



Veterans Education Transition Support (VETS)
2022 Report



In 2014, Tennessee passed into law TCA § 49-7-13, the Tennessee Veterans Education Transition Support (VETS) Act. The VETS Act establishes a program of recognition for higher education institutions which allocate resources to support veterans' successful transition from military service to college enrollment. An institution receiving VETS campus certification not only prioritizes outreach to veterans, but diligently delivers the services necessary to create a supportive environment for student veterans' academic success. Appendix A provides requirements for a higher education institution to become a VETS Campus.

As part of this VETS campus certification, institutions are required to provide annual data to the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) on or before July 31st of each year. The data collection initiative is continually improved to both standardize the data requirements and definitions of military-affiliated students. Generally, these students were tracked due to using United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) or U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) educational benefits such as the GI Bill[®].¹ However, use of these benefits is not a requirement to fit the definition of a military-affiliated student. See Appendix B for a glossary of definitions regarding ***military-affiliated students***.

Campus reported data was analyzed to differentiate military-affiliated students by service type: veteran, Reserve or National Guard, Active Duty, and military dependent. The data was then correlated with postsecondary institutional category (community college or university), student status (full or part time), degree completion, and programs of study. Military dependents are not included in the student status, degree completion, or programs of study outcomes.

The 2021 VETS Campus Data Collection asked three questions about calendar year 2020:

1. How many military-affiliated students are enrolled at the institution?
2. What are the programs of study student veterans are enrolled in?
3. How many degrees did student veterans complete?

There are 28 VETS Designated campuses (listed in Appendix C). In 2021, five new institutions received the VETS Campus designation and will be reporting data in July 2022. However, a new VETS Campus volunteered to submit data. Therefore, this report provides information from 24 VETS Campuses about military-affiliated student enrollment, student veteran completion, and the programs of study student veterans were enrolled in for the 2020 calendar year.

¹ 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>.

VETS Campus Enrollment

There are at least 17,800 military-affiliated students in Tennessee's VETS campuses. Almost half (45%) are veterans while 2,300 students are currently serving as Active Duty or Reserve service-members, or in the National Guard. Military dependents make up 42 percent of the military-affiliated population. A fifth of Tennessee's military-affiliated students are enrolled in community college. Nine percent of military-affiliated students are attending graduate school, amounting to almost 1,700 military-affiliated students enrolled in graduate study.

Table 1: VETS Campus Enrollment by Sector (CY 2020)

Student	Community	4Y Undergrad	Graduate	Other	Total	% Community	% Grad
Veterans	1,864	5,000	990	109	7,963	23%	12%
Military Dependents	1,350	5,607	565	60	7,582	18%	7%
Reserve/National Guard	86	943	72	6	1,107	8%	7%
Active Duty	173	951	49	36	1,209	14%	4%
Military-Affiliated	3,473	12,501	1,676	211	17,861	19%	9%

Veterans No Benefits

Tennessee's VETS campuses identify military-affiliated students through student self-reporting of their military status and by use of veteran benefits. Some institutions also track student veterans who are enrolled but not currently using veteran benefits. Three of the ten community colleges do not track this demographic of veteran, but public universities have reported that roughly 22 percent of Tennessee's student veterans remain enrolled while not using veteran benefits. These student veterans may have exhausted their benefits, the benefits may have expired, or may be saving the earned benefit for a later degree. Regardless, THEC recommends institutions keep account of veterans not using benefits (Vet No Benefit) to ensure resources and information is shared and accessible to these veterans.

Table 2: VETS Campus Veterans No Benefits

	Community*	4Y Undergrad	Total
Veterans No Benefits	186	1,091	1,277
Percentage of Vet No Benefits	10%	22%	16%
<i>*Three of the 10 Community Colleges are not tracking Veterans not using benefits.</i>			

Student Veterans and Military Families: Pandemic Trends

Student veterans are typically classified as non-traditional students. According to Syracuse University, “approximately one-half of student veterans who benefit from the Post-9/11 GI Bill® are between 25 and 34 years of age while one-third are married with dependents and another 15 percent are single with dependents.”² During the COVID-19 Pandemic, veterans with benefits continued to receive the Military Housing Allowance provided with the GI Bill® while a swift adjustment to regulations by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs allowed many student veterans to remain enrolled in classes that quickly transitioned from in-residence to online.

Throughout 2020, 71 percent of undergraduate student veterans and 53 percent of graduate student veterans were enrolled in higher education full-time. Using comparable data from CY 2019, overall military-affiliated enrollment grew 18 percent in CY 2020, including a roughly 10 percent gain in veteran enrollment and a 48 percent increase in military dependent enrollment.

Enrollment of Reservists, members of the National Guard, and Active-Duty service-members, however, declined by about 18 percent. Students with current military service obligations were called upon to deploy overseas and to the Mexican border, run COVID-19 testing sites, and help with natural disaster recovery operations in Tennessee and abroad. These broad ranging service obligations underscore the flexibility that currently serving student veterans need when accessing higher education.

Table 3: VETS Campus Enrollment Trends

Category	CY2019	CY2020	Pandemic
Veterans	7,220	7,963	10%
Military Dependents	5,128	7,582	48%
Reserve/National Guard	2,825	1,107	-18%
Active Duty	-	1,209	
Military-Affiliated	15,173	17,861	18%
Participating VETS Campus	23	24	
Student Veterans/VETS Campus	437	428	-2%
Mil-Aff/VETS Campus	660	744	13%

Reservist, members of the National Guard, and Active-Duty service-members were classified as one category, “currently serving students,” in CY 2019.

² [Student Veterans: A Valuable Asset to Higher Education](#), Syracuse University’s Institute for Veterans and Military Families, 2019.

Programs of Study

Using the U.S. Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistic’s list of Classifications of Instructional Programs (CIP) codes that provide a taxonomy of fields, THEC determined the top programs of student veterans for calendar year 2020.

The following data showcases the top programs of study by student veteran enrollment across three institutional categories: community colleges, four-year universities, and graduate degrees. Twenty-one percent of student veterans at VETS Campuses are enrolled at a community college while eleven percent are attending graduate school.

Programs of Study: Community Colleges

Approximately 35 percent of student veterans at Tennessee VETS Community Colleges are enrolled in a General Studies or Liberal Arts program. In total, 73 percent of student veterans attending a community college are condensed into five programs of study: Liberal Arts, Business, Engineering, Health, and Computer Sciences. All but three percent of student veterans are enrolled in the top 15 programs of study.

Table 4: Programs of Study at VETS Campus Community Colleges

Program of Study by CIP Code	Student Vets	Percentage	
24 - Liberal Arts and Sciences, General Studies and Humanities	791	35%	73%
52 - Business, Management, Marketing, and Related Support Services	232	10%	
15 - Engineering Technologies/Technicians	223	10%	
51 - Health Professions and Related Clinical Sciences	221	10%	
11 - Computer and Information Sciences	181	8%	
13 - Education	140	6%	20%
50 - Visual and Performing Arts	128	6%	
43 - Security and Protective Services	109	5%	
47 - Mechanic and Repair Technologies/Technicians	50	2%	
42 - Psychology	26	1%	
45 - Social Sciences	23	1.0%	4%
14 - Engineering	17	0.7%	
22 - Legal Professions and Studies	15	0.7%	
10 - Communications Technologies/Technicians and Support Services	14	0.6%	
44 - Public Administration and Social Service Professions	13	0.6%	

Programs of Study: Bachelor’s Degrees

Almost half of student veterans at universities are enrolled in five programs: Business, Liberal Arts (APSU), Health, Security and Protective Services, or Computer Science. General Studies and Liberal Arts is a top program primarily due to Austin Peay State University’s Liberal Arts associate degree, which was designed to help student veterans and military families jumpstart their postsecondary educational journey.

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

Program of Study by CIP Code	Student Veterans	Percentage	
52 - Business, Management, Marketing, and Related Support Services	879	16%	48%
24 - Liberal Arts and Sciences, General Studies and Humanities	744	13%	
51 - Health Professions and Related Clinical Sciences	381	7%	
43 - Security and Protective Services	373	7%	
11 - Computer and Information Sciences	343	6%	
31 - Parks, Recreation, Leisure, and Fitness Studies	341	6%	21%
15 - Engineering Technologies/Technicians	232	4%	
42 - Psychology	215	4%	
26 - Biological and Biomedical Sciences	214	4%	
14 - Engineering	210	4%	
45 - Social Sciences	185	3%	14%
30 - Multi/Interdisciplinary Studies	172	3%	
50 - Visual and Performing Arts	162	3%	
01 - Agriculture, Agriculture Operations, and Related Sciences	148	3%	
49 - Transportation and Materials Moving	143	3%	

Programs of Study: Graduate Programs

Sixty-seven percent of the student veterans who are enrolled in graduate programs are enrolled in Business, Health, Education, Public Administration and Social Services, or Computer Sciences.

Table 6: Graduate Degree Programs at VETS Campuses

Program of Study by CIP Code	Student Veterans	Percentage	
52 - Business, Management, Marketing, and Related Support Services	176	20%	67%
51 - Health Professions and Related Clinical Sciences	158	18%	
13 - Education	139	16%	
44 - Public Administration and Social Service Professions	84	9%	
11 - Computer and Information Sciences	41	5%	
24 - Liberal Arts and Sciences, General Studies and Humanities	36	4%	14%
54 - History	27	3%	
31 - Parks, Recreation, Leisure, and Fitness Studies	24	3%	
42 - Psychology	21	2%	
14 - Engineering	20	2%	
49 - Transportation and Materials Moving	19	2%	9%
26 - Biological and Biomedical Sciences	16	2%	
22 - Legal Professions and Studies	15	2%	
15 - Engineering Technologies/Technicians	15	2%	
01 - Agriculture, Agriculture Operations, and Related Sciences	14	2%	

Tennessee College of Applied Technology Snapshot

There were no VETS designated campuses at the Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology (TCATs) during the 2020 VETS data collection period. However, the Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) provided a systemwide overview. According to TBR, close to 1,800 student veterans are enrolled at TCATs. Additionally, 1 in 3 military-affiliated students are military dependents.

Eighty-two percent of student veterans are enrolled full-time at TCATs and approximately 85 percent of student veterans were enrolled in five programs: Mechanic and Repair, Health Professions, Precision Production, Construction, and Culinary.

Table 7: Top Programs for Student Veterans at TCATs

Program of Study by CIP Code	Student Veterans	Percentage	
47 - Mechanic and Repair Technologies/Technicians	559	30%	85%
51 - Health Professions and Related Clinical Sciences	475	26%	
48 - Precision Production	286	15%	
46 - Construction Trades	129	7%	
12 - Personal and Culinary Services	125	7%	
11 - Computer and Information Sciences	123	7%	15%
52 - Business, Management, Marketing, and Related Support Services	62	3%	
49 - Transportation and Materials Moving	41	2%	
15 - Engineering Technologies/Technicians	31	2%	
50 - Visual and Performing Arts	14	1%	
01 - Agriculture, Agriculture Operations, and Related Sciences	10	1%	1%
19 - Family and Consumer Sciences/Human Sciences	3	0%	

Degree Completion

In 2020, student veterans at the VETS campuses earned close to 2,500 degrees. Approximately 50 percent of all degrees earned were at the bachelor's level.

Table 8: Degrees Earned by Type for Student Veterans

Degree Type	Total Awards
TCAT Diplomas	196
TCAT Certificates	126
Associate	718
Bachelors	1,104
Masters	279
Doctoral	37
Grand Total	2,460

Recommendations for Improved Data Collection

THEC's data collection efforts have gradually improved over the past six years. For CY 2017, the data collected only identified students who had "previously served" or were "currently serving" in the military. There was little distinction between those two demographics and not all colleges reported data fully. Over the next two years, THEC improved the questions by asking more specific questions relating to how the students were coded in Banner rather than broad questions like, "Which students have benefits? Which of those have served? How many are still currently serving?" Refined data collection and disambiguation leads to more thorough results. The CY 2019 data collection was the most similar and more comprehensive of the previous few years, which allowed for a comparison to identify pandemic trends.

Properly coding military-affiliated students by type and benefit used or not provides a much easier avenue for the continued improvement of real-time tracking as well as identifying trends in enrollment. The statewide use of Banner and Argos is tremendously helpful in this endeavor. Two specific codes partners are asking to be implemented are for the **STRONG Act** students and for **Veterans No Benefits**. Currently, only about half of the institutions are tracking these two groups. On the institution level, the change in data collection practices allows those involved in student programming to intervene when a student is struggling academically while being able to identify and reward military-affiliated students who are achieving success.

Continued improvements to correctly coding military-affiliated students identified leads to tracking **graduation** (or completion) **rates** and **persistence rates** not only for student veterans, but potentially for all four demographics of military-affiliated students: veteran, reservists or members of the National Guard, active-duty service-members, and military dependents.

More thorough data outcomes help Tennessee to realize the return on investment into our military-affiliated population by highlighting trends in enrollment and addressing success metrics. Are student veterans finding success or experiencing challenges? Analyzing the effort to support the military-affiliated population will take time and verification but will ultimately lead to data driven decisions to improve services, adjust policies or processes, and promote higher education to this population. A case in point is the fallout of student veterans who are still serving. There are processes at each institution to ensure service-members can withdraw from classes completely or with an "incomplete" grade while the institution commits to re-enrolling them back into the program of study upon return. Those processes should be known and accessible to student veterans.

There are a total of 17,861 military-affiliated students at 24 of Tennessee's VETS Campus and another 2,739 at 39 of Tennessee's Colleges of Applied Technology, and there are more postsecondary education institutions not represented in this VETS Campus data report. To further capture how many military-affiliated students are in Tennessee, THEC should continue to encourage other campuses to strive towards becoming a VETS Campus and increase the awareness of trends of the military-affiliated population.

Appendix A: VETS Campus Designation Requirements

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: Glossary of Terms

- **Military-Affiliated 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.

Appendix C: List of VETS Campus by Sector

The following postsecondary institutions were designated VETS campuses in CY 2020.

Newly designated VETS campus in calendar years 2020 and 2021 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
Northeast State Community College
Pellissippi State Community College
Volunteer State Community College
Walters State Community College
Nashville State Community College*
Southwest Tennessee 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 Dickson*

Private Not-for-Profit Colleges and Universities

Bryan College
Christian Brothers University
Lane College
Lipscomb University
Maryville College
Trevecca Nazarene University*