1 *This chapter provides a historical overview of the relationship between the military and higher education.*

Student Veterans in Higher Education: A Conversation Six Decades in the Making

Shane Hammond

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To understand the experience of student veterans in the academy, one must use a historic lens to gain insight into the longstanding, complex relationship between the U.S. military and higher education. Such a lens can help educators recognize similarities and differences between veterans of past wars and service members today. This first chapter provides a historical overview of the relationship between the military and higher education, including its early origins and the educational benefits afforded to veterans through the original G.I. Bill and subsequent iterations following various military conflicts. The chapter continues with an exploration of the impacts of combat and ongoing conversations in higher education about student combat veterans and their perceived needs.

Early Citizen-Soldiers

Although America's first citizen-soldier regiments, now called the National Guard, were created in 1636 (Doubler & Listman, 2007), little history exists regarding the experience of student veterans in higher education prior to the U.S. Civil War. The relationship between the U.S. military and higher education began with what Abrams (1989) described as almost an "absence of mind," arising from an afterthought stipulation in the Morrill Land-Grant College Act of 1862 that colleges and universities financed under terms of the act must offer military training as part of the curriculum. Even though the main purpose of the Land-Grant Act was to promote agriculture and the mechanical arts (Thelin, 2004), the Civil War was under way, and Congressman Justin Morrill of Vermont saw the need for fostering military skills as the country continued to grow. The state of the country at that time allowed Morrill to persuade his colleagues to insert the stipulation with little debate (Abrams, 1989; Thelin, 2004).

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For the first half century following the enactment of the Morrill Act, the military training stipulation appears to have had little impact (Abrams, 1989). It was not until the country's entry into global competition and a provision in the National Defense Act (NDA) of 1916 and subsequent NDA of 1920 that a Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) in civilian colleges and universities was formalized (Abrams, 1989; Doubler & Listman, 2007; Thelin, 2004). The momentum of this program, however, was short-lived, as the United States entered the First World War, stifling the opportunity for growth. It was not until the enactment of the Servicemen's Readjustment Act (1944), following World War II, that the relationship between higher education and student veterans would eventually grow into a major phenomenon (Abrams, 1989), forever changing the landscape of higher education.

The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944

The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, historically known as the G.I. Bill, has been described as one of the most far-reaching events in the history of American higher education, given its influence on physical infrastructure, expanded admissions practices, and government investment in entitlement programs (Kiester, 1994). During the period in which the bill was enacted, the societal importance of academic work was emerging in light of the country's military efforts and a new focus on national concerns (Freeland, 1992). Described as being born out of fear of mass unemployment and social unrest after World War II, the G.I. Bill has gained an almost mythical status in the decades since its passing (Field, 2008). It has been often credited with promoting postwar prosperity, expanding the middle class, and democratizing higher education in the United States by making college a viable option for veterans from a diversity of backgrounds (Bound & Turner, 2002; Farrell, 2005; Stringer, 2007).

Title II of the G.I. Bill (P.L. 78–346, 58 Stat. 284m) aimed to provide support to veterans for education and vocational training through subsidized tuition and books as well as living expenses. Creators of the legislation sought to "replenish the nation's human capital" (Serow, 2004, p. 483) depleted by the decline in college enrollments during the war and the hundreds of thousands of combat deaths and disabilities (Bennett, 1996; Olson, 1974; Serow, 2004). One consequence of this legislation was to push out civilian women who had enrolled in college to open up capacity for the increased demand among male veterans (Altschuler & Blumin, 2009). Initial governmental projections of veterans enrolling in colleges and universities drastically underestimated actual enrollments (Olson, 1974). By the fall of 1945, 88,000 veterans had applied and been accepted for participation under the G.I. Bill (Bound & Turner, 2002; Olson, 1974). In total, over 2.2 million veterans, or one in every eight returning soldiers, attended college under the G.I. Bill (Olson, 1974). Subsequently, colleges and universities

experienced a doubling of enrollments. Prior to 1945, student enrollments across the system of higher education had been in decline because of the military draft (Bennett, 1996; Serow, 2004; Thelin, 2004).

Despite scholarly debate regarding the broader impact on the economy following its enactment, the G.I. Bill has been described as innovative at the federal level and as a visionary federal policy, similar to the Northwest Ordinance of 1789 and the Homestead and Morrill Acts of 1862. Each of these policies recognized that, for a nation to prosper, its individual citizens must also prosper (Hyman, 1986; Serow, 2004). Symbolically, the G.I. Bill has been widely accepted as an important moment for higher education, partly representing a transition from a period when college was reserved largely for the elites to an era of increased access and affordability in higher education (Bennett, 1996; Clark, 1998; Serow, 2004).

The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1952

The World War II G.I. Bill helped to shape future iterations of the original legislation, including The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1952, also known as Public Law 550 or, more commonly, the Korean War G.I. Bill (Olson, 1974; Steele, Salcedo, & Coley, 2010). Less than 1 month after the start of the Korean conflict, John Rankin, Chair of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, introduced legislation to extend benefits of the 1944 G.I. Bill to veterans of the Korean conflict (Bound & Turner, 2002; Olson, 1974). Two years later, the law was approved by overwhelming majority in the Senate and applied to those veterans who served between June 1950 and January 1955 (Olson, 1974).

Although certain provisions of the Korean War G.I. Bill paralleled the original G.I. Bill of 1944, there were distinct modifications to its education and training benefits (Cohen, Warner, & Segal, 1995; Olson, 1974; Teachman, 2005). There are several reasons for the differences between the Korean War G.I. Bill and the original G.I. Bill legislation. Olson (1974) said, "The prosperity and veteran contentment of the postwar years had frightened away the ghosts of the 1930s who had haunted those responsible for the 1944 G.I. Bill" (p. 106). Changed economic conditions had altered the underpinnings of the 1952 Act. No longer was there a fear of a widespread recession or social unrest with the return of Korean War veterans as there was at the time of the original G.I. Bill (Bennett, 1996; Bound & Turner, 2002; Olson, 1974; Serow, 2004). Congress called for a review of the G.I. Bill and other educational programs.

The House Select Committee to Investigate Educational Programs under the G.I. Bill, also known as the Teague Committee for its head Olin E. Teague, proved to be one of the most influential in all of the investigations and hearings surrounding the evaluation of the educational programs (Olson, 1974) and subsequent recommendations for revision to the original legislation.

In its final report (U.S. Cong., 2d sess., 1952), the Teague Committee sealed the fate of the educational benefits package in the Korean War G.I. Bill by suggesting the level of assistance provided in the original bill encouraged many veterans to go to school more for the subsistence payments rather than for a primary interest in education (Olson, 1974).

By 1958, there were approximately 400,000 veterans in higher education, representing just 15% of all students, at a time when college enrollment growth began to accelerate (Kim & Rury, 2007). Kim and Rury (2007, p. 306) said veterans had "ceased to be a factor in enrollments," laying the groundwork for further reduction in educational benefits in what would later become the Veterans' Readjustment Benefits Act of 1966.

The Veterans' Readjustment Benefits Act of 1966

On March 3, 1966, Congress passed the Veterans' Readjustment Act, also known as the Vietnam G.I. Bill (Olson, 1974; Steele et al., 2010). Funds from the G.I. Bill had been unavailable from 1955 to 1965, so for the first time, benefits of the G.I. Bill were awarded retroactively to veterans who had served during peacetime (MacLean, 2005). As written, the proposed legislation covered the Vietnam-era veteran whose service occurred after January 31, 1955, and, reflecting the conditions of society at the time, recommended even fewer benefits for veterans of the Vietnam conflict (Cohen et al., 1995; Olson, 1974; Teachman, 2005; Teachman & Call, 1996).

Unlike World War II and Korean War veterans, Vietnam-era veterans were at a disadvantage in obtaining higher education compared to their non-veteran counterparts (Teachman, 2005; Teachman & Call, 1996). The value of civilian education benefit programs expanded to make them on par or better than those associated with military service (Cohen et al., 1995; Teachman & Call, 1996). Consequently, while veterans of the Vietnam era obtained more education than veterans of World War II or Korea, they could not keep pace with the educational attainment of nonveterans, leading to an ultimate deficit in years of schooling for Vietnam veterans (Teachman, 2005; Teachman & Call, 1996). Cohen et al. (1995) speculate that lower pay during the Vietnam era would have also made obtaining an education difficult for returning soldiers, further widening the gap between the educational attainment of Vietnam veterans and their counterparts of World War II and Korea. It would be more than 10 years after the bill was signed before any further modifications to the G.I. Bill of 1966 would occur.

Veterans Educational Assistance Program of 1977 and the Montgomery G.I. Bill of 1984

Benefits under the Veterans' Readjustment Act of 1966 were discontinued in 1976 (Cohen et al., 1995; Gilroy, Phillips, & Blair, 1990). In 1977, the G.I. Bill was replaced by the Veterans' Educational Assistance Program (VEAP).

VEAP, yet again, offered fewer benefits to veterans than its predecessor. The imbalance in educational benefits and rising tuition costs outpaced the amount of benefits afforded to those relying solely on those benefits to finance their education, limiting access to colleges and universities for many veterans. It was not until 1981 that the U.S. Army supplemented VEAP benefits with the Army College Fund (Cohen et al., 1995). Nicknamed "Ultra VEAP," this supplement offered extra benefits up to $12,000 to selected personnel, but to qualify one had to be a high school graduate and score a 50 or above on the Armed Forces Qualification Test (Cohen et al., 1995). In 1984, Mississippi Congressman Gillespie Montgomery reintroduced an expanded G.I. Bill offering educational benefits to almost all active-duty service members (Stringer, 2007; U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2011).

Gaps in the Montgomery G.I. Bill did not account for the hundreds of thousands of National Guard and Reserve troops who would be deployed overseas during contemporary conflicts. Combat tours of duty lasting over a year left some military personnel with little or no educational benefits (Marklein, 2007; Steele et al., 2010; Stringer, 2007). Military forces serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) in Iraq and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in Afghanistan increasingly include a large percentage of activated National Guard and Reserve units from around the country (Rumann & Hamrick, 2010). Conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq have put the National Guard and Reserves, America's earliest citizen-soldiers, at risk of not completing their college education as planned. Therefore, the passage of the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008 could be considered a "just-in-time" overhaul of the G.I. Bill at a time when America and its citizen-soldiers needed it most. The provisions of the bill signal another sociopolitical shift, capturing the spirit of the original legislation as written by Congress in 1944.

The Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008

In 2005, Congress authorized the first update to the Montgomery G.I. Bill since 1984. Called the Reserve Educational Assistance Program (REAP) (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2010), this program ensured that Reservists called to active duty after September 11, 2001 receive Montgomery G.I. Bill benefits similar to those of other active-duty service members (Steele et al., 2010). Although the Montgomery Bill and REAP helped defray the cost of tuition and related expenses for student veterans, the benefit level was far from sufficient to cover full-time tuition and living expenses at some public institutions and most private universities (Yeung, Pint, & Williams, 2009).

The Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act was passed in 2008 (P. L. 110–252, H.R. 2642). This new law expanded benefits available to OEF and OIF veterans by paying tuition and fees on the student's behalf and providing a monthly living allowance and annual book stipend directly to

the student (Steele et al., 2010). Much like the original G.I. Bill, recipients of Post-9/11 benefits have their tuition and fees paid directly to the institution.

The enactment of the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008 marked an important renewal of America's commitment to U.S. service members and, in the spirit of the original bill, rewarded veterans for their "service and sacrifice" to the country (Serow, 2004; Steele et al., 2010). A year after the Post-9/11 Bill was enacted on August 1, 2009, more than 500,000 current and former service members had applied for benefits, and just over 300,000 had used their benefits to enroll in higher education (Steele et al., 2010). Two million returning service members from Iraq and Afghanistan are eligible for Post-9/11 G.I. Bill benefits (McBain, Kim, Cook, & Snead, 2012).

Student Veterans: Then and Now

Olson (1973) said, "When the G.I. Bill was made into law, no one in their wildest imagination anticipated veterans would attend college in such numbers" (p. 602). Student veterans were different than educators expected (Olson, 1973, 1974). Most faculty welcomed the changes that occurred on campus, but some were skeptical of the veterans and their opinion of education in the early years (Bennett, 1996; Olson, 1973, 1974). James B. Conant, President of Harvard University (1933–1953), found the G.I. Bill "distressing" because he believed it failed to distinguish between those who could be successful in college and those who might be least capable of success among the war generation (Olson, 1973, p. 33). However, despite their early fears of the impact of veterans on the academic community, the majority of faculty were impressed by the commitment and capacity of the veteran population (Bennett, 1996). Veterans were older, more mature, highly motivated, and tended to be better students than the general population (Bennett, 1996; Fredericksen & Schrader, 1951; Garmezy & Crose, 1948; Hadley, 1945; Kinzer, 1946; Kraines, 1945; McDonagh, 1947; Olson, 1974).

Student veterans represented a range of experiences and challenged the traditional practices of college training; thus colleges at the time braced to meet the needs of veterans with an appreciation for their future roles in society (McDonagh, 1947). In addition to changes in academic policy, curriculum, and admission practices, colleges were told to prepare for very real and unique differences between veterans and civilian students given the veterans' combat experiences (Hadley, 1945; Kraines, 1945; Ritchie, 1945; Toven, 1945). Kraines (1945) said, "The veteran who goes to college will present many problems quite different from those of the usual college student" (p. 290). Returning veterans were expected to manifest both physical and psychological symptoms of their combat experience (Hadley, 1945; Kinzer, 1946; Kraines, 1945; Olson, 1973).

The immediate and long-term impacts of war have been long-felt by our nation's veterans, including historical appearances of modern-day post

traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). During the American Civil War, a soldier's first experiences with the brutality of combat and war were described as "seeing the elephant" (Grossman, 2009). Later, during the First World War, this condition was described as "shell-shock." In every war of the twentieth century, the chances of becoming a psychiatric casualty for some period as a result of the stress of combat or military life were greater than the chances of being killed by enemy fire, and during World War II it was reported that more than 800,000 men were classified as unfit for military service due to psychiatric reasons (Grossman, 2009).

After the surge of World War II veterans into higher education subsided, veterans began disappearing from college campuses along with most of the special arrangements afforded to them. The composition of students at colleges in the early 1950s began to resemble closely their pre-war selves (Olson, 1973). Herrmann, Raybeck, and Roland (2008) noted after the first G.I. Bill the educational support from the government and the people for veterans continued a downward slide throughout the Korean and Vietnam Wars, in part due to the controversial nature of the wars themselves. Operation Desert Storm, which began in January 1991 and swiftly ended in February 1991, marked the beginning of the Gulf War Era, but prompted few changes to veterans' overall education benefits as a component of the Montgomery G.I. Bill (U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, 2011).

Current U.S. military operations require more intensive and prolonged use of military power than at any time since Vietnam (Hosek, Kavanagh, & Miller, 2006). Since October 2001, more than two million U.S. troops have been deployed for Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF) in Afghanistan and Iraq (Radford, 2009; Steele et al., 2010). Twenty-five percent of veterans separating from the military are expected to enroll in college within 2 years (Hughes, 2011). Not since the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 have colleges and universities across the country seen such dramatic increases in student veteran enrollments.

Similar to their counterparts from World War II, veterans from OEF and OIF enrolling in higher education tend to be more mature and motivated in their studies than the general student population (Ackerman, DiRamio, & Mitchell, 2008; Brown, 2009; Brown & Gross, 2011; Hammond, 2015; Herrmann et al., 2008; Mangan, 2009; Rumann & Hamrick, 2010). This heightened sense of maturity has led some combat veterans to be frustrated with their younger peers and often influence behavioral outbursts of student veterans in the classroom or at the university as a whole (Byman, 2007; Hammond, 2015; O'Herrin, 2011). However, more concerning was a perceived lack of campus support found by first-year combat veterans in comparison to nonveterans (National Survey of Student Engagement, 2010).

Common injuries to deployed OEF and OIF service members include physical injuries such as amputations and traumatic brain injury (TBI) and psychological "hidden" injuries such as post traumatic stress disorder

(PTSD) and depression. Unlike prior wars in U.S. history, combat veterans of current conflicts are surviving and returning to civilian life in unprecedented numbers (Tanielian & Jaycox, 2008). According to the Department of Defense, 85% of injured soldiers in the OEF and OIF conflicts survive their injuries because of improvements in body armor and modern medical evacuation systems. This has led to an increased number of troops returning from combat with PTSD, TBI, or both. These "invisible wounds" of modern warfare can take their toll on the strongest-willed student veterans and present potential obstacles to their success in college (Tanielian & Jaycox, 2008).

Students diagnosed with TBI or PTSD following combat are likely to present unique and unanticipated challenges for faculty, administrators, and staff, as well as themselves (Shackelford, 2009). Greene-Shortridge, Britt, and Castro (2007) found that although many soldiers experience psychological problems related to combat, there is a lag in those who actually seek help for the condition. PTSD, in particular, still carries a stigma that causes many combat soldiers to withhold information that may result in such a diagnosis (Hodge, 2010; Warner, Appenzeller, Mullen, Warner, & Grieger, 2008).

The veterans of OEF and OIF require unique educational and cultural adjustments in order to make a smooth transition from the military to a civilian college environment (Hammond, 2015; McBain, 2008; Rumann & Hamrick, 2010). The influence of the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill's increased benefits will likely have a comparable impact on higher education to the original G.I. Bill of 1944 (Simon, Negrusa, & Warner, 2009; Yeung, Pint, & Williams, 2009). Contemporary conflicts have awakened an important conversation for student veterans. This renewed conversation, stretching across six decades of history, once again calls upon colleges and universities to consider the distinct population student veterans represent in higher education. Further institutional research on this population will help academic leaders better understand the complex attributes of student veterans that have endured both the test of time and societal context.

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