study the needs of veterans were explored. Additionally, this study reviewed the current services and resources available for veterans at higher education institutions, including those that were part of collaborations with the veterans’ services office. The findings of the study consider the integrative leadership model and ways that it can be used to meet the needs of student veterans in higher education. The outcomes of this study present colleges and universities in Arkansas with the information to enable them to better assist student veterans.
This chapter presents an analysis of the data collected during the research process. Data analysis began as transcripts became available. The chapter describes the data analysis process, followed by a description of the categories. Each participant is looked at in light of the categories, and a case summary is given for each case.

Within-case analysis is the first data analysis technique used (Eisenhardt, 1989). Interviews of both groups, student veterans and veterans’ services coordinators, within the same university were reviewed to identify patterns within the institution. After reviewing the audio recordings and interview transcripts several times, a short synthesis of the needs of the student veterans and ways they believed the university helped, could help, or could improve, was written for each participant. This summary was also used in the process of member checking, whereby interview participants were asked to review, clarify, and correct (if needed) the summary to ensure accuracy of the representation of their stories. According to Stake (1995), member checking occurs when the researcher asks a participant to examine the analysis and reflect on its accuracy.

Upon verification of the summaries, each case (university) was reviewed across groups to identify patterns. A case write up was then completed for each organization. According to Eisenhardt, within-case analysis “typically involves detailed case study write-ups for each site” (1898, p. 540). Chapter 5 discusses the thematic analysis process and cross-case analysis, which was conducted using themes that developed from the categories, established from the research questions, with the allowance of additional themes to emerge. These themes were helpful in comparing similarities and differences across cases.
Categories

Categories were established from the research questions, and from the interview guide based upon the review of literature. The categories allow for a composite view of student veterans. Three primary categories were developed: needs and challenges; support and resources; and suggestions and advice. Most of the themes that emerged during analysis fell into one of these categories, previewed below.

Needs and Challenges

The needs of veterans are as varied as their experiences. Their needs can range from personal, to student, to veteran. Needs typically come from their unique characteristics, such as age, family, and deployment; and become additionally complex when considering their challenges such as disabilities. According to the literature, common challenges faced by veterans in higher education included accelerated enrollments, academic demands, socialization with peers, and limited access to institutional services (DiRamio et al., 2008; Ostovary & Dapprich, 2011). Additional challenges in the literature include receiving educational benefits and credit for military training, relearning study skills, and managing anger and stress.

Support and Resources

It takes a variety of resources to meet the needs that student veterans face. For the purpose of this study, resources were considered as structures that are in place at the university to assist veterans, including services provided by the university, outside sources, and systems of support for veterans. These resources can be a part of existing services offered by the university for all students, resources specifically provided for student veterans, or referral to other organizations that may provide a service not offered,
or not offered at an advanced level, by the university. Additional considerations include accessibility of resources, knowledge of existing resources, and reluctance to proactively seek resources.

**Suggestions and Advice**

Not every need may be met with existing resources. As such, student veterans and veterans services coordinators alike were asked how the university could better meet the needs of student veterans. These suggestions, along with the information reported in the literature review, allowed for recommendations to be made for universities in Arkansas in Chapter 6 of this study. Like the needs faced by veterans, the suggestions offered vary; however, there are several suggestions that are reiterated throughout both interview groups and across cases. This indicates the needs of student veterans, though varied, may be more universal than they appear.

**Case Analysis**

Three cases were chosen for this study. Each case was a different university: one from eastern Arkansas, one from central Arkansas, and one from western Arkansas. Additionally, each was a medium-size, four-year, public university. There were two separate groups of participants, student veterans and veterans’ services coordinators. In each case, at least one of the veterans’ services coordinators was a U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs School Certifying official. Each case was looked at independently of the others.

Initially, each interview transcript was reviewed and analyzed thematically. Then an analysis for each participant was written through the lenses of needs and challenges; support and resources; and suggestions and advice; additionally, background information
was included. Table 4.1 shows the demographics for the student veteran participants, while Table 4.2 shows the demographics for the veterans’ services coordinators. Next, the participants were viewed in light of each other within their group, either student veterans or veterans’ services coordinators, and then also across groups to identify patterns. A case summary was then written for each case, comparing the descriptions received from university personnel with that of the student veterans.
Table 4.1
Student Veteran Participant Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Branch</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Race / Ethnicity</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Years of Service</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daniel</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Navy</td>
<td>HON</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>E6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Army</td>
<td>DMR</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>E5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donald</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Army</td>
<td>NG</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>E5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorothy</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Marines</td>
<td>DMR</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>E7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>Army</td>
<td>RET</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>E4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Army</td>
<td>NG</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>E7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Army</td>
<td>NG</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>E5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Marines / Army</td>
<td>HON</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>E6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Army</td>
<td>HON</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>E5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Army</td>
<td>HON</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>E5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Army</td>
<td>HON</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>E5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Army</td>
<td>HON</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>E5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Daniel, David, Donald, and Dorothy are students at Diamond State College; James, Joe, and John are students at Joyner State College; Robert is a student at Rosewood State College. Statuses: HON=Honorable; DMR=Disabled and Medically Retired; NG=National Guard; RET=Retired.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Military Connection</th>
<th>VETS Years</th>
<th>HiEd Years</th>
<th>SS Years</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deborah</td>
<td>Veteran 's Representative</td>
<td>Admissions, Records &amp; Registration</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Rose and Donna are at Diamond State College. Jennifer is at Joyner State College, and Rebecca and Rose are at Rosewood State College. Deborah and Donna are at Diamond State College. Jennifer is at Joyner State College, and Rebecca and Rose are at Rosewood State College.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donna</td>
<td>Director, Veterans Center</td>
<td>Department of Nursing and Health Professions</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>None: Deborah and Donna are at Diamond State College. Jennifer is at Joyner State College, and Rebecca and Rose are at Rosewood State College. Abbreviations: VETS=Years working with veterans; HiEd=Years working in higher education; SS=Years working in student services. Deborah, Jennifer, and Rose are the authorized VA School Certifying Officials, for their respective universities. Donna and Rebecca are advocates who work directly with veterans, but they cannot certify students' enrollment for VA compensation. Rebecca and Donna are at Diamond State College.Jennifer is at Joyner State College, and Rebecca and Rose are at Rosewood State College. Please note that Deborah and Donna are at Diamond State College. Jennifer is at Joyner State College, and Rebecca and Rose are at Rosewood State College.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Case 1: “Joyner State College”

Joyner State College is located near one of the major military training facilities in the state. Joyner State College is positioned to provide services to a large number of military personnel, both Active Duty and National Guard. Joyner State College is host to an Army ROTC program and has a Student Veteran Organization. There are approximately 450 veterans utilizing VA educational benefits annually.

Veterans’ services coordinator “Jennifer.” A school certifying official, Jennifer has worked in higher education for 10 years and with veterans specifically for eight years. Jennifer is a Caucasian female. Her grandfather served in Vietnam, and she was familiar with the benefits available from his service, but has no other connections to the military. “I’m not military myself. My grandfather was a Lieutenant Colonel in the Army. He served in Vietnam….my mom was a military brat.” Jennifer admits to interacting daily with student veterans.

Needs and challenges. According to Jennifer, veterans have many needs, one of the biggest being structure: “Veteran students really, really need structure; that is the way that they operate. Everything is very structured, and they like precise and clear instructions. They don’t like a lot of gray areas.” An additional area that poses challenges is dealing with traditional-aged students.

One of the difficulties they have is…discussions in class on topics of war or anything like that, where the young, traditional student is coming in and they’ve never experienced anything. So their opinion and their worldview are so very different than the veteran who has been shot at, wounded, and has been in the middle of who knows what and seen death.
Frustration can occur when they are unable to receive answers to questions they have, and when faculty and staff fail to be aware of veterans and their needs: “I have talked to veteran students who have expressed a very deep frustration in infrastructure, asking questions and not getting the answer.”

Jennifer also told the story of one student veteran’s difficult experience on Veteran’s Day:

It was brought up in class that it was Veteran’s Day. Somebody asked why the flags were at half-staff, and the instructor didn’t even know why. The instructor said, “Oh, well, you know, that is just for the Korean, World War I, World War II, all those veterans.” And the student said, “We have Veteran’s Day, and we’ve been at war for years, and we’re still at war. We have veterans everyday coming out of the army. Veterans my age, I’m a veteran.” And it bothered him that a faculty member only thought of veterans as older people from World War I to the Korean War, Vietnam, that sort of thing. They weren’t recognizing that we have veterans that are in their 20s right now. I think that is something that bothers them, and it is a struggle.

Jennifer discussed that one way to meet the needs of student veterans and the challenges that they face could be educating faculty and staff, along with providing other resources.

Support and resources. Jennifer stated there are structures in place to assist veterans, and the university wants to assist veterans: “I think that the support is one hundred percent here on campus, from the top down, that they support our military and they want to do everything they can.” The university has tutoring services, a disabilities office, and career services. Jennifer reflected, “When I first came here there really was
zero communication between offices with regard to veteran students.” Jennifer has been collaborating across campus to help other offices and faculty understand the needs of student veterans, specifically to maintain eligibility for benefits. “So I started having meetings with the Registrar, Director of Admissions, Director of Advisement, Vice-Chancellor of Enrollment Management, Financial Aid Director, and Director of Finance.” Additionally she has begun collaboration efforts with outside entities to increase the services available to student veterans. For example one organization hosted a workshop to help “our veteran students with improving their skills for interviewing for a job, and one of those is taking their resume and…changing it a bit so that the military skills that they’ve acquired translate into civilian terms.” Although the resources and services available for student veterans are beginning to increase on this campus, Jennifer suggested ways by which to meet their needs.

**Suggestions and advice.** Jennifer offered several suggestions for how the university can work to better meet student veterans’ needs, including the creation of a Veterans Center, which currently does not exist on campus.

I want to have a student Veterans Center or veteran resource center or something like that. A place, somewhere on campus, that houses computers and lockers and has a couch and refrigerator and whatever they need for them to come in. They can study; they can hold their student veteran organization meetings; they can meet with different counselors that they need to meet with from the VA. Just that space that’s available specifically for those veteran students, and that is the ultimate goal.
She also recommended the formation of a Student Veterans Organization, which was established this year. The establishment of a tracking system could collect data on the academic progression of student veterans specifically, and would be beneficial to increasing student success; Jennifer acknowledged, “On our side we don’t really track veterans independently of the regular student population. They’re lumped in with the non-traditional students. They’re not their own category.” With the rising focus on assessment, tracking will be increasingly important. She also recommended faculty and staff should be educated and trained on the needs of student veterans: “Education and training for our faculty and staff on the needs of the veteran student from an advising stand point and from a psychological stand point.” Jennifer’s recommendations come from her interaction with student veterans and a review of the eight keys to veteran success assessment that she recently completed.

Veteran “James.” At 46-years-old, James is a Black male. Married, his wife helped guide him towards education following his deployment to Iraq and retirement from the Army.

I got married in 1992. My wife had graduated with her bachelor’s degree….And when we got married, and she came down to Fort Campbell, Kentucky, there was nothing for her to do. She couldn’t find a job, and I said, “Hey, you have two weeks, you either find a job, or you go back to school.” She went back to school. So when it was time for me to retire, she said, “Hey, you have two months, either find a job or you go back to school.” And she knew I wasn’t going to look for a job. So I came to school, terrified, but I love it now.

James stated that he does not plan to graduate any time soon.
**Needs and challenges.** Beginning college was difficult as younger students could be disrespectful: “My first semester here was hard, really hard because of the younger atmosphere, discipline, disrespect towards the instructors and professors, and I just couldn’t grasp it.” James stated he does not feel like veterans have specific needs different from those of regular students; however, he stated every veteran should have a support system that extends beyond family. “Anybody who’s been in combat needs a good support system and needs more than just the family, more than the wife or the husband, the kids, mom, and dad. You need a good network in the community.” Additionally, academics can be a challenge for some veterans who have been out of school for a while.

**Support and resources.** James stated the non-traditional student organization and the Academic Success Center could be attributed to his continued enrollment after academics became a challenge:

Well, if it hadn’t been for the non-traditional students’ organization, I don’t think I would still be here. When academics became an issue for me, with my first paper, the other non-traditional students came together and were like, “Hey look, let’s help James.” You know, how can we—what can we do to help you? And it was a great support system.

Additionally, the reminder that the younger students he interacts with are the same age as his daughter, has helped him to consider situations from multiple perspectives. “So I look at a lot of things, I say, ‘Okay. She’s my daughter’s age.’ Let me take it in that manner…so my family really helps me overcome a lot of things.” James contended he
did not have any distinct needs, and felt comfortable elaborating on the needs of other student veterans.

**Suggestions and advice.** He recommended that veterans need a place to themselves, and that veterans have a desire to be heard. “There’s supposed to be study areas, and you go in there. People are laughing and joking. That’s what I think every veteran needs a place where they can go and study; not have to listen to all the younger atmosphere.” James also mentioned the university does not think about the needs of veterans, and that they need to find a way to show that they care about student veterans.

**Veteran “Joe.”** Joe is a 31-year-old Hispanic male. He served in the Marine Corps for three years, and was medically retired following a combat injury. Joe is married and holds senior class standing. He explained, “I was in the Marine Corps and I was a reservist….I spent most of my time [active duty] training and then I spent…eleven months in the hospital and that was all. So I hardly spend any time as a reservist.” His injury created some unique challenges.

**Needs and challenges.** Joe discussed the needs of veterans as being similar to regular students, with the added complexity of possible PTSD, anxiety, disabilities, and memory loss.

It was harder for me because I did have a TBI, the Traumatic Brain Injury, and the same type of memories. It’s really bad. It’s really bad, and it’s not comparable to how it used to be, or I didn’t have to write everything down before. I have to write everything now, or I’ll forget. It’s been a little different for me. It’s been hard to get used to. I forget words and, you know, common words that are used in speech
every day. I’ll just forget them. So, I’ll just sit there almost stuttering, and it’s been hard to get used to.

He noted difficulty in dealing with younger students and the “problems” they have as compared to the struggles veterans face.

It was hard to change from how—or when especially when I was hurt coming back into school and listening to all the problems people have. You know, they’re worried about little simple things. While I was here, I was always in pain. I’m always in pain. I’m still always in pain, and I hear people complaining about little things that really shouldn’t bother them. And you know, I feel differently because I have to worry about pain all the time. I have to worry about not going crazy all the time; I have to worry about just, you know, not thinking about the traumatic stuff and just at the same time, worry about the little stress that school gives us.

The pain from injuries sustained in combat are a constant battle for Joe.

**Support and resources.** According to Joe, he believed the university rarely thought about the needs of veterans. “I don’t think they think about it too much….I mean, I don’t think I ever saw anything other than maybe like Veteran’s Week, or a Veteran’s Day.” There is one advocate for veterans on campus, the veterans’ services coordinator; “all the VA coordinators here they definitely helped out, even though at first it was a little more difficult to get some things done.” Joe discussed the university’s resources for students that veterans may also use, including a gym, the library, and health care. “They were missing a Student Veterans Organization. Luckily now we have that.”

**Suggestions and advice.** Joe would recommend the university find a way to provide a location for student veterans to congregate. “We could definitely use a place
where we could still be on campus, but away from the general public….It would be
great—get away, but still be on campus, because you still want to feel like a student.” He
also suggested that the university could have therapists and advisors who understand
veterans’ issues: “It’s a little more difficult for us sometimes with school, but we’re here,
doing our best, and it would be great to have some kind of—I don’t know, maybe a
therapist or something.” He added, “Maybe have advisers that know a little more about
veterans, how we work, or how we think things through”; since most advisors are faculty,
this could mean training faculty on the needs of veterans and the struggles they face.

**Veteran “John.”** A newlywed, John is a 29-year-old member of the Arkansas
National Guard. A Caucasian male, he is currently an *M-Day* soldier (a traditional
member of the Reserves or National Guard who serves one weekend a month and two
weeks a year). He has deployed to both Iraq and Afghanistan.

**Needs and challenges.** The school certifying official has changed several times
since John began his studies at the university. This has been a challenge for him,
especially considering the representatives are unable to keep up-to-date with the trends
and changes to the various forms of educational benefits available to student veterans.
John mentioned the biggest need he has as a veteran is for someone to be able to answer
his questions, rather than just direct him to a website; this has caused other veterans to
leave the university, according to John.

We’ve had two other VA reps that I’ve talked to….for me it’s hard to grasp that
you give somebody a job, like her job is the VA rep., you know. She has about
400 people she has to deal with, and you know for the first year like, I hated the
fact that they couldn’t answer all my questions…. That’s hard for me; to do my
own research and stuff like that when, you know, people are getting paid to have that job.

Additionally, John said it could be challenging for veterans to deal with change, such as adapting to different teachers’ techniques or their inability to teach:

The way things kind of change, you get people teaching a certain way, and then all of a sudden you get your teacher that’s really strict, your teacher that’s by the book, or something like that. So like dealing with the different teachers and the way things change is definitely roller-coaster-ish.

Other needs, that veterans may have, include disability services and a place to interact with other veterans.

**Support and resources.** John discussed that a student veterans organization was recently established, though it meets at times that are not conducive to working students’ schedules such as his. Additional resources that assisted in John’s transition included the admissions office, a new student orientation, and an off-campus bookstore. John recalled one admissions officer: “She was definitely very helpful, and then telling me you know what I had to do next and where I probably needed to go or who I needed to talk to, this, that, and the other.”

**Suggestions and advice.** John recommended the university consider hiring more veterans’ representatives to address the growing number of veterans attending the university, and to specialize in different areas, such as specific GI Bill chapters or branches:

It may be something that the colleges need to have more than one. I think they need to have four. I think they need to have one for each branch, so that they can
more base it off of each branch because they’re all different apparently; what they get.

John believed this would allow the veterans representatives to be better equipped to answer questions posed by student veterans.

**Case summary “Joyner State College.”** There are many crossovers in the categories between student veterans and the veterans’ services coordinator. VSC Jennifer and John both discussed the needs for veterans to have their questions answered. Additionally, James and Joe both mentioned they do not feel veterans needs are significantly different from traditional students; they also concur it can be difficult for student veterans to deal with younger students who may be disrespectful, inconsiderate, and naïve. A myriad of resources were mentioned by participants though there was no apparent overlap. These services include tutoring, disability support services, career services, non-traditional student organization, student veterans’ organization, academic success center, admissions office, bookstore, gym, library, health center, and the veterans’ services coordinator. VSC Jennifer discussed that veterans become frustrated when faculty and staff are unaware, and recommends that faculty and staff be educated and trained; similarly, James suggested the university needs to find a way to show they care about veterans. VSC Jennifer, James, and Joe all suggested the university find a way to provide a location for student veterans to connect with each other as well as services they may need. In short, a Veterans Center is suggested by the participants at Joyner State College.
Case 2: “Rosewood State College”

Rosewood State College is located near a major military training facility in the state. Rosewood State College has connections which allow them to provide services to a large number of military personnel, both Active Duty and National Guard. Rosewood State College has a Student Veteran Organization. There are approximately 650 veterans utilizing VA educational benefits annually.

Veterans’ services coordinator “Rose.” Rose is a school-certifying official who has worked with veterans for seven years and has been in education for two years. “I currently work in the Veterans Affairs Office. I’ve been here about two years….I work with the veterans, and it’s a very rewarding job.” A Black female, Rose’s husband was a military member who was killed in action.

Needs and challenges. From Rose’s perspective, veterans face challenges in higher education following deployment including academics, disrespectful students, and lack of guidance.

Veterans need a lot more guidance…because traditional students usually have been out there in the work force, or just in civilian life period, where they have been exposed to how things are done….The military is structured, so they’re pretty much told what they have to do…and when they have to do it….They need a lot more guidance because of that.

Student veterans also face issues coping and financial challenges. Rose posited, “Financial would be the number one [challenge] and then outside of that would be just coping with everything.” According to Rose, student veterans need a place where they can socialize with other veterans and share their concerns.
**Support and resources.** According to Rose, there is a veterans resource center, a military discounted tuition rate, and a student organization specifically for veterans on campus. However, the resource center is a functioning office, and therefore a professional decorum must be maintained, which prevents the socialization the veterans seek. Rose described, “We have a resource center that’s available for our veterans to come and utilize throughout the semester….And of course it’s an office, so they could only get so rowdy here.” She also mentioned there is an advocate for veterans who helps to identify and transfer military courses for credit rather than electives. Additionally, Rose reviewed the college offices and services provided by the university: tutoring services, counseling services, an admissions office, a financial aid office, online classes, academic advisors, recruiters, and a food court. Rose reflected, “We do have some things here at [Rosewood] that we offer to veterans. The thing is, if they want to take advantage of it. That’s some of the challenging issues that we discovered.” The university, and many of the veteran benefits, utilizes online resources that can be difficult to navigate. Rose discussed the following:

We use a lot of online resources,…so we refer them to our website….Our website is definitely at their convenience as long as they have access to a computer….[but it’s] not very easy. Far too often I find that they need a lot of assistance, a lot of support, a lot of help with that.

Rose stated university personnel collaborate with the small business association, the Vet Center, and counselors to assist veterans with issues that are outside the capacities of the university.
Suggestions and advice. Rose recommended the university consider having a living and learning community or a first-year program where veterans can develop a support system with other veterans on campus. She elaborated, “Where the classes will be just veteran students, because it is a little transition for them coming from a military life to civilian life,…[a class] that is designed for the needs of a veteran.” She also recommended a place for student veterans to socialize, “where they can hang out and be together and share their experiences that they’re dealing with at the campus or just life in general…where they can feel comfortable and just relax.” She recognized the university administration has no way of knowing the needs of student veterans unless they are communicated by her.

Well, first [the university] needs to become aware of [the student veteran’s needs]. There’s not a tool in place that I am aware of where I can tell the veteran to share that with the university….So we need a tool in place for the veterans to share their struggles or to share the things that they need. Then the university can begin to address [their needs].

She recommended a process be established to allow student veterans to share their struggles and needs with the administration.

Veterans’ services coordinator “Rebecca.” Rebecca is a Caucasian, female, veteran who utilized her military educational benefits to obtain her degree: “I went on and got my master’s degree in professional and technical writing, and that is what gave me the opportunity to be here.” She has since been placed in a position that allows her to assist student veterans by translating their military service transcripts into actual course work rather than simply electives. She has been working in higher education and with
veterans in higher education for seven years, though her military service had her supporting veterans for much longer. “I’ve had a varied life and different experiences. I am a veteran. I served 20 years in the Air Force.”

**Needs and challenges.** Her unique position allowed for a more complete understanding of the needs of student veterans and the challenges they face, having recently been one. The needs and challenges included a lack of camaraderie in the classroom and a desire for their service to be valued. Rebecca reflected:

Many of them don’t really say anything about services, but what they miss is that camaraderie that only the military has. There is nothing like the instant *esprit de corps*, or just a core level of experiences that military people have, and out there in the classrooms, they don’t have that....[Veterans] are different. It’s not to say that they’re all crazy and stressed out and PTSD or anything like that…but they have different experiences, and they really need to be treated differently. So when you have the veteran students, I really feel that they need acknowledgement of their service. They need to feel like whatever they did was valued here in this world of education.

Many also have an inadequate understanding of younger students (specifically younger students’ lack of respect and discipline), and a need for rules and structure, not just to exist, but to be followed. Rebecca explained,

When you’re trying to pay attention and then you have kids behind you either talking or texting,…that’s a challenge because the military student is disciplined. And they can’t understand when a professor says do not use your phone
and…then the professor doesn’t do anything about it….When you have schedules
and rules and structure that are actually applied, the military student will thrive.
Additionally, Rebecca stated, most of the students are first-generation college students:
“Because of that, they don’t have the resources at home to go down to mommy and
daddy and say, ‘what does this mean?’” Rebecca’s unique circumstances help her to
understand student veterans’ needs and attempt to connect them to helpful resources.

**Support and resources.** According to Rebecca, the university has many resources
in place to assist students, such as extended office hours, family nights, tutoring, and
campus activities; additionally, the university has disability services, testing services, and
counseling services as well as an academic success center. They have a veterans’ office,
where the school certifying official works that also houses a small computer lab and a
coffee pot where student veterans can go to work, but it is limited in capacity and
function. Rebecca and Rose have established working partnerships with various
counseling agencies and a homeless veteran’s organization in the community; “one of our
students became homeless,…and we’re trying to get him in the system so the he can have
a place to live.” Rebecca additionally provides advising, support, and translation for
previous military courses.

**Suggestions and advice.** Though the university has made strides at meeting the
basic needs of student veterans, Rebecca suggested areas of improvement including
educating faculty and staff on student veteran identity and needs and expanding the
veterans’ office into a Veterans Center that could help veterans through all of the
university processes in one location, while providing them with an area to promote
camaraderie.
Their basic needs are being met, yes, but if we want to go a step beyond and be truly military friendly, and grow our military student population, we have some things that we need to do….Education for faculty and staff,…and having a Veterans Center where it is a one-stop shop, where we could help them through admissions, financial aid, academics, advise them, or what have you.

She also suggested an organization fair where organizations on campus and in the community that provide services for veterans could showcase their offerings, “just to give a little round table or conference or something for veteran students.” Rebecca also proposed a first-year seminar class specifically for veterans that address not only the basics of beginning college, but also helps to orient them to civilian life and what to expect as they begin courses.

Veteran “Richard.” A dual-service veteran, Richard served in the Marine Corps prior to joining the Army. He is a disabled veteran who served most recently in Iraq. “I’m a combat veteran; I’ve served in three wars and seven conflicts. I’m a disabled veteran, and my disabilities include loss of feeling in my lower extremities, PTSD, COPD, and loss of a lung.” Married, Richard is a Caucasian male. Though he is medically retired from the military, he continues to work closely with veterans and families as a chaplain; “I serve the community by helping veterans.” Furthermore, he is a student worker at the university.

Needs and challenges. Richard discussed that situational awareness, being aware of their surroundings, was a challenge faced by veterans, even if that meant to the detriment of their education.
I [have challenges] everyday...because of what I have been through….In the classroom, I sit where I can see everything, everything. I might not be able to see the board very well because I’m so far back in the classroom, but I can see everything that’s going on. There’s always that leeriness in the back of my mind. Though challenging, Richard said the fact he can be in school was a blessing; “suffering from PTSD…the fact that I can be here today, and sit with the student that’s 18-years-old and [has not] served in the military and never seen those types of things. I thank the Lord for every day.” Richard appreciated the traditional students and their naivety.

**Support and resources.** Richard added the VA office was so helpful, that the only other place he needed to go was to see an advisor. “Believe it or not, the only office I ever went in was the VA office. Everything was done through there. Anything that was needed, I gave to them, and they made sure you go to the right place.” The university website was another resource he used.

**Suggestions and advice.** Richard felt the university is very concerned about the needs of student veterans, and recommended streamlining the information-sharing process would be valuable for student veterans. “What they could do is make the information process simpler….The processes were long and drawn out for registering student veterans.” He also recommended that veterans who are interested in beginning their educational pursuits should contact the campus VA office, recognizing that other universities may not have offices that are as helpful to their veteran students.

**Veteran “Robert.”** Robert is a dual-service veteran that initially served in the Marine Corps, and has since joined the Arkansas Army National Guard. “I was in the Marine Corps before I got in the Army; I have six MOSs, a total of 14 and a half years
He is 40-years-old, Caucasian, and male. He is currently an M-Day soldier; however, he is in the process of medically retiring. Robert is divorced and holds a junior class standing.

**Needs and challenges.** Robert conjectured that veterans do not have separate needs from other students, unless they have a disability, which should still be handled the same way as any student with a disability.

Just because I’m military doesn’t mean I have extra special needs above and beyond anybody else…other than dealing with the disability side….I guess if anything it affects where I sit in class, and just where I’m at….I’ve got my disabilities, makes it really kind of hard to pay attention, focus, and there’s just so much going on…but just the pain alone makes it difficult to sit for any period of time and pay attention to what’s going on.

Robert also discussed frustration with the lack of preparation of faculty in the discipline of teaching and learning.

It’s different….You got a lot going on up there, and especially now at 40-years-old, I’ve lived a lot of life….So my judgment of the abilities of a lot of the teachers comes into play….I’ve always said, “You might know the material, but that doesn’t make you a good teacher.”

He noted specific difficulty in discussing military credit evaluation: “I feel that I should be getting a lot more credit for some of the stuff I have done,…but it doesn’t seem like they understand what I have done.”

**Support and resources.** Robert mentioned resources he has used. In particular, the disability services office: “The disability resource center has been really good about
being accommodating….I mean it’s the kind of thing you would expect, if you are as messed up as I am.” He also discussed the VA office and the academic editor’s office. “You would think that the [VA office] would have done a lot more…Rebecca’s done a lot for me….I think it’s because she is ex-military….She gets it.”

_Suggestions and advice._ Robert believed the university personnel, other than a select few, do not care about the needs of veterans.

I think [VSC Rebecca and VSC Rose] care. The rest of them, I don’t think they could care less. But, you know, it’s not their job to care. It’s their job to just teach you, direct you, or point you in the right direction. I don’t think it’s their job to care.

He recommended that the university find a more efficient way to assign specific college course credit for military training that has been evaluated by the American Council on Education (ACE) rather than just elective credit.

For me personally, I wish they were more in tune with what a military class is….Generally, I’m not going to take a calculus class or anything like that in the military, but there are a lot of things that I’ve done that could easily be given credit towards a class that is here. So as far as that goes…I wish they would do that.

Robert would also appreciate the university administration granting VSC Rebecca more authority to determine course credit for military classes, since the faculty does not understand military transcripts.

_Case summary “Rosewood State College.”_ In the categories between student veterans and the veterans’ services coordinator, there were many consistencies at
Rosewood State College. VSC Rose and VSC Rebecca both agreed younger students, especially those who are disrespectful, create challenges for student veterans, noting a lack of guidance and a desire for rules and structure compound these issues. Additionally, VSC Rose mentioned that struggles coping with what they have been through could be challenging, while Robert added that disabilities could be debilitating. Richard and Robert concurred that their military experiences, especially in a war zone, have contributed to actions and reactions in class, including where they sit in the room. VSC Rose and VSC Rebecca emphasized that student veterans need interaction, specifically with other veterans, to reestablish the camaraderie that is now absent.

Rosewood has numerous resources, many of which were understood by participants. VSC Rose, VSC Rebecca, Richard, and Robert all mentioned the VA office. Academic advising services were noted by VSC Rose, VSC Rebecca, and Richard, and the academic editor’s office was noted by Robert, VSC Rebecca, and VSC Rose. VSC Rose and Richard also discussed online resources. VSC Rebecca and Robert mentioned disability services. VSC Rose and VSC Rebecca rounded out the discussion of resources with tutoring, counseling, and many others; additionally, they suggested the creation of a Veterans Center and a first-year program for student veterans. Richard and VSC Rose recommended establishment of new processes, one that would allow student veterans to share their needs with the university and another to streamline the information sharing process. VSC Rebecca added it is important to educate faculty and staff on student veteran identity and needs. Robert mentioned difficulty in discussing and receiving military credit evaluation, and though VSC Rebecca discussed that she does translate previous military courses, Robert would still recommend the university find a more
efficient way in which to handle the situation. Overall, it appears Rosewood State
College believes a Veterans Center would meet the needs of student veterans and help to
fulfill the recommendations.

Case 3: “Diamond State College”

Diamond State College is host to an Army ROTC program, has a Student Veteran
Organization, and has a Veterans Center. There are approximately 400 veterans utilizing
VA educational benefits. Additionally, approximately 150 veterans, both student and
non-student veterans are registered with the Veterans Center.

Veterans’ services coordinator “Deborah.” Deborah is a school certifying
official who has worked in higher education for 17 years, 15 of which have been spent
working with veterans: “I started doing the school certifying in 1999, and I have done it
ever since….but as far as being the school certifying official, I had to read the manual
and learn it all on my own.” She is a Caucasian female with no veteran status or relation
to the military.

Needs and challenges. Deborah felt the university is doing a good job meeting
the needs veterans face with the services they currently offer. Veterans occasionally need
assistance with clemency, but policy dictates how that can be handled, and usually it is
not to the benefit of the students.

You can start with a clean slate, but you have to be away from school for five
years or more….If you have filed clemency, you lose everything. You can’t just
pick and choose what you want to keep and what you want to get rid of….and
that’s for every student, not just for veterans. The clemency is in the bulletin.
Deborah also indicated the lack of structure in academia as compared to their military experiences can be challenging:

Well, they were in a structured environment. They were told when to wake up, when to go to sleep, and where to be, and had to be there on time….They’re older. They’re in class with 18-year-olds. They’re the oldest one in there, and they’re thinking, “I’ve already done all this so I’m having to take the course, and I’ve lived this.” You know…. [Many of them] have kids, multiple other things for their time and money.

This can be compounded by the fact that most of the student veterans are older, with more experiences, and have additional focuses such as a family or kids.

Support and resources. Deborah mentioned there are numerous services, offices, and resources available to student veterans through the university, including a webpage, Veterans Center, school certifying official, ROTC program, Residence Life, and student veterans organization. She added, “They want to know about…the Montgomery GI Bill, financial aid, housing…career services…and then the Veterans Center;” and that advocates on campus include the Veterans Center and ROTC. Additionally, the university grants in-state tuition to veterans: “all military, military dependents, honorably discharged, get in-state tuition here. So if they’re coming from Texas and their home state is Michigan, it doesn’t matter…grad school, all the way up.” Deborah additionally determines prior service credit based on the Joint Services Transcripts, but admitted, “Most of the students…basically just get six elective credits.”

Suggestions and advice. Deborah had suggestions for new students, which included taking it easy entering education and not starting with the hard classes. “Step in
it easy. Do maybe some fine arts, music, or a PE, or something to get you back in the habit of studying and reading.” Deborah also felt more communication across the campus, from the Chancellor’s Office, to faculty, and student affairs could help to expand the understanding of the needs student veterans face.

Veterans’ services coordinator “Donna.” Donna is the Director of the Veterans Center. She has worked in higher education for 12 years and has worked directly with veterans for nine years. She is a Caucasian female who is the spouse of a retired Army veteran, and all of her children have served in the military, two in Desert Storm and two in OIF/OEF. As such, Donna has a unique insight into the military life.

Needs and challenges. Donna mentioned that the structured environment student veterans were in can create conflicts with faculty as student veterans are more likely to question or confront faculty about issues and concerns in the class and regarding feedback.

I think that aids sometimes, in conflicts with the faculty because due to their experience, history, and age. Our median age is 34. We’ve got them all ages, but our median age is 34 for our program. They are more likely to say, to question something, or to stand up to them and say, “You’ve had our test for 30 days or whatever and we need to know this.” They’re more confrontive and some of our faculty did not like that. [Faculty] feel it’s disrespectful.

Student veterans additionally face challenges of impatience, and annoyance with younger students, especially with regard to lack of discipline: “Sometimes, they’re so irritated with some of the younger folks….They are frustrated with the ones that lack that discipline.”
Support and resources. Drawing upon the information provided by Deborah regarding university services, Donna added that the Veterans Center also provides speech, physical therapy, counseling, and evaluations for veterans and dependents, many through collaborations with outside agencies. “Speech, physical therapy, and [some] counseling is done on campus. We can do referrals also for their dependents, and scholarships….We actually have an agreement with a private health agency [to provide counseling and mental health services]” that are above the capacity of the university. She additionally identified collaborations with Vocational Rehabilitation, the VA job force, ministers, mental health agencies, the local food bank, and homeless shelter. Donna asserted, “We’re working on this.” The Veterans Center additionally coordinates with the unemployment office, guard and reserve units, Disabled American Veterans (DAV), Purple Heart Association, and Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW). The Veterans Center provides additional support to student veterans by facilitating regular contact with the degree programs in which veterans are enrolled, connecting with community organizations, providing tutoring, offering priority registration, creating opportunities for veteran and community socialization, and recommending disability services when needed.

Suggestions and advice. Donna noted there is always room to improve, but until veterans bring their needs to light, it is difficult to address.

I think we’re making a good effort at it. I think, probably more than most. Do we still have a ways to go? Yes, and still sometimes, we find a need that we didn’t recognize that when it is brought to our attention or we learn about one or think we learn about one. I think we make a really good effort at trying to find it.
New initiatives to meet veterans needs include community education, peer mentoring, and a program for emotional support dogs.

**Veteran “Daniel.”** Daniel is a 35-year-old married Caucasian male. He joined the Navy after spending two years homeless, living on the beach in California. “Living on the streets…it was an experience that I wouldn’t trade for anything,…[but] I just needed a change…structure.” Daniel served eight years in the Navy before being Honorably Discharged, much of which was spent in a combat zone. “I [was deployed] in the ocean…the wet part…anywhere in between Guam and the [Iraqi] Gulf.”

**Needs and challenges.** Daniel has struggled with anxiety, crowds, and being around people he does not know.

I love college football, but I can’t go to the games. There’s just too much going on….I can’t keep my eye on [everyone] all the time….Seating would be a big issue too. I would want to be in the front so I can hear, but I want to be at the back that way I can see everything that’s going on.

This has led him to take most of his classes online: “I know with me, I want to try to get all online classes because I hate being in big groups….I’m much better when I’m by myself or in extremely small groups.” He is also concerned with disagreements and confrontational situations with other students; he has noticed that his military experiences have caused frustrations when young students fail to listen.

If I see something one way and you see something in a different way, there’s a chance for an argumentative situation going on….I think it would [be challenging] because sometimes I just want to put people through the wall, just
smash their heads for being stupid….It has cause problems because when I try to teach [younger students]; they don’t want to listen, and it can be frustrating.

Daniel has service-connected disabilities that make it difficult to stay seated for long periods of time. “I’ve got no cartilage in my lower back, so seating, that’s a big issue. Having the right support or being able to get up and walk around, move around.”

Support and resources. “I’m still looking into what the university has to offer.”

Daniel’s primary resource has been the Veterans Center, which provides counseling services, financial assistance, transportation and countless other resources. “My wife and I, we’ve had some really bad issues….The Veterans Center…[has] gone above and beyond to help.” The Veterans Center also gives participants preferential scheduling of classes. “The Veterans Center [has been a source of support], if I have bigger issues or just need to get away or whatever, I can come here.”

Suggestions and advice. Daniel believes the university realizes they can do more for student veterans and have begun to do so. “I believe that they’re recognizing that there’s more that can be done and that should be done that hasn’t been done before.”

Daniel would suggest that every university have a Veterans Center like Diamond State College.

I believe that every university should have something similar to [the Veterans Center] if not identical to it…because they have resources. They just have so many resources and people that are there to support you. No matter what’s going on in your life. They always carve out time, and they make themselves available to you, which is a big help to people that are coming out of the military.
He also believes that being able to have classes in one building would help with veterans who have mobility issues.

**Veteran “David.”** David, a 28-year-old Caucasian male, was medically retired from the Arkansas Army National Guard after being wounded during combat. “I was in the guard…ten years, got wounded in Afghanistan; retired….Now, since I’m back, I was retired, and too young to be retired, so I started back to school.” A sophomore, he started college as a way to interact with others. “I could go a couple days without seeing or talking to someone. So, I was like, ‘That’s not good for you.’ So, I got back into school, probably a year after being retired.”

**Needs and challenges.** David mentioned veterans face issues such as anxiety, crowds, and dealing with younger students. “Like anxiety issues and stuff like that….You walk into a class, used to you just sit wherever….I can’t see out of my left [eye] at all, so…if I really want to see in the class…sit on a certain side.” His injury has compounded some of the challenges he encounters. David felt the needs of wounded student veterans are more apparent than when considering non-wounded veterans and their traditional counterparts. “As just a veteran probably not any [needs] – being a wounded veteran, there’s some excuses from class because you got a VA appointment or, you know, I guess the list can go on forever on that.” Additionally, he indicated it is difficult for veterans to ask for help due to pride; therefore, many student veterans do not understand the resources available at the university. “It’s hard to ask for something like….Nobody wants to say that, you know, ‘I mean I do have a special circumstance now. I do need this.’ It’s hard for a prideful person to say that.”
Support and resources. For David, the Veterans Center has helped eliminate many of the challenges that veterans at other universities seem to face.

I mostly went through the Veterans Center….I guess that’s why I didn’t have as many challenges, because if I didn’t know where to go or what office to get to, I can come to the Veterans Center and sit in [VSC Donna] or [Ms. Desiree’s] office and they will call whoever and get it done...and [VSC Deborah] has been here forever and she’s the veteran officer for the registrar. She’s awesome too.

The personnel in the Veterans Center assist students with coordinating the various services that students may require, and the school certifying official in the registrar’s office is helpful in completing financial aid and tuition documents.

If you’re thinking you’re not doing good or been out of school too long...or it’s hard to learn that, you know—I got hit in the head with a dadgum RPG. My brain don’t work the same anymore. [The professors] are super good with [reminding me], “Hey, you’re doing good and you’re doing right on this,” “Hell, you’re passing most of the people in the class.” I’ve had extreme luck with teachers; all my teachers have done that.

David added his professors have been extremely helpful, going above and beyond.

Additional resources he mentioned included student veterans’ organizations and disability services.

Suggestions and advice. David suggested that if the university were to make more overt efforts to offer the services rather than them being requested, student veterans may be more likely to accept assistance.
So like, if something is being offered, it’s not like hey, you know, “you got scrambled eggs for brains now—you may need this” instead of something like… “This is here if you want, you can have it,” type of deal. Instead of putting a veteran to, “Hey, I can’t type anymore, do you have something where I can speak, and it types for me?” I guess it’s easier if it’s offered than being requested.

This reinforces David’s belief that pride prevents student veterans from asking for help.

**Veteran “Donald.”** Donald is a married, Caucasian male who is 28-years-old. He currently serves as an M-Day Officer in the Arkansas Army National Guard, where he has deployed to both Iraq and Afghanistan. “I’ve been married for four years, going on five in June. I have a two-year-old daughter; I have served on two combat deployments….I still serve in the National Guard where I am an Executive Officer.”

Though he has been in school for several years, only recently has he realized the importance of and utilized the on-campus Veterans Center. “To put it in perspective, I’ve been going to [this university] since 2007, and yesterday was the first time I’ve ever been to the Veterans Center because I’m finally starting to realize that I needed to file for VA disability.”

**Needs and challenges.** Like many veterans, Donald mentioned that anxiety and distrust of others has been a point of concern for him. “I feel less trusting in people…as [compared to] before deployments. I’m not the type of person who usually just walks up to somebody and starts talking….I guess in the past I was more outgoing and outspoken.” His biggest challenge remains the ability to receive assistance with forms and filing for educational assistance. “I’ve had some challenges with…getting assistance with going to school….Each year it seems like it’s getting harder and harder.”
Support and resources. Though the Veterans Center is beginning to play an important role in his education, Donald mentioned the school certifying official in the registrar’s office has not always been the most helpful, either in being difficult to reach, or unable to answer questions and provide clarification.

One thing that I would say, and I don’t want to dime anybody out I guess, but like the military assistance coordinator here in the registrar’s office, I feel like at times can be kind of difficult to work with, either to get a hold of or you know when it comes to answering questions, it seems like sometimes the best answer I get is, “Well that’s not in my lane,” or “I don’t really help with that kind of thing.” I just feel like if [DSC] wants to help veterans, I would say having somebody that knows all aspects either of the GI Bill, tuition assistance because…[veterans need to know] how to get those benefits that they deserve and that they’ve earned.

Donald also discussed his faculty support, one in particular “has always been very understanding. I keep her up to date on what I’m doing, and she corresponds with me through email even if I don’t have class with her.” He feels that the university has made attempts to meet the needs, “but I don’t think a lot of the times the soldiers’ voice is being heard, because I know I’m not the only person to have issues,” and student veterans continue to face the same issues. The creation of the Veterans Center is one example of the university’s attempt to meet veterans’ needs.

Suggestions and advice. He recommended that other universities have a Veterans Center, because it has helped considerably with the struggles he has faced in higher education. Donald believed a Veterans Center would help not only veterans, but the
university, because veterans would feel less overwhelmed when considering beginning college.

Hopefully, the Veterans Center can be, I guess, the foundation for other colleges to follow suit, because I know, of course, there’s veterans at probably every college in the United States, and I know if I struggle…I know they do as well….So having [a Veterans Center] in place at other colleges would definitely not just benefit the veteran, but it would also benefit college in the long run. Because you would have veterans that aren’t as intimidated to go to college when they know they have somebody there to assist them.

Additionally, he thinks colleges should participate in programs that assist veterans with costs that may not be covered by military educational benefits.

**Veteran “Dorothy.”** Dorothy served for eight years in the Arkansas Army National Guard. “My name is Dorothy, 32-years-old….I have three children….I do love working with children.” A 32-year-old Black female, Dorothy was a supply clerk and has deployed to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

**Needs and challenges.** She mentioned that post-deployment she struggled with anger and PTSD, and she still has difficulty accepting she has PTSD.

My husband at the time said, “You are different,” and I was like “shut up. There ain’t nothing wrong. You’re just mad because you know this ain’t going the way you want it to go.” I didn’t even know that something was wrong with me….I just take it as aggravation. People are just aggravating me, and before I knew it, I started snapping out on people. It didn’t take much to set me off. For a long time I just thought people were aggravating me, and I didn’t know that that was the
PTSD….I just thought, I’m cranky, I got an attitude; you’re aggravating me, so I’m fixing to let you have it.

As a mother, she reiterated the importance of a strong support system: “This experience here [in college], I mean it pays to have a good support system. It really does.” Like many veterans, Dorothy does not feel that she has unique needs as a veteran student but perhaps they are more aligned with a student with disabilities, such as PTSD and others.

“I don’t think that me being a veteran [requires special consideration], I mean aside from my PTSD, but I don’t see that required a need, a little bit of counseling. I don’t know.” She mentioned that it can be very difficult to interact with younger students who are inconsiderate.

There’s one girl in my philosophy class. Of all classes I have something to say, and I feel like the class will really benefit from it. I don’t talk a lot in class because I don’t like people looking at me…so, when I raise my hand, I have something to say. I need to get it out. She interrupts me. And what I see is me getting up out of my seat, going to her, putting my hands around her neck and banging her head on the desk, “Shut up and let me finish,” that’s what I see, just because she cut me off. To me, that’s not normal, but I can’t control it….I didn’t [bang her head], but I don’t even know if my face said anything.”

Support and resources. Student support services, such as tutoring and mentoring, counseling, helped Dorothy and led her to the Veterans Center on campus: “The Student Support Services provided tutors and mentoring. [It was nice] just having an outlet, having another adult to [talk to]….When they found out I was a veteran they told me to go to the Veterans Center.” She is aware the campus offers counseling and disability
services as well and plans to consider them in the future: “I’m trying to get over…to the counseling center and the Disability Services because I do have testing anxiety and stuff.” Dorothy believes that the university does not consider the student veterans, but advocates in the Veterans Center help to ensure the student veterans’ needs are met.

I don’t think the university thinks a lot about a veteran’s needs. I don’t think they do. I think it is [VSC Donna] and [Ms. Desiree] that think about our needs because they are the ones who are closely interacting with us. They know a good portion about us, not [the university]. I don’t really think [the university] gives two shits about us.

She also advised that students go to the multicultural center for non-traditional students.

Suggestions and advice. Though she did not provide specific recommendations for how the university could do better for student veterans, she mentioned a concern regarding a program of study for non-traditional students that has some of the required classes offered only at night, and the challenges that can pose in obtaining childcare. “For the non-traditional students...some of the core classes are at night...just because we have a support system doesn’t necessarily mean they want to keep our kids for us all the time while we were in school.” She would welcome any attempts by the university to mitigate those concerns.

Case analysis, “Diamond State College.” The categories between student veterans and the veterans’ services coordinators at Diamond State College have many similarities. VSC Deborah and VSC Donna both mentioned the lack of structure in college and the inundation of structure in the military creates friction later for student veterans. Additionally, VSC Deborah, VSC Donna, Daniel, David, and Dorothy all
confirmed the challenges associated with interacting with younger students, especially those who are inconsiderate or lack discipline. Daniel, David, and Donald discussed that anxiety causes issues for them and many other veterans, and can lead to a distrust of others. Dorothy and David both agreed student veterans do not have unique needs because of their veteran status, but may due to issues such as PTSD and other disabilities.

Several different resources were named as being available for veterans including online resources, financial aid, housing, career services, and the multicultural center. Dorothy and VSC Donna both referred to tutoring and counseling, as well as speech, physical therapy, and mentoring. Donald, David, and VSC Deborah all discussed the school certifying official; though Donald perceives the official as much a limitation as a resource. Dorothy, David, VSC Donna, and VSC Deborah all referred to the student veterans’ organization and disability services. All participants, VSC Deborah, VSC Donna, Daniel, David, Donald, and Dorothy, continually remarked on the Veterans Center, the support they provide, the connections they create, and the benefit that occurs because of its existence. There is only one suggestion provided by multiple participants, which is that other universities have Veterans Centers comparable to or modeled after the one at Diamond State College.

**Summary**

After patterns were identified within each case (university) across groups, a case summary was completed for each organization. Themes that developed from categories established from the research questions were used to begin thematic analysis, with the allowance of additional themes to emerge. The themes helped compare similarities and differences within each case. Chapter 5 discusses the thematic analysis process in detail.
and utilizes thematic analysis to review themes across cases; this allows for the construction of a composite description of the meanings and essences of the experience for the group as a whole (Moustakas, 1994).
Chapter 5 Findings

The purpose of this phenomenological multiple case study was to explore the experiences of student veterans in higher education, their perceptions of the challenges they face, and resources that could assist them. Additionally, Veteran Services Coordinators (VSCs) were interviewed to obtain an alternative perspective. In order to fully understand the needs and challenges of student veterans, an exploration of their background and experiences must occur.

By better understanding the needs and challenges faced by student veterans, along with the existing resources, higher education can provide student veterans with the services and resources needed to help them succeed. This chapter presents the findings from the 14 in-depth interviews. Four major findings emerged from this study:

1. Student veterans have unique needs and face unique challenges that can limit or inhibit participation in higher education; disabilities can compound these challenges as can interacting with traditional students.

2. Student veterans can be successful in higher education with adequate support and resources; additionally, advocates can empower student veterans by creating a supportive atmosphere.

3. Student veterans believe higher education is attempting, though somewhat unsuccessfully, to meet the needs they face, and student veterans suggest the creation of a Veterans Center on campuses.

4. Student veterans are reluctant to self-identify as a veteran to other students, and interactions with other students can be challenging; however, interacting with other student veterans provides the impetus for overcoming challenges.
Following the completion of within-case analysis, a search for cross-case patterns was completed. Cross-case analysis is similar to the phenomenological methodology where themes are developed across all cases. Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) stated case study research involves “a detailed description of the setting or individuals, followed by analysis of the data for themes, patterns, or issues” (p. 137). According to Moustakas (1994), data analysis is a five-stage process by which the researcher must first horizontalize the data, then list meaning; the data then must be clustered into themes, which creates textural descriptions of the experience, and finally specific examples are used as support.

A thematic analysis was completed. The analysis was used to generate and develop themes across cases; this allowed for the construction of a composite description of the meanings and essences of the experience for the group as a whole (Moustakas, 1994), whereas “the vast array of words, sentences, and paragraphs has to be reduced to what is of most importance and interest and then transformed to draw out themes and patterns” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p.137). Coding was used to manage data classification; the codes were used to help identify the themes. Additionally, the individual excerpts were thematically grouped by connected categories, which is the most commonly used way of presenting qualitative findings (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). NVivo® software was used to organize the codes and excerpts. Codes were combined and separated as needed following the initial round of coding. Specific examples were pulled from the interviews to illustrate the themes explicitly. Analysis allowed participant data to be linked to the research questions, which are discussed in Chapter 6.
Three primary categories were established from the research questions and from the interview guide based upon the review of literature and included needs and challenges; support and resources; and suggestions and advice. Most of the codes that emerged during analysis fell into one of these three categories. One additional category emerged: interactions (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). Table 5.1 shows the hierarchy of codes as grouped by the four categories.

Table 5.1

**Codes by Categories.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Sub Code</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Needs and Challenges</strong></td>
<td>The Challenges and Needs of the Veteran</td>
<td></td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Challenges and Needs of the Veteran as a Student</td>
<td></td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Traditional Students</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personal Struggles</td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Challenges with College Offices &amp; Resources</td>
<td></td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perception of Veterans Needs by Others</td>
<td></td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Challenges Created by Negative Expressions of Support</td>
<td></td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Support and resources</strong></td>
<td>The Significance of Family and Personal Support</td>
<td></td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Importance of University Support</td>
<td></td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Veterans Center</td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>College Offices</td>
<td></td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Resources</td>
<td></td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td></td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Impact of Community and Professional Support</td>
<td></td>
<td>58</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Effect of Advocates</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Suggestions and Advice</strong></td>
<td>Perception of University Views of Needs</td>
<td></td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Advice for Student Veterans Entering Higher Education</td>
<td></td>
<td>36</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Proposals for Ways the University Could Better Support Student Veterans</td>
<td></td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interactions</strong></td>
<td>Reluctance to Identify as a Veteran</td>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Veterans have Diverse Interactions with Other Students</td>
<td></td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition to the four categories listed above, one additional category, background and experience, was created to encompass the codes related to prior experiences. This category was not included in the thematic analysis process because it does not pertain to the aims of the current study; however, it gives context to the examples provided in support of the findings of this study.

**Background and Experiences**

A discussion of background and experiences of student veterans allows for the understanding of their needs. This discussion created a dialogue that allowed the student veterans to open up to me during the interview process. In addition to discussing their needs, resources, and suggestions, I also discussed with student veteran participants their military service and school experiences. Although the category background and experiences is not as relevant to the aims of the current study, and does not define any pertinent themes, it is essential to understanding the themes and gives context to the examples.

**Military Service**

Military service was discussed initially to determine qualification for participation in the study. The discussion included rank, time in service, branch, current status, job experiences, deployment, and motivations to join the military. Below are examples that explicate the military experiences of the student veterans, specifically their motivation to join, rank, and deployment. It is helpful to consider this background information, as it directly impacted the school experiences. There were 76 references to military service.

David, Donald, Dorothy, James, John, Richard, and Robert all served in the Army or Army National Guard. Richard and Robert served in the Marines prior to joining the
Army. Joe served in the Marines; Daniel served in the Navy. Donald and John are both currently serving in the Arkansas Army National Guard (See Table 4.1). Daniel, Dorothy, Richard, and Robert were all honorably separated from the military. James retired from the Army after serving 20 years. David and Joe were both injured in combat and medically retired from service. Daniel, Dorothy, James, Joe, Robert, and Richard all deployed to Iraq. David, Donald, and John deployed to both Iraq and Afghanistan.

There are many reasons people join the military. For this group of participants, the most cited reason was to get out of the current life path they were on. Additional reasons included paying for school, patriotism, and a family history of service. There were 28 references specifically to motivations to join the military.

Robert, David, and John discussed a family history of military service. David recalled, “I wasn’t really raised military brat, I grew up with my dad, but my mom, everybody on my mom’s side of the family is military. So I guess that’s how I was introduced.” He added, it was “something to be proud of…[at the] end of the day, you can hang your head high and be proud of what you did, and there’s no better reward than that.” John reflected,

I had a man that was pretty much like my father. Raised up, kind of around him as a family friend. That’s really all he was, but he is who I called dad. I didn’t know my dad until after I turned 18, so—but he was in the military for 30, no 28 years, something like that.

Robert said, “[My] whole entire family is in the military.” However, he also mentioned, “Originally, when I got in…I used it as an avenue to get away from [home].”
Joe, Daniel, and James all mentioned the military was a way for them to get out of a bad place. Joe discussed, “I always wanted to be in the Marine Corps….When I was in California, my freshman year [of high school], I joined the MJROTC in my school—I was trying to get away from the bad stuff.” Daniel professed, “I needed a change. Living on the streets….I wanted to get out, separate myself from bad influences.” James divulged,

I was 19-years-old, had a daughter, [from a] previous relationship than [the one] I’m in now. I was fighting all the time. A pastor, preacher, told me, got into it with him, and he told me, “You know, [You’re] never going to do right until [you] get some discipline. And, he pressed charges on me and told the judge, “Hey, if this young man goes in the military then I’ll drop charges.” And, that was it; my luck had run out on the street.

Richard similarly recounted, “Well, the funny thing is, when I was 16, my father looked at me one day and said, ‘Son you ain’t going to amount to a hill of damn beans if I don’t put you in the Army.’” Richard brought home the Marine recruiter the next day, and recalled, “Since then I’m the one and only Marine in the family.”

Donald, Dorothy, and Joe discussed the military was a way for them to obtain education and training that would help them achieve their goals. Donald said, “All my friends were kind of doing it, but then I started to realize…I had to look for options to pay for college if I wanted to go.” He followed up by saying, “I have different priorities now as far as why I’m in the military still,” discussing that after joining he became more patriotic. Dorothy discussed, “I really wasn’t ready for college, but I knew that I didn’t want to go into the workforce just without a degree or anything. So, I saw the military as
a way out maybe.” Joe also stated, “The Marine Corps really sucked me in…, because I got a really high ASVAB score…and they told me well if you do this we’ll give you a $50,000 scholarship that you can use later and plus my GI Bill.” He lost the scholarship when he joined the Marine Reserves instead of Active Duty, but maintained his eligibility for the GI Bill®.

Daniel discussed, “It was like we were over there all the time, you know. The best way to describe it would be…I was in a combat zone three and a half or four years out to five.” When asked where, he answered, “in the ocean”; subsequently he revealed “the wet part.” He then explained, “We spent time anywhere in between Guam and the Gulf, the Iraqi Gulf, parts of Thailand, Malaysia, that area. We even got to hit Australia once; that was interesting.” David communicated, “I was in ten years, got wounded in Afghanistan, retired.” According to Donald, “I have served on two combat deployments. The first one was in 2006 to Iraq, and then my second one was in 2012 to Afghanistan.”

James underscored his role as an infantry soldier and drill sergeant. He participated in “Desert Storm…[and] embedded some interpreters with the Marines before the war started and then did a tour, 2005 to 2006, in Iraq.” John discussed he has deployed three times, twice to Iraq and once to Afghanistan. He commented that his “total deployment time I guess would be 30 months in country.” Joe reported,

I was in the Marine Corps, and I was a reservist. I was infantry. Most of the time I was in, I was active duty. I was either at school or some kind of school, and then I was activated to go overseas. Spent most of my time training, and then I spent a year in a hospital—eleven months in the hospital and that was all.
Richard recounted, “I’ve served in three wars and seven conflicts.” Additionally, Richard is a disabled veteran who served in the Marine Corps and then the Army, deploying for 18 months to Iraq. Robert is also a dual-service veteran who served in the Marine Corps prior to joining the Army. Holding six MOSs, he has deployed twice to Iraq, once for eight months and once for 22 months.

Furthermore, David recalled, “I started out lower enlisted being the lead gunner, route clearance missions, finding IEDs,…[and I deployed for] 18 months to Iraq, and I’m guessing six or seven months to Afghanistan.” Donald discussed, “I still serve in the National Guard,” and “[I hope] to at least achieve the rank of Lieutenant Colonel before I retire.” Dorothy accounted,

I went in as an E2, and it took me a little while to get promoted, but after I got my first promotion then shortly after that I became E4. They asked if I wanted to go PLDC which is leadership school to be a sergeant. I just didn’t want the responsibility. Being a supply clerk is responsibility enough, so I didn’t want the responsibility of having soldiers underneath me that I will be held accountable for; so, I turned it down twice.

The military experiences of student veterans are extremely varied, which underscores the reason for the variation of experiences student veterans in this study have in higher education.

School Experiences

The college experiences of student veterans are as varied as their military experiences. The experiences are affected by prior educational experiences, military service, and deployment. Veterans decided to begin or return to education during or
following military service for a number of reasons, most reportedly due to educational benefits. There were 15 references to school experiences. John said, “What’s good about it is just the opportunity as far as being a veteran. I don’t have to pay for school….I get paid more than I should get paid to go to school.”

Robert stated he did not attend college prior to military service, rather: “I got a degree after I got out of the Marine Corps; I went to school in San Diego before I moved back here” and joined the Army. John reported he did not attend college prior to joining the military, “I went from high school to dead-end jobs, to joining the Guard, and like I said, I’m still in the Guard.” Daniel discussed,

I was too busy that I couldn’t afford it, time wise. We were working anywhere from 18 to 36 hours a day. I know that sounds funny but it felt like it was a constant day, so the time that I did have I was either eating or in the gym, you know, and then I’d get back to work.

James stated he did not go to college prior to joining, but while in the military he “took some classes;” he recalled, “I think I had 12 or 13 credit hours, just here and there.” Richard disclosed, “I didn’t start college until 1998, while I was in the Army, and since then, I have been hand picking at what I want to finish my degree in.”

David estimated he attended college for “three semesters, would probably be more accurate to say that a time frame, because it was broken up during deployments.” Dorothy acknowledged, “I tried to go to school in Tennessee, where I lived, and there was no…services that veterans qualify for.” She professed, “I didn’t see a problem, I just quit. I was young, and I was married. My husband is supposed to take care of me, so I quit going to school, and I quit my job.”
Donald believed “[I felt] less trusting in people I would say [now] as before deployments.” Joe remarked, “I did have a lot more—distractions, because I…could fit in a lot more with different groups, and I could talk to a lot more different people.” Robert stated, “When I went to school the first time, I was 20-something years old, and now I’m 40…just by the sheer nature of the time frame, I look at it different,” reinforcing college is different now than before. For participants who attended college prior to deployments, the experience of college is different now than before; for some it is harder due to disabilities or expanse of time since being in a formal education setting. Overall, participants viewed it as more meaningful because they understand how fortunate they are to be able to attend at no cost, and their life experiences allow them to have a broader understanding during discussions.

Decision to begin or return to school. There are a variety of reasons a member of the military or a veteran chooses to attend college. Most participants stated the decision was due to pressure or encouragement from family, need for social interaction, and/or desire for increased earning potential. There were 22 references to the various decisions by the participants.

Daniel mentioned, “In 2008 my daughter was born, and I know that [my going to college]…is something that my daughter could look up to.” David and Joe, who were both severely wounded in action, began college as a way to reintegrate with society. David discussed he does not have the pressure most college students do because he does not have the need to use his degree to obtain a job, rather “I’m going just for the social interaction…. [not to] find people to go out and have a beer with or anything, I just mean like instead of sitting at home, retired and young, that gets old quick.” Joe attested, “I
spent too much time just at home doing nothing. I was just sad the whole time, I guess, depressed, playing video games.”

Donald articulated, “I’m always excited to go back to school. It seems like when I’m going to school, everything kind of falls into place; having that structure, having something to look forward to doing every day.” As previously noted, James acknowledged his wife pushed him into education following his retirement from the military. John’s wife also pushed him toward education: “My wife is a lawyer, so she did seven years of school. She did four undergrad and three in law school….I gripe about my job and not getting paid enough.” Robert went back to school following active duty service in the National Guard; funding had been cut, and he lost his job. Although there are a variety of reasons the participants decided to attend college, the military impacted the process either from delaying enrollment, causing disabilities, or financing education.

**Post deployment and effects of the Military.** Deployment and military service had obvious impacts on the student veterans. Some noted positive impacts, while others noted negative influences. There were 27 references to experiences at college post deployments, and the effects of the military on the pursuit and attainment of higher education.

Donald, Daniel, and David discussed positive influence the military had on educational attainment. Daniel explained, “I’ve seen a lot of things, been a lot of places, and I know how things work. A lot of students don’t understand that, so I feel that I have a leg up.” David reported,

I would say it’s better, just because I’ve grown up some. And post injury, I’m getting more out of it, I guess, than just trying to learn something or just trying to
figure what I’m going to do. Just like the mental stimulus and being around people and stuff has done me wonders.

Joe conveyed the military discipline had a positive impact, but he indicated his service-connected disabilities created challenges: “Well, I am a lot more disciplined now. I will go through the actual studying. I will actually go through the hours to get the work done, but I mean the pain is just hard to overcome sometimes.”

Daniel proclaimed, “I believe that the military encouraged me to further my education instead of hindering it….it encouraged me to go to school” while he affirmed, “When I was on the boat, it did hinder it. But now that I’m out, I have free time. I can go to college.” David added the military “made me grow up some to where you get more out of [education]. Actually, [the military] probably better prepared me to be a student.” Donald concurred, the military “definitely progressed my education…my punctuality improved, my preparation for things improved…that all comes from having those values that you gained within the military.” According to Donald,

Honestly, I think I’ve matured a lot more post-deployment in college. Of course, it’s mainly appreciating having the benefits of getting to go to college and having that paid for. I feel more like now I have a sense of entitlement to go to college because of me being able to serve, but I feel like I take college a lot more serious now, and that maybe a mix of the military side but also having a family now, having priorities, being able to prioritize but in the most part I would say definitely that things are more clear now as to what I want to do.

John stated college post-military “It’s overwhelming, definitely overwhelming.” Robert said, “It’s different. You got a lot going on up there, and especially now at 40-
years-old. I’ve lived a lot of life. I’ve been to a lot of schools.” Joe remarked, “There’s nobody out here forcing us to go to class, or they’re not forcing us to do anything, and if we don’t force ourselves, it’s not going to get done,” which is why the discipline instilled by the military is so crucial.

Robert, John, and Joe discussed the struggles faced in higher education following military service. John stated the military has

Stumped [my education], I say mainly because I joined, I wasn’t really interested in college. So, when you join the military, and when they Barney style everything for you, you get used to that. And then you come to college where everything’s just self-driven, you have to read between the lines, you have to study, you have to work hard to do some of these things. In the military they make it to where they show you everything you need to know. If they didn’t show or they didn’t tell you, then you don’t need to know it, and college is not like that. They’re going to show you anything and everything for the most part that’s in that book, and then they’re going to pick and choose what you need to know, but you need to know all of it. So, I’d say that it got me learning down the wrong path.

Joe asserted, 

But the negative thing is that [the military] make things really dumb. They dumb down things. I mean they teach us how to go up ladders. They teach us, you know, step by step, they call it breaking it down Barney style, because you know - - man, it’s really bad. But I mean, everything we learn in the military, especially in the Marine Corps, I remember the acronym that they teach us for the leadership traits and you know they instill in us quite a bit in boot camp.
Robert noted the military hindered his education pursuits due to the disability issues he now faces, while it has also helped because “it’s enabled me to change my style of learning versus when I went to school the first time….You don’t learn the same way, you evolve over time.” James highlighted time management, attention to detail, and working with a team were valuable military skills he has transferred to his educational experience. Whether it is learned skills, maturity, disability, or structure, the military has impacted each student veteran in some way.

These backgrounds and experiences student veterans possess support and clarify their needs and challenges. The category background and experiences is essential to understanding the themes that follow and gives context to the examples. The experiences of student veterans both in education and in combat are diverse.

**Finding 1. Student veterans have needs and face challenges that can limit or inhibit participation in higher education; disabilities can compound these challenges as can interacting with traditional students.**

**Needs and Challenges**

The needs and challenges student veterans face are as varied as their experiences. Deployment, reintegration, and military and academic issues are common challenges veterans in higher education face (Bonar & Domenici, 2011), and their needs can range from personal, to student, to veteran. This can create challenges and can be difficult to overcome. Student veterans may face problems while learning how to function in a non-structured environment that includes physical and psychological injuries, family discord, difficulties with authority, issues of perceived support, and identity issues (Black,
Westwood, & Sorsdal, 2007). In this study, four themes emerged from the interviews that fell into the category of needs and challenges:

- Veteran status can create needs and challenges as diverse as their military experiences; these challenges can range from receiving benefits to disabilities.
- Student needs can be similar to traditional students, but veteran status may create additional needs or intensify challenges (e.g., interacting with traditional-aged students, dealing with personal struggles such as procrastination, and receiving assistance from college offices).
- Negative support, such as lack of adequate information or personal support, can create challenges for student veterans.
- Perceptions of student veteran needs by VSCs are similar to those expressed by student veterans in this study, namely difficulties working with traditional students, complications working with college offices, and desires for structure.

The Needs and Challenges of the Veteran

Student veterans’ challenges come from many aspects of their lives. Veteran needs and challenges include those that can be described as caused or created from participation in military service, including but not limited to receipt of veterans benefits, injuries and disabilities associated with military service, and hyper vigilance and anxiety that have been associated with deployment to a combat environment. There were 79 references to needs and challenges related to veteran status across the three cases and 14 interviews, 47 of which were concerning disabilities.

Many of the issues discussed were related to disabilities. Issues faced by participants were varied; a number of topics, such as getting funding, filing paperwork,
obtaining appointments, receiving counseling, and accessing university resources (or a lack of), were recounted by more than one veteran.

According to DiRamio and Spires (2009), disabilities traditionally have been conceived as visible: mobility, visual, and medical; however, with combat veterans many of the disabilities they face are invisible. Veterans commonly have difficulty hearing and suffer from depression, PTSD, and TBI. PTSD and TBI are signature wounds of OEF/OIF veterans, and determining whether or not to disclose disability is perhaps the greatest challenge of veterans entering higher education (Ostovary & Dapprich, 2011).

David discussed it is hard for a prideful person to admit they need help, and “I think I fall in that prideful crowd, that hadn’t asked.” James mentioned, “If something is triggering PTSD, I’ve been diagnosed with that, then I tell [faculty], ‘Hey, I’m going to step out of the classroom right now, and I’ll be back when I’m good.’” So there’s an understanding and a respect.” Dorothy said, “It didn’t take much to set me off. For a long time I just thought people were aggravating me, and I didn’t know that that was the PTSD.”

Robert talked about anxiety when he said, “It affects where I sit in class, and just where I’m at.” Daniel discussed, “I would want to be in the front so I can hear, but I want to be at the back that way I can see everything that’s going on.” Additionally, David said, “I can’t see out of my left [eye] at all….If I really want to see in the class or pay attention in the class and catch everything that’s going on, [I have to] sit on a certain side.”

Robert examined the difficulties his disabilities create daily: “It’s made things more difficult. With everything I’ve got going on, it makes it hard to get up every day and just get out of bed.” As quoted in Chapter 4, Joe disclosed about his difficulties
following eleven months in the hospital, and how his TBI has significantly impaired his memory. Joe also stated, “I have to worry about pain all the time. I have to worry about not going crazy all the time…not thinking about the traumatic stuff.” Daniel reported, “I’ve got no cartilage in my lower back, so seating that’s a big issue. Having the right support or being able to get up and walk around, move around.” Additionally, Robert remarked, “Just the pain alone makes it difficult to sit for any period of time and pay attention to what’s going on.”

Robert said, “I’ve got my disabilities, makes it really hard to pay attention, focus, and there’s just so much going on. So I have to work a little harder to keep my grades up than I would imagine most do.” Richard discussed that he is a disabled veteran whose disabilities include “loss of feeling in my lower extremities, PTSD, COPD, and loss of a lung.” Joe added, “Sometimes…my headaches are bad enough that I don’t want to be around other people where I might get annoyed or get to that point. So I’ve been—keeping safe. I’ve been keeping my space if I had to.” James and Dorothy both discussed how hastily the onset of anger can occur. Robert, Daniel, and David all discussed the experiences they had and how it affects where they choose to sit. Robert, Joe, and Daniel revealed significant disabilities created from their veteran experiences. It is important veterans understand their disabilities and the challenges they create.

DiRamio and Spires (2009) discussed that disabilities can be both visible and invisible; additionally, veterans may have learning disabilities following combat that were not previously present. Taylor et al. (2010) added the transitions from military service could be overwhelming, especially where disabilities are concerned. This is
similar to the information reported by the participants. Student veterans in this study that had disabilities reported more difficulties than those students who did not.

Richard stressed the needs veterans have and the challenges they face “change with every person, with every veteran.” Joe discussed,

[Faculty and staff] might not see a lot of these veterans, and how they struggle, but we see it all the time, and I see it all the time. Especially with the veterans that are always alone. I’m sure they don’t mind, but you know, we are fighting our own little battle in our minds. And it’s a little more difficult for us sometimes with school, but we’re here, doing our best.

Donald stated several of the soldiers in his unit have similar problems “as far as being able to get their education paid for, not the VA side like with the GI Bill, but on the tuition assistance side which is more of a state thing than it is a federal thing.” Donald discussed financial issues, “When you go a month without being paid, it’s not like they understand that people’s bills don’t stop; it’s one of those things where you just kind of suck it up and drive on, but yeah it does suck to a point.”

Further, John said, “I would say the need to have somebody be able to answer your question when you ask them.” Daniel explained previously that he prefers online classes since large groups are arduous. James added, “Every veteran needs a place where they can go and just study,” specifically one where they would not have to be around younger students who are distracting. Joe confirmed when he said, “We could use a place for ourselves. We could definitely use a place where we could still be on campus, but be away from like the general public where maybe we just don’t feel comfortable.”
John asserted, “I think there’s quite a few [veterans] that won’t interact with other students because they’re not veterans.”

Donald spoke of the difficulties working with the VA when he said getting “all of that paperwork transferred over to this VA has kind of been a pain in the butt in getting my VA hospital stuff started back up.” Dorothy related, “The wait on the VA is ridiculous. Since September 2013, I’ve been to the VA once.” Joe stated that veterans need a place and “somebody we could talk to…I feel like I have nowhere else to go. The VA is where we are supposed to go to, but I mean I see mine, once a year, twice a year. It’s not enough.” Furthermore, James said, “Veterans have a need or a desire to be heard. They need to be able to express their inner emotions and there is no way, there is no outlet for them here.” Daniel, James, Joe, and John all discussed student veterans need a place where they can go on campus, but away from other students. James and Joe both discussed they need someone to which they can talk. The needs of student veterans are a multifaceted challenge that must be addressed.

The Challenges and Needs of the Veteran as a Student

Many of the challenges veterans face as a student are similar to those of the traditional student, while simultaneously veterans experience challenges that are in tension with those traditional student needs. Similar to their veteran needs, many of the challenges faced are directly related to their military service and experiences. Learning how to function in a new environment, coupled with interfaces with students, faculty, staff, and college offices, can pose distinct difficulties for student veterans. There were 74 references to needs and challenges of students across the three cases and 14 interviews, which were broken down into three subthemes.
Student veterans discussed challenges as (a) interacting with younger or traditional-aged students, (b) personal challenges, and (c) challenges dealing with or deciding to utilize college offices and resources. Student veterans’ combat experience and age differences contribute to a sense of maturity as compared to their civilian counterparts (Rumann & Hamrick, 2010). Thus, student veterans had difficulty interacting with traditional-aged students.

Traditional students. Student veterans can feel disconnected from other students since the other students likely do not understand their previous experiences (Ryan et al., 2011). Frustration mounts among veterans with civilian peers because civilian students appear to lack concern for others based on inappropriate use of cell phones, disruption of class, and discussion of trivial issues (Demers, 2011; DiRamio et al., 2008). There were 12 references to challenges related to dealing with younger or traditional-aged students.

Robert put it in perspective when he said, “I don’t really talk to that many students. I’m just here to get an education. I’m generally a lot older than most of them anyway, so there’s not like a ton in common.” James considered a class he was enrolled in where they “are arguing public issues and there are a lot of young students in there, when I say young, 22 and below. And they start voicing their opinion about, you know, military, and how it sucks that they wouldn’t do it.” As noted by Joe earlier, younger students have simple worries, and it bothers him when they complain because of the serious issues that he faces. Additionally, James stated:

My first semester here was hard, really hard, because of the younger atmosphere, discipline, disrespect towards the instructors and professors, and I just couldn’t grasp it. I couldn’t grasp why they had the freedom or the gall to be so
disrespectful, texting in class, talking while the instructor is talking….Now you know, I tell them, “Hey, Dr. Jones, can you tell this person to stop talking over here, I can’t hear.” Or if they are texting, “Hey what’s that on Facebook?” So, you know, for me it’s gotten better.

These examples highlight some of the difficulties student veterans must overcome as they enter higher education.

**Personal struggles.** Since the needs and challenges student veterans face are varied, there are many struggles a student veteran faces that are personal or unique to them. Many of these struggles tie back to the change from the structured military environment to the personal drive required to be successful in the higher education setting. Additionally, veterans desire faculty to recognize their status as a veteran and to make an effort to understand them not only as a student but also as a population (DiRamio et al., 2008). There were 11 references to personal struggles faced by student veterans.

The struggles student veterans face are very personal. To illustrate, Dorothy said, “When I first started going back to school I was paranoid that I wouldn’t do well. I don’t know why. I was just afraid that I was setting myself up to fail.” John stated, “You’re not being told what to do constantly…as far as the military, hey, here’s your job. This is the end task, but you’re going to do it, and if you don’t, there are consequences.” John also added procrastination and forgetfulness are additional issues faced by student veterans, “Like I said, with the self-driven and the procrastination that’s one, but I’d say…doing everything yourself is probably the biggest hurdle I have.” Dorothy expressed the challenge of being a single parent when you are, “trying to go back to school is a
struggle, because my kids are in school. They need help with their school work, but I need help with my school work as well, and then trying to divide the time.”

Additionally, student veterans face challenges when they are viewed as traditional students. James stated:

I had one instructor who’s sending an e-mail saying, “James, hey, I need you to stay after class, I need to talk to you.” I replied, “No problem, can you tell me what it is in reference to?” And he replied back and said, “Does it matter what it is in reference to? If I’m the professor, instructor, and I tell you I need to see you, then I need to see you.” And I started typing back, “Yes, I’m a grown man before I’m a student. I’m probably closer to your age than anybody else you’ve dealt with. So, yes, it does matter what you want to see me for.” And before I could hit send, he sent something back, “Hey, I apologize, I never had a student ever question why I wanted to talk to him.” So in that aspect, you know, it’s challenging when they, when people see you as a traditional student versus a non-traditional student.

Robert corroborated when he said,

And especially when [faculty] are accustomed to dealing with 18, 19, or 20-year-old kids. [The traditional students] never walk in [faculty] offices and say anything about [the] faculty. So, they’re probably I would imagine not very accustomed to having somebody walk in their office and question their ability to do their job, or for their faculty/staff members to do their job.

These challenges with faculty and staff also seep over to college offices and resources.
Challenges with college offices and resources. Although most college offices and resources are in place to help students be more successful, often students can find working with them challenging. Additionally, some students fail to recognize the existence of offices and resources, or are concerned about the perception of others if they chose to utilize them. There were 43 references to such instances by participants.

John mentioned it had been difficult to work with “the VA reps” (school certifying officials) because there has been significant turnover in that position; “it’s hard to grasp that you give somebody a job,…[and] I hated the fact that they couldn’t answer all my questions.” Donald stated it can be challenging to work with the school certifying official at his school, “When it comes to answering questions it seems like sometimes the best answer that I get is ‘Well, that’s not in my lane’ or ‘I don’t really help with that kind of thing.’”

VSC Deborah mentioned at Diamond State College, veterans who submit military transcripts “only get credit for one course, Concepts of Fitness” and that most of the students just receive six elective credits. Joe stated, “I never did anything with my college credits. I guess in the military you could transfer some stuff over for college credit; I never did any of that.” Whereas Robert believed he should receive more credit: “Some of the stuff I have done, I know deals directly with the degree plan that I’m in. But, it doesn’t seem like they understand what I’ve done. So it’s been frustrating.”

David stated that getting started in college, “like registering and doing your financial aid, and trying to transfer transcripts…it’s a pain in the ass.” Donald said veterans need “somebody that understands that, and can get students that are in the veteran status jumpstarted in the school and get them going.” David added it can be
difficult “transferring your credits over, having to go to the registrar, finding out where the registrar is, financial aid, [and] filling out the FAFSA form.” Additionally, Joe said, Financial aid has always been hard because I’m retired, so I don’t get any money. I can’t really work. I’m not supposed to [work] a certain amount. and I haven’t worked in years. But my taxes are all kind of screwed up in that way, because I don’t have any income, but you know, and that always messes with FAFSA. And sometimes I get told “do it this way.” Sometimes I get told “do it that way.” And two years now, FAFSA was just all messed up where I had to get it fixed and wouldn’t get the money for school or, you know, luckily I’d had the GI Bill that helped me out.

Even though the college offices are resources meant to assist students and student veterans through the process, many veterans still struggle because student veterans fail to recognize resources; refuse to seek assistance; or feel the offices, resources, or personnel do not desire to assist them.

**Perception of Student Veterans Needs by Veteran Services Coordinators**

Veterans Services Coordinators were asked what they perceived to be the needs of student veterans and the challenges student veterans face. This theme was segregated because all but one of the VSCs have no military affiliation. The perceptions they have come from interactions with student veterans while performing their job, discussions of needs and challenges with student veterans, and in the case of VSC Rebecca, influences from personal experience. Many of the perceived challenges and needs are aligned with those discussed by the student veterans, including dealing with traditional students,
needing questions answered, and desiring structure. A total of 42 references were made to
the theme of perception of student veteran’s needs.

VSC Deborah stated, “They were in a structured environment. They were told
when to wake up, when to go to sleep, and where to be, and had to be there on time.”
VSC Jennifer previously corroborated when she discussed the need for structure among
student veterans and the challenges that occur when there is gray areas. Similarly, VSC
Rose said student veterans need guidance because, “being in the military or just going
through what they put you through, you’re guided there…and when you get out in the
civilian world you don’t have that here. So you don’t know those skills at that point yet.”

VSC Rebecca asserted, “Veteran students are different, no matter how much we
want to lump them into the student population.” VSC Rose mentioned, “They need a lot
more support in their academics,” while VSC Jennifer stressed, “Veteran students have
expressed a very deep frustration in infrastructure, asking questions and not getting the
answer.” Additionally, VSC Rose stated, “Most of them won’t go to the support places
for assistance or help,” though from discussions with VSC Rebecca, some students
“never know what is available to them…[or] did not know about the disability resource
center that could have given [them] a little extra time [on tests].”

Traditional-age students can also pose a challenge as VSC Jennifer explained,
“One of the difficulties that [veterans] have is dealing with the traditional student that
doesn’t have life experience.” VSC Donna concurred, “Sometimes they are so irritated
with some of the younger folks.” VSC Rebecca expressed, “I have a lot of military
students…who don’t like the classroom environment because the kids were sitting there
texting or doing disruptive things.” VSC Rose added traditional students “come in [class],
and they talk on their cellphones and disrupt class and things of that nature, and a lot of our veterans are disciplined.” VSC Jennifer said, “Learning how to survive in that environment without wanting to go ballistic is a huge challenge for veteran students.” VSC Rebecca added student veterans are just as frustrated “when a professor says, ‘do not use your phone in the class,’ and the students use their phone in the class, and then the professor doesn’t do anything about it.” VSC Deborah, VSC Jennifer, and VSC Rose discussed the lack of structure contributes to student veteran challenges. VSC Jennifer, VSC Donna, VSC Rebecca, and VSC Rose discussed the challenges student veterans experience when dealing with traditional-age student. Based on the discussion with student veterans, the perceptions of the needs they have and the challenges they face is fairly consistent.

Student veterans stated their needs and challenges to include dealing with traditional-aged students, being viewed as a traditional student, lacking structure in higher education, and working with faculty, staff, and college offices. Similarly, VSCs stated a perception of student veteran’s needs included dealing with traditional-aged students, needing structure in higher education, and feeling frustrated with infrastructure. VSCs appeared to believe a lack of structure in higher education played a larger role than did student veterans; however, VCSs were less cognizant of the frustrations concerning interactions with faculty, staff, and college offices discussed by student veterans.

**Challenges Created by Negative Expressions of Support**

The theme of *negative support* can best be defined as traditional systems of support for student veterans that instead of being a resource have caused difficulties. These areas of negative support, like the traditional systems, can include personal
support, university support, and community and professional support. There were 23 references to negative support by the participants which were primarily relate to personal and university support issues.

Daniel said when he first began college, “my wife wasn’t really supportive. She was like, ‘I don’t know why you are doing this.’” Joe, while discussing his aspirations to join the military said, “My family always held me back.” John mentioned his family “doesn’t really care. I don’t come from a family that has, I think, any college degrees….So not a whole lot from my family.” Personal support tends to be the primary source of support for student veterans, without which the challenges can be magnified.

Donald articulated he directs his soldiers on how to get benefits they have earned, but “when they come to the college, they’re not getting the same assistance or the same guidance that they should be getting as far as getting those things set up.” Dorothy mentioned from a previous school experience “they didn’t have a representative there that took the time out to explain everything to me.” John said one of the biggest difficulties is “if you got any questions, you go ask them. But then in turn when you ask your questions, they give you a website, you know….You shouldn’t direct me to some website or something like that.” Robert stated,

You would think that the [veteran’s office] would have done a lot more. But, it’s really not been a good experience there. I don’t go there unless I have to….The other offices can answer minor questions, but they can’t really and they don’t really, help you transition at all. And it’s just kind of like, there you go, there’s that.
Joe said, “I’ve done everything by myself up to now, and now… I have to find a way to get [some help].”

Challenges related to deployment, reintegration, and military and academic issues create needs that can be difficult to overcome. In this study, the four themes that emerged include: Veteran status can create needs and challenges; student needs can be similar to traditional student, but veteran status may create additional needs or intensify challenges; perceptions of student veteran needs are similar to those expressed by veterans; and negative support can create challenges for student veterans. Understanding the variety of needs and challenges that student veterans face allows for an understanding of the resources necessary and that can be utilized to assist student veterans in the reintegration process. Table 5.2 summarizes the data related to the category needs and challenges; participants that have made comments that fall into the different aspects of the category are marked with an “X.” Raw frequencies and percentages of participants are noted for each participant group separately and in total.
Table 5.2 Data Summary Table: Needs and Challenges

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<th>Challenge with disabilities</th>
<th>Challenge with anxiety and anger</th>
<th>Difficulty accessing university resources</th>
<th>Need for questions to be answered</th>
<th>Difficulty dealing with lack of structure</th>
<th>Difficulty receiving credit for military training</th>
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Note: \( n^v=9 \) is the number of student veterans; \( n^c=5 \) is the number of Veterans Services Coordinators; \( n=14 \) is the total number of participants.

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<th>Data Summary Table: Needs and Challenges</th>
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Deborah

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Note: \( n^v=9 \) is the number of student veterans; \( n^c=5 \) is the number of Veterans Services Coordinators; \( n=14 \) is the total number of participants.
**Finding 2.** Student veterans can be successful in higher education with adequate support and resources; additionally, advocates can empower student veterans by creating a supportive atmosphere.

**Support and Resources**

It takes a variety of resources to support student veterans in meeting the needs they face. Student veterans can be supported through family and personal support systems, university support systems, and community and professional support systems. Resources were considered as structures that are in place at the university to assist veterans, including services provided by the university, outside sources, and systems of support for veterans. These resources can be a part of existing services offered by the university for all students, resources specifically provided for student veterans, or referral to other organizations that may provide a service not offered, or not offered at an advanced level, by the university. Four themes emerged from the category of support and resources:

- Family and personal support can have a significant positive impact on successful transition from the military to higher education in the form of encouragement and the determination to be an exemplar.

- The support a university provides for student veterans can have a significant impact on the success of the student veteran; support can range from offices and resources to collaborations with outside entities. The most significant support can be found in the form of a Veterans Center on campus.

- Community and professional support can have a potentially positive impact for student veterans, and although it is not always entwined with the university system, it can have amplifying effects when it is.
• Effective advocates can have a positive effect on the success of student veterans through encouragement, confidence building, support, and assistance.

**The Significance of Family and Personal Support**

Personal support includes personally developed relationships and connections. For most, this begins with family, including parents, siblings, and other influential adults. Family grows to include spouses and children. Additionally, friends and coworkers are part of the personal support system. There were 36 references related to the effect of family and personal support systems.

All veteran participants mentioned family and/or friends have been a source of support at some point during their educational pursuits. Dorothy said, “It pays to have a good support system,” adding, “I have family here which is a big, big support.” Daniel specifically mentioned, “My 19-year-old daughter just texted me that she would help me out in math…. [My wife is] supportive and she keeps me on track and says, ‘Hey, you have this assignment due. You need to get it done.’”

Donald said, “I have a really supportive family. My wife she’s kind of been the backbone it seems like, with me deploying and everything….my wife has kind of helped me hold everything together.” Joe stated, “My wife has been pretty supportive….She’s pretty much the only support I’ve really had.” John added his wife is his support,

It’s definitely been my wife. She, like I said, she went to school for seven years. So with her help and with her cussing me when she needed to cuss me and praising me when she needed to praise me and it helped a lot, you know. She’s my driving force of everything. She pushes to pull my potential out, and that’s something that I need. A lot of military men need it, most of them do, you know,
they got their good wives standing behind them, so or beside them, sorry, not behind them. You know what I mean, standing behind and pushing, and when you stop they are right there. So yeah, it’s been her. She’ll say, “Hey, just stop, don’t get mad” because that’s my default, is to get angry about it and then when I calm down then she-- you know keeps me on the level, and then she’s like “we can figure this out.” And then we have to start looking stuff up or whatever and get the problem fixed and go on about my business.

Joe said his family helps him get through school: “Just thinking about my kids, I have to pass. I feel like if I don’t pass, I’ll let them down.” Donald stated that “having a family now, having priorities, [has helped me to realize] what I want to do.” James remarked, “My family really helps me, you know, overcome a lot of things. They tell me when I’m being grumpy or, you know, a butthead or whatever.”

Donald discussed, “I have my certain mentors that I go to that have experienced the same things, that if I ever need assistance or I have any questions, I can go to them with those questions.” John added, “Some friends of mine that have been to school, some guys in the unit that have been to school, they were pretty helpful.” Richard said he worries less when he interacts with classmates, which has been a big support. All student veteran participants stated the positive impact of personal support systems, mentioning specifically the importance of family support.

**The Importance of University Support**

University support is considered to be structures that are in place at the university to assist veterans, including services provided by the university and services provided through university collaboration with outside sources. These resources can be a part of
existing services offered by the university for all students, resources specifically provided for student veterans, or referral to other organizations that may provide a service not offered, or not offered at an advanced level, by the university.

There are many resources and services provided by the university in support of student veterans, which can include college offices, programs, services, and personnel. There were 185 references to university support of students across the three cases and 14 interviews, which were broken down into four subthemes: Veterans Center, college offices, resources, and collaboration.

**Veterans Center.** Only one university in this study has a Veterans Center. It is clear through the participants’ interviews this has been a vast source of support of student veterans. There were 15 references specifically concerning the Veterans Center.

Daniel stated, “Well, the only office I deal with is the Veterans Center right now, and they have a range of services. Like they help you get in contact with the people that can get you into class…we get preferred scheduling.” Donald said he has just recently realized the importance of the Veterans Center now that he needs assistance filing paperwork with the VA; he added, “You don’t have to actively search out anybody. I think that’s one great thing that [the university] has done here with the Veterans Center.”

Dorothy added, “The Veterans Center told me I need to go and talk to [Deborah]…and the multi-cultural center…and the counseling center, and the disability services” which has helped her to understand the services available.

David also discussed that he had fewer challenges because of the Veterans Center, stating that the staff would help him figure out what to do and where to go, often eliminating the need to physically go to other offices. He added:
The Veterans Center is a place you can go and kind of be out of the crowd to do homework, or if you don’t have a printer, don’t have a good, you know, whatever it is. They probably have it here, and you’re not kind of in the crowd, especially if you’re older.

Additionally, Daniel said the Veterans Center “has made it a lot easier, whether I’m going here, or somewhere else, you know, I mean they’ve made it really easy.” He added, “The Veterans Center—if I have bigger issues or just need to get away or whatever, I can come here, I can go to the day room. I can relax and just, whatever. Dorothy explained,

I always tell even my classmates now, when I find out that they are veterans, I always tell them, “Go to the Veterans Center.” They will help you out so much, not to burn [the Veterans Center] out, but to help the student. They know services and resources and stuff that the students can benefit from, and they can point them in the right direction. The Veterans Center isn’t the only center that helps [veterans]…but first and foremost is the Veterans Center.

David said the university sees a need to support student veterans, and that the “Veterans Center is probably the star of that,” showing that university support, and a Veterans Center specifically, can make a difference. Only one university in this study currently has a Veterans Center; as such, other universities plan a higher demand on college offices to provide support for student veterans.

**College offices.** There are numerous college offices that exist to support students in their quest for an education. These office, though usually not specifically in existence for veterans, are also a source of support for student veterans. There were 61 references
to college offices in participants’ interviews. Participants noted several college offices that have been supportive: the Veterans Affairs office, disability services, and others (e.g., the advising center, financial aid, residence life, admissions, registrar, student support services, and counseling services).

VSC Rebecca said the “veteran’s office…has an area that has computers and has coffee brewing all the time.” She added that the veteran’s office “helps [students] through the horrible [computer] system” that is required to apply for veterans benefits, and that the “testing office even allows them to have a quiet area to test.” Joe mentioned, “The VA coordinators here, they definitely helped out.” VSC Rose said the veterans’ office tries “to provide [students] with the support that they need…we try to offer the information that’s available.”

Robert stated, “The disability resource center here helps a lot.” Dorothy discussed, “I’m trying to get over there as soon as I find time to go to the counseling center and the Disability Services because I do have testing anxiety and stuff.”

VSC Deborah discussed several college offices assist veterans in their transition to college life:

Well, they come in. They want to know what they qualify for as far as the Montgomery GI Bill. They want to know about financial aid, housing, where they need to start. Like, if they don’t have a major in mind, who would they go see in way of career services that can do those little test things that say this would be a good fit for you. Then, the Veterans Center—they have all their services that they help the veteran student with—financial aid, housing, what credits they get from the military, what they could bring in as far as what their MOS was.
In addition to the Veterans Center, Dorothy said, “Student support services [helps] because they deal with non-traditional students; the multicultural center will [help] because they deal with non-traditional students.”

VSC Jennifer elaborated on the roles college offices perform as they assist student veterans in their transition to college life:

A first-time college student will always say, “Okay, I want to come back to college, what do I need to do?” There are several things they can do simultaneously. It’s not one comes before the other. So I always talk to them about applying for their GI Bill benefits if they’ve not. And then I also remind them that the FAFSA is out there….Then we discuss admissions, and what’s going to be required for that. High school transcript, GED, they need to have proof of those, have their high school send those….We work with them as best we can and for like the financial aid FAFSA….They’ll visit with financial aid; they’ll visit with me; they’ll visit with the admission office. And then once they have been accepted as a student, then they meet with an adviser over in the general advising.

John mentioned, “The admissions office…helped me with any questions I had,” even when they were not related to admissions. Additionally, VSC Rose said the admissions office, financial aid, and counseling play pivotal roles.

**Resources.** Resources are directly associated with the college offices, but specifically refer to services that are provided, supplementary materials, and tools that can assist student veterans. College offices typically provide these resources, though
many come from a referral to another organization. There were 83 references to resources provided by the university either directly or through a referral.

VSC Deborah mentioned, “We have a webpage….We have the Veterans Center. Most all departments now know that we have a VA school certifying official on campus. We have ROTC. We have Residence Life. It has a dorm for military, and flyers and SVO.” VSC Donna added the university provides services related to “Speech, physical therapy, counseling, evaluations. It’s done on campus. We can do referrals also for their dependents. So, we can offer mental health, speech, physical therapy for their dependents, and scholarships.” Additionally, students enrolled in the Veterans Center receive priority registration.

David said that there are all kinds of resources including “veteran services and [student] veteran organizations.” VSC Donna also mentioned the Veterans Center “pays for tutoring. We arrange tutoring….There is a writing lab; it’s available here on campus.”

As previously discussed by VSC Deborah, military personnel, both active and honorably discharged, and their dependents receive in-state tuition no matter where they are from or currently living; she added, “The veteran dependents and anybody honorably discharged gets in-state tuition, graduate school, all the way up.” Additionally, VSC Rose stated her college has “started a military special discount rate…which eliminates additional fees that [students] are normally assessed so that it brings the cost down.”

Dorothy discussed several college offices and the resources they provide when she said:

Through the Disability Services they let you check out equipment if you need it, and they allow you to come in and take tests at a later time. Because when I’m
sitting in [sic] my desk or table, and I see people getting done with their test, I’m thinking, “I’m just on my second page and I have six more pages to go.” It kind of stresses me out. But with student support services, they allow you to like check out laptops and scientific calculators. They provide tutoring services. They do workshops on financial literacy and just being responsible; some people need it. I feel like I just somehow skipped over and need a refresher course on that. But they do provide pretty good workshops. Even the Veterans Center, they do anger management courses and marital counseling, group therapy. They have different classes that they bring to the table every now and then.

In contrast, Joe stated his only resource has been “the VA coordinator here. When I came to Arkansas, it was really limited.”

VSC Rebecca talked about services that are available for student veterans with disabilities,

We have counseling services. We have our disability resource center, and from that if we have a military student who has PTSD, or who has lost a limb, or whatever the situation is, whatever the disability may be, they will intervene and speak with the faculty so that [the student] can have things like somebody there taking notes or a little extra time to take a test….Our testing office even allows them to have a quiet area to test outside of the classroom so that there is no interruption, and there are no things that can really trigger someone who has PTSD.

Robert added, “The disability resource center here helps a lot so, when you register with them, because I get extra time on tests, they afford me a lot of different things, parking
spots really close to where my classes are.” College offices are playing a pivotal role in providing resources for student veterans, though they are not the sole provider. An increased pressure on student affairs has led to the realization that to best meet the needs of students, the creation and enhancement of on-campus partnerships must exist in higher education through breaking down of silos, and collaborations must “move beyond the campus to form partnerships with community agencies, government entities, and private industries” (ACPA & NASPA Task Force, 2010, p. 9).

Collaboration. According to the literature, there are two types of collaboration: internal and external (Amey, Eddy, & Ozaki, 2007; Kezar, 2005b; Kezar, 2006). Internal collaboration involves collaboration within the university system (Kezar, 2005b; Kezar, 2006), whereas external collaboration is between the university and local business, industry, government, nonprofit, etc. There were 26 references to collaboration. Collaboration is integral to integrative leadership, but there was a lack of collaboration found in this study. There were few references made to internal collaboration; most references were related to external collaboration which can be directly linked to community and professional support.

VSC Jennifer expressed that she has been actively engaging in internal collaboration at the University:

I’ve been working with advisement, admissions, the registrar’s office and even talking with faculty about proper advising of students and making sure that they understand the rules, regulations, those sort of things; the criteria that a veteran student has to meet in order to be eligible to receive their benefits.
Additionally, VSC Jennifer has looked at external collaborative efforts when her university asked her to determine if the university met the eight keys to veteran success. One point, according to VSC Jennifer, was “collaborating with local communities and organizations; that was another area that we just recently started working on with the department of work force services.”

VSC Donna noted, “We work with voc. rehab. We work with the VA job force….We have some ministers. We have [collaborations] with our mental health agencies in our area, food bank we work with. We work with our homeless shelter.” VSC Donna highlighted a specific example:

Our community contacts are a huge support. We have groups; even as simple as the Masonic Lodge that buys all our coffee. You won’t believe how much coffee I go through because that pot is on from six in the morning to six at night, 12 hours a day, and that little thing, somebody went to the effort to make sure we have this little thing, and come get a coffee; it is the little things.

VSC Rose and VSC Rebecca discussed coordination with local organizations to assist homeless veteran students as well as for mental health concerns. VSC Rebecca added,

We are right now putting together a partnership with the Professional Education Center. They have cyber security training out there, and we are a NSA-certified school in our information assurance and our computer forensic programs. We’re trying to get a partnership where we can provide the classes for the students, so that they can go out and become certified, and if they want to, they can continue and finish their education.
VSC Rose also mentioned the Small Business Association has helped at least one veteran pursue a business plan. Understanding the importance of collaboration to both integrative leadership and to the ability of collaboration to enhance the services provided to students will allow for an increased capacity of higher education to meet the needs faced by student veterans, furthering the integration process. The deficiency of collaboration found in this study, coupled with the literature explicating a necessity for collaboration, shows a clear need to enhance collaborative processes.

**The Impact of Community and Professional Support**

Community and professional support has ties to the collaborative efforts of the university, but can also include support the veteran received without assistance from the university. This could include community memberships, veterans associations, the VA, and other professional support such as counselors, and government offices. Community and professional support may be government, nonprofit, or business including veterans benefits. A veteran is “any current or former member of the active duty, National Guard, or Reserve military regardless of deployment status or combat experience” (Vacchi, 2012, p. 17). Additionally, in order to receive veterans benefits, an honorable or general discharge must have been given at time of separation. Veterans benefits are one of the support mechanisms available to veterans, and are provided by the government through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. There were 58 references to community and professional support including 33 references specifically related veterans benefits.

James discussed the importance and impact of having community support systems:
You need a good network in the community. I have church. I have my motorcycle group; I’m a member of the Elks Club. I stay busy to keep my mind from those things, and when I do feel like I’m getting into a funk or getting depressed, one of those people close to me, you know, besides my family will say, “Hey, everything okay? You’ve changed; something is going on.” Even at school, if I miss a day of class and I hadn’t sent an email prior, the professors will email me, “Hey, missed you in class. Everything okay? You need my help with anything?” So it’s-- you really need a support system more than just the family, more than just the VA, more than—a support system is key.

Dorothy said she received help with “counseling because during that time with the move and then going from one school to another school my kids started acting out.” She added, “I asked their doctor if he could maybe put in a request for therapy. That helped a little too when the children got into therapy, and they did like family sessions.” Richard said, “If I have a problem, I talk to my doctor.”

Additionally Dorothy highlighted, “My kids are on ARKids…and then we get SNAP because I don’t work. I can’t work. There’s no way I can be a full-time mom and a full-time student and work. I’ve tried, and it didn’t work.” VSC Rose said, “I really wish that the city…all the cities that have this issue, could find ways of reaching out to the veterans and getting them connected with the programs that could keep them, like everybody else, functioning in the city.” VSC Rose discussed there are many local agencies to help veterans, though she is not aware of all of them. She adds many counties have a veteran’s representative as well as the local unemployment offices.
Donald said, “I’m in the process of filing for VA compensations and up to this point I’ve never filed for anything, and I’ve come to the point now where it seems like I’m going to need it.” Joe remarked, “I don’t really go to groups. I don’t do the whole therapy thing. I do see a therapist through the VA, but I might see him maybe once a year maybe or twice a year.” Robert added,

In the voc. rehab. program, they assign you a counselor. My counselor is not, how can I say this politely, maybe her plate is full. I would imagine it’s probably like that everywhere at the VA, everyone’s plate is full. So she was a huge help, and I did a lot of research beforehand.

Dorothy, David, Daniel, James, Joe, John, and Richard all receive education benefits from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. John, Robert, James, Joe, Daniel, and David also receive disability benefits at some percentage.

**The Effect of Advocates**

There are many individuals who serve as advocates for veterans. These advocates can come from any of the categories of support: personal, university, and professional and community. Advocates may be supporters of veterans, or may actively speak on behalf of veterans and their needs. Participants in this study discussed advocated at the university who have helped in the reintegration through higher education process. There were only nine references to advocates, but the impact advocates appeared to have was significant for those student veterans.

David remarked, “All my teachers will go above and beyond,” as quoted in Chapter 4 when he discussed the encouragement he received from his professors while
enrolled in college post-injury. Robert noted, “If it weren’t for [VSC Rebecca], I probably would have just cashed out, right after I started.”

James talked about two teachers who were beneficial to him: “An English professor gave me, I don’t know how or when or why, but gave me confidence in myself, in my writing skills, and then they just allowed me to be me.” James expressed his difficulties in math, and the assistance of his math teacher was also helpful: “I would come in the morning, and as soon as the instructor would come around [the corner], ‘Not you again, [James].’ ‘Oh, yeah, you have to help me with this problem.’ So they helped me with the problems.” Donald highlighted one teacher in particular, “My adviser is really good about assisting me,” and he mentioned that she always takes the time to check in on him even when he is not in her classes.

Student veterans face a variety of challenges; as such, it takes diverse resources to support them. These resources can be offered by the university for all students or for student veterans and may also include referral to other organizations. In this study, the four themes that emerged from the category of support and resources include: the significance of family and personal support, the importance of university support, the impact of community and professional support, and the effect of advocates. Though these resources are helpful to student veterans, additional suggestions could enhance the services and resources provided. Table 5.3 summarizes the data related to the category support and resources; participants that have made comments that fall into the different aspects of the category are marked with an “X.” Raw frequencies and percentages of participants are noted for each participant group separately and in total. VSCs were not
asked about family and personal support available to the student veteran; for those two aspects the n=7.
Table 5.3: Data Summary Table: Support and Resources

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<td>Jennifer</td>
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<td>Deborah</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total (n=14)</td>
<td>7* (78%)</td>
<td>4* (44%)</td>
<td>6 (43%)</td>
<td>12 (86%)</td>
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Note. \( n=9 \) is the number of student veterans; \( n=5 \) is the number of Veterans Services Coordinators; \( n=14 \) is the total number of participants. *\( n=7 \), VSCs were not asked about personal support available to the student veteran.
Finding 3. Student veterans believe higher education is attempting, though somewhat unsuccessfully, to meet the needs they face, and student veterans suggest the creation of a Veterans Center on campuses.

Suggestions and Advice

Not every student veteran need may be met with existing resources. As such, student veterans, and veterans’ services coordinators alike, were asked how the university could better meet the needs of student veterans. Additionally, student veterans and veterans services coordinators were asked what advice they would offer to incoming student veterans. Moreover, the perceptions of support may be as important as the actual support, and can directly influence the support that is being proposed. Three themes emerged related to suggestions and advice:

- The perceptions, or misperceptions, of how the university views the needs of student veterans are more negative for student veterans and more positive for veterans’ services coordinators.

- Personal experiences and interactions with veterans prompts advice for veterans considering pursuing higher education, such as being patient, not procrastinating, and finding and using available resources.

- Based on their perceptions, needs, and personal experiences, participants proposed ways in which the university could better show their support of student veterans; namely, having a Veterans Center, educating faculty, and having specialized personnel.
Perception of University Views of Needs

Participants were asked how the university viewed the needs of student veterans. This was not to show actual views by the university, but to show how student veterans and veterans’ services coordinators perceived the university to be considering the needs of student veterans. Because veterans’ services coordinators are paid by the university, their views are kept separate from those of the student veteran participants. There were 17 references to perceptions of the university views of student veterans needs by student veterans and an additional 11 by veterans’ services coordinators.

Veterans from all three schools, that is Daniel, Donald, John, and Richard, believed the university made attempts at considering the needs of student veterans, not to say they were doing it well. Daniel noted,

I believe that the University, there’s been a lot more concentration on it than there has been in the past. I believe that they’re recognizing that there’s more that can be done and that should be done that hasn’t been done before.

Donald affirmed, “I know that the university definitely has made attempts at some of these things.” John echoed, “I think they try to help [veterans]”; Richard professed, “They are very concerned.”

Donald also said, “I think [the university] has done a good job,…but I don’t think a lot of time…the veterans’ voice is being heard, because I know I’m not the only person to have issues with education like I said.” John articulated, “They do enough to say we’re doing it….They only care enough about our needs to keep us in the school…to keep us in the classroom. I don’t think that they really care enough to make things easier.”
In contrast, Dorothy, James, Joe, and Robert, veterans representing all three universities in this study believed the university is not concerned with the needs of veterans. Joe revealed, “I don’t think they think about it too much. I mean there’s hardly anything here about the veterans…hardly ever.” As noted by Robert previously, he believes the Veteran Services Coordinators at his university are the only ones who care about veterans, because it is their job, not the faculty, staff, or administrators. As quoted by Dorothy in Chapter 4, she reiterated the Veterans Center staff is the ones that work closely with the veterans and she felt that they were the only ones at the university who think about the needs of student veterans. Joe commented, “I guess it’s not a big emphasis on it, on veterans, but it’s not really that I guess they don’t feel like it’s their place, or they don’t know any better.”

Joe continued, “I guess they might not see a lot of these veterans and how they struggle, but we see it all the time….You know, we are fighting our own little battle in our minds.” James summed it up when he stressed,

[The university doesn’t care]. There’s only one organization that I know of that has ever acknowledged veterans. Veterans they come, veterans they go. The university doesn’t-- the university itself, the Chancellor has never come down to say, “Hey, where are my veterans? Let me sit with my veterans, or let’s just have a chat. Let’s go to lunch,” you know, never, ever. So, I don’t think they even-- they don’t think about us too much.

Among the Veteran Services Coordinators, VSC Jennifer asserted, “I think that the support is one hundred percent here on campus, from the top down that they support our military, and they want to do everything the can.” However, she added, “We were
contacted to participate in the eight keys of veteran success….I realized that we probably were doing maybe three or four of them, not all eight.”

VSC Donna, the director of the only Veterans Center in the study, believes that the university is trying to meet the needs of student veterans, and though there will always be more than can be done, they are continually striving to improve the services offered.

Overall, it is apparent student veterans struggle to feel connected with the university. Even the student veterans who believed the university had made an effort, still felt critical of the reasoning behind the efforts or the true intentions of the university. Based on the discussion from the VSCs, however, the university may be trying to do more than what appears at first glance. There is an apparent divide between the university support of student veterans as viewed by the VSCs and the student veterans; it is clear a disconnect exists between university intent and perception by student veterans. This is a communication issue, where the university must find a way to communicate available resources to student veterans. One way to do this would be through a Veterans Center, which could serve as a unifying voice for the university to disseminate information to student veterans.

**Advice for Student Veterans Entering Higher Education**

All participants had clear advice they would give to veterans deciding to pursue higher education. The advice echoed among participants. There were 36 references to advice, for example being informed, taking it easy, and asking for help.

Daniel contended the advice he would give was probably going to be done by veterans anyway such as, “do you research…get the best information…make sure the
college that you pick is the one that is best for you, it’s the one that offers what you’re wanting.” Robert corroborated, “Do your homework ahead of time. Don’t come in here blind and misinformed. But, most people in the military, they’re not going to come in here blind. They’re generally going to do their homework ahead of time anyway.”

VSC Deborah, VSC Donna, VSC Rebecca, and Joe all discussed taking it easy at first. VSC Deborah said, “Don’t take hard classes. Don’t overload yourself with chemistry and biology and physics. Step in it easy…to get you back in the habit of studying and reading.” VSC Donna underscored, “Just slowly take those hard classes….We want you to succeed, not fail.” VSC Rebecca expressed, “I would tell them, maybe they need to take it easy the first semester.” Joe affirmed, “The best advice probably would be, to take it slow, not burn themselves out. Because if you get too stressed out, that is when it’s hard to control how you feel.”

VSC Rebecca asserted student veteran success is the most important thing and, “if at any time during the process they’re feeling stressed, then we need to go see the resources that we have so that they can go to counseling and continue.” John articulated,

They love pictures and they love crayons in the military. So they’re going to make sure that it’s Barney style. It’s just going to be broken down to the simplest form possible and here it’s not. So, you have to be ready for that, you just have to. And, you have to be patient and wait on it. It’s going to be hard at first especially like me where it doesn’t really come easy; you just have to work on it.

Additionally, Joe stressed, “If you feel like you can’t be around people, get away. I mean, there’s nothing wrong with missing a class if you have to….and take your meds. Take
Just because you’re a veteran, don’t think that you can’t go back to school. Especially if you’re like me, and you were infantry. Just because you’re infantry, don’t think that you’re too dumb to go to school. Because you’re not, I proved it; I’m not. I am smarter than the average person. So, absolutely go to school; pursue your benefits. If you want to know what they are call us.

Donald noted, “Start getting all of your stuff together as early as possible. Don’t wait until the last second to get your notice of basic eligibility or submitting your transcript.”

David communicated, “Give it two semesters. That’s the main thing because it’s probably going to have a whole lot of suck and just embrace the suck for two semesters and then decide, ‘I’m definitely going to do it or not going to do it.’ …Anything worth doing is probably not going to be easy, especially all the time.”

VSC Jennifer remarked, “Go ahead and apply for your military benefits. Apply and get that going at the very least, because it takes a while to process that.”

VSC Donna said, “Don’t give up….Ask for help.” Donald echoed, “Find somebody that can assist you with those things. Don’t try to do it on your own.” John stressed, “Be patient. Be very patient, it takes time to get used to it. It takes time to get used to the people; it takes time to get used to the not having things drawn out for you like it is in the military.” Dorothy related, “I would suggest that they contact the veteran’s representative.” In summary, advice for veterans interested in higher education is:

- Do your research about the school.
• Be patient; give it time; do not give up.
• Find help; ask for help, use resources that are available.
• Anything worth doing is probably not going to be easy.
• Do not take hard classes.
• Do not wait until the last minute.
• Contact a veteran’s representative.
• Adapt to the university environment.
• Get away if needed.
• Find other veterans, and ask them questions.
• Pursue veteran benefits.

Overall, the advice given by student veterans and veterans’ services coordinators reflects their experiences within the university.

**Proposals for Ways the University Could Better Support Student Veterans**

Since all student veteran needs cannot be met with existing resources, student veterans and veterans’ services coordinators discussed ways in which the university could better meet the needs of student veterans. Though there were many different suggestions, three resonated with the strongest emphasis: creating a Veterans Center, educating faculty, and hiring additional or specialized personnel. There were 83 references to the ways in which the university could better meet the needs of student veterans.

Daniel and Donald are both students at Diamond State College where there is a Veterans Center; both would recommend that all universities should have such a center in place. James, VSC Jennifer, Joe, VSC Rebecca, and VSC Rose aspired to have a Veterans Center at their university. Daniel proclaimed,
I believe that every university should have something similar to [the Veterans Center], if not identical to it; because, I’m a firm believer that if the Veterans Center wasn’t here there wouldn’t be hardly any veterans going here,…because [the Veterans Center] has resources. They just have so many resources and people that are there to support you no matter what’s going on in your life. They always carve out time, and they make themselves available to you which is a big help to people that are coming out of the military. There’s a lot of times when people, they get out of the military, there’s I know I did, I had a huge chip on my shoulder, you know, real attitude problem. And it was because I didn’t know where I could get any help to get things done. Where in the military, you knew where you could go to get what you needed, you know, and out here there’s not like a map or anything, and that’s what the Veterans Center does, they help veterans and point them in the right direction.

Donald echoed this sentiment, when he discussed his desire for the Veterans Center to be a model for other universities:

I know if I struggle with the same things as far as education I know that they do as well….So having those things in place at other colleges would definitely not just benefit the veteran, but it would also I think benefit colleges in the long run because you would have veterans that aren’t as intimidated to go to college if they know they have somebody there to assist them in getting those education benefits because a lot of times that’s their biggest worry. It’s not the college courses; it’s the process of having those things taken care of to get started.
James discussed the importance of having a place where veterans can study quietly, away from the juvenile environment.

Joe acknowledged being on campus is important while still having a place for veterans to gather that is separate from the general population. As VSC Jennifer previously commented, she would desire to have a Veterans Center physically located on campus where students could use computers, lounge, socialize, study, hold student veterans organization meetings, meet with counselors, et cetera. VSC Jennifer added, “It’s a place for [veterans] to go where the other veterans are, and they could kind of just disengage a little bit and decompress and get their center back.” Joe described a “secluded location on campus.”

VSC Rebecca stated, “I had made a proposal that we should have a veteran student success center,” but it had been rejected. She mentioned they are trying to do it as a process without the centralized location, but that it is difficult. VSC Rebecca dreamed of “expanding and actually having a center where it was a one-stop shop where we could help them through admissions. Help them through their financial aid, help them through academics, and advise them.”

VSC Deborah discussed that more communication was needed between the various silos in the university, including faculty and staff, academic affairs, and the chancellor’s office. VSC Jennifer divulged, “I’ve given [the university] suggestions on how to help the veteran students and by reaching out to our faculty and staff and asking them to participate in a smaller advising pool that is for veteran students.” Joe concurred, “Maybe have advisers that know a little more about veterans, how we work, or how we think things through.”
VSC Jennifer revealed, “We don’t have on campus a trained veteran counselor who would handle any kind of psychiatric or PTSD or anything like that.” She added they could be housed part time in the Veterans Center if one were in place. Joe also disclosed it would be nice to have “maybe a therapist or something… somebody we could talk to other than the VA…, I feel like I have nowhere else to go.”

Donald divulged, when he noted previously, that universities need to have staff who truly understand veterans benefits and can help students through the process of receiving those benefits. John remarked, “The colleges need to have more than one [school certifying official]. I think they need to have like four. I think they need to have one for each branch…because they’re all different apparently, what they get.”

James underscored, “Show [veterans] that [the university] cares. Show them that they are a part of the university in some shape, form, or fashion. Acknowledge them.” Joe vocalized, “Have an event once in a while; you know, towards veterans,” adding “showing us that, you know, there is like a light at the end of the tunnel.” VSC Rebecca expressed, “We need to recognize the military students.”

VSC Rebecca suggested a course similar to the first-year colloquium that is offered to current incoming freshmen to learn about college; she offered, “I would love to see a course that military students have to take. That gets them oriented into college and gets them, really just helps them into the civilian world again.” As quoted by David in Chapter 4, he acknowledged the difficulties student veterans face in recognizing the need for assistance such as disability services, and the importance for universities to offer services rather than waiting for student veterans to seek out services. VSC Jennifer also acknowledged there is no system in place “to collect data and track information on
veterans.” VSC Rebecca noted the university was accredited as being military friendly because they met the basic needs of student veterans, but “if we want to go a step beyond and truly be military friendly…, if we want to really, really, really, mean what we say when we say military friendly, we have some things that we need to do.” Additionally, Robert claimed, “I wish they would just put a little more effort into giving military students credit for what they’ve done instead of just dismissing it.” VSC Rose mentioned, in order to help veterans, the university must first become aware of student veterans and the needs they face, and currently there is not a mechanism in place by which to do that.

To review, three themes emerged as relating to suggestions and advice: perception of the university views of the needs of student veterans, advice for student veterans entering higher education, and proposals for ways the university could better support student veterans. Table 5.4 summarizes the data related to the category suggestions and advice; participants that have made comments that fall into the different aspects of the category are marked with an “X.” Raw frequencies and percentages of participants are noted for each participant group separately and in total. It is apparent higher education has the services student veterans need, however, collaborations need improving in order to best meet their needs. By integrating services into a Veterans Center, universities can improve the perception of intent to meet the needs of student veterans. Student services has the role of delivering services that positively contribute to the students’ educational experiences while providing added institutional and societal value (Barham & Scott, 2006). Additionally, collaborations must exist both on-campus and off-campus to include community, government, and private sectors (ACPA & NASPA Task Force, 2010).
integrative leadership could be used to create and maintain cross-sector collaborations to address the complex public challenge of veteran reintegration.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Propositions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Officers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
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<td>Students</td>
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Table 5.4 Data Summary Table: Suggestions and Advice

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<tr>
<th>Perceptions</th>
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<tbody>
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<tr>
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<td>Procrastinate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Easy/Be</td>
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<td>Take it</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Use</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Veterans</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supports</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attempts</td>
<td>Concern</td>
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<table>
<thead>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
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<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: n=9 is the number of student veterans; n=5 is the number of Veterans Services Coordinators; n=14 is the total number of participants.
Finding 4. Student veterans are reluctant to self-identify as a veteran to other students, and interactions with other students can be challenging; however, interacting with other student veterans provides the impetus for overcoming challenges.

Interactions

Interactions include interfaces with faculty and staff, students, and other veterans. This emerged as a separate category, which transcends the boundaries of the previous categories. Interactions can be both positive and negative. They can create a need, they can develop from a source of support, and they can create suggestions for future assistance. The interactions can show tolerance, ignorance, or annoyance. The interactions usually occur upon identification of veteran status. As such, many student veterans struggle to determine if, and when, to identify their status. Two main themes emerged:

- Most student veterans are reluctant to identify themselves as a veteran.
- Veterans have diverse interactions with other students, including other veterans; these interactions can be both positive and negative.

Reluctance to Identify as a Veteran

Many student veterans struggle to determine if, and when, to identify their veteran status due to the interactions they encounter. Most of the participants choose to hold their veteran status close, sharing it only with other veterans or people they determine need to know. A total of 24 references were made to the theme of reluctance to identify as a veteran.
Daniel reported he usually discussed his veteran status “only around others like me. I don’t bring it up unless the subject comes up, or if I’m asked.” He feels others view it as heroic, and he does not like that perception being placed on him. David acknowledged he is not one to disclose his veteran status, but that at times it is probably apparent, “Not normally, unless it pertains to something. And, I guess, it depends on time of year. Like if it’s summer to where everybody can see, you know, scars and stuff, it always comes out. But winter, no, most of the time not.”

Donald said, “I am proud to be a veteran, but I guess my demeanor is more or less I don’t throw it out there. You know if somebody asks or something, of course I’d acknowledge it.” John remarked, “Not generally, I don’t really come out and say it to begin with. After I’ve been in class with people for a minute, then yes I will.” Robert articulated, “Most of the time my hair is a lot shorter, so it kind of gives me away. I don’t walk into any situation just automatically identifying myself as one.”

James claimed, “I want people to know me for me, not, you know, a title or status quo type of thing.” He also discussed,

Here, when people find out that you are military, you had combat experience, they kind of look at you in a different light. A lot are like, “Okay is he going to go crazy, does he have PTSD?” and, “Oh, here’s come another one of those cocky arrogant military people. They think they know everything.”

Joe related, “I don’t know. I don’t want to be seen differently….I never thought about it… but no I never really tell anybody. I don’t think I tell anybody at all. Unless, it’s a cop I guess [Laughs].” Many veterans do not want their veteran status to be openly discussed, because it is unclear how others may interpret it.
Veterans have Diverse Interactions with Other Students

Interactions with other students, especially traditional students, can create interesting situations; both positive and negative interactions occurred for the participants. There were 61 references to interactions with students, 21 of which were specifically interactions with student veterans.

Donald voiced, “When somebody comes up to me and tells me, thank you for your service, I appreciate it, but then again I feel like I’ve been put into some sort of awkward situation, I don’t know why.” Richard remarked, “I don’t act like I’m any different than them you know. Whether they appreciate the fact that I’m a veteran is not my concern basically.”

Student veterans often attempt to tolerate the views of others, for which they have fought for others to maintain that freedom. David said, “I guess, you got to at least try to not be mad at someone else’s opinions because, you got the right to your opinion just like I have the right to mine.” Dorothy expressed,

We all have our opinions about the women being on the frontline. That was a hot topic for a short time. [The local newspaper] came and interviewed us on that. I don’t see a problem with women if they are trained exactly the same way the men are trained and there’s no partiality….I don’t do confrontation well. So I try to stay clear if I feel like it may get heated, the discussion may turn into something else, because I know how I am. I have a temper, and I have a hot attitude. So I try to not even feed into conversations like that because everybody can have their own opinion about everything.
However, tolerance does not always extend to other veterans as David described, “I have a short fuse for people that work the system and maybe haven’t earned stuff that they say they have on the veteran part.”

David recounted one negative encounter when another student spoke out against the military, “It does kind of get under my skin a little bit. I went over there and lost guys. I didn’t do that for nothing.” Daniel disclosed his aggravation with traditional aged students, especially when viewpoints are different, and how dealing with “stupid” people leads him to try to avoid argumentative situations. Donald professed, “Student-wise, I don’t really associate with a lot of other students here, other than classmates for projects and what not, but it’s never really been brought to the attention that of my service.”

As noted from Dorothy earlier, interactions with other students, such as the one in her philosophy class, can be challenging, especially when she feels her life experiences can add to the discussion. Joe expressed when other students find out about his military service, “Most students just want to know if I had seen combat before. I guess that interested them or maybe some maybe want to join at some point; that’s pretty much it.”

John said when other students find out you are a veteran “there’s a lot more questions. People are more interested than normal.” Richard interacts with students every day, we work together; we talk; we laugh; we joke. You know there would be instances that relate to something that happened like “Well I was in the military.”…I don’t give them specific details to make them feel inferior to me you know. I’ll make a joke out of it and make it as comfortable as possible for the
entire work environment because it’s not completely about me. It’s about all of us.

Robert noted, “I don’t really talk to that many students. I’m just here to get an education,” Robert added he is generally older than most students creating a gap in commonalities.

Student veterans interact with each other as well as other students. Additionally veterans’ services coordinators discussed their interactions with student veterans. Student veterans rely on the support of other veterans who have a frame of reference for the stories, feelings, and situations that they face.

Deborah noted, “I see every veteran that registers for classes….They have to let me know that they’re enrolled in classes. If you’re off-campus, you just call me.” VSC Donna discussed that she interacts with veterans in many ways, “Everything from individual and family therapy, group sessions, advisement…you name it.” As the advisor for the student veterans’ organization, VSC Jennifer explained, “[Organization leaders] come up, and we visit about all kinds of events and things they want to do and processes.” VSC Rebecca communicated,

I’ll have military students in my office sometimes for hours simply because they want to talk. They see my shadow box on the wall and they realize, “Oh, is that yours?” And when I say yes they’re like “she was in the military,” and they’ll start telling me war stories and things, and I just allow them to you know have an ear. I’ll be an ear. And, they just say what they’d like to say.
VSC Rose encountered positive interactions with student veterans, “I’ve built a lot of rapport with veterans trying to give them the service that they deserve from serving the country as also as student.”

John observed, “I’ve noticed the military people in the classrooms with you, you kind of group toward them….You’ll tend to stay more with the military people.”

Alternatively, James remarked,

I don’t hang around veterans per say unless they don’t know that I’m a veteran, because some of them not all of them like to have challenges. “I did this, when I was there,” and it’s just annoying. So I really don’t socialize with veterans.

Just as veterans’ interactions with other students, faculty, and staff vary, so do their exchanges with other student veterans. Table 5.5 summarizes the data related to the category interactions; participants who have made comments that fall into the different aspects of the category are marked with an “X.” Raw frequencies and percentages of participants are noted for each participant group separately and in total.
Table 5.5

Data Summary Table: Interactions

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty/Staff</th>
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<th>Veteran</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donald</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorothy</td>
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<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
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<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Donna</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deborah</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Rose</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rose</td>
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</table>

Sub Total (n=9)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub Total (n=9)</th>
<th>(56%)</th>
<th>(22%)</th>
<th>(78%)</th>
<th>(67%)</th>
</tr>
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<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note. n=9 is the number of student veterans; n=7 is the number of Veterans Services Coordinators; n=14 is the total number of participants.

* n=7, VSCs were only asked about their own interactions with student veterans.

**Faculty/Veteran ID:**
- Usually
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Positive
- Negative
- Students
- VSCs
Summary

A total of four categories overlaid four findings and 13 themes. The background and experiences of student veterans laid the framework for understanding the context of the findings. The categories included the three previously established categories: needs and challenges; support and resources; and suggestions and advice; and one emergent category: interactions. Appendix J presents the findings and themes by category.

Following Moustakas’ (1994) five-stage process, each individual and their experience were explored in Chapter 4. Next, the significance of each thought was inferred. The data were then clustered into themes, which allowed for the creation of thematic descriptions of the experience in Chapter 5. Specific examples were then used to support the descriptions. Chapter 6 uses the thematic analysis to create clear connections between the research questions and the findings of this study.
Chapter 6 Discussion

The number of veterans entering higher education continues to rise as OIF/OEF/OND veterans are reintegrating (Ryan, Carlstrom, Hughey, & Harris, 2011), creating a growing concern for the experiences of student veterans. Currently, higher education is challenged to find solutions to the issues student veterans face. Veterans’ experiences are as varied in education as they are in the military. One student veteran reflected:

When I was hurt, I got hit with a RPG, a rocket-propelled grenade, and it was a complex attack. So, like, it went on for a good minute. But towards the end, I lost consciousness. And like, when I was going out it was like—it went from pain to feeling good. It was like, “Man, this is it. I’m getting on the stairway right now.” And I was trying to think of something like to yell—like if I had one, you know one thing to say it was like: what can I say? Like, you know, all is good, you know whatever. So, I yelled freedom.

I thought I was still in the battle field like, you know, right there where we got hit. And it’s like, well, you know, it will be a big screw you to the enemy that’s still right there. They had trenches in, and it would be a morale booster for my guys. I was out of it. I was blinded in both eyes for a while. So, I was just kind of listening and trying to figure out where I was. I wasn’t there, and they were carrying me to put me in the helicopter.

I have a big scar through here and then, you know all this. So, when I was talking it wasn’t really as much coming out my mouth as it was like, I guess, where I’d been hit in the neck. But I was yelling “freedom” as I was being carried
to the helicopter and my medic, which is a good friend of mine, was getting pissed off about it.

And he was like, “Shut up. Get in.” He thought I was goofing off, but I thought, you know, it’s like, “This is it. I’m about to be at the gates,” because I wasn’t hurting anymore. I was like I’ll give a big screw you to the enemy and, you know, give something for the guys to talk about later on. Now all the guys are like, “Yeah, he was butt naked on the gurney being carried to the helicopter yelling freedom.” It’s kind of funny.

Though this veteran has come to terms with his injury, this is no laughing matter. The scars, both visible and invisible, that veterans bring with them to higher education cannot be considered lightly.

Higher education must take a stand for student veterans and proactively seek to meet the needs and challenges they bring with them. The findings of this study provide Arkansas colleges and universities information to assist veterans in their transition from combat into the classroom. Additionally, recommendations are made for how to use collaboration with government, private, and nonprofit groups to further enhance the reintegration of veterans based on the integrative leadership model. Further, the findings of this study inform colleges and universities of the needs of student veterans so they can enhance the services provided. This could aid in the reintegration of student veterans into society as well as the retention of student veterans in the college environment. Thus, higher education is in a unique position to provide veterans with access to services and benefits that would increase their reintegration back into society, in turn contributing to the increased quality of life of veterans and their families, allowing for their contribution.
back to society, which in turn would increase the quality of life for all Arkansans, and consequently, the nation as a whole.

**Discussion**

Guiding this study were the following four research questions. These questions are addressed through a combination of background knowledge gained from the review of literature found in Chapter Two and analysis of data described in detail in Chapter Five.

**Research Question 1:** What are student veterans’ needs in higher education in Arkansas (i.e., emotional needs, physical needs, educational needs, psychological needs)?

Student veterans have a variety of needs in higher education in Arkansas which can arise from diverse challenges, sources, and situations. Deployment, reintegration, and military issues are common challenges veterans face (Bonar & Domenici, 2011) and are coupled with academic issues when veterans enter higher education. It can be difficult to overcome these challenges. Black et al. (2007) discussed that student veterans may be facing problems while learning how to function in a non-structured environment that includes physical and psychological injuries, difficulties with authority, issues of perceived support, and identity issues.

Some needs of student veterans are caused or created from participation in military service, including but not limited to receipt of veterans benefits, injuries and disabilities associated with military service, and hyper vigilance and anxiety associated with deployment to a combat environment. Student veterans in this study reiterated they have challenges related to their veteran status, specifically in getting assistance filing the
proper paperwork to receive their benefits. Additionally, having someone able to answer the questions they have regarding that paperwork is an important need.

Student veterans with disabilities have additional needs. According to Ostovary & Dapprich (2011), PTSD and TBI are signature wounds of OEF/OIF veterans; additionally, determining whether or not to disclose disability is perhaps the greatest challenge of veterans entering higher education. This was confirmed by the student veteran responses. David and James both mentioned they were not likely to ask for help. This adds complexity to the concern of meeting student veterans’ needs. Even if higher education can provide the resources and services veterans need, how can the university get the veteran to utilize them? Additionally, the veterans in this study discussed challenges in wanting to get out of bed in the mornings, or dealing with others when their symptoms peak. Determining ways to help student veterans with these challenges is no easy task.

In part, veterans have these challenges because of the values instilled in them throughout their service. For example, personal courage, the “ability to face fear, danger, or adversity, both physical and moral courage” (U.S. Army, 2011, para. 13), leads many veterans to believe they should be able to handle difficult and challenging situations without outside assistance, and the inability to do so is considered a weakness among the ranks. Another value is selfless service, defined as “[putting] the welfare of the nation, the Army and your subordinates before your own. Selfless service is larger than just one person. In serving your country, you are doing your duty loyally without thought of recognition or gain” (U.S. Army, 2011, para. 7). This value prevents many veterans from
publicly identifying because they feel by identifying they are boasting in an attempt to gain recognition.

Many of the challenges veterans face as students are similar to those of the traditional and non-traditional student, such as paying for school, building self-confidence as a student, refreshing study skills, and managing time and other resources (Benshoff, 1993). However, student veterans have needs that extend beyond those of the non-traditional student such as the need for structure and clear instructions. The study by Kim and Cole (2013) show though student veterans and non-traditional students may have similar experiences, they cannot be assumed to be the same. One reason for this is due to military training and military life where very clear roles and expectations are given to every member. The structure of military life is challenging to move away from, and is even more prominent in academia where structure is minimized in an attempt to prepare students for future careers. Additionally, many of the student challenges faced by veterans are directly related to their military service and experiences. Student veterans have difficulties learning how to function in a new environment, as well as interacting with students, faculty, staff, and college offices. Student veterans discussed challenges including interacting with traditional-aged students, personal challenges, and challenges dealing with or deciding to utilize college offices and resources. This can be attributed to the values instilled in them during their military experience. Additionally, their combat experience and age differences, though sometimes negligible, contribute to a sense of maturity as compared to their civilian counterparts (Rumann & Hamrick, 2010).

Student veterans in this study were frustrated with non-military students because of apparent lack of concern for others based on inappropriate use of the cell phone,
disruption of class, and discussion of trivial issues (Demers, 2011; DiRamio et al., 2008). Student veterans discussed it was hard to go from being told what to do to having to do it themselves and to motivate themselves. Additionally, veterans desire faculty to recognize their status as a veteran and to make an effort to understand them not only as a student but also as a population (DiRamio et al., 2008). Although most college offices and resources are in place to help students be more successful, often student veterans can find working with them challenging. Additionally, some students fail to recognize the existence of offices and resources, or are concerned about the perception of others if they chose to utilize them, which is consistent with the difficulty they mentioned having in trying to decide to use available resources. Other struggles relate back to the change from the structured military environment and the personal drive required for success. Specifically, the loss of camaraderie and the difficulties in translating “warrior ethos” to new social groups is a challenge for OEF/OIF veterans (Brenner et al., 2008). In short, student veterans face issues as diverse as their military experiences that need to be addressed in order for them to successfully achieve their educational goals.

**Research Question 2:** How is higher education anticipating the needs of student veterans and how is higher education responding? 
(a) What structures are in place to assist veterans? (b) What services are being provided by the university? (c) How accessible are the resources?

Veterans Services Coordinators (VSCs) in this study interacted with student veterans daily and were the face of higher education for student veterans. As such, VSCs are able to communicate student veteran needs to the university, as well as share university resources with the student veteran. VSCs discussed the perceived challenges and needs of student veterans, which are aligned with those discussed by the student
veterans, including dealing with traditional students, needing questions answered, and desiring structure.

According to the VSCs in this study, higher education seems to be making attempts at responding to the needs student veterans face once they have become aware. However, higher education is still challenged to anticipate student veterans’ needs. Fortunately, VSCs attempt to connect student veterans with available resources while trying to help the university see the gaps that still exist in the system. Universities in this study are interested in making strides to becoming military friendly, which is evidenced in two institutions, where, according to the VSCs, the administrations at the institutions are accepting of new ways to approach meeting the needs of student veterans.

In general, there are negligible structures in place to assist veterans in higher education. There is a lack of cohesion between universities with the placement of their VSCs. The three schools used in this study have their school certifying officials in three different structural locations: the registrar’s office, financial aid, and admissions. This can be challenging for veterans who typically attend multiple institutions while pursuing a degree (Hultin, 2014).

Most of the resources available for student veterans are part of existing services offered by the university for all students. Nonetheless, there are a few resources specifically provided for student veterans, such as a Student Veterans’ Organization, a school certifying official, and at one university, a Veterans Center. Some resources are also available in the form of referral to outside organizations.

The majority of support for any student in higher education comes from student affairs/services. Support structures exist on campus in the form of academic advising,
campus activities (student organizations), counseling services, disability services, financial aid, and student registration/records (UNESCO, 2002). Unfortunately, many of these services are not serving the student veteran population well. Student veterans have a variety of reasons for not utilizing campus services including lack of ease to locate the service, unaware of the availability of the service, indignity associated with use of the service, and inability of the service to meet the unique circumstances of the student veteran.

As an example, most counseling centers on campus are equipped to address issues such as “multicultural and gender issues, career and developmental needs, life transitions, stress, violence, and serious psychological problems” (Kitzrow, 2003, p. 168), with serious psychological problems being used to classify eating disorders, drug and alcohol abuse, classroom disruption, gambling, and suicide attempts. However, few are prepared to handle students with PTSD. According to Grossman (2009), “except with regard to learning disabilities, most colleges and universities will have only limited prior experience with the predominant disabilities related to service in Iraq and Afghanistan” (p. 6). Overall, higher education appears to want to meet the needs student veterans face; however, there is a lack of structure through which to understand and address veterans’ needs, leading to inadequate and underutilized resources.

**Research Question 3:** How well is higher education addressing the needs of veterans? (a) What has fostered veterans’ reintegration through higher education? (b) What has hindered veterans’ reintegration through higher education?

Student veterans in this study were split in their view of higher education’s ability to fulfill the needs they face; however, most were in agreement that higher education is
doing a mediocre job of addressing their needs. For student veterans at Diamond State
College, the Veterans Center has played a large role in fostering reintegration through
higher education because of the formal structure in place that provides a variety of
services, most of which are outside of the capabilities higher education can provide on
their own. Student veterans at all universities in this study discussed the impact of
veterans benefits (i.e., GI Bill®) in helping them attend college while simultaneously
creating challenges with the filing of the paperwork and dispersal of funds.

DiRamio et al. (2008) discussed the process of a veteran’s reintegration as they
move into higher education following military service. Based on their study, the
following topics were identified as typically manifesting in student veterans assimilating
to the college environment:

- Connections with peers
- Blending in
- Faculty
- Campus veterans office
- Finances
- Students with disabilities
- Mental health and PTSD

These matters can both foster and hinder a student veteran’s reintegration process. Both
positive and negative impacts on a student veteran’s educational attainment can come
from the interactions they have with faculty, staff, and students. For example, interacting
with traditional-aged students and the inability for student veterans to understand why
traditional students play on their phones in class can have a negative impact. Conversely,
having a faculty member who takes the time to understand a student veteran’s struggles can foster the reintegration process. Though student veterans desire for faculty to recognize them and their veteran status, they also have a desire to blend in, according to DiRamio et al. (2008). This specifically referred to not being called on in class or standing out as compared to other students.

Similarly, a campus veterans office that helps a veteran to understand the process and necessary paperwork in order to receive benefits is helpful, while those offices that send the student veteran to a website and create more questions than answers can hinder the process. Finances and disabilities play a significant role in addition to the issues faced by student veterans that deal with interactions they have with people and offices. Paying for college, with the added responsibility of families and household, compounds the financial challenges of student veterans. Though many have government benefits, such as the GI Bill®, the bureaucracy involved with the receipt of benefits leave many veterans paying upfront with the hope that their benefits will pay before their next bill is due. For those who cannot afford to pay upfront, this frequently results in dropping out of college often never to return.

Concerning disabilities, including visible and invisible wounds, many veterans receive veterans benefits. An astounding 40% of student veterans are estimated to have some level of disability, whether physical, mental, or emotional. Though it may not be the duty of higher education to treat student veterans, training faculty and staff of the signs and symptoms along with available resources could help to create an environment for student success. Therefore, in order to better assist veterans as they move through
higher education, collaboration with those who have the expertise to meet the needs of student veterans would help them overcome the challenges they face.

**Research Question 4:** Given the stated need for collaboration in the literature, how is the use of integrative leadership evident in Arkansas as expressed by the needs of veterans? (a) Based on the structures that are in place, would integrative leadership prove useful to assist combat veterans entering higher education?

Integrative leadership provides a framework by which to create and maintain cross-sector collaborations, such as higher education with government, community, private, and nonprofit organizations. Crosby and Bryson (2010) discussed the “increased need for shared, collective, and distributed leadership within organizations and networks” (p. 212), and further posited that “leadership work is central to the creation and maintenance of cross-sector collaborations that advance the common good” (p. 212).

Integrative leadership “involves leading across boundaries at individual, group, organizational, and broader levels” (Crosby & Bryson, 2010, p. 216). The parts of the integrative leadership framework described by Crosby and Bryson (2010) include: “initial conditions, processes and practices, structure and governance, contingencies and constraints, and outcomes and accountabilities” (p. 216). During *initial conditions*, that is the environment and preconditions that affect the formation of collaborations (Bryson, Crosby, & Stone, 2006), leaders, specifically those initiating the collaboration, must be aware of the assets and liabilities of others, and “must seek sponsors of and champions for the change effort” (Crosby & Bryson, 2010, p. 217). These collaborative efforts can be fostered when organizations realize their efforts alone cannot solve the problem; when a problem is viewed by multiple groups, the formation of cross-sector collaboration can occur. Though challenges still exist, it is easier to cross government-academic sector
boundaries than government-private boundaries (Crosby & Bryson, 2010); this puts higher education in the unique position of being able to enable cross-sector collaborations to meet the needs of student veterans. However, if there is not at least one committed champion (such as a Veterans Center director) and one committed sponsor (such as an institution of higher education), change efforts are not likely to be initiated.

The second part of the framework, *integrative processes and practices* is defined as a “contextually situated, socially accomplished flow” of linked organizational actions or proceedings. The design of forums, through which public problems can be identified and shared meaning created, is crucial. Higher education in Arkansas is establishing forums specifically designed to discuss student veterans, reiterating the understood obligation to work to better meet the needs of student veterans. With the identification of the problem, once higher education institutions become sponsors and identify a champion, agreements regarding the composition, mission, and process of the collaboration can be forged. This should be done through careful planning and management of conflicts. Additionally, formal leaders must be established and given authority. Trusting relationships hold the collaboration together. In order for a Veterans Center, or any collaboration, to succeed, it “must build legitimacy through making use of structures, processes, and strategies that are deemed appropriate within its institutional environment” (Crosby & Bryson, 2010, p. 223), which can be difficult for newly formed organizations.

*Structure and governance* is the third part of the integrative leadership framework and refers to the goals, rules, and authority of the collaborative. Structure and process typically interact in collaborations, though structure is minimally considered in the
literature as compared with process (Crosby & Bryson, 2010). According to Crosby and Bryson (2010), “Scholars point out that the structure of a collaboration is influenced by context, including system stability and availability of resources” (p. 223). The purpose of a partnership can also affect structure (e.g., policy making network vs. resource exchange network). For effective collaborations to exist in higher education for the benefit of student veterans, specifically in the form of resource exchange, a Veterans Center would provide a stable platform and set resources.

The fourth and fifth part of the integrative leadership framework deal with contingencies and constraints and outcomes and accountabilities. Contingencies and constraints include factors that have been shown in the research or in theory to have an influence on a collaboration’s process, structure, and governance, as well as its overall sustainability” (Bryson, Crosby, & Stone, p. 50). Outcomes and accountabilities are categorized as public value, resilience, and reassessment to ensure the collaborative is meeting established goals. The application of these parts can only be done once a collaboration is in existence. In sum, the integrative leadership framework would provide higher education institutions with a mechanism through which they could begin to more effectively address the needs of student veterans.

The need for higher education to collaborate in order to meet the needs of student veterans has been discussed in several studies (DiRamio et al., 2008; Rumann & Hamrick, 2010; Vance & Miller, 2009; Zinger & Cohen, 2010). VSCs in this study discussed collaborations that exist for the benefit of student veterans on their campus. Joyner State College is working with a local corporation to provide job workshops for student veterans. Additionally, the VSC at Joyner, who is located in Financial Aid, is
working across campus with admissions, advising, and faculty, in an attempt to provide a more inclusive campus. Rosewood State College discussed collaborations with mental health professionals, a homeless shelter, and nearby military installations. Diamond State College is perhaps the closest representation we have in Arkansas Higher Education regarding the Integrative Leadership Model being used for veterans services. Diamond State College works with private health agencies to provide mental health and counseling services. They also work with ministers, the food bank, and the homeless shelter. These collaborations are available through their Veterans Center.

According to a Task Force on the Future of Student Affairs (ACPA & NASPA Task Force, 2010), in order to best meet the needs of students, higher education, and more specifically student affairs, must collaborate with government, community, and private organizations. This is because higher education has finite resources. Though collaborations are recommended, integrative leadership is limited in higher education in Arkansas for the benefit of student veterans. Only Diamond State College has the structure in place, a Veterans Center, to support integrative leadership. Without a centralized location, such as a Veterans Center, through which a champion can drive change and advocate for student veterans, it would be difficult to collaborate with and bring together all the necessary partners. Thus, in order for integrative leadership to prove effective, a Veterans Center is recommended.

**Implications and Recommendations**

According to Hultin (2014), “States can help by providing services specifically for veterans on campuses.” Hultin explained that tailored orientation programs, veteran resource centers, and faculty training programs are ways in which the state can help
student veterans’ transition, through which both the student and the institution benefit (2014). Examples of legislation in three states show their commitment to providing campus services for veterans:

Arizona: HB 2602 (2012)—In order to be classified as a campus supportive of veterans on the state’s higher education website, the institution must perform a campus survey of student veterans to identify their needs, issues and suggestions; create a campus steering committee on veteran students; offer sensitivity and awareness training on military and veterans’ culture; provide peer mentoring and support for veteran students; and have a one-stop resource and study center on campus for student veterans, their families, and student family members of the armed forces who are currently deployed.

Oregon: HB 2178 (2009)—Creates the Campus Veterans’ Service Officers Program, which directs the Department of Veterans’ Affairs to appoint a sufficient number of veterans’ service officers to ensure the provision of veterans’ services at every community college and every institution in the State University System.

New Jersey: AB 3360 (2009)—Establishes the Troops to College Program in the Commission of Higher Education to assist the state’s public higher education institutions in coordinating a comprehensive array of services to assist veterans in making the transition into the college classroom. This is to include assistance in applying for student financial aid, counseling resources, a campus veterans’ assistance officer to provide information on the institution’s benefits, and programs for veterans. (Hultin, 2014)
The propositions by Hultin and others (e.g., DiRamio et al., 2008; Rumann & Hamrick, 2010; Zinger & Cohen, 2010), illustrations of legislation, and suggestions from participants reinforce the recommendations of this study in that training and resources must be provided if higher education hopes to meet student veterans’ needs.

**Implications for Higher Education**

Based on the literature and findings of this study, in order to meet the needs of student veterans in higher education in Arkansas, institutions need to have (a) a Student Veterans’ Organization, (b) an Orientation Course, (c) a Faculty/Staff Training Program, and (d) a Veterans Center.

Student veterans are connected with each other through their shared experiences and common values. This intensifies the differences they have from non-military civilians. Additionally, difficulties in translating “warrior ethos” to new social groups and a loss of camaraderie is a challenge for OEF/OIF veterans (Brenner et al., 2008). A Student Veterans Organization (SVO) on campus can increase veterans’ socialization which could help to reinforce comradeship and support effective coping. All three of the universities in this study have a student veterans’ organization. Several participants in this study discussed the importance of participating in organizations such as an SVO; one student exclaimed “[The university was] missing a Student Veteran Organization. Luckily now we have that.” However, participation can still be challenging depending on the time and location of the meetings. One student remarked, “I did want to join [the student veteran organization], and I did. But now their meetings are like Fridays at 12, and I work from 7 to 3:30….I can't ever make those meetings.” According to DiRamio et al. (2008), student veterans’ connecting with peers is an important step in the
reintegration process. Attempting to connect with peers can be exacerbated when TBI and PTSD are present, making participating in large group activities difficult for some veterans.

Additionally, having an orientation for new and returning student veterans would be of great benefit (Bauman, 2009). Orientation courses are typically designed to explain faculty, staff, and student roles, responsibilities, and expectations (UNESCO, 2002). VSC Rebecca, who is retired military, discussed the importance of an orientation course, “I would love to see a course that military students have to take, that gets them oriented into college and helps them into the civilian world again.” Currently, all of the universities require an orientation course; however, none of them have a course, or even a section of a course, designated for veterans. DiRamio et al. (2008) suggested a mandatory orientation developed specifically for veterans should be utilized. Many universities already have an orientation program; one option could include setting aside specific sections for veterans.

Educating faculty, staff, and students on the characteristics and needs of the student veteran may help universities meet the needs of student veterans and help them reintegrate (DiRamio et al., 2008). VSC Jennifer explained the need to educate faculty, “better education and training for our faculty and staff on the needs of the veteran student and from an advising stand point, from a psychological stand point.” She added one student was bothered when a faculty member failed to recognize student veterans, stating “that a faculty member only thought of veterans as older people from World War I to Korean War, Vietnam, that sort of thing.” Although informal discussions appear to occur on all campuses, only Joyner State College is beginning to address the need of a formalized training for faculty and staff. VSC Jennifer has been granted permission to
develop a formal training. Zinger and Cohen (2010) recommended universities provide sensitivity training to faculty and students. A faculty/staff training program could be developed in a similar manner to diversity and inclusion training that are offered for other minority populations on the college campus. The interactions student veterans have with faculty, staff, and students can have both positive and negative impacts on their educational attainment.

Finally, a Veterans Center is a place where student veterans can socialize with other student veterans. Hinojosa and Hinojosa (2011) conveyed the strongest relationship a veteran can form is with another military member, and these relationships can affect how well a veteran handles the stress of reintegration. This correlates directly with the needs expressed by the veterans to have a space for veterans, on campus but away from non-military students. The university can provide needed services and resources for student veterans through a Veterans Center. Diamond State College is the only college in this study that has a Veterans Center, and their student veterans believe all universities should have a Veterans Center. One student explained,

So having [a Veterans Center] in place at other colleges would definitely not just a benefit the veteran, but it would also I think benefit colleges in the long run. Because you would have veterans that aren’t as intimidated to go to college, that know they have somebody there to assist them in getting those education benefits, because a lot of times that’s their biggest worry. It’s not the college courses; it’s the process of having those things taken care of to get started.

The Veterans Center is running well, but could always use improvement, which was reiterated by VSC Donna when she said,
I think we’re making a good effort at [meeting student veterans’ needs]. I think, probably more than most. Do we still have ways to go? Yes, and still some times, we find a need that we didn’t recognize. When it is brought to our attention or we learn about one or think we learn about one. I think we make a really good effort at trying to find it.

The other two universities, Joyner State College and Rosewood State College, both understand the role a Veterans Center can play and desire its creation on their campuses.

VSC Jennifer stated:

I want to have a student veteran's center or veteran resource center or something like that. A place somewhere on campus that house computers and lockers, has a couch and refrigerators, and whatever they need for them to come in. They can study; they can hold their student veteran organization meetings; they can meet with different counselors that they need to meet with from the VA. Just that space that's available specifically for those veteran students and that is the ultimate goal, to hopefully have that.

Rebecca discussed:

I had dreamed of you know, expanding [our existing functions] and actually having a center where it was a one stop shop where we could help them through admissions. Help them through their financial aid, help them through academics, advise them, or what have you, but that was turned down for a physical location.

Rumann and Hamrick (2010) suggest universities should create partnerships rather than duplicating services. Since a university has finite resources, they are unable to meet all needs student veterans face. Therefore, a Veterans Center could serve as a point of
collaboration between the university and existing public, private, and nonprofit organizations, and integrative leadership theory provides a framework by which to develop such collaborations. A university can offer a Veterans Center, but it will not be successful without the services offered within it.

**Recommendations for the Use of Integrative Leadership Theory**

Formal and sustained partnerships are not common in universities (Duffield et al., 2013). Student Veterans of America, an organization devoted to providing “military veterans with the resources, support, and advocacy needed to succeed in higher education and following graduation” (SVA, 2015, “Mission”), has developed a Veterans Center handbook for universities. The handbook includes steps to establish a Veterans Center, resources and partnerships (including suggested university services and external organizations), and funding options.

According to the SVA Veterans Center Handbook (2010), it is often difficult for a service member to “locate, understand, and obtain information relating to the resources and benefits for which s/he is entitled” (p. 3). The handbook explains a Veterans Center can “provide college support services for veterans and their dependents” while also serving as a “hub for a variety of resources specifically geared toward the unique needs of veterans” and is but one “specific measure to facilitate success and alleviate these additional stresses for veterans and service member” (SVA, 2010, p. 3). A Veterans Center can help student veterans by providing focused support, navigating a complex array of information, making information accessible, assisting in the transition process, understanding their unique needs, offering a dedicated space, and encouraging camaraderie (SVA, 2010).
In order to provide for these needs, sector boundaries (including those within higher education) must be crossed. SVA (2010) recommends that a task force be created, which is consistent with the recommendations of integrative leadership, where general agreement is reached on the problem. “Agreement can help clarify the stake or interest that an organization has in resolving the social problem and how much the organization needs others to solve the problem” (Crosby et al., 2006, p. 45). Membership should include academic, student services, and administrative departments. Once a decision has been made about what services are needed by student veterans at a particular institution, then a space can be designated.

The space should be centrally located for ease of access by student veterans and should be in close proximity to student support services. The space ideally will have offices for a Veteran Services Coordinator, a School Certifying Official, and Veteran Work Study students, and an office for partners to use when on campus. There should also be a meeting room for the Student Veterans Organization. This meeting room could be a classroom that could also be used for a dedicated orientation class or other group-based meetings. Additionally, there should be a lounge area where veterans can relax and socialize; at Diamond State College, their lounge area also includes a coffee pot which brews all day, a refrigerator and microwave, so that student veterans can come there to eat lunch, and a television. The Veterans Center should also have computers and desks for student veterans to do homework and where they could receive academic assistance when needed.

After space has been allocated, partnership must be established with organizations, particularly near the institution, that offer support services for veterans.
These organizations should be given times at which they could send a representative to campus so that student veterans do not have to seek them out. They would need access to a dedicated office space. This space could be shared among partners, being used by one when another is not there. The Veterans Center is a physical location through which all resources can be come together and should fully integrate “all facets of student support services, VA programs, state services, and student veteran organizations in one location” (SVA, 2010, p. 10). Figure 6.1 shows the suggested inclusion of resources and partnerships for a Veterans Center, please note that this is not an inclusive list and may vary based on the needs of the student veterans at a given institutions as well as the community resources.

In order to create and maintain a Veterans Center as a sustainable cross-sector collaboration, champions and advocates for student veterans must exist at each university and will need to work with partners at the individual level (e.g., local counseling providers), intra-organizational level (e.g., disability services, career advising, registration, etc.), inter-organizational level (e.g., Veterans Affairs, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Wounded Warrior Project, etc.), and sector-boundaries. Sectors include the private sector (businesses), the nonprofit sector (e.g., Wounded Warrior Project), and the public sector (also called government sector, such as Department of Veterans Affairs), as well as the general public and community. This will allow the Veterans Center to help meet “important public needs and advance the common good” (Crosby & Bryson, 2010, p. 216).
Figure 6.1. A suggested outline of Resources and Partnerships for a campus-based Veterans Center. This is not an inclusive list and may vary based on student veteran need at an individual institution and community resources.

Researcher Reflections

Beginning this study, it was important to make conscious efforts to set aside biases and assumptions. Experience working with student veterans and seeing their
challenges generated a desire to better understand the needs they have. It was necessary to shelve preconceived ideas of the challenges faced by student veterans and focus on the data.

It was believed, during the literature search, that integrative leadership would be found in higher education. Interestingly, integrative leadership was not found, except in the most primitive forms and even still, only in the institution where a Veterans Center is already in existence. This helped with the formulation of the recommendation that a Veterans Center is needed at every institution of higher education.

**Implications for Research**

There were several limitations to this study. First, only three medium-size state universities were chosen. To be more inclusive it would help to include large and small universities, private universities, and two-year community colleges. Based on the discussions of several veterans who take courses online, it may be beneficial to consider the online university in future studies.

A second limitation is the rank and branches of service of the participants. Most of the participants were enlisted members of the Army or Marines. To be more inclusive it would help to include additional participants from the Navy, along with participants from the Air Force and Coast Guard. Though most Officers are required to have a college degree to obtain commission, many return to higher education to further their education; therefore, it would be helpful to include more Officers in future studies. Additionally, this study focused specifically on recent combat veterans, specifically veterans who served in combat in support of OEF/OIF/OND and does not include non-combat veterans or veterans from other conflicts.
One suggestion for future research is to survey student veterans and determine what resources would be helpful for them to have access to on campus. Another study that needs to be conducted is why veterans choose not to utilize services that are available to them. Student veterans in higher education is a growing area of research as more people are becoming aware of the problems that OIF/OEF/OND veterans, as well as other current and future conflict veterans, bring home with them as they try to reintegrate into society. The differences between student veterans and traditional students have been explored; however, it is important to also consider the similarities and differences of student veterans with non-traditional students.

To fully understand the applicability of integrative leadership to the problem of meeting the needs of student veterans, it will be important to look at institutions that currently have a Veterans Center, specifically their structures, processes, constraints, and outcomes, as well as their partners.

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was “to understand the experiences of combat veterans in higher education institutions in Arkansas, explore how integrative leadership could assist in the reintegration of OEF/OIF/OND combat veterans in institutions of higher education in Arkansas, and recognize what higher education can do to assist student veterans.” This qualitative multi-site case study explored the experiences of student veterans in higher education. The theoretical framework proposed that collaboration between the university and government, private, and nonprofit entities could assist in providing for the needs and challenges student veterans face during their reintegration to civilian life through higher education. The literature implied that veterans needs vary
based upon their different experiences. While individual needs varied, the underlying conclusion of the interview data in this research study is that higher education is poised to provide a structure through which to meet the needs of student veterans. Administrative support, advocates, and community participation are needed to provide comprehensive services for student veterans.

The findings produced four major categories that revealed the needs and challenges student veterans face; resources and sources of support for student veterans; suggestions for improvement; and interactions of the student veteran with the campus community. Recommendations encourage higher education to work with community stakeholders in the reintegration of combat veterans and further suggest the establishment of a Veterans Center at each university, as well as an orientation program, faculty and staff awareness training, and a student veteran organization.
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Appendix A

IRB Approval

Institutional Review Board

Memorandum

To: Amy Hawkins, Jamie Earls

From: Research Compliance Office

Date: October 6, 2014

Subject: Expedited Review of IRB # 14-142
Title: Integrative Leadership in Higher Education: Meeting the Needs of Student Veterans

Your request to conduct the above titled research with human subjects was reviewed by a member of the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The research as presented in your application meets the requirements of expedited research and is in compliance with the federal regulations for protecting the rights and welfare of human subjects and the policies and procedures of the University of Central Arkansas. Your application was approved on October 6, 2014.

You have approval to conduct the research as described in your application for twelve months. Any changes to the original proposal must be submitted for approval prior to implementation. Promptly inform the Research Compliance Office of any adverse or unexpected reactions or harm incurred by subjects as a result of participating in this research.

Approval to conduct this research expires on: October 5, 2015.

It is the investigator’s responsibility to obtain IRB approval to continue the research beyond 12 months by completing and submitting a Continuing Review form prior to the approval expiration date. If the research is completed before the 12 months ends, please send a completed Final Report form to us. Forms are available on the Sponsored Programs webpage under Research Compliance at http://www.uca.edu/sponsoredprograms.

If you have any questions, please contact our office at 852-7460 or researchcompliance@uca.edu.

CC: Steve Beal, Rhonda McClellan
Appendix B

Definition of Key Terms & Military Jargon

*Barney Style*—“Refers to the kid show ‘Barney and Friends.’ When something is broken down Barney style, it’s being explained as if to a child.” (Ingersoll & Bender, 2014)

*Combat Veteran*—A member of the armed forces, including Army, Navy, Marines, and Air Force who served on active duty in a combat zone in support of OEF, OIF, or OND and who received an honorable or general discharge.

*Epistemology*—The study of understanding how we know what we know.” (Capella, n.d.)

*External Collaboration*—Collaboration between the university and local business, industry, government, and nonprofit entities. (Kezar, 2005b, 2006)

*GI Bill®*—define

*Horizontalization*—the ideal, wherein the researcher places equal value on every statement, with the understanding that every time an experience is relived a different view of the experience is created

*Integrative Leadership*—also called Integrative Public Leadership—Bringing “diverse groups and organizations together in semi-permanent ways, and typically across sector boundaries, to remedy complex public problems and achieve the common good” (Crosby & Bryson, 2010, p. 211)

*Internal Collaboration*—Involves collaboration within the university system: student-student, student-faculty, faculty-faculty, cross-disciplinary research, cross-disciplinary learning, cross-institutional (such as student and academic affairs), etc. (Kezar, 2005b, 2006).

*M-Day*—specifically Man-day—The traditional Reserve or National Guard soldier who serves one weekend a month and two weeks a year, but is not on full-time duty. (C. Earls, personal communication, March 24, 2015)

*Ontology*—“One’s view of reality and being…[in other words] what we mean when we say something exists” (Mack, 2010, p. 5)

*Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF)*—Ongoing military operations in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and neighboring countries of the former Soviet Union since October 7, 2001 (Torreon, 2012).

Operation New Dawn (OND)—Military operations in Iraq from September 1, 2010, marking the official end to OIF and combat operation by United States forces in Iraq until December 15, 2011 (Torreon, 2012) when the last U.S. troops left Iraqi territory.

Paradigm—A “set of interrelated assumptions about the social world which provides a philosophical and conceptual framework for the organized study of the world.” (Filstead, as cited in Ponterotto, 2005, p. 127)

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)—A mental health condition that’s triggered by a terrifying event, either experiencing it or witnessing it. Symptoms may include flashbacks, nightmares and severe anxiety, as well as uncontrollable thoughts about the event. (Mayo Clinic, n.d.)

Qualitative Research—“A means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures; collecting data in the participants’ setting; analyzing the data inductively, building from particulars to general themes; and making interpretations of the meanings of data. The final written report has a flexible writing structure.” (Creswell, 2014, p. 4)

Reintegration—The transition following separation from active duty in the armed forces.

Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC)—“The Reserve Officers' Training Corps is the best opportunity for you to get invaluable experience while you earn a college degree. When enrolled in ROTC you learn and develop leadership skills and prepare for a career as an officer in the U.S. Military. You will learn first-hand what it takes to lead others, motivate groups and how to conduct missions as a military officer.” (Military.com, n.d.)

Student Veterans—Any college student who served on active duty in a combat zone in support of OEF, OIF, or OND, received an honorable or general discharge, has since enrolled in college. For the purpose of this study, only combat veterans who have since separated from active duty either into a civilian role, or as a member of a Reserve or National Guard unit will be studied.

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)—“Occurs when an external mechanical force causes brain dysfunction;…usually results from a violent blow or jolt to the head or body. Mild TBI may cause temporary dysfunction of brain cells. More serious TBI can result in bruising, torn tissues, bleeding and other physical damage to the brain that can result in long-term complications or death.” (Mayo Clinic, n.d.)

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)—The mission of the VA “is to serve America’s Veterans and their families with dignity and compassion, and to be their principal advocate in ensuring that they receive medical care, benefits, social support, and
lasting memorials promoting the health, welfare, and dignity of all Veterans in recognition of their service to this Nation.” (VA, 2015)

Veteran—Any current or former member of the active duty, National Guard, or Reserve military regardless of deployment status or combat experience” (Vacchi, 2012, p. 17)

Veterans’ Services Coordinator (VSC)—The “student affairs staff member responsible for certifying student veterans enrollments at their institutions so the student veteran is eligible to receive GI Bill® funding for college. These individuals also serve as liaisons between the student veteran and the Department of Veteran Affairs and assist them with the process of receiving funding” (Rumann, 2010, p. 5).
Appendix C
Veterans Education Benefits Descriptions

The following descriptions of Veterans Education Benefits are direct quotes from the Lamar State College – Orange website (n.d.).

**Chapter 30: Montgomery GI Bill® Active Duty**

The Montgomery GI Bill® is for individuals who have served on Active Duty for the first time after July 1, 1985, and who agreed to have their pay reduced by $100 for 12 months. Veterans must have received an honorable discharge and active-duty personnel must have served at least two years to be eligible to use their benefits. Benefits are provided up to 36 months and generally must be used within 10 years of discharge from active duty. This bill can be applied for prior to discharge. The monthly benefit paid is based on the length of service, category, and Department of Defense (DoD) put kickers into your MGIB Fund (if applicable).

**Chapter 31: Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment**

The Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) Program (commonly referred to as “Voc-Rehab”) is authorized by Congress under Title 38, Code of Federal Regulations, Chapter 31. Eligibility for VR&E VetSuccess Services mandates the veteran has received, or will receive a discharge that is other than dishonorable and have a service-connected disability rating of at least 10%, or a memorandum rating of 20% or more from the Department of Veteran Affairs (VA). Eligible veterans may be allowed up to 48 months of full-time benefits. Veterans generally have 12 years from the date they are notified of their entitlement to the program. Application for Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) VetSuccess services is also required.
Chapter 33: Post 9/11 GI Bill®

Effective August 2009, the Post 9/11 GI Bill® was enacted for individuals with at least 90 days of aggregate service on or after September 11, 2001, or individuals discharged with a service-connected disability after 30 days. You must have received an honorable discharge to be eligible for the Post-9/11 GI Bill®. The Post-9/11 GI Bill® is effective for training on or after August 1, 2009. This benefit will pay tuition and fees directly to the college. Additionally, students will receive a payment of up to $1,000 annually (divided by academic term) for books and supplies. They will also receive a monthly living allowance based on the Department of Defense Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) rate for E-5’s with dependents within the same zip code as the student’s school (LSC-O’s zip code is 77630). The amount of this benefit varies from 40% to 100% depending on length of service.

Chapter 35: Dependents’ Educational Assistance

The Dependents’ Educational Assistance (DEA) program provides educational and training benefits for dependents and spouses of veterans who died or are 100 percent permanently disabled due to service-connected causes. Survivors and dependents are allowed 45 months of full-time benefits. Spouses have 10 years from the date of the veteran’s effective date of permanent and total disability rating or the veteran’s death. Dependents’ benefits end on their 26th birthday or eight years from the veteran’s effective date of permanent or total disability rating or the veteran’s death, but not after the dependent’s 31st birthday.
Chapter 1606: Selected Reserve

Montgomery GI Bill® - Selected Reserves (Chapter 1606) benefits are available to reservists who enlist, reenlist, or extend an enlistment in the Selected Reserve for not less than six years on or after July 1, 1985. Benefit entitlement ends 14 years from the date of eligibility for the program, or on the day personnel leaves the Selected Reserve. For officers, the six-year period is in addition to any other obligated period of service. Eligibility for the program requires that the reservists have obtained a high school diploma or equivalent. In addition, the reservist must have completed Initial Active Duty Training (IADB). Finally, a reservist must be participating in training at the time benefits are used. A reservist is allowed 36 months of full-time benefits.

Chapter 1607: Reserve Educational Assistance Program

The Reserve Educational Assistance Program is a Department of Defense program designed to provide educational assistance to members of the reserve components ordered to active duty in response to a war or a national emergency declared by the President or Congress. These components include Army Reserve, Naval Reserve, Air Force Reserve, Marine Corps Reserve, Coast Guard Reserve, and the Army National Guard, Air National Guard, Army IRR, Air Force IRR, Navy IRR and Marine Corps IRR. A member ordered to active service while serving in the reserve component remains entitled to benefits under REAP only by continuing to serve in the reserve component. Entitlement under REAP is 36 months. There is a 48-month limitation when combining this benefit with one or more education programs.
## Appendix D

Resources for Veterans

### Veteran Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization Name</th>
<th>Contact Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>FOOD AND GAS</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalition to Salute America’s Heroes</td>
<td>888-447-2588</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coast Guard Mutual Assistance Program</td>
<td>800-881-2462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping Hands for Freedom</td>
<td>602-845-1390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Children under 18)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope for the Warriors</td>
<td>877-246-7349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navy-Marine Corp Relief Society</td>
<td><a href="http://www.nmcrs.org">www.nmcrs.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operation First Response</td>
<td>888-505-2795</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran’s Love and Appreciation</td>
<td>305-673-2856</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VFW Unmet Needs Program</td>
<td>866-789-6333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>UTILITIES</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armed Forces Foundation</td>
<td>910-585-8003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalition to Salute America’s Heroes</td>
<td>888-447-2588</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coast Guard Mutual Asst. Program</td>
<td>800-881-2462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping Hands for Freedom</td>
<td>602-845-1390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Children under 18)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope for the Warriors</td>
<td>877-246-7349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Income Home Energy Assistance</td>
<td>Google LIHEAP or check with local Community Services Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program (LIHEAP) (Administered by Children and Families Department)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Navy Marine Corp Relief Society</td>
<td><a href="http://www.nmcrs.org">www.nmcrs.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>VFW Unmet Needs</td>
<td>866-789-6333</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>APPLIANCE REPAIRS</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping Hands for Freedom.org</td>
<td>602-845-1390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FURNITURE</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Help for The Warriors.org</td>
<td>877-246-7349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FUNERAL EXPENSE</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Armed Forces Foundation</td>
<td>910-585-8003</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coast Guard Mutual Assistance</td>
<td>800-881-2462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fallen Patriot Fund</td>
<td>214-658-7125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Wounded or Killed in Action)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Freedom Alliance</td>
<td><a href="http://www.fredomalliance.org">www.fredomalliance.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Loans/Grants</td>
<td>800-333-4636</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. General Service Administration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grants for Low Income</td>
<td>800-696-6775</td>
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<tr>
<td>U.S. Dept. of Human Services</td>
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<td>Navy Marine Corp Relief Society</td>
<td><a href="http://www.nmcrs.org">www.nmcrs.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operation Family Fund</td>
<td>760-793-0053</td>
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<tr>
<td>Operation First Response</td>
<td>888-505-2795</td>
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### Veteran Resources

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<th>Organization Name</th>
<th>Contact Information</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TAPS (Tragedy Assistance Program/Survivors)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ADAPTIVE MEDICAL EQUIPMENT</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Hope For The Warriors</td>
<td>877-246-7349</td>
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<tr>
<td>Semper Fi Fund</td>
<td>760-725-3680</td>
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<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.americasfund.org">www.americasfund.org</a></td>
<td>202-412-0611</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>HOME REPAIRS/ADAPTIVE HOUSING</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Coast Guard Mutual Assistance</td>
<td>800-881-2462</td>
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<tr>
<td>Freedom Is Not Free</td>
<td>855-298-1190</td>
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<tr>
<td>Homes for our Troops</td>
<td>508-823-3300</td>
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<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.americasfund.org">www.americasfund.org</a></td>
<td>202-421-0611</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>MEDICAL FLIGHTS</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Air Compassion for Veterans</td>
<td><a href="http://www.aircompassionforveterans.org">www.aircompassionforveterans.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Soldier’s Angels</td>
<td>626-529-5141</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>EMERGENCY TRANSPORTATION/TRAVEL/LODGING</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Coalition to Salute America’s Heroes</td>
<td>888-447-2588</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coast Guard Mutual Assistance</td>
<td>800-881-2462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fisher House</td>
<td><a href="http://www.fisherhouse.org">www.fisherhouse.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Wounded Warriors/Veteran’s Families)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Freedom Is Not Free</td>
<td>855-298-1190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help For The Warriors</td>
<td>877-246-7349</td>
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<tr>
<td>Helping Hands For Freedom</td>
<td>602-845-1390</td>
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<tr>
<td>Navy Marine Corp Relief Society</td>
<td><a href="http://www.nmcrs.org">www.nmcrs.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Operation Family Fund</td>
<td>760-793-0053</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ronald McDonald House</td>
<td><a href="http://www.rmhc.org/">www.rmhc.org/</a></td>
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<td>Semper Fi Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>Soldier’s Angels</td>
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<tr>
<td>Veteran’s Love &amp; Appreciation</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.americasfund.org">www.americasfund.org</a></td>
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<td><strong>RENTAL/MORTGAGE/LEASE PURCHASE</strong></td>
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<td>Coalition To Salute America’s Heroes</td>
<td>888-447-2588</td>
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<tr>
<td>Foreclosure Protection</td>
<td>800-521-8259</td>
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<td>Helping Hands For Freedom</td>
<td>602-845-1390</td>
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<td>Homeless Veterans</td>
<td>877-424-3838</td>
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<tr>
<td>Homeowners Preservation Fund</td>
<td>888-995-4673</td>
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<td>Hope for the Warriors</td>
<td>877-246-7349</td>
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<td>HUD</td>
<td>877-622-5825</td>
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<tr>
<td>HUD Outreach Center</td>
<td>800-225-5342</td>
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<tr>
<td>Navy Marine Corp Relief Society</td>
<td><a href="http://www.nmcrs.org">www.nmcrs.org</a></td>
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<td>Operation First Response</td>
<td>888-505-2795</td>
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<td>VFW Unmet Needs</td>
<td>866-789-6333</td>
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<td><strong>VEHICLE REPAIRS</strong></td>
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<td>Coalition To Salute America’s Heroes</td>
<td>888-447-2588</td>
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### Veteran Resources

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<tr>
<th>Organization Name</th>
<th>Contact Information</th>
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<tr>
<td>Helping Hands For Freedom</td>
<td>602-845-1390</td>
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<tr>
<td>Navy Marine Corps Relief Society</td>
<td><a href="http://www.nmcrs.org">www.nmcrs.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Operation Family Fund</td>
<td>760-793-0053</td>
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<tr>
<td>VFW Unmet Needs</td>
<td>866-789-6333</td>
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**PHONE**

Coast Guard Mutual Assistance 800-881-2462

**MEDICAL/DENTAL/EYE GLASSES**

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<th>Organization Name</th>
<th>Contact Information</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coalition To Salute America’s Heroes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fallen Patriot Fund</td>
<td>214-658-7125</td>
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<tr>
<td>Freedom Alliance</td>
<td><a href="http://www.freedomalliance.org">www.freedomalliance.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navy Marine Corp Relief Society (Patients Share of Cost)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.nmcrs.org">www.nmcrs.org</a></td>
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<td>Operation Family Fund</td>
<td>760-793-0053</td>
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<td>Operation First Response</td>
<td>888-289-0280</td>
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**Long Term Medical Conditions**

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<th>Organization Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>American Legion Medical Dental and Funeral Freedom Is Not Free</td>
<td>Apply at the nearest Post</td>
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<tr>
<td>Helping Hands For Freedom</td>
<td>855-298-1190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lion’s Clubs (Free eye exams 1 x year for children under 18 or 21 if disabled)</td>
<td>Check Local Phone Directory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shriner Foundation Children with Long Term Medical conditions or disabled</td>
<td>Check Local Phone Directory</td>
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**Prescriptions**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Department of Social Services in the state of residence</td>
<td><a href="http://www.freemedicine.com">www.freemedicine.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Free Medicine</td>
<td>888-812-5152 or 573-966-3333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knights of Columbus</td>
<td>Some Prescriptions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Partnership for Prescription Assistance</td>
<td><a href="http://www.pparx.org">www.pparx.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Weber Foundation</td>
<td><a href="http://www.weberfoundation.com">www.weberfoundation.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>VFW Unmet Needs</td>
<td>866-789-6333</td>
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**LEGAL**

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<td>Active Duty Legal Assistance</td>
<td><a href="http://www.legalassistance.law.af.mil">www.legalassistance.law.af.mil</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>American Bar Association</td>
<td><a href="http://www.americanbar.org">www.americanbar.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Bankruptcy</td>
<td><a href="http://www.consumer.abiworld.org">www.consumer.abiworld.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>COAST GUARD LEGAL</td>
<td><a href="http://www.uscg.mil">www.uscg.mil</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Credit Counseling Agencies</td>
<td><a href="http://www.abanet.org">www.abanet.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Forclosure, Housing, Credit</td>
<td><a href="http://www.hud.gov">www.hud.gov</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Free Legal Services by State</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ptla.org">www.ptla.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Justice for Vets</td>
<td><a href="http://www.nadcp.org">www.nadcp.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lawyers Serving Warriors</td>
<td><a href="http://www.lawyersforwarriors.blogspot.com">www.lawyersforwarriors.blogspot.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Legal Services for Low Income Persons</td>
<td><a href="http://www.lawhelp.org">www.lawhelp.org</a></td>
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**Veteran Resources**

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Legal Services for Paralyzed Veterans</td>
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<td>Legislative Representation</td>
<td><a href="http://www.mopsf.org">www.mopsf.org</a></td>
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<td>Military Home Front Legal Services</td>
<td><a href="http://www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil">www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil</a></td>
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<td>National Disability Rights Network</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ndrn.org">www.ndrn.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>National Found. For Credit Counseling</td>
<td><a href="http://www.nfcc.org">www.nfcc.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>National Housing Law Project</td>
<td><a href="http://www.nhlp.org">www.nhlp.org</a></td>
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<td>National Law Center on Homelessness</td>
<td><a href="http://www.nlchp.org">www.nlchp.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>National Veterans Legal Services</td>
<td><a href="http://www.nvlsp.org">www.nvlsp.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>NAVY LEGAL</td>
<td><a href="http://www.jag.navy.mil">www.jag.navy.mil</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Operation Family Fund</td>
<td>760-793-0053</td>
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<tr>
<td>Veteran’s Law Clinic</td>
<td><a href="http://www.law.nccu.edu">www.law.nccu.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veterans Consortium Pro Bono Program</td>
<td><a href="http://www.vetsprobono.org">www.vetsprobono.org</a></td>
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**CAR PAYMENTS/LEASE PAYMENTS/RENTAL CARS**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Armed Forces Foundation</td>
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<td>Coalition To Salute America’s Heroes</td>
<td>888-447-2588</td>
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<tr>
<td>Helping Hands For Freedom</td>
<td>602-845-1390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operation Family Fund</td>
<td>760-793-0053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operation First Response</td>
<td>888-505-2795</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VFW Unmet Needs</td>
<td>866-789-6333</td>
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**PTSD/TBI ASSISTANCE, WOUNDED, OR KILLED IN ACTION**

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<th>Organization Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>America’s Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>Operation First Response</td>
<td>888-505-2795</td>
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<tr>
<td>Purple Heart Service Foundation</td>
<td>888-414-4483</td>
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<tr>
<td>Semper Fi Fund</td>
<td>760-725-3680</td>
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**VA CLAIMS ASSISTANCE**

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<td>Purple Heart Service Foundation</td>
<td>888-414-4483</td>
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<tr>
<td>VFW Posts Locator</td>
<td><a href="http://www.vfw.org/oms/findpost">www.vfw.org/oms/findpost</a></td>
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**EDUCATION/ JOB TRAINING**

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<tr>
<td>AbilityOne Program (Disabled Vets)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.abilityone.org">www.abilityone.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>America’s Fund</td>
<td>212-412-0611</td>
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<tr>
<td>America’s Job Exchange</td>
<td><a href="http://www.americasjobexchange.com">www.americasjobexchange.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Legion Career Opportunities</td>
<td>[www legion.org](<a href="http://www">http://www</a> legion. org)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMVETS Career Center</td>
<td><a href="http://www.armycivilianservice.com">www.armycivilianservice.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Army Civil Service</td>
<td><a href="http://www.armyhire.com">www.armyhire.com</a></td>
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<td>Army Contracting Command</td>
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<td>GI Jobs – Top 100 Military Friendly Employers</td>
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<td>Foundation</td>
<td>888-414-4483</td>
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<td>VansForVets</td>
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<td>800-881-2462</td>
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<td>Navy Marine Corp Relief Society</td>
<td><a href="http://www.nmcrs.org">www.nmcrs.org</a></td>
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<td>Semper Fi Fund (Navy, Marine)</td>
<td>760-725-3680</td>
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Appendix E

Pilot Study Information

Pilot Study IRB Approval

Institutional Review Board

Memorandum

To: Amy Pitchford / Jamie Earls

From: Research Compliance Office

Date: March 5, 2014

Subject: Expedited Review of IRB # 14-043
Title: Integrative leadership and the Student Veteran: How Colleges Can Meet Their Needs: Pilot Study

Your request to conduct the above titled research with human subjects was reviewed by a member of the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The research as presented in your application meets the requirements of expedited research and is in compliance with the federal regulations for protecting the rights and welfare of human subjects and the policies and procedures of the University of Central Arkansas. Your application was approved on March 5, 2014.

You have approval to conduct the research as described in your application for twelve months. *Any changes to the original proposal must be submitted for approval prior to implementation.* Promptly inform the Research Compliance Office of any adverse or unexpected reactions or harm incurred by subjects as a result of participating in this research.

Approval to conduct this research expires on: **March 4, 2015.**

It is the investigator’s responsibility to obtain IRB approval to continue the research beyond 12 months by completing and submitting a *Continuing Review* form prior to the approval expiration date. If the research is completed before the 12 months ends, please send a completed Final Report form to me. Forms are available on the Sponsored Programs webpage under Research Compliance at http://www.uca.edu/sponsoredprograms.

If you have any questions, please contact our office at 450-3451 or researchcompliance@uca.edu.

CC: Gary McCullough, Scott Payne
Pilot Study Interview Protocol

Participant Number: _____  Pseudonym: __________________  Date: ____________

University Pseudonym: ____________________________________________________

Class Standing: _________  Est. Grad Date: _______________  Age:_____________

Branch: ___________  Years in Service: ________  Current/Highest Rank: _________

Sex: M / F  Race/Ethnicity: ___  Marital Status: Single/ Married/ Divorced/ Widowed

Welcome—Explain purpose of the interview

- Thank you for agreeing to do this interview. My name is Jamie Earls, and I’ll be talking with you today.
- The purpose of this interview today is to learn more about your experiences as a combat veteran and a student.
- The interview will last about 1 hour.
- [Give informed consent] Go over informed consent. Do you have any questions?
  Have participant sign and retain a copy.

Ground rules

- Everything you tell me will be confidential. To protect your privacy, I will not connect your name with anything that you say.
- If you have any questions or if you would rather not answer any specific question please feel free to let me know at any time during our conversation. You can also stop the interview at any time for any reason.
- Please remember that I want to know what you think and feel and that there are no right or wrong answers.
- Is it OK if I audiotape this interview today?

[Turn on recording equipment.]

Opening Questions

1. To begin, please tell me a little about yourself.
   o Prompts: Branch of service, family, school

Description of Service

2. What made you decide to go into the military?
3. What was your role in the military?
   o Prompts: MOS, rank (highest rank), title, job description, how long in military
4. What is your current status in the military?

Experience at College/University in Arkansas

5. When you got out of the military at what point did you decide to go back to school?
   o Prompts: did you attend school while in the military? Prior to joining the military?
6. What type of interactions have you had with faculty/staff and students, if any, one they realized that you are a member of the military?
7. How would you describe your experience of being a college student post-deployment?
   - Prompts: difficulties, challenges, help overcoming, different than pre-deployment (if attended prior to deployment)
8. What type of needs do you feel like you have that are unique to your veteran status versus other traditional students?
9. Are your needs as a student being met? As a veteran? Are those needs different?
10. What types of things could the university do to help meet some needs that you have as a student veteran?

Closing Questions
11. Have you pursued or are you currently receiving veterans benefits?
   - Prompts: disability, GI Bill®
12. Is there anything else you would like to add about any of the topics that we have discussed or about any other areas that we didn’t discuss but you think are important?
13. Do you have any questions?
14. Would it be possible for me to follow up with you if I have any additional questions or need clarification?

Closing Statement
Thank you for your time and participation in this interview. The information that you provided to us will be very helpful in this project.

[Turn off recording equipment]
Pilot Study Informed Consent

University of Central Arkansas

Informed Consent Agreement

Integrative Leadership In Higher Education:
Meeting The Needs Of Student Veterans

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Before you give your consent to volunteer, it is important you read the following information and ask as many questions as necessary to be sure you understand what you will be asked to do.

Investigators
Jamie Earls, PhD Student, University of Central Arkansas, Leadership Studies
Dr. Amy Pitchford, Research Advisor, University of Central Arkansas, 501-450-5602

University of Central Arkansas
201 Donaghey Ave.,
Conway, Arkansas 72035
Phone: 501-450-5000

Purpose of the Research
The purpose of this research study is to understand the impact of higher education on the reintegration of OEF/OIF/OND combat veterans in institutions of higher education in Arkansas and how integrative leadership can be used to assist in the process. The data from this research will bring to light the phenomenon of the student veteran. This research will contribute to my dissertation in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the Ph.D. program.

Procedures
If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in an interview. Your participation will take approximately one hour. The interview will be audio recorded and transcribed to ensure accuracy.

Potential Risks or Discomforts
There are no foreseeable risks or costs associated with the study. The topic may be uncomfortable, and will require reflection on your time spent in a combat zone (veterans’ only).

Potential Benefits of the Research
You will receive no benefits from participating in this research; however it is hoped that this research will be used to inform colleges and universities of the needs of student veterans so that they can increase the services provided.

Confidentiality and Data Storage
Your name will be known only by the researcher, and will remain anonymous in disclosure of the results of this study. Where necessary, pseudonyms will be used.

Date will be stored electronically in a password protected file. Raw data will be available to the principle investigator and the research advisor. Audio recordings will be stored electronically until adequate transcription is ensured. They will be destroyed upon transcription or upon approval of the dissertation as deemed necessary by the research advisor.

Participation, Withdrawal, and Questions about the Research
Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you are free to stop at any time without penalty by just stopping and/or telling the investigator. You may not withdraw from the study after data collection has been completed since your name is not linked to the data.

Questions about the Research
If you have any questions about the research, please ask them now. If you have questions later, you may contact Jamie Earls at jearls1@uca.edu.

This research project has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at the University of Central Arkansas. If you believe there is any infringement upon your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Research Compliance Coordinator at (501) 450-3451.

Subject’s Agreement
I have read the information provided above. I understand that I will be audio recorded. My signature below indicates my voluntary agreement to participate in this research study and to be recorded. Please return one copy of this consent form and keep one copy for your records.

____________________________________________  ________________
Signature of Research Subject                     Date

____________________________________________  ________________
Signature of Investigator                         Date
Appendix F

Interview Protocol for Student Veterans

Participant Number: _____ Pseudonym: __________________ Date: ____________

University Pseudonym: __________________________________________________

Class Standing: _________ Est. Grad Date: _____________ Age:__________

Branch: ___________ Years in Service: ________ Current/Highest Rank: ________

Sex: M / F           Race/Ethnicity: ___ Marital Status: Single/ Married/
                        Divorced/ Widowed

Welcome—Explain purpose of the interview

- Thank you for agreeing to do this interview. My name is Jamie Earls, and I’ll be talking with you today.
- The purpose of this interview today is to learn more about your experiences as a combat veteran and a student.
- The interview will last about 1 hour.
- [Give informed consent] Go over informed consent. Do you have any questions? Have participant sign and retain a copy.

Ground rules

- Everything you tell me will be confidential. To protect your privacy, I will not connect your name with anything that you say.
- If you have any questions or if you would rather not answer any specific question, please feel free to let me know at any time during our conversation. You can also stop the interview at any time for any reason.
- Please remember that I want to know what you think and feel and that there are no right or wrong answers.
- Is it OK if I audiotape this interview today? [Turn on recording equipment.]

Opening Questions

1. To begin, please tell me a little about yourself.
   - Prompts: Branch of service, family, school
2. To preserve your anonymity, I will assign you a pseudonym instead of your given name. What would you like that pseudonym to be? Tell me why you chose that particular name.

Description of Service

3. What made you decide to go into the military?
4. What was your role in the military?
   - Prompts: MOS, rank (highest rank), title, job description, how long in military

5. How long were you deployed in a combat zone? Where?

6. What is your current status in the military?

***Experience at College/University in Arkansas***

7. When you got out of the military at what point did you decide to go back to school?
   - Prompts: did you attend school while in the military? Prior to joining the military? How long were you in college prior to the mobilization?

8. Do you identify yourself as a veteran when interacting with other students, faculty or staff on campus? Why/Why not?

9. What type of interactions have you had with faculty/staff and students, if any, once they realized that you are a member of the military?
   - Prompts: once you started school, after you left the military or got back from overseas, once they realized you are a veteran

10. Has there been a time since you enrolled at college when someone on campus said something about the military that offended you or you disagreed with? Tell me about this experience.

11. How would you describe your experience of being a college student post-deployment?
   - Prompts: difficulties, challenges, help overcoming, different than pre-deployment (if attended prior to deployment)

12. What roles did various college offices play during your transition back to college life? What resources were available to you? On-campus or off-campus.

13. How have you dealt with the transition of returning to college? What has the transition been like for you? What have been sources of support (e.g., family support)?

14. What type of needs do you feel like you have that are unique to your veteran status versus other traditional students?

15. Are your needs as a student being met? As a veteran? Are those needs different?

16. What types of things could the university do to help meet some needs that you have as a student veteran?
   - Prompts: How do you think the University thinks about your needs?
Closing Questions

17. What advice would you give someone who is re-enrolling in college or entering college following military service in a war zone?

18. How has being in the military affected your education?

19. Have you pursued or are you currently receiving veterans benefits?
   ○ Prompts: disability, GI Bill®

20. Is there anything else you would like to add about any of the topics that we have discussed or about any other areas that we didn’t discuss but you think are important?

21. Do you have any questions?

22. Would it be possible for me to follow up with you if I have any additional questions or need clarification?

Closing Statement

Thank you for your time and participation in this interview. The information that you provided to me will be very helpful in this project.

[Turn off recording equipment]
Appendix G

Interview Protocol for Veterans Services Coordinators

Participant Number: _____ Pseudonym: __________________ Date: _____________

University Pseudonym: __________________________________________________

Title:_____________________ Department Location: _______________________

Years working with Vets: _____ Years in Hi.-Ed.: _____ Years in Stu. Serv.: _____

Sex: M / F Race/Ethnicity: ________ Veteran/Military Status (if any): ________

Welcome—Explain purpose of the interview
- Thank you for agreeing to do this interview. My name is Jamie Earls, and I’ll be talking with you today.
- The purpose of this interview today is to learn more about your experiences as a veteran’s services coordinator/designee with veterans, the services that the university provides for veterans, the structures and resources that are in place.
- The interview will last about 1 hour.
- [Give informed consent] Go over informed consent. Do you have any questions? Have participant sign and retain a copy.

Ground rules
- Everything you tell me will be confidential. To protect your privacy, I will not connect your name with anything that you say.
- If you have any questions or if you would rather not answer any specific question, please feel free to let me know at any time during our conversation. You can also stop the interview at any time for any reason.
- Is it OK if I audiotape this interview today? [Turn on recording equipment.]

Opening Question
1. To begin, please tell me a little about yourself.
   - Prompts: position at the University, years in position/working with veterans, job duties, personal relationship/status with military

Structures, Services, and Resources
2. What structures are in place to assist veterans?

3. What services are being provided by the university (for veterans)?

4. What should be provided but are not? Why?
   - Prompts: What have student veterans asked for?

5. What services provided are a result of collaboration with entities outside the university?
Prompts: Are veteran’s services coordinators collaborating? What are those collaborations? What collaborations need to be?

6. What roles do various college offices play during veterans’ transition back to college life? What resources are available to them? On-campus or off-campus.

7. How accessible are the resources?

Experiences with Veterans

8. What type of interactions have you had with veterans?

9. What type of needs do you feel like veterans have that are unique to their veteran status versus other traditional students?

10. What are the difficulties/challenges that you believe student veterans face participating in college?

11. What are the sources of support available to student veterans (e.g. family support, academic support, disability)?
   
   o Could you identify an advocate for veterans on campus, off campus, how do you work together?

12. Do you believe their needs as a student veteran being met?

Closing Questions

13. What types of things could the university do to help meet some needs that student veterans face?

14. What advice would you give someone who is re-enrolling in college or entering college following military service in a war zone?

15. Is there anything else you would like to add about any of the topics that we have discussed or about any other areas that we didn’t discuss but you think are important?

16. Do you have any questions?

17. Would it be possible for me to follow up with you if I have any additional questions or need clarification?

Closing Statement
Thank you for your time and participation in this interview. The information that you provided to me will be very helpful in this project.

[Turn off recording equipment]
Appendix H

Informed Consent Agreement for Student Veterans

University of Central Arkansas
Informed Consent Agreement
Student Veterans

Integrative Leadership in Higher Education: Meeting the Needs of Student Veterans

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Before you give your consent to volunteer, it is important you read the following information and ask as many questions as necessary to be sure you understand what you will be asked to do.

Investigators
Jamie Earls, PhD Student, University of Central Arkansas, Leadership Studies
Dr. Amy Hawkins, Research Advisor, University of Central Arkansas, 501-450-5602

University of Central Arkansas
201 Donaghey Ave.,
Conway, Arkansas 72035
Phone: 501-450-5000

Purpose of the Research
The purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of combat veterans in higher education institutions in Arkansas, explore how integrative leadership could assist in the reintegration of OEF/OIF/OND combat veterans in institutions of higher education in Arkansas, and recognize what higher education can do to assist student veterans. This research will contribute to my dissertation in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the Ph.D. program.

Procedures
If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in an interview. Your participation will take approximately one hour. The interview will be audio recorded and transcribed to ensure accuracy.

Potential Risks or Discomforts
There are no foreseeable risks or costs associated with the study. The topic may be uncomfortable, as you may briefly reflect on your time spent in a combat zone.

Potential Benefits of the Research
You will receive no benefits from participating in this research; however it is hoped that this research will be used to inform colleges and universities of the needs of student veterans so that they can increase the services provided.

Confidentiality and Data Storage
Your name will be known only by the researcher, and will remain anonymous in disclosure of the results of this study. Where necessary, pseudonyms will be used.

Date will be stored electronically in a password protected file. Raw data will be available to the principle investigator and the research advisor. Audio recordings will be stored electronically until adequate transcription is ensured. They will be destroyed upon transcription or upon approval of the dissertation as deemed necessary by the research advisor.

**Participation, Withdrawal, and Questions about the Research**

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you are free to stop at any time without penalty by just stopping and/or telling the investigator.

You may not withdraw from the study after data collection has been completed since your name is not linked to the data.

**Questions about the Research**

If you have any questions about the research, please ask them now. If you have questions later, you may contact Jamie Earls at jearls1@uca.edu.

This research project has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at the University of Central Arkansas. If you believe there is any infringement upon your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Research Compliance Coordinator at (501) 450-3451.

**Subject’s Agreement**

I have read the information provided above. I understand that I will be audio recorded. My signature below indicates my voluntary agreement to participate in this research study and to be recorded. Please return one copy of this consent form and keep one copy for your records.

___________________________________________
Signature of Research Subject

___________________________________________
Signature of Investigator

Date

Date
Appendix I

Informed Consent Agreement for Veterans Services Coordinators

University of Central Arkansas
Informed Consent Agreement
Veterans Services Coordinators

Integrative Leadership in Higher Education: Meeting the Needs of Student Veterans

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Before you give your consent to volunteer, it is important you read the following information and ask as many questions as necessary to be sure you understand what you will be asked to do.

Investigators
Jamie Earls, PhD Student, University of Central Arkansas, Leadership Studies
Dr. Amy Hawkins, Research Advisor, University of Central Arkansas, 501-450-5602

University of Central Arkansas
201 Donaghey Ave.,
Conway, Arkansas 72035
Phone: 501-450-5000

Purpose of the Research
The purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of combat veterans in higher education institutions in Arkansas, explore how integrative leadership could assist in the reintegration of OEF/OIF/OND combat veterans in institutions of higher education in Arkansas, and recognize what higher education can do to assist student veterans. This research will contribute to my dissertation in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the Ph.D. program.

Procedures
If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in an interview. Your participation will take approximately one hour. The interview will be audio recorded and transcribed to ensure accuracy.

Potential Risks or Discomforts
There are no foreseeable risks or costs associated with the study.

Potential Benefits of the Research
You will receive no benefits from participating in this research; however it is hoped that this research will be used to inform colleges and universities of the needs of student veterans so that they can increase the services provided.

Confidentiality and Data Storage
Your name will not be used in disclosure of the results of this study. However, anonymity
cannot be guaranteed since there are few individuals at the university with the title of Veterans Services Coordinator, or equivalent.

Data will be stored electronically in a password protected file. Raw data will be available to the principle investigator and the research advisor. Audio recordings will be stored electronically until adequate transcription is ensured. They will be destroyed upon transcription or upon approval of the dissertation as deemed necessary by the research advisor.

**Participation, Withdrawal, and Questions about the Research**
Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you are free to stop at any time without penalty by just stopping and/or telling the investigator.

**Questions about the Research**
If you have any questions about the research, please ask them now. If you have questions later, you may contact Jamie Earls at jearls1@uca.edu.

This research project has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at the University of Central Arkansas. If you believe there is any infringement upon your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Research Compliance Coordinator at (501) 450-3451.

**Subject’s Agreement**
I have read the information provided above. I understand that I will be audio recorded. My signature below indicates my voluntary agreement to participate in this research study and to be recorded. Please return one copy of this consent form and keep one copy for your records.

___________________________________________
Signature of Research Subject
Date

___________________________________________
Signature of Investigator
Date
## Appendix J

### Findings and Themes by Category

#### Table A1

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<th>Category</th>
<th>Finding</th>
<th>Themes</th>
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| Needs and Challenges| 1. Student veterans have needs and face challenges that can limit or inhibit participation in higher education; disabilities can compound these challenges as can interacting with traditional students. | • Veteran status can create needs and challenges as diverse as their military experiences; these challenges can range from receiving benefits to disabilities.  
• Student needs can be similar to traditional students, but veteran status may create additional needs or intensify challenges (e.g., interacting with traditional aged students, dealing with personal struggles such as procrastination, and receiving assistance from college offices).  
• Perceptions of student veteran needs by VSCs are similar to those expressed by student veterans in this study, namely difficulties working with traditional students, complications working with college offices, and desires for structure.  
• Negative support, such as lack of adequate information or personal support, can create challenges for student veterans. |
|                     | 2. Student veterans can be successful in higher education with adequate support and resources; additionally, advocates can empower student veterans by creating a supportive atmosphere. | • Family and personal support can have a significant positive impact on successful transition from the military to higher education in the form of encouragement and the determination to be an exemplar.  
• The support a university provides for student veterans can have a significant impact on the success of the student veteran; support can range from offices and resources to collaborations with outside entities. The most significant support can be found in the form of a Veterans Center on campus.  
• Community and professional support can have a potentially positive impact for student veterans, and although it is not always entwined with the university system, it can have amplifying effects when it is.  
• Effective advocates can have a positive effect on the success of student veterans through encouragement, confidence building, support, and assistance. |
### Suggestions and Advice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3.</th>
<th>Student veterans believe higher education is attempting, though somewhat unsuccessfully, to meet the needs they face, and student veterans suggest the creation of a Veterans Center on campuses.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

- The perceptions, or misperceptions, of how the university views the needs of student veterans are more negative for student veterans and more positive for veterans’ services coordinators.
- Personal experiences and interactions with veterans prompts advice for veterans considering pursuing higher education, such as being patient, not procrastinating, and finding and using available resources.
- Based on their perceptions, needs, and personal experiences, participants proposed ways in which the university could better show their support of student veterans; namely, having a Veterans Center, educating faculty, and having specialized personnel.

### Interactions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4.</th>
<th>Student veterans are reluctant to self-identify as a veteran to other students, and interactions with other students can be challenging; however, interacting with other student veterans provides the impetus for overcoming challenges.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

- Most student veterans are reluctant to identify themselves as a veteran.
- Veterans have diverse interactions with other students, including other veterans; these interactions can be both positive and negative.