

Prioritizing Student Veterans in Tennessee



Addressing the Need to Effectively Serve Student Veterans

Tennessee's veteran education initiatives were designed around the following six strategies to increase veteran enrollment and success in higher education.



1. Support veterans transitioning into a career post-military and provide pathways to success for veterans seeking a degree or credential.



2. Create consistent processes for admission, enrollment, and prior learning assessment (PLA) for student veterans.



3. Grow the educational attainment rate for veterans in Tennessee.



4. Connect skilled and credentialed veterans with jobs in high-demand fields.



5. Recruit local policy champions and facilitate buy-in from campus faculty and staff to create change necessary to support student veterans.



6. Develop a suite of statewide policies to demonstrate multi-level commitment to veteran education attainment and employment.

Timeline of Tennessee's Veterans Education Initiatives

Veterans Education Transition Support (VETS) Act (Public Chapter 612) passed to establish in-state tuition for veterans and create the VETS Campus designation for public institutions that meet criteria.

Issues addressed:



The Veteran Reconnect Grant assisted campuses in developing and scaling resources for student veterans. The first round of the grant was followed by two more rounds to promote veteran educational attainment.

Issues addressed:



2014

2015

2016

2017

An **update to the VETS Act** (Public Chapter 219) updated in-state tuition to include dependents and required institutions to revise PLA policies for military education, training, and service.

Issues addressed:



Public Chapter 31 created a directive to further standardize and catalog PLA for veterans returning to college. PC 31 mandated the development of a groundbreaking web-based tool for veterans to better plan out getting academic credit for their military training.

Issues addressed:



Early Outcomes of Tennessee's Veterans Education Initiatives

Tennessee's veterans education initiatives are still relatively young, and long-term success will be built over time as more students enroll and current students begin to graduate. Students who enrolled using the resources and benefits created through the policy initiatives are mostly still enrolled and working toward a degree. Early outcomes, however, are pointing to long-term success for the initiatives. Through the state's veterans education initiatives, student veterans are playing a major role in Tennessee's pursuit of the educational attainment goals of the Drive to 55.

The Numbers

10,500+
veterans enroll in higher
education each year in
Tennessee

VETS Campus
institutions educate
8,000+ veterans
annually

40 orientation sessions
for student veterans
across TN

23 institutions revised
PLA policies for veterans

21 institutions
developed mentoring
and support programs

The Shift in Campus Culture

Campuses across Tennessee have developed a new level of understanding of the needs of student veterans. Faculty and administrators at dozens of higher education institutions have been trained in the needs of student veterans. Veteran resource centers are popping up at campuses across the state to meet the individual needs of students with military experience.

Middle Tennessee State University | Created Veteran Transition Manager position and opened Charlie and Hazel Daniels Veterans and Military Family Center.

Chattanooga State Community College | Developed a Veteran Support Center and hosts an annual campus recognition event for its student veterans.

Lipscomb University | Student Veterans Office hosts events for both student veterans and traditional students to create dialogue around campus support of military veterans and provided training to faculty and staff.

East Tennessee State University | Developed partnerships with local industry to support employment of graduating student veterans and uses data on its student veterans to provide academic support and interventions.

3 Takeaways of Tennessee's Veterans Education Initiatives



State coordination (legislation) and local action (campus practices) lead to long-term shifts and change.



To achieve continuous program innovation and meet emerging student needs, continually evaluate and update policies at the state level.



Study and adapt best practices happening in pockets across the state. Statewide success is informed by local successes.