



Veterans Education Transition Support (VETS)
2023 Report



Introduction

The Tennessee Veterans Education Transition Support (VETS) Act,¹ passed in 2014, established a program of recognition for higher education institutions that strategically support veterans' transition from military service to college and on to gainful employment. These institutions are recognized as VETS Campuses for providing dedicated outreach and services (Appendix A) necessary to create a supportive environment for student veterans' academic success.

As of 2022, there were 30 VETS designated campuses (listed in Appendix B). This report provides information from 27 VETS Campuses across Tennessee. An additional three new institutions (Motlow State Community College, Roane State Community College, and Tennessee College of Applied Technology (TCAT) Chattanooga) received the VETS Campus designation in 2022 and will be reporting data in 2023.

VETS Campuses are required to provide annual data on veterans to the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC). The campus-reported data differentiates military-connected students by service type: veterans, members of the Reserve or National Guard, active-duty service-members, and military dependents (Definitions in Appendix C). Enrollment data considers all military-connected students. Due to data limitations, graduation and enrollment in programs of study categories include student veterans only. The three specific questions for this 2022 VETS Campus Report for calendar year (CY) 2021 are:

1. How many student veterans and military dependents were enrolled at the institution?
2. What are the programs of study student veterans are enrolled in?
3. How many degrees did student veterans complete?

Student Enrollment at VETS Campuses

There were approximately 17,000 student veterans and military dependents at Tennessee's VETS Campuses in CY 2021. As illustrated in Table 1, the largest portion of both student veterans and military dependents were undergraduate students at public universities. In total, there were 8,232 undergraduate student veterans and 6,845 undergraduate military dependents at Tennessee's VETS Campuses. Additionally, there were 1,290 student veterans and 600 military dependents enrolled in graduate programs.

¹ Tennessee Code Annotated § 49-7-13

Student Veterans

In 2021, more than half (56 percent) of these students were student veterans. In total, there were 8,232 undergraduate student veterans and 1,290 graduate student veterans. The term *student veteran* includes previously serving veterans, active-duty service-members, and members of the National Guard or reserves. The breakdown of student veterans in 2021 at Tennessee’s VETS Campuses was as follows: 7,721 previously serving veterans, 1,004 active-duty, and 797 members of the National Guard or reserve. Twenty-one percent of student veterans at VETS Campuses were enrolled at a technical or community college, however, most student veterans (65 percent) were at a four-year college or university with the remaining 14 percent attending graduate school. Including those at community colleges, 66 percent of undergraduate and 52 percent of graduate student veterans at VETS Campuses were enrolled full-time.

Military Dependents

Military dependents make up 44 percent of the military-connected students at Tennessee’s VETS Campuses. Nineteen percent of military dependents at VETS Campuses were enrolled at a technical or community college. Like student veterans, most military dependents (73 percent) at VETS Campuses were undergraduates who attend a four-year college or university with only eight percent enrolled in graduate study.

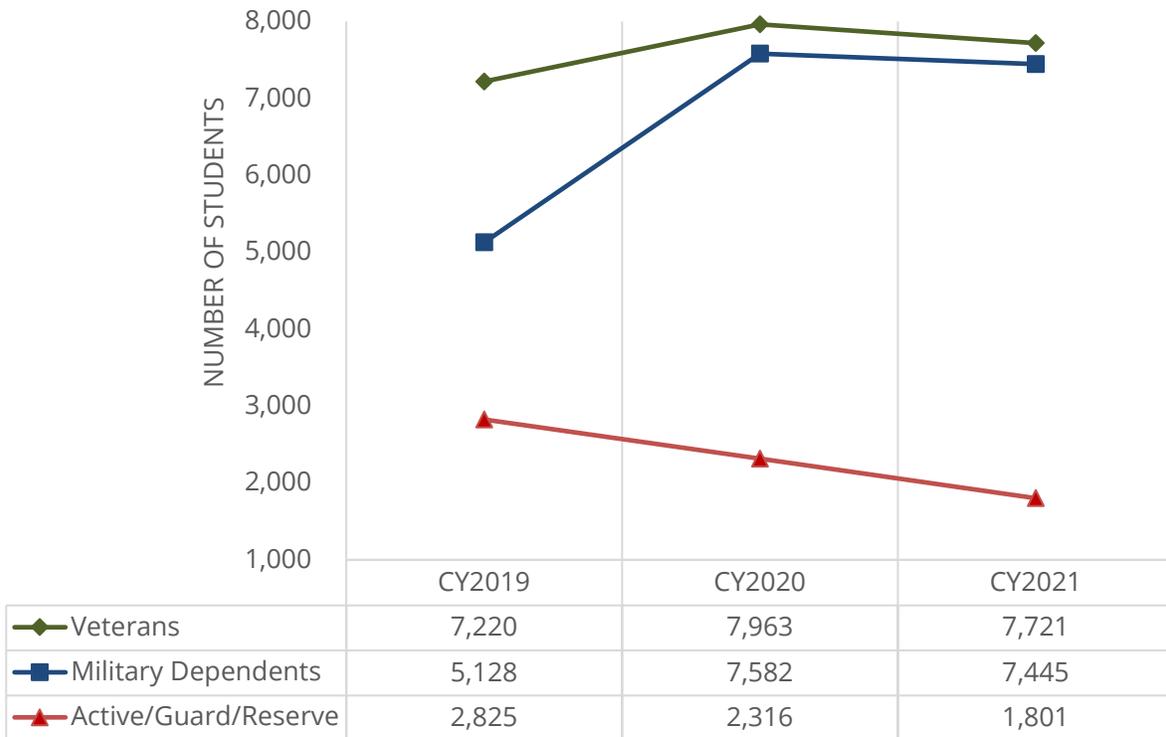
Table 1: Student Veterans and Military Dependents enrolled at Tennessee VETS Campuses (CY 2021)

Type of Institution	Undergraduate		Graduate	
	Student Veterans	Military Dependents	Student Veterans	Military Dependents
Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology	123	33	-	-
Community Colleges	1917	1394	-	-
Public University	5999	5205	1097	523
Private Not-for-Profit Colleges & Universities	193	213	193	77
TOTAL	8232	6845	1290	600

Enrollment Trends of Student Veterans and Military Dependents at VETS Campuses

In 2021, enrollment of veterans and military dependents remained stable, but the enrollment of the *currently serving student veterans*—a combination of Reservists, members of the National Guard, and active-duty service-members—declined by 36 percent from CY 2019 to CY 2021. There has been a steady decline, shown in Figure 1, of currently serving student veterans.

Figure 1: Student Enrollment by Type at Tennessee VETS Campuses



Enrollment of Associate-level Students

There were approximately 3,500 military-connected students enrolled at Tennessee’s technical or community college VETS Campuses in 2021. Of those, 2,040 were student veterans and 1,427 were classified as military dependents. As noted in Table 2, Volunteer State, Pellissippi State, and Nashville State Community Colleges enrolled the most student veterans, while Northeast State Community College enrolled the most military dependents. Also in Table 2, Motlow State and Roane State Community Colleges and TCAT Chattanooga became VETS Campuses in CY 2021. Those campuses will report VETS Campus data during the next reporting period.

Table 2: Undergraduate Students Enrolled at TCATs and Community Colleges (CY 2021)

Community Colleges	Student Veterans	Military Dependents
Volunteer State Community College	352	110
Pellissippi State Community College	333	91
Nashville State Community College	310	171
Northeast State Community College	200	570
Chattanooga State Community College	165	69
Columbia State Community College	160	112
Walters State Community College	145	64
Southwest Tennessee Community College	112	75
Cleveland State Community College	62	38
Dyersburg State Community College	46	63
Jackson State Community College	32	31
Motlow State Community College*		
Roane State Community College*		
SUBTOTAL	1917	1394
Tennessee College of Applied Technology (TCAT)		
TCAT Dickson	123	33
TCAT Chattanooga*		
SUBTOTAL	123	33

Enrollment of Bachelor-level and Graduate Students

Roughly 68 percent of student veterans and military dependents were enrolled in bachelor programs at a Tennessee VETS Campus in 2021, and another 11 percent were enrolled in graduate study.

Table 3 provides a snapshot of enrollment and is sorted by top undergraduate student veteran enrollment.² In 2021, Austin Peay State University (APSU) enrolled the most undergraduate student veterans. APSU, the University of Tennessee in Knoxville (UTK), and Lipscomb University all have the most student veterans in graduate study. Tennessee State University (TSU), UT Knoxville and UT Martin (UTM) enroll the most military dependents at Tennessee’s VETS Campuses.

Table 3: Military-Connected Students Enrolled at Public and Private Not-for-Profit Colleges and Universities (CY 2021)

Public Universities	Undergraduate		Graduate	
	Student Veterans	Military Dependents	Student Veterans	Military Dependents
Austin Peay State University	2201	726	239	61
Middle Tennessee State University	764	506	143	66
University of Memphis	670	336	144	35
Tennessee Technological University	644	444	101	50
East Tennessee State University	621	261	64	37
University of Tennessee, Knoxville	499	786	191	91
University of Tennessee, Martin	229	748	40	82
University of Tennessee, Chattanooga	217	217	37	16
Tennessee State University	151	1172	70	60
University of Tennessee Health Science Center	#	#	68	25
SUBTOTAL	5999	5205	1097	523

Private Not-for-Profit Colleges and Universities	Undergraduate		Graduate	
	Student Veterans	Military Dependents	Student Veterans	Military Dependents
Lipscomb University	157	180	186	76
Christian Brothers University	22	18	#	#
Bryan College	#	#	#	#
Lane College	#	#	#	#
Maryville College	#	#	#	#
SUBTOTAL	193	213	193	77

² When individual cells in a table presented contain fewer than 10 observations, that data is suppressed but still included in the table totals.

VETS Campus Programs of Study

Using the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) list of Classifications of Instructional Programs (CIP) codes which provide a taxonomy of programs, THEC determined the top programs of study for student veterans at Tennessee's VETS Campuses during CY 2021.

This section highlights the top programs of study by student veteran enrollment across program tracks: associate, bachelor, and graduate. Each category will provide the CIP Code by number of student veterans in each program and the percentage of student veterans in those programs across all two-year colleges, undergraduates at four-year colleges and universities, and graduate programs. Military dependents were not included in this section since only the collection of student veteran data is required. Additionally, staff from the Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) provided THEC with program of study data from all TCATs systemwide beyond just TCAT Dickson.

Student Veterans Pursuing Associate Degrees

Approximately 48 percent of student veterans at Tennessee VETS Campuses were enrolled in a Liberal Arts and Sciences, General Studies, and Humanities program (CIP Code Category 24), as seen in Table 4. Eighteen percent of the student veterans enrolled in these programs are attending Austin Peay State University's Liberal Arts associate degree, a program which was designed to help student veterans and military families jumpstart a postsecondary educational journey. In total, the top five programs that 83 percent of student veterans chose were classified within the CIP categories of Liberal Arts, Health, Engineering, Computer Sciences, and Business. All but seven percent of student veterans were enrolled in the top 10 program of study categories. Amongst that seven percent, a few student veterans were enrolled in programs such as communications, culinary services, legal studies, and mathematics.

Table 4: Associate Degree Programs of Study Category at VETS Campus

<u>Program of Study Category by CIP Code</u>	<u>Student Vets</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
24 - Liberal Arts and Sciences, General Studies, and Humanities	938	48%
51 - Health Professions and Related Clinical Sciences	207	11%
15 - Engineering Technologies/Technicians	166	9%
11 - Computer and Information Sciences	154	8%
52 - Business, Management, Marketing, and Related Support	153	8%
43 - Security and Protective Services	77	4%
47 - Mechanic and Repair Technologies/Technicians	47	2%
13 - Education	26	1%
50 - Visual and Performing Arts	26	1%
31 - Parks, Recreation, Leisure, and Fitness Studies	15	1%

Student Veterans Pursuing Bachelor’s Degrees

Almost half of student veterans pursued a bachelor’s degree and were enrolled in the top five program of study categories listed in Table 5. Business, Management, Marketing, and Related Support majors are popular among student veterans.

Table 5: Bachelor’s Degree Programs of Study at VETS Campuses

<u>Program of Study Categories by CIP Code</u>	<u>Student Vets</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
52 - Business, Management, Marketing, and Related Support	880	17%
24 - Liberal Arts and Sciences, General Studies, and Humanities	440	8%
51 - Health Professions and Related Clinical Sciences	410	8%
31 - Parks, Recreation, Leisure, and Fitness Studies	345	7%
43 - Security and Protective Services	325	6%
11 - Computer and Information Sciences	319	6%
14 - Engineering	242	5%
42 - Psychology	206	4%
42 - Social Sciences	195	4%
15 - Engineering Technologies/Technicians	192	4%

Student Veterans Pursuing Graduate Study

Sixty-seven percent of the student veterans who were enrolled in graduate study (Table 6) were enrolled in Business, Education, Health, Public Administration and Social Services, or Computer Sciences. In future data collections, we aim to distinguish graduate degrees by type: master’s, doctoral, or professional degrees.

Table 6: Graduate Degree Programs of Study at VETS Campuses

<u>Program of Study Categories by CIP Code</u>	<u>Student Vets</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
52 - Business, Management, Marketing, and Related Support	209	24%
13 - Education	122	14%
51 - Health Professions and Related Clinical Sciences	119	13%
44 - Public Administration and Social Service Professions	98	11%
11 - Computer and Information Sciences	43	5%
24 - Liberal Arts and Sciences, General Studies, and Humanities	41	5%
22 - Legal Professions and Studies	29	3%
42 - Psychology	27	3%
14 - Engineering	26	3%
31 - Parks, Recreation, Leisure, and Fitness Studies	25	3%

Tennessee College of Applied Technology (TCAT) Snapshot

Two TCATs have achieved the VETS Campus designation since the 2020 VETS Campus Data Report. Still, TBR staff provided a systemwide outlook showing more than 2,000 student veterans were enrolled at TCATs along with a thousand military dependents. Systemwide, student veterans earned 196 TCAT Diplomas and 126 TCAT Certificates in CY 2020 with a 31 percent increase in combined credential attainment in CY 2021 (238 TCAT Diplomas and 183 TCAT Certificates). In CY 2021, 84 percent of student veterans were enrolled full-time at TCATs and approximately 86 percent of student veterans were enrolled in the top five programs of study listed in Table 7: Mechanic and Repair, Health Professions, Precision Production, Construction, and Personal or Culinary Services.

Table 7: Top Programs of Study for Student Veterans at TCATs

<u>Program of Study Categories by CIP Code</u>	<u>Student Vets</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
47 - Mechanic and Repair Technologies/Technicians	596	30%
51 - Health Professions and Related Clinical Sciences	487	24%
48 - Precision Production	299	15%
46 - Construction Trades	172	9%
12 - Personal and Culinary Services	153	8%
11 - Computer and Information Sciences	121	6%
52 - Business, Management, Marketing, and Related Support	68	3%
49 - Transportation and Materials Moving	56	3%
15 - Engineering Technologies/Technicians	38	2%
50 - Visual and Performing Arts	12	1%

VETS Campus Degree Completion

Starting in CY 2019, student veterans have earned almost 5,900 credentials at Tennessee's VETS Campuses. Approximately 50 percent of all degrees earned by student veterans were at the bachelor's level. Student veterans at Tennessee's VETS Campuses earned close to 1,800 credentials in CY 2021 (Table 8). There was a 21 percent growth of postsecondary credentials at VETS Campuses in CY 2020 and a 19 percent decrease in CY 2021.

Table 8: Degrees Earned by Type for Student Veterans

<u>Degree Type</u>	<u>CY 2019</u>	<u>CY 2020</u>	<u>CY 2021</u>
TCAT Diplomas	20	3	36
TCAT Certificates	0	13	17
Community College Certificates	124	77	157
Associate	337	718	431
Bachelors	1,078	1,104	864
Masters	236	279	259
Doctoral	42	37	34
Grand Total	1,837	2,231	1,798

Financial Aid of Student Veterans and Military Dependents

In CY 2021, VETS Campuses identified 46 percent of student veterans within the veteran category as having used a specific veteran education benefit. These veterans were tracked as having used veteran specific benefits like the Chapter 30 (Montgomery GI Bill®), Chapter 31 (Veteran Readiness and Employment), and the most used Chapter 33 (Post-9/11 GI Bill®).³ The Post-9/11 GI Bill® provides eligible students with in-state tuition and fees paid directly to the institution as well as a book stipend and a housing allowance then paid to the student for 36 months of training. As the COVID-19 Pandemic continued through 2021, student veterans and military dependents were able to maintain a military housing allowance provided through the GI Bill® with the adjustment to regulations by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. This allowed many students the opportunity to maintain enrollment in classes throughout.

Table 9: Tennessee VETS Campus Enrollment by Student Identifier (CY 2021)

Campus Student Identification System Category	2Y	LGIs Public		UT System		Private Univ		Total
	UG	UG	GR	UG	GR	UG	GR	
Veteran	114	185	70			81	100	550
Veteran GI Bill		105	13			3		121
Chapter 30 (Montgomery GI Bill)	63	27	12	16	6			126
Chapter 31 (VocRehab)	163	376	40	86	23	7	3	698
Chapter 33 (Post-9/11 Vet)	1,059	1,831	292	397	181	70	43	3,873
Other Veteran	322	818	190				4	1,334
<i>Veteran No Benefits</i>	<i>187</i>	<i>443</i>	<i>72</i>	<i>179</i>	<i>94</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>37</i>	<i>1,018</i>
VRAP		1						1
								7,721

2Y: TCAT and Community College, LGIs: Locally Governed Institutions, UT: University of Tennessee
UG: Undergraduate Students, GR: Graduate Students

There are a remaining 26 percent of veterans, specifically, that were tracked as using an unknown status of veteran education benefit usage. As seen in Table 9, tracking veterans by benefit, or lack thereof, is inconsistent during reporting. Many students were identified as *Veteran*, *Veteran GI Bill*, and *Other Veteran* with no standardized definition. Similarly, 47 percent of military dependents also have an unknown status of benefit usage. Some campuses also track an identifier known as *Veteran No Benefit*.

³ GI Bill® is a registered trademark of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). More information about education benefits offered by VA is available at the official U.S. government Web site at <https://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill>.

Veteran No Benefit

Thirteen percent of the undergraduate veteran category (compiled in Table 10) reported by VETS Campuses were identified as *Veteran No Benefit*. These veterans may have exhausted their veterans' education benefits, the benefits may have expired, or the earned benefit was being saved for a later degree. These veterans are more common within the UT System and in graduate school.

Table 10: Percentage of Veterans identified as *Veteran No Benefit* at VETS Campuses

<u>Students</u>	<u>CC</u>	<u>LGI</u> s	<u>UT</u>	<u>Private</u>	<u>Overall</u>
Veterans No Benefit (UG)	10%	12%	28%	12%	13%
Veterans No Benefit (GR)	-	10%	31%	20%	20%

Keeping an account of student veterans and military dependents helps provide the ability to track enrollment trends at a statewide level. At the institutional level, more precise and timely data helps ensure resources or information are accessible to students who may not otherwise interact with the institution's veteran's office. If a student is struggling, those within the Veterans Office at each institution should be able to intervene and provide support.

Another important identifier Tennessee's VETS Campuses have begun to track is for those using the [STRONG Act](#). The Tennessee STRONG (Support, Training, and Renewing Opportunity for National Guardsmen) Act provides eligible members of the Tennessee National Guard funding for tuition toward a first-time technical certificate or diploma, associate's, bachelor's, or master's degree through a tuition reimbursement program. In CY 2021, VETS Campuses reported that a third of the student veterans within the National Guard and Reserve category at Tennessee's VETS Campuses were using the STRONG Act. This is a direct investment into currently serving student veterans by the State of Tennessee.

Conclusion

There were nearly 17,000 student veterans and military dependents at 27 of Tennessee's VETS Campus and an additional 3,000 at 24 of Tennessee's Colleges of Applied Technology. Still, there are more postsecondary education institutions in Tennessee not represented in this VETS Campus data report. As we learn more about our military-connected population, THEC continues to engage and encourage other campuses to strive towards becoming a VETS Campus. There is also much gratitude and appreciation for the VETS Campuses that continually contribute efforts to make progress in correctly coding student veterans and military dependent students.

A challenge to take on in next year's VETS Campus Data Report is the question of data quality and consistency. As noted in the Financial Aid of Student Veterans and Military Dependents section and Table 9, current data being reported is often confusing and complex. Our efforts to standardize definitions have helped. The efforts of yesterday and today to define and identify student veterans and military dependents may someday lead to tracking graduation (or completion) rates and persistence rates for these students.

The Tennessee Higher Education Commission and the institutions of higher education in Tennessee are leading the way to create and use data to make informed decisions, improve services, adjust policies or processes, and promote higher education to this population. These efforts help Tennessee continue being a leader in increasing the awareness of the trends within the military-connected population.

Appendix A: VETS Campus Designation Qualifications

To qualify for the VETS Campus designation, institutions must:

1. Conduct an annual campus survey of students who are veterans to identify the views, needs, issues and suggestions of veterans;
2. Provide information to faculty and staff about military and veterans' culture, including combat-related mental or physical disabilities or other challenges;
3. Administer orientation programs for students who are veterans;
4. Facilitate mentoring and support programs for students who are veterans;
5. Develop outreach and communication strategies for military bases located near the campus, for the purpose of assessing veterans' educational goals and meeting their identified needs;
6. Create and maintain a process for the assessment of prior learning that grants academic credit to veterans for transferable training and experience attaining through military service; and
7. Provide, on the campus website, information on the availability of prior learning assessments and potential program credit for skills, training or education obtained during military service.

Eligible institutions may apply for designation as a VETS Campus by submitting a written request to THEC's Executive Director outlining all outreach services offered to veterans.

Appendix B: List of VETS Campus by Sector

The following postsecondary institutions were designated VETS Campuses in CY 2021.

Newly designated VETS Campus in calendar years 2021 and 2022 are marked with an asterisk ().*

Community Colleges

Chattanooga State Community College
Cleveland State Community College
Columbia State Community College
Dyersburg State Community College
Jackson State Community College
Motlow State Community College*
Nashville State Community College
Northeast State Community College
Pellissippi State Community College
Roane State Community College*
Southwest Tennessee Community College
Volunteer State Community College
Walters State Community College

Public Universities

Austin Peay State University
East Tennessee State University
Middle Tennessee State University
Tennessee State University
Tennessee Technological University
University of Memphis
University of Tennessee, Chattanooga
University of Tennessee, Knoxville
University of Tennessee Health Science Center
University of Tennessee, Martin

Tennessee College of Applied Technology (TCAT)

TCAT Chattanooga*
TCAT Dickson

Private Not-for-Profit Colleges and Universities

Bryan College
Christian Brothers University
Lane College
Lipscomb University
Maryville College

Appendix C: Definitions

- **Military-Connected Student:** Any student fitting within the description of Student Veteran or Military Dependent below:
 - **Student Veterans:** Active-duty members of the armed services, the National Guard, or Reserves and persons who are separated from the military through retirement or after a period of military service who are enrolled as a full- or part-time student at a postsecondary institution taking classes either online or in person.
 - **Veterans:** A person who served in the active military, naval, or air service, and who was discharged or released therefrom under conditions other than dishonorable.
 - **Reserve / National Guard:** The National Guard is part of the reserve components of the United States Army and the United States Air Force. There are also Reserve components in the Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard. Many Reserve / National Guard individuals are in higher education or hold a civilian job full-time while serving part-time as a National Guard member.
 - **Active Duty:** A person who is active duty is in the military full time. They work for the military full time, may live on a military base, and can be deployed at any time.
 - **Military Dependents:** Students attending a postsecondary institution who are the qualified spouse, natural, adopted, stepchild or parents of a veteran or service-member.