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State Auditor

An Audit Report on

**Veterans' Services at Selected
Institutions of Higher Education
and Survey Results Related to
Veterans' Services at All Texas
Public Higher Education
Institutions**

September 2010
Report No. 11-004



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Overall Conclusion

The seven institutions of higher education (institutions) that auditors visited either fully or partially complied with statutory requirements related to students who are veterans or current military service members and their dependents (student veterans). Each also had in place several nationally recognized best practices to help make the institutions "veteran friendly."

However, auditors identified several areas in which the institutions should consider providing additional services and support to help student veterans maximize available state and federal educational benefits. These include:

- Sending targeted communications about financial assistance and resources available to student veterans prior to their arrival on campus.
- Enhancing their Web sites to ensure that they provide easily located and comprehensive information about the educational benefits available to student veterans, including a link to those resources on the Web site's home page.
- Offering student veterans one central location on campus where they can obtain information about both the federal and state education-related financial assistance available to student veterans.
- Establishing a veterans advisory committee that includes representation from all stakeholders.
- Offering early class registration to student veterans.

Additionally, auditors reviewed the Web sites of 20 Texas public institutions. While most of the Web sites contained information about the benefits and services available to student veterans, that information was not always comprehensive or easily located. For example, 11 of the 20 Web sites did not have a link to veteran-related information on their home pages, and many of the Web sites presented information about federal and state financial assistance in separate locations that were often difficult to locate and/or did not clearly identify the financial assistance offered by the State's Hazlewood Act.

Background Information

Texas has the second largest population of military service members and veterans in the nation and is projected to have 90,954 people transition out of military service through federal fiscal year 2015, according to the National Center for Veteran Analysis and Statistics.

Based on the results of a survey that auditors conducted, most higher education institutions expect the population of student veterans to grow. The 101 Texas public higher education institutions that responded to the survey auditors conducted reported that 42,312 veterans, current military service members, and their dependents were enrolled as students in the Fall 2009 semester. This is a 31 percent increase from the reported enrollment in Fall 2008.

An institution's Web site is typically the first resource used by current or prospective student veterans to access information on available benefits and resources. If these Web sites do not provide clear, direct access to information about all the benefits available to student veterans, eligible students may be unaware of the benefits and may not take advantage of the financial assistance available to them.

Auditors also conducted a survey of all 111 public two-year, four-year, and health-related institutions in Texas that were approved providers of veteran education programs by the Texas Veterans Commission. All four-year and health-related institutions and 85 percent of two-year institutions responded to the survey.

The 101 responding institutions reported an increase in the number of student veterans using federal and state benefits during the Fall 2009 semester, after the expansion of federal and state benefits became effective (see text box). The institutions also anticipated an increase in the number of military dependents receiving financial assistance through the State's Hazlewood Act, which exempts eligible recipients from tuition, dues, and selected fees.

Overall, the majority of responding institutions stated that they provide programs and services specifically designed for student veterans, offer some form of counseling services for student veterans, and are considering implementing "veteran-friendly" changes in the next five years.

Expansion of Federal and State Benefits

Expanded federal and state benefits became available to veterans, military service members, and their dependents in 2009. These include:

- The federal Post-9/11 GI Bill, which became effective August 1, 2009. New education benefits include:
 - ♦ Up to 100 percent tuition and fee coverage.
 - ♦ A monthly living (housing) stipend.
 - ♦ Up to \$1,000 a year for books and supplies.
 - ♦ A one-time relocation allowance.
 - ♦ The option to transfer benefits to family members.

The State's Hazlewood Act exemption provides education benefits to honorably discharged or separated Texas veterans. Eligible veterans who declare Texas as their home of record are exempt from the payment of all tuition, dues, and selected fees for up to 150 semester credit hours at Texas public higher education institutions. Senate Bill 93 (81st Legislature) expanded Hazlewood Act exemption benefits to include:

- Removal of certain residency restrictions.
- Extension of eligibility to spouses.
- The option for eligible veterans to assign their unused hours to their children.
- Allowing the use of state financial aid to pay tuition that is not covered by federal financial assistance for veterans.

Summary of Management's Response

The higher education institutions responding to the audit report agreed with the findings and recommendations in this report. The higher education institutions' management responses are presented immediately following each set of recommendations in the Detailed Results section of this report.

Summary of Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

The objectives of this audit were to determine whether selected institutions:

- Inform service members and veterans about education opportunities.
- Provide support while these individuals attend the institution.
- Have implemented other practices to assist these individuals.

The scope of this audit covered all functions related to student veterans who were enrolled in a Texas institution between September 1, 2007, and December 31, 2009. Auditors also reviewed the services that the institutions offered student veterans after December 31, 2009, to determine compliance with applicable state laws and rules.

The audit methodology included gaining an understanding of processes and controls related to the services offered to student veterans. This included collecting information and documentation, performing selected tests of credit awarded, analyzing the results of tests, and conducting interviews with staff at seven institutions that auditors visited. Those institutions were:

- Texas A&M University.
- Texas State University - San Marcos.
- Texas Tech University.
- University of Houston.
- University of North Texas.
- The University of Texas at El Paso.
- The University of Texas at San Antonio.

Auditors also surveyed all Texas public higher education institutions that were approved providers of veteran education programs by the Texas Veterans Commission about the services they offer student veterans, analyzed selected institutions' Web sites for student veteran-related information, and conducted focus groups with student veterans at the seven institutions visited.

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Detailed Results

Chapter 1

Institutions Generally Complied with Statutory Requirements Related to Student Veterans; However, the Institutions Should Provide Additional Services and Support to Student Veterans

Seven Institutions Visited

Auditors visited seven institutions to determine whether they informed student veterans about education opportunities, provided support while the student veteran attended the institution, and had implemented other practices to assist student veterans. Those institutions were:

- Texas A&M University.
- Texas State University - San Marcos.
- Texas Tech University.
- University of Houston.
- University of North Texas.
- The University of Texas at El Paso.
- The University of Texas at San Antonio.

The seven institutions of higher education (institutions) that auditors visited (see text box) had in place several nationally recognized best practices to help make the institutions “veteran-friendly.” However, auditors identified several areas in which the institutions should provide additional services and support to help students who are veterans/current military service members and their dependents (student veterans) maximize available state and federal educational benefits. These include:

- Sending targeted communications about financial assistance and resources available to student veterans prior to their arrival on campus.
- Enhancing their Web sites to ensure that they provide easily located and comprehensive information about the educational benefits available to student veterans, including a link to those resources on the Web site’s home page.
- Offering student veterans one central location on campus where they can obtain information on both federal and state education-related benefits available.
- Establishing a veterans advisory committee that includes representation from all stakeholders.
- Offering early class registration to student veterans.

In addition, all of the institutions visited either fully or partially complied with statutory requirements related to providing services to student veterans.

Chapter 1-A

Institutions Should Improve Their Communication with Student Veterans to Help the Students More Effectively Navigate and Maximize Federal and State Benefits and Available Resources

While many of the institutions visited offered a range of services to student veterans, the institutions’ efforts to communicate this information to student veterans varied. To better help student veterans navigate the benefits and resources available to them, the institutions should improve the student veterans’ access to information about the benefits and resources, enhance their

Web presence, and provide more timely communication about the locations and contact information for veteran benefits contacts.

Institutions should ensure that they provide sufficient, easily located information about federal and state financial assistance and support services available to student veterans.

Each of seven institutions that auditors visited had at least one staff member who was knowledgeable about federal and state financial assistance available to student veterans, as required by the Texas Education Code (see text box for information about veteran benefits contacts). While most institutions place the certifying official who is knowledgeable about federal financial assistance in the veteran services office, individuals knowledgeable about state financial assistance, such as the Hazlewood Act, are often located in other offices. During focus groups with auditors, student veterans noted that it was difficult to locate the offices or contact persons needed to obtain information on federal and state financial assistance. Not having a single individual or office that can advise student veterans about all the assistance available can make it more difficult for student veterans to gather information and gain an understanding about how to maximize their federal and state benefits. For example, student veterans in Texas who have not served enough time in the U.S. armed forces to qualify for full federal financial assistance may still be eligible to use the State's Hazlewood Act exemption to cover the remaining costs of tuition, dues, and selected fees.

Veteran Benefits Contact

Texas Education Code, Section 56.006, requires each institution as of January 1, 2010, to have at least one employee trained in (1) understanding state and federal student financial assistance programs specifically applicable to and available to student veterans and (2) assisting student veterans in understanding and obtaining those available benefits.

In addition, during focus groups with auditors, students at four of the seven institutions visited stated that they were not aware of either (1) the financial assistance provided by the Hazlewood Act, which exempts tuition, dues, and selected fees at Texas public institutions not only for eligible students who are veterans, but also for their dependents or (2) the fact that Hazlewood Act financial assistance may be used in conjunction with federal benefits. Student veterans at four of the seven institutions visited also indicated that it was difficult to obtain information about other support services available.

Institutions should improve their communication with student veterans by sending targeted information, such as letters and brochures, to students who self-identify as student veterans on the ApplyTexas Application, which is the common application used by most public institutions in Texas.¹

Of the seven institutions visited, only Texas State University - San Marcos sent targeted information during the application process to inform student veterans about the veterans services office on campus, federal and state benefits available, and contact information for support services. In addition to

¹ Effective July 2009, the ApplyTexas application began capturing veteran demographic data. Some institutions indicated they were capturing veteran-related information during their application process prior to it being identified in the ApplyTexas application.

printed letters and brochures, the institutions could use lower cost electronic methods to communicate to student veterans, such as e-mail. This targeted communication should minimally include information related to:

- The location of veteran services offices and contacts for federal and state educational benefits available to student veterans.
- The transition and health services available at the institution, such as tutoring and counseling.
- Local veteran resources and community services available for student veterans.
- Updates regarding changes to state and federal education benefits for student veterans.
- Institution procedures and contacts for submitting military transcripts for course credit consideration.
- Other student veteran-related news.

Institutions should develop a strong Web presence that provides comprehensive information about educational benefits available to their student veterans.

Auditors reviewed the Web sites of the 20 institutions in Texas (10 four-year institutions and 10 two-year institutions) with the highest number of student veterans. While most of the Web sites contained information about benefits and services available to student veterans, this information was often difficult to find, incomplete, and not clearly presented. For example, 11 (55 percent) of the 20 institutions did not have a direct link to veteran-related education benefits on their Web sites' home pages (see Appendix 3 for a list of the institutions' Web sites reviewed). Many of the Web sites also presented information about federal and state financial assistance in separate locations that were often difficult to locate and/or did not clearly identify the Hazlewood Act as a state benefit that offers an exemption from tuition, dues, and select fees. In addition, 10 (50 percent) of the 20 institutions' Web sites did not contain information regarding the support services available on campus or include links to direct student veterans to those services.

An institution's Web site is typically the first resource used by current or prospective student veterans to access information on available benefits and resources. According to nationally identified best practices² of "veteran friendly" schools, an institution's home page should provide easily accessible information on veteran-specific benefits and resources. For example, Texas A&M University's Web site had many of the elements of a veteran-friendly

² The information regarding best practices for an institution's website was obtained from the American Council on Education and the Education Advisory Board.

Web site (see Appendix 4 for screen shot of Texas A&M's Web site). These included:

- A separate veteran services page that serves as a portal for information on federal and state benefits and services available to student veterans.
- A link on the Web site's home page to the veteran services page (see Appendix 5 for more information and screen shots for El Paso Community College and Texas A&M University).
- Clear descriptions of state benefits, including the Hazlewood Act exemption.
- Clear information on and links to both institutional and local support services.
- Copies of or links to applications and other forms needed to apply for benefits.
- Information about veteran benefits contact(s) on campus.

In addition, several institutions' Web sites directed student veterans to the Higher Education Coordinating Board's College for All Texans Web site to obtain information about the Hazlewood Act exemption because the Higher Education Coordinating Board is the state agency that administers the Hazlewood program. However, the Higher Education Coordinating Board's College for All Texans Web site does not include a clearly identified link on its home page to information about state benefits for student veterans; instead, the link is presented on a drop-down menu under "Make a Plan." In addition, the Web page about the Hazlewood Act exemption requires users to scroll down through several sections to find information about the financial assistance offered by the Hazlewood Act.

If clear, direct access to information about education-related benefits available to student veterans is not available on the institutions' or the College for All Texans Web sites, eligible student veterans may be uninformed or unaware of the financial assistance offered by the State of Texas and therefore, might not take advantage of the benefits available to them.

Texas Higher Education Institutions Should Consider Additional Opportunities to Implement Nationally Recognized Best Practices for Creating Student Veteran-Friendly Institutions

Several national organizations³ have documented best practices of institutions that are veteran-friendly. On average, the institutions auditors visited had implemented 7 (64 percent) of 11 best practices that auditors judgmentally selected for testing. The best practices tested could be classified into two areas: (1) admissions and registration and (2) support services.

Admissions and Registration

The institutions visited had, on average, three of the five best practices tested related to admissions and registration. Specifically:

- Identifying student veterans during the application process. All institutions can now identify student veterans for those who self-identify on the ApplyTexas Application. However, not all institutions visited were utilizing that information to identify student veterans during the application process and directing targeted information about available resources to those students (see Chapter 1-A for additional details).
- Factoring military service into the admissions process. Five (71 percent) of 7 institutions visited do not factor military service into its admissions process. Only Texas A&M University and the University of North Texas consider military training and experience as an additional factor for consideration for admission.
- Offering early registration for student veterans. Six (86 percent) of the 7 institutions visited do not provide early registration for student veterans. Student veterans must maintain a full course load to receive their full federal benefits; therefore, having the option to register early would help to ensure student veterans' access to the courses needed in their degree programs. Early registration also is important to student veterans who are still on active or reserve duty because they typically have a deadline for completion of their degree plan. During focus groups with auditors, some student veterans stated that they had to change to a different degree plan because they could not get the classes they needed for their original degree programs.
- Deferring tuition for student veterans who do not receive federal financial assistance in a timely manner. All seven institutions visited had procedures for deferring tuition for student veterans who experience delays in receiving federal financial assistance. In addition, 86 (85 percent) of the

³ These organizations include the American Council on Education, Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges, Student Veterans of America, and the Education Advisory Board.

101 higher education institutions responding to the auditors' survey reported they provide tuition and fee deferment options for student veterans experiencing delays in registration due to the backlog in processing GI Bill claims (see Appendix 2 for survey results).

- Reducing or eliminating application fees for student veterans. Six (86 percent) of the 7 institutions visited do not reduce or eliminate application fees for student veterans. The University of Texas at El Paso does not require an application fee for any potential student unless the application is received after a priority deadline.

Support Services

The institutions visited had, on average, four of the six best practices tested related to support services. Having comprehensive support services can help student veterans make the transition to college life and may improve the success and retention rates of student veterans throughout their college career. Specifically:

- Offering veteran-specific orientation or content. Having a veteran-specific orientation can help ease the initial transition for student veterans to campus and facilitate their interaction with peers, faculty, and staff. Four (57 percent) of the 7 institutions visited had some form of veteran-specific orientation or content available to student veterans. For example, the University of Texas at San Antonio provides general information about the veterans services office at the institution during orientation, and the University of North Texas offers break-out sessions to student veterans regarding their education benefits as part of its orientation. Texas A&M University offered a separate veteran orientation in the Fall 2009 semester. Additionally, Texas State University - San Marcos offers a separate orientation and a seminar course with student veteran-specific content for both new and transfer student veterans.
- Having a veteran services office. All seven institutions visited had a designated office at which student veterans could obtain information about the services available to them; however, the veteran services office at the University of Texas at San Antonio is not easily accessible to disabled veteran students and is difficult to locate.
- Connecting veteran students to local veteran resources and community services. The veteran services offices at the institutions visited generally identified and compiled lists of local veteran resources and community services available to student veterans.
- Offering faculty and staff sensitivity training about the issues faced by student veterans. Only 1 (14 percent) of the 7 institutions visited offered this type of sensitivity training for all faculty and staff. Ensuring that faculty and staff complete sensitivity training on the issues faced by student veterans

was cited by the American Council on Education (ACE) as one of the best ways to create a supportive environment for student veterans. Texas State University - San Marcos began offering training to its faculty and staff in 2007 to raise awareness and understanding about the needs of student veterans for higher education institutions. This training was initially offered as an online course; however, in the fall of 2009, Texas State University - San Marcos developed and began offering the internally taught course Transitioning from Combat to Classroom: Helping Student Veterans Succeed at Texas State. In addition, Texas State University - San Marcos created a program to provide placards to offices on campus that had achieved “veteran-friendly” status. To receive a placard, a department must meet several criteria, including assigning a primary point of contact for student veterans, having at least 25 percent of its staff complete the sensitivity training offered, and agreeing to utilize and provide a list of key offices at the institution that offer student veterans assistance and resources.

- Connecting student veterans to transition and health services. All seven institutions visited had some form of general transition and health services available to all students. For example, all of the institutions visited had general counseling services and tutorial assistance available to all students.
- Having a student organization on campus for student veterans. Six (86 percent) of the 7 institutions visited had a student organization on campus for student veterans. The University of Texas at El Paso did not have a student organization for student veterans.

Table 1 lists the best practices implemented at each institution visited.

Table 1

Veteran-friendly Best Practices Implemented at the Seven Institutions that Auditors Visited									
As of June 2010									
Best Practice	Texas A&M University	Texas State University-San Marcos	Texas Tech University	University of Houston	The University of North Texas	The University of Texas at El Paso	The University of Texas at San Antonio	Percentage That Implemented Best Practice	Percentage That Had Not Implemented Best Practice
Admissions and Registration									
Reduction or elimination of application fees for student veterans	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	14%	86%
Military service factored into admissions process	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	29%	71%
Student veterans are identified in the application process	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	100%	0%

Veteran-friendly Best Practices Implemented at the Seven Institutions that Auditors Visited

As of June 2010

Best Practice	Texas A&M University	Texas State University-San Marcos	Texas Tech University	University of Houston	The University of North Texas	The University of Texas at El Paso	The University of Texas at San Antonio	Percentage That Implemented Best Practice	Percentage That Had Not Implemented Best Practice
Tuition deferments for student veterans who do not receive federal financial assistance timely	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	100%	0%
Advance registration for student veterans	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	14%	86%
Support Services									
Connection to local veteran resources and community services	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	100%	0%
Veteran-specific orientation or content	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	57%	43%
Sensitivity training for faculty and staff	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	14%	86%
Transition and health services	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	100%	0%
Student veterans organization	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	86%	14%
Veteran services office	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	100%	0%
Totals -Yes	8	8	6	7	8	6	7		
Totals - No	3	3	5	4	3	5	4		

Veterans Advisory Committee

Four of the seven institutions visited had standing veterans advisory committees; however, not all included representation from all stakeholders related to student veterans. Two of the seven institutions visited had a veterans advisory committee that included representation from all stakeholders. These two were Texas State University - San Marcos and Texas A&M University. Texas A&M University's committee also includes representation from local community resource offices offering veteran support services. According to ACE, institutions can make a big impact on addressing student veterans' issues with limited resources by establishing a diverse veterans advisory committee. Ideally, the committee should (1) meet more than once per semester; (2) have members representing key offices, such as veteran services office, admission and registration, financial aid, academic affairs, counseling, and disability services; and (3) include a faculty and a student veteran representative.

Awarding Credit for Military Training and Experience

Feedback received from student veterans during focus groups, as well as issues raised in a national forum by ACE in May 2010⁴, indicate that there is a gap between the training and experience that student veterans anticipate will be accepted as credit and what institutions actually accept as credit for military training and experience. Each institution's admissions office generally conducts the initial screening of a student veteran's application and military transcript, and the academic departments make the final determination about what credits will be awarded.

The student veteran's military transcript includes credit recommendations from ACE (see text box); however, not all of the admissions offices at the institutions visited provided those recommendations to the department advisors for consideration. For example, Texas State University - San Marcos provides only the military transcript course title to the department without the associated course detail. In addition, a vice president at one institution stated that some college advisors or deans responsible for evaluating military credit and experience question the academic rigor of the classes provided by the military and suggested that this may be related to faculty not participating in and understanding the ACE review process.

American Council on Education Credit Recommendations

The American Council on Education (ACE) has teams of teaching faculty that travel to military installations to evaluate military academic courses, vocational and leadership training programs, and experience. ACE then publishes recommendations for credit that should be awarded in *A Transfer Guide: Understanding Your Military Transcript and ACE Credit Recommendations*, which is made available to all academic institutions.

The awarding of eligible military credits toward core degree requirements, whenever appropriate, is important to student veterans to ensure that they complete their degrees before they exhaust financial assistance benefits.

Chapter 1-C

All Institutions Visited Had Policies and Procedures That Fully or Partially Addressed Statutory Requirements Related to Student Veterans

Overall, the seven institutions visited had policies and procedures in place that either fully or partially addressed statutory requirements related to student veterans. However, the University of Houston did not consistently document that it had considered military training for degree course credit as required by Texas Education Code, Section 51.3041. Six of 30 student veterans' files selected for testing at the University of Houston had submitted military

⁴ The American Council on Education (ACE) hosted a national three-day online virtual forum on May 3-6, 2010, for nearly 3,000 participants, including student veterans, campus leaders, nonprofit organization and government agencies, to discuss the challenges and opportunities facing veterans in higher education. A summary of the event was released by ACE on July 8, 2010.

transcripts for consideration. In 4 (67 percent) of the 6 transcripts, there was no evidence in the institution’s system that showed the institution had evaluated the military transcripts and considered awarding credit.

Texas Tech University’s and the University of Houston’s policies and procedures partially complied with statutory requirements in other areas. Specifically, Texas Tech University’s policy for degree programs that require physical education credits restricted the number of military credit hours that would be accepted. Texas Tech University amended its policy at the end of June 2010 so that credit would be awarded for all physical education courses after auditors completed site visit fieldwork in May 2010. The University of Houston’s policies and procedures related to withdrawals due to deployment addressed only student veterans who are in the reserves of a branch of the U.S. armed forces, and they did not include all military service members as required by Texas Education Code, Section 54.006.

Table 2 lists the implementation status of policies and procedures addressing statutory requirements related to student veterans at the seven institutions visited.

Table 2

Implementation Status of Policies and Procedures Addressing Statutory Requirements at the Seven Institutions Visited										
Statutory Requirement	Texas A&M University	Texas State University - San Marcos	Texas Tech University	University of Houston	The University of North Texas	The University of Texas at El Paso	The University of Texas at San Antonio	Implementation Status		
								Full	Partial	Not
Award credit for all physical education courses for degree and up to 12 electives outside major or minor for military services.	●	●	⊙ ^a	●	●	●	●	6	1	0
Consider military training for degree course credit.	●	●	●	⊙	●	●	●	6	1	0
Refund tuition and fees, or award incomplete or final grade for withdrawal due to deployment.	●	●	●	⊙	●	●	●	6	1	0
Excuse from required exams and up to 25 percent of total classes for withdrawal due to deployment.	●	●	●	⊙	●	●	●	6	1	0
Readmit students performing active military service.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	7	0	0
Note: ● = Fully Implemented; ⊙ = Partially Implemented; ○ = Not Implemented										
^a Texas Tech University, subsequent to the auditors’ completion of fieldwork in May 2010, updated its online and print catalog to comply with the statutory requirements for awarding physical education credits.										

Recommendations

The seven Texas public higher education institutions should review their current processes, Web sites, and other practices to identify additional opportunities to improve their services to student veterans. These could include:

- Improving the timeliness of and access to information on the resources and services available to student veterans.
- Using student veteran enrollment data to send targeted communications to student veterans during the application process, including mailings, messages on listservs, and messages sent using other methods of electronic communications.
- Providing a central location or a single point of contact for student veterans to obtain information related to state and federal education benefits.
- Enhancing the content and improving the accessibility of veteran-specific information on institution Web sites. These improvements should include:
 - ♦ A separate veteran services page that serves as a portal for information on federal and state benefits and services available to student veterans.
 - ♦ A link on the institution's home page to the veteran services page.
 - ♦ Clear descriptions of state benefits, including the Hazlewood Act exemption.
 - ♦ Clear information on and links to both institutional and local support services.
 - ♦ Copies of or links to applications and other forms needed to apply for benefits.
 - ♦ Information about veteran benefits contact(s) on campus.
- Considering the implementation of additional veteran-friendly best practices. This could include, but is not limited to:
 - ♦ Offering early registration to student veterans to help those students be able to register for a full course load in their degree plan.
 - ♦ Implementing orientations designed specifically for student veterans.
 - ♦ Offering sensitivity training related to the issues faced by student veterans for all faculty and staff members.

- ♦ Ensuring that appropriate consideration is given to ACE credit recommendations by:
 - Reviewing admissions office and academic department procedures for evaluating credit for military training and experience and determining whether they appropriately consider credit recommendations from the ACE’s guide for the evaluation of military transcripts.
 - Encouraging faculty participation on an ACE team that evaluates military courses to increase faculty understanding of the rigor of the ACE evaluation process.
 - Seeking opportunities for faculty and staff responsible for the evaluation of military transcripts to participate in training offered by the ACE and/or the Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges.⁵
- Establishing veteran advisory committees to track and monitor student veterans issues and initiatives. The committee should include representation from all relevant stakeholders, including representatives from admissions/registration, support services, and veteran services office, as well as a student veteran and faculty representative.

In addition, the University of Houston should:

- Consistently follow its internal procedures to maintain documentation to demonstrate that it has considered military training for degree course credit as required by Texas Education Code, Section 51.3041.
- Ensure that its withdrawal policies for deployment include all military service members as required by Texas Education Code, Section 54.006 (f).

In addition, the University of Texas at San Antonio should make reasonable accommodations to provide disabled student veterans access to the veteran services office.

Management’s Response from the Texas A&M University

Texas A&M University has a rich history of support for the military and veterans and continues to value the contributions they make to the state and nation. Supporting veterans who enroll at Texas A&M University remains a

⁵ All seven institutions visited were members of the Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (SOC), which was created in 1972 to provide educational opportunities to service members. Higher education institutions that join the SOC pledge to be military-friendly and design policies and practices in the areas of student services, admissions, and marketing that provide easy access to accurate information about the institution and its degree programs, policies, and procedures.

priority of the institution, as noted by our compliance with existing statutory requirements and the implementation of numerous best practices.

We will continue to seek out and implement best practices that serve the needs of the veteran population at Texas A&M University, including assessment of the best practices identified in the report. To this end, since the audit period was concluded, we have increased our communications with students through veteran-specific programming at our New Student Conferences and conducted veteran sensitivity training with faculty and staff advisors through the University Advisors and Counselors organization – a noted best practice. We will continue to reach out and support veterans.

Management's Response from the Texas State University - San Marcos

The State of Texas State Auditor's Office recently conducted a review of Texas State University's Veterans' Services. The finding resulted in the development of eleven "Veteran-Friendly Best Practices" that were examined during their examination of seven institutions of higher learning. The following is our management's response on how Texas State University is working to improve our Veterans' Services as we work to put in place the best practices identified by the State Auditor's Office.

Texas State University prides itself in providing an unsurpassed educational opportunity of our student veteran population. We are pleased to see the findings by the State Auditor's Office points out our inherent strengths showing that we have implemented and are practicing eight (8) of the eleven (11) identified "Veteran-Friendly Best Practices". We continuously review how we might better meet the unique requirements of our applying veterans. We realize the decision of which university may be the best fit for them is likely to be made while deployed. It is our intent to make access to Texas State University simple and easy to accommodate the veterans applying regardless of their location and circumstance.

Management's Response from the Texas Tech University

Recommendation I

Improving the timeliness of and access to information on the resources and services available to student veterans.

Response to Recommendation I

Texas Tech University agrees with this recommendation. Currently, the Veterans Affairs Office at Texas Tech University facilitates processing for students that self-identify as a veteran during the admissions process. The contact during the early period of application and admission helps improve

the timeliness of providing veterans benefit resources. The Military and Veterans Programs Office (MVP) was created as of June 1, 2010, as a one-stop resource to provide student veterans with a single point of contact in a single location. We believe this will improve veteran student access to information.

Recommendation II

Using student veteran enrollment data to send targeted communications to student veterans during the application process, including mailings, messages on listservs, and messages sent using other methods of electronic communications.²

Response to Recommendation II

Texas Tech University agrees with this recommendation and a communication plan is being implemented to identify student veterans during the admission process. Targeted communications will be sent to encourage early interaction with the MVP office. For example, Texas Tech participates in the Servicemembers Opportunity College Concurrent Application program with an email and follow-up mail contact to establish targeted communications with future student veterans. Currently enrolled student veterans are contacted via email, paper mail, university daily announcements and social media sites such as Facebook. Veteran flags on the Texas Common Application will allow the MVP office to initiate early contact with prospective veteran students. A veteran student survey is in the final stages of development to help assess current veterans' needs. The MVP Coordinator is responsible for additional development and implementation of the communication plan which should be complete by December 1, 2010.

Recommendation III

Providing a central location or a single point of contact for student veterans to obtain information related to state and federal education benefits.

Response to Recommendation III

Texas Tech University agrees with this recommendation and is dedicated to ensuring student veteran success in post-secondary education. Effective September 1, 2010, the VA Compliance and Benefits office, which already provided information related to state and federal educational benefits, was merged into the newly created Military and Veterans Program Office (MVP). In addition to providing benefit, and certification information, the MVP Center will focus on transition, retention and graduation initiatives, and the recruiting and outreach of veterans and their families thus providing a one-stop shop for veterans and their families.

Recommendation IV

Enhancing the content and improving the accessibility of veteran-specific information on institution websites. These improvements should include:

- *A separate veteran services page that serves as a portal for information on federal and state benefits and services available to student veterans.*
- *A link on the institution's home page to the veteran services page.*
- *Clear descriptions of state benefits, including the Hazlewood Act exemption.*
- *Clear information on and links to both institutional and local support services.*
- *Copies of or links to applications and other forms needed to apply for benefits.*
- *Information about veteran benefits contact(s) on campus.*

Response to Recommendation IV

Texas Tech University agrees with this recommendation. The MVP staff is in the process of implementing this recommendation. High on the agenda is to combine the current Texas Tech websites that provide information for veterans so that students will be directed to a one-stop shop online and single portal, www.mvp.ttu.edu. This website will continue to include information on federal and state benefits and services, contact information for establishment of these benefits, as well as clear descriptions and links concerning state benefits, including the Hazlewood Act. The website contains links to a variety of veteran-specific information on institutional and local support services, veteran mentoring, faculty resources and other services. Improved of accessibility of veteran specific information is also an immediate goal. Links from the Admissions website to the MVP site will be available. The MVP Coordinator is responsible for the initiative to improve veteran information on Texas Tech websites to be complete by December 1, 2010.

Recommendation V

Considering the implementation of additional veteran-friendly best practices. This could include, but is not limited to:

- *Offering early registration to student veterans to help those students be able to register for a full course load in their degree plan.*
- *Implementing orientations designed specifically for student veterans.*

- *Offering sensitivity training related to the issues faced by student veterans for all faculty and staff members.*
- *Ensuring that appropriate consideration is given to the American Council on Education (ACE) credit recommendations by:*
 - ♦ *Reviewing admissions office and academic department procedures for evaluating credit for military training and experience and determine whether they appropriately consider credit recommendations from ACE's guide for the evaluation of military transcripts.*
 - ♦ *Encouraging faculty participation on an ACE team that evaluates military courses to increase faculty understanding of the rigor of the American Council on Education evaluation process.*
 - ♦ *Seeking opportunities for faculty and staff responsible for the evaluation of military transcripts to participate in training offered by the American Council on Education and/or the Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges.*
- *Establishing veteran advisory committees to track and monitor student veterans issues and initiatives. The committee should include representation from all relevant stakeholders, including representatives from admissions/registration, support services, veteran services office, as well as a student veteran and faculty representative.*

Response to Recommendation V

Texas Tech University agrees with the recommendation and plans to implement additional veteran-friendly best practices by reviewing the new student orientation processes and implementing procedures to assist student veterans.

One initiative recently implemented identifies military and veteran students with a special emblem on University ID cards. Local businesses can offer discounts to veterans with the special emblem. Linking student veterans with community resources for veterans in the Lubbock area fosters outreach and engagement. Support for families and returning veterans is also a top priority with certain MVP staff members already certified to conduct Operation Resilient Families sessions through partnership with the National Alliance on Mental Illness of Texas. These MVP initiatives tie into the university's strategic plan to enhance access, attract, retain and graduate a diverse student population.

Texas Tech will seek sensitivity training related to the issues faced by student veterans for faculty and staff. Procedures for evaluating military training and experience continue to be under review to ensure that appropriate ACE credit

recommendation is considered. Faculty will be encouraged to participate on an ACE team that evaluates military courses in order to help facilitate understanding of the rigor of the ACE evaluation process.

Texas Tech University and the friendly Lubbock area traditionally support the military and veteran population. New partnerships will continue to be developed between existing campus and community programs. The Texas Tech MVP office is a key partner in the newly created Lubbock-area Veterans Resource Coordination Group, a holistic initiative by the local community to serve veteran needs.

Texas Tech University already has a Health and Mental Health Focus Group comprised of campus officials in health/mental health, and veteran offices and the Lubbock community. The MVP office is in the final stages of creating a veteran-advisory committee which will track and monitor student veteran issues and initiatives.

Creating an environment that is rich in information and resources is the focus of Texas Tech University and the Military and Veterans Programs office. We will strive to successfully assist student veterans in the admissions and orientation process, registering for courses each term, persistence and retention measures and ultimately receiving a degree at Texas Tech University. Our vision is to make Texas Tech the university of choice in Texas and the southwest region for military and veteran students.

The MVP Assistant Director is responsible for implementing these recommendations, which should be complete by June 1, 2011.

Management's Response from the University of Houston

The University of Houston will review our current processes, websites, and other practices to identify additional opportunities to improve our services to student veterans. A written policy will be developed for consideration of military training for degree course credit. The current withdrawal policy for military deployment will be modified to include all military service members.

Title of person responsible for implementing corrective action: Registrar

Planned completion date: December 1, 2010

Management's Response from The University of North Texas

UNT is pleased that most of the best practices reported herein either already exist at UNT or are being evaluated or implemented. UNT is grateful for such a report that broadly shares these best practices.

Management's Response from The University of Texas at El Paso

Recommendations

The seven Texas public higher education institutions should review their current processes, Web sites, and other practices to identify additional opportunities to improve their services to student veterans. These could include:

- Improving the timeliness of and access to information on the resources and services available to student veterans.
 - **Management's Response from the University of Texas at El Paso:** UTEP has created a one-stop-shop "Military Services" for veterans needs. UTEP has applied for a federal grant to integrate other Student Affairs related services into Military Services current location.
- Using student veteran enrollment data to send targeted communications to student veterans during the application process, including mailings, messages on listservs, and messages sent using other methods of electronic communications.
 - **Management's Response from the University of Texas at El Paso:** The Military Services Office is working with the Office of Admissions to develop a specific web portal, via Hobsons EMT product, to communicate information directly to military students.
- Providing a central location or a single point of contact for student veterans to obtain information related to state and federal education benefits.
 - **Management's Response from the University of Texas at El Paso:** UTEP has created a one-stop-shop "Military Services" for veterans needs. UTEP has applied for a federal grant to integrate other Student Affairs related services into Military Services current location.
- Enhancing the content and improving the accessibility of veteran-specific information on institution Web sites. These improvements should include:
 - ♦ A separate veteran services page that serves as a portal for information on federal and state benefits and services available to student veterans.
 - **Management's Response from the University of Texas at El Paso:** UTEP has a web page for student veterans that provide information on federal and state benefits and services available. UTEP has applied for a federal grant to integrate other Student Affairs related

services into Military Services current location. The web page is being updated with links for campus services.

- ♦ *A link on the institution's home page to the veteran services page.*
 - ***Management's Response from the University of Texas at El Paso:***
Military Services is working with IT to create a link to the main Military Services homepage.
- ♦ *Clear descriptions of state benefits, including the Hazlewood Act exemption.*
 - ***Management's Response from the University of Texas at El Paso:***
The Military Services web page is being updated to reflect the changes to the Hazlewood Act and to expand the information on other state benefits.
- ♦ *Clear information on and links to both institutional and local support services.*
 - ***Management's Response from the University of Texas at El Paso:***
The Military Services web page includes links and addresses for national, state, and local support services. The web page is being updated with links for campus services.
- ♦ *Copies of or links to applications and other forms needed to apply for benefits.*
 - ***Management's Response from the University of Texas at El Paso:***
The Military Services web page includes links and addresses for applications and other forms needed to apply for benefits.
- ♦ *Information about veteran benefits contact(s) on campus.*
 - ***Management's Response from the University of Texas at El Paso:***
UTEP currently facilitates this through the Military Services office.
- *Considering the implementation of additional veteran-friendly best practices. This could include, but is not limited to:*
 - ♦ *Offering early registration to student veterans to help those students be able to register for a full course load in their degree plan.*
 - ***Management's Response from the University of Texas at El Paso:***
UTEP will have this in place by October 24, 2010 for Spring 2011 registration.

- ♦ Implementing orientations designed specifically for student veterans.
 - **Management's Response from the University of Texas at El Paso:** UTEP's Military Services office is working with the Orientation Office to being to offer a veterans specific orientation program for the fall of 2011 class.
- ♦ Offering sensitivity training related to the issues faced by student veterans for all faculty and staff members.
 - **Management's Response from the University of Texas at El Paso:** UTEP's Military Services office is looking into how it might be able to facilitate this training with its Counseling Center. UTEP has applied for a federal grant to integrate other Student Affairs related services into Military Services current location.
- ♦ Ensuring that appropriate consideration is given to the American Council on Education (ACE) credit recommendations by:
 - Reviewing admissions office and academic department procedures for evaluating credit for military training and experience and determine whether they appropriately consider credit recommendations from ACE's guide for the evaluation of military transcripts.
 - **Management's Response from the University of Texas at El Paso:** The Admissions office adheres to the ACE credit recommendations when evaluating all military transcripts. Staff evaluating credits received ACE training at least once a year to ensure that best practices are updated and followed.
 - Encouraging faculty participation on an ACE team that evaluates military courses to increase faculty understanding of the rigor of the American Council on Education evaluation process.
 - **Management's Response from the University of Texas at El Paso:** UTEP Faculty participated in the below training hosted by UTEP entitled "An Evaluator's Primer: The Evaluation of Learning Acquired and Awarding of Credit for Military Training and Experience" which focused on the evaluation of military courses and occupational specialties.
 - Seeking opportunities for faculty and staff responsible for the evaluation of military transcripts to participate in training offered by the American Council on Education and/or the Service members Opportunity Colleges.

➤ **Management’s Response from the University of Texas at El Paso:** UTEP hosted an ACE training session in December of 2009. The session entitled “An Evaluator’s Primer: The Evaluation of Learning Acquired and Awarding of Credit for Military Training and Experience” focused on the evaluation of military courses and occupational specialties and discussed the following topics in detail:

- provide an overview of the American Council on Education (ACE);
- clarify the review process and quality measures used in determining credit recommendations;
- increase the awareness, use, and benefit of the transcript services;
- give an overview of how military transcripts are created and how to breakdown the credit recommendation areas of the transcript; and
- provide an overview of resources available to the higher education community.

UTEP and El Paso Community College faculty and staff were invited to participate with approximately 60 persons in attendance. UTEP will host ACE training sessions at least every two years.

♦ *Establishing veteran advisory committees to track and monitor student veterans issues and initiatives. The committee should include representation from all relevant stakeholders, including representatives from admissions/registration, support services, veteran services office, as well as a student veteran and faculty representative.*

➤ **Management’s Response from the University of Texas at El Paso:** UTEP has established a committee that meets weekly to discuss issues related to veterans and all military service personnel. The offices involved in this weekly meeting are admission, financial aid, registration, advising, student testing and assessment, orientation, and student affairs.

Management’s Response from the University of Texas at San Antonio

We agree with the recommendation made by the SAO to make reasonable accommodations to provide disabled student veterans access to the Veterans Certification Office at the University of Texas at San Antonio.

Due to the limited space at the university and limited funding, the Registrar's Office consulted with the Director for Space Utilization to request advice on space availability on campus. Adjacent space to the current office has been secured, the renovation cost estimate has been determined, and funding has been approved.

Construction will begin in the near future that will expand the current floor plan by an additional 600 sq. ft., thereby doubling the existing space. The office will include a sliding glass door to accommodate our veterans with wheel chairs and prosthetic legs. Included in the refurnished office is a Wall Trax with computer and monitor for the veterans to have access to the Internet. We plan on having recessed level cubicles at the front counter to accommodate wheel chairs. Our intention is to provide advisors working space to be available for veterans to discuss their degree plans. This space would also be available for the Texas Veterans Commission auditor and other visiting support staff.

Responsible Person: Assistant Vice President and University Registrar

Implementation Date: November 30, 2010

Management's Response from the Higher Education Coordinating Board

Thank you for bringing to our attention the difficulty veterans expressed in accessing benefit information through the Coordinating Board website. It is certainly our intent to make this information readily available to the service members and their families.

I am pleased to advise you that this has been addressed. The opening screens for both our main website, www.THECB.state.tx.us and the www.CollegeforAllTexans.com website have direct links to information for the military and their families.

We sincerely hope these links will enable military families to easily acquire information and take advantage of the state's programs to help them participate in higher education.

Survey Results for Higher Education Institutions

Breakdown of Survey Respondents

Auditors received survey responses from 101 institutions, which was 91 percent of all institutions surveyed. Specifically, auditors received responses from:

- Public four-year institutions - 35 respondents (100 percent).
- Public health-related institutions - 8 respondents (100 percent).
- Public two-year institutions - 58 respondents (85 percent).

Auditors surveyed all 111 public two-year, four-year, and health-related institutions in Texas that were approved providers of veteran education programs by the Texas Veterans Commission (see Appendix 9 for a list of approved providers). All four-year and health-related institutions that had students enrolled during the scope of the audit⁶ and 85 percent of two-year institutions responded to the survey (see text box for a breakdown of survey respondents and Appendix 10 for a list of institutions that did not respond to the survey).

The responding institutions reported an increase in the number of student veterans using federal and state benefits during the Fall 2009 semester, after the expansion of federal and state benefits became effective. The institutions also anticipate an increase in the number of military dependents using state Hazlewood benefits. (See Appendix 2 for aggregate survey totals for all survey respondents)

Overall, the majority of institutions responding stated that they provide programs and services specifically designed for student veterans, offer some form of counseling services for their student veterans, and are considering implementing “veteran-friendly” changes in the next five years. The auditors’ survey was based on a national survey published in July 2009 by ACE, *From Soldier to Student: Easing the Transition of Service Members on Campus*. Overall, Texas institutions reported that they offered more programs and services, including counseling services, to student veterans than respondents to the national survey. Results of the auditors’ survey are summarized below.

Student veteran enrollment increased significantly from Fall 2008 to Fall 2009 at Texas institutions.

The 101 institutions responding to the auditors’ survey reported that 42,312 student veterans receiving federal and/or state military-related benefits were enrolled during the Fall 2009 semester. This was a 31 percent increase from reported student veteran enrollment at the institutions during the Fall 2008 semester (see Table 3 on the next page).

⁶ Two four-year institutions did not complete the survey because they did not have students enrolled during the scope of this audit.

Table 3

Student Veteran Enrollment Fall 2008 and Fall 2009 Semesters			
Type of Student Veteran	Fall 2008 Enrollment	Fall 2009 Enrollment	Percent Increase
Veterans	21,622	29,706	37%
Active Military Service Members	6,002	6,645	11%
Dependents	4,683	5,961	27%
Totals	32,307	42,312	31%

Source: Unaudited information self-reported by the institutions on the auditors' survey.

Of the institutions responding to the auditors' survey, Central Texas College reported having the largest number of student veterans enrolled during the Fall 2009 semester. In addition, 8 (53 percent) of 15 institutions with the largest reported student veteran enrollment were public two-year institutions. Table 4 lists the 15 institutions with the largest reported enrollments of student veterans during the Fall 2009 semester.

Table 4

The 15 Institutions with the Largest Reported Student Veteran Enrollments ^a Fall 2009 Semester				
Institution	Students Who Are Active Service Members	Students Who Are Former Service Members	Military-related Dependents	Total Student Veteran Enrollment
Central Texas College - Main Campus ^b	3,019	3,981	601	7,601
Austin Community College ^b	125	1,400	300	1,825
Houston Community College System ^b	10	1,656	107	1,773
El Paso Community College ^b	173	1,221	242	1,636
San Antonio College ^b	436	1,000	179	1,615
The University of Texas at San Antonio	71	1,301	231	1,603
St. Philip's College ^b	363	883	137	1,383
Texas State University - San Marcos	95	865	190	1,150
University of North Texas	91	845	153	1,089
The University of Texas at Arlington	70	842	77	989
The University of Texas at El Paso	136	483	183	802
Northwest Vista College ^b	35	619	148	802

The 15 Institutions with the Largest Reported Student Veteran Enrollments ^a				
Fall 2009 Semester				
Institution	Students Who Are Active Service Members	Students Who Are Former Service Members	Military-related Dependents	Total Student Veteran Enrollment
Collin County Community College ^b	59	637	101	797
University of Houston	18	730	46	794
Texas A&M University	67	465	260	792

^a The enrollment totals in this table were self-reported by the institutions responding to the auditors' survey and have not been audited. Institutions that did not respond to the survey are not listed in this table (see Appendix 10 for a list of non-responding institutions).

^b This is a two-year institution.

Institutions anticipate that they will see an increase in the number of students receiving state Hazlewood benefits.

Nearly all of the institutions responding to the auditors' survey stated they had students enrolled who were receiving state Hazlewood benefits. In total, the institutions reported that 10,518 student veterans were receiving Hazlewood benefits in the first half of 2010. In addition, more than 89 percent of the responding institutions said they anticipate that they will see an increase in the number of students receiving state Hazlewood benefits. Among the contributing factors to the increases in student veteran enrollment are the following:

- Sixty percent of the responding institutions attributed the increase to the new Hazlewood Legacy Act's extension of education benefits to dependents of veterans.
- Twenty-six percent of responding institutions attributed the increase to a change in the Hazlewood Act to allow eligible student veterans to use federal benefits concurrently with Hazlewood Act benefits. For example, an eligible student veteran who does not qualify for full federal benefits can have his or her state benefit pay for the uncovered portion of tuition, dues, and select fees.

Of the institutions responding to the auditors' survey, Texas State University - San Marcos reported having the largest number of students who were receiving Hazlewood benefits as of July 2010 (see Table 5 on the next page).

Table 5

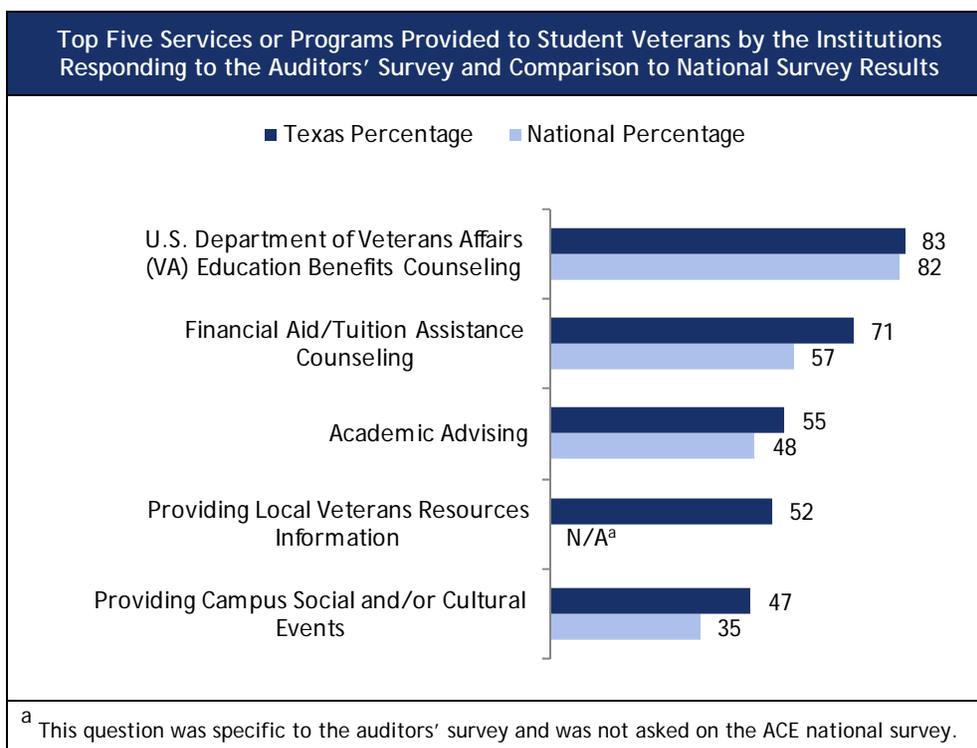
The 10 Institutions with the Largest Reported Number of Students Receiving Hazlewood Benefits As of July 2010	
Institution	Number of Students
Texas State University - San Marcos	773
The University of Texas at Austin	425
The University of Texas at San Antonio	400
Texas Tech University	379
St. Philip's College	376
The University of Texas at El Paso	324
Austin Community College	300
San Antonio College	300
Texas A&M University	300
Sam Houston State University	297

Source: Auditors' survey of Texas institutions. These totals were self-reported by the institutions and were not audited.

The majority of responding institutions reported that they provide programs and services specifically designed for student veterans and are considering implementing additional veteran-friendly practices in the next five years

Of the institutions responding to the auditors' survey, 94 percent reported that they provide programs and services specifically designed for student veterans. The top five programs and services reported to be in place at Texas institutions are consistent with what institutions are offering nationally (see Figure 1 on the next page). Among the least commonly offered programs and services at the institutions responding to the auditors' survey were assisting student veterans with the transition to college (24 percent); offering support groups for student veterans (23 percent); offering housing assistance (16 percent); and providing a student veterans lounge or other designated gathering place (11 percent).

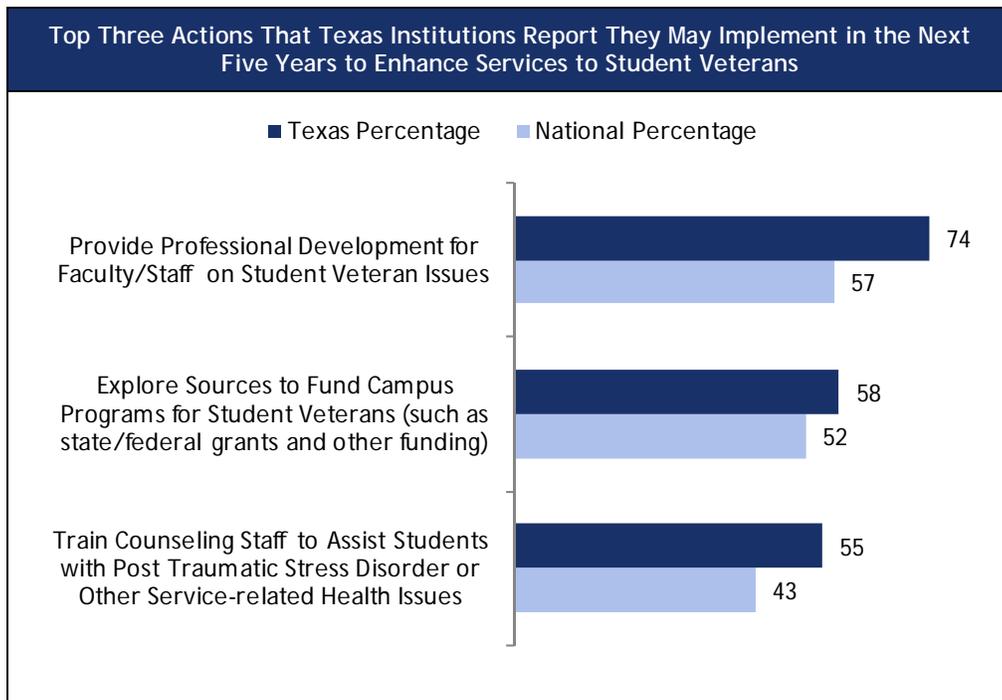
Figure 1



Sources: Texas totals are based on responses to the auditors' survey; national totals are based on a national survey published in July 2009 by ACE, *From Soldier to Student: Easing the Transition of Service Members on Campus*.

Seventy percent of the Texas institutions responding to the auditors' survey stated that providing programs and services for student veterans was a part of their long-term strategic plans, compared to 59 percent of the respondents to the ACE national survey. In addition, 91 percent of responding Texas institutions stated they were considering veteran-friendly changes in programs and services in the next five years, compared to 81 percent nationally. Figure 2 on the next page shows the top three actions that Texas institutions reported they may implement in the next five years, compared to respondents to the ACE national survey.

Figure 2



Sources: Texas totals are based on responses to the auditors' survey of Texas institutions. National totals are based on a national survey published in July 2009 by ACE, *From Soldier to Student: Easing the Transition of Service Members on Campus*.

Eighty-two percent of responding Texas institutions identified at least one issue related to student veterans as a top priority, compared to 91 percent nationally. The top five issues identified as priorities by responding Texas institutions were:

- Training qualified staff to address student veteran needs (58 percent of respondents).
- Ensuring faculty and staff sensitivity to issues related to student veterans (45 percent of respondents).
- Having sufficient staffing for student veteran services and programs (39 percent of respondents).
- Locating funding sources for added campus programs and services for student veterans (34 percent of respondents).
- Ensuring campus accessibility (for example, extended hours or night classes) (27 percent of respondents).

Most Texas four-year and health-related institutions and more than half of the two-year institutions report that they offer some form of counseling services for student veterans.

The majority of the responding Texas four-year and health-related institutions reported that they provide counseling services to assist student veterans. Those services included counseling for: social adjustment (86 percent), stress and anxiety management (86 percent), depression (84 percent), and post-traumatic stress disorder (72 percent).

In addition, responding Texas two-year institutions reported they provide counseling services to student veterans for: social adjustment (59 percent), stress and anxiety management (55 percent), depression (55 percent), and post-traumatic stress disorder (47 percent). Overall, 71 percent of all responding Texas institutions reported that they offer counseling services to student veterans, in contrast to the 23 percent of respondents that reported offering these services in the ACE national survey.

Further, 49 percent of the responding Texas four-year institutions and 47 percent of the Texas two-year institutions reported that they had a staff member, such as a licensed counselor or psychologist, trained to address the needs of student veterans with disabilities, compared to 40 percent of four-year institutions and 35 percent of two-year institutions responding to the ACE national survey.

More than half of responding Texas institutions reported having an office or department exclusively dedicated to student veterans.

Sixty percent of responding Texas institutions reported that they have an office or department exclusively dedicated to serving student veterans, compared to 49 percent nationally. However, the locations of these departments/offices varied significantly among the responding institutions. Locations included in the registrar's office, in the student affairs/student services area, and in the admissions office.

Nearly all responding Texas institutions reported that they offer alternative curriculum delivery formats for student veterans.

Ninety-seven percent of responding Texas institutions reported that they offer alternative curriculum delivery formats. These included offering online courses, evening and weekend courses, and other alternative formats (see Table 6 on the next page). Offering alternative curriculum delivery formats can be particularly beneficial to active military service members and reservists who may need more flexibility in completing their degree requirements.

Table 6

Alternative Curriculum Delivery Formats Offered by Responding Texas Institutions			
Alternative Curriculum Delivery Format	Number of Texas Respondents Offering Alternative Format	Percentage of Texas Respondents Offering Alternative Format	Percentage of Respondents to ACE National Survey Offering Alternative Format
Online Education	95	94%	89%
Evening Courses	90	89%	89%
Weekend Courses	55	55%	68%
Accelerated Courses	59	58%	67%
None of the Above	3	3%	5%
Other Format(s)	6	6%	4%

Source: Texas totals are based on responses to the auditors' survey of Texas institutions. National totals are based on a national survey published in July 2009 by ACE, *From Soldier to Student: Easing the Transition of Service Members on Campus*.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

Objectives

The objectives of this audit were to determine whether selected higher education institutions (institutions):

- Inform service members and veterans about education opportunities.
- Provide support while these individuals attend the institution.
- Have implemented other practices to assist these individuals.

Scope

The scope of this audit covered all functions related to students who are veterans/current military service members and their dependents (student veterans) who were enrolled in a Texas institution between September 1, 2007, and December 31, 2009. Auditors also reviewed the services that the institutions offered student veterans after December 31, 2009, to determine compliance with applicable state laws and rules.

Methodology

The audit methodology included gaining an understanding of processes and controls related to the services offered student veterans. This included collecting information and documentation, performing selected tests of credit awarded, analyzing the results of tests, and conducting interviews with staff at seven institutions that auditors visited. Those institutions were:

- Texas A&M University.
- Texas State University - San Marcos.
- Texas Tech University.
- University of Houston.
- University of North Texas.
- The University of Texas at El Paso.
- The University of Texas at San Antonio.

Auditors also surveyed all Texas public higher education institutions that were approved providers of veteran education programs by the Texas Veterans Commission about the services they offer student veterans, analyzed selected institutions' Web sites for student veteran-related information, and conducted focus groups with student veterans at the seven institutions visited.

Information collected and reviewed included the following:

- Institution policies and procedures related to the admission, registration, and withdrawal of student veterans.
- Institution data and supporting documents for credit awarded to student veterans.
- Student veteran enrollment data.
- Employee job descriptions and training records for student veteran benefit coordinators.
- Responses to a survey conducted by auditors of Texas public higher education institutions.
- Institution Web sites.
- National best practices for “veteran-friendly” institutions compiled by the American Council on Education (ACE), Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges, Student Veterans of America, and the Education Advisory Board.

Procedures and tests conducted included the following:

- Interviewed key personnel at the seven institutions visited to gain an understanding of the institutions' processes and controls related to student veterans.
- Tested institutions' compliance with statutes related to credit awarded to student veterans for military service.
- Tested institutions' compliance with the requirement to have a person on campus who is knowledgeable about state and federal education benefits available for student veterans.
- Reviewed applicable institution policies and procedures for compliance with statutes related to student veterans.
- Reviewed institutions' implementation of selected national best practices related to student veterans.

- Analyzed selected institutions' Web sites to determine whether information related to student veterans was accessible, complete, and understandable.
- Conducted interviews and focus groups with student veterans at the seven institutions visited.
- Surveyed all Texas public higher education institutions that were approved providers of veteran education programs by the Veterans Commission as of February 3, 2010.

Criteria used included the following:

- Institutions' policies and procedures.
- Texas Education Code, Chapters 51, 54, and 56.
- Texas Administrative Code, Title 19, Chapters 4 and 13.
- National best practices for student veteran programs and services based on:
 - ♦ *Student Veterans of America Veteran Center Handbook*, January 1, 2009.
 - ♦ *Structuring Veterans' Support Programs on Campus*, Education Advisory Board, March 6, 2009.
 - ♦ *Serving Those Who Serve: Higher Education and America's Veterans*, ACE, November 2008.
 - ♦ *Military Service Members and Veterans in Higher Education: What the New GI Bill May Mean for Postsecondary Institutions*, ACE, July 2009.
 - ♦ *Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges Principles and Criteria, 2009-2011*.

Project Information

Audit fieldwork was conducted from March 2010 through July 2010. We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

The following members of the State Auditor's staff performed the audit:

- Stacey Williams, CGAP (Project Manager)
- Mary Goldwater (Assistant Project Manager)
- Jenay Oliphant
- Parsons Townsend
- Charles Wilson, MPAff
- Mike Apperley, CPA (Assistant State Auditor)
- John Young, MPAff (Audit Manager)

Survey Results

Auditors surveyed all Texas public higher education institutions (institutions) that were approved providers of veteran education programs by the Texas Veterans Commission as of February 3, 2010, about the services and programs offered to students who are veterans/current military service members and their dependents. The survey was conducted in March 2010 and April 2010 and was later reopened for two weeks in July 2010 to give institutions that had missed the survey's initial deadline the opportunity to respond. All public four-year and health-related institutions that had students enrolled during the scope of this audit⁷ and 85 percent of two-year institutions responded to the survey, which was based on a national survey published in July 2009 by the American Council on Education, *From Soldier to Student: Easing the Transition of Service Members on Campus*. Table 7 summarizes the survey results.

Table 7

Results of Survey of Higher Education Institutions Related to the Services Available to Student Veterans on Campus		
Response	Four-year and Health-related Institutions	Two-year Institutions
1. Are programs/services for military service members and/or veterans part of your institution's long-term strategic plan?		
Yes	67%	72%
No	21%	9%
Don't Know	12%	19%
2. Which of the following is your institution considering in the next five years? Please select all that apply.		
a. Explore sources to fund campus programs for military service members/veterans (state/federal grants, etc.).	65%	53%
b. Train counseling staff to assist students with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or other service-related health issues.	70%	43%
c. Increase the budget for military service members and/or veterans services and programs.	42%	16%
d. Increase the number of military service members and/or veterans services and programs.	67%	40%
e. Increase staff for service members and veterans programs and services.	51%	47%
f. Establish a department for service members and veterans programs.	19%	24%

⁷ Two four-year institutions did not complete the survey because they did not have students enrolled during the scope of this audit.

Results of Survey of Higher Education Institutions Related to the Services Available to Student Veterans on Campus		
Response	Four-year and Health-related Institutions	Two-year Institutions
g. Establish a veteran's center for service members, veterans, and their families.	37%	33%
h. Provide professional development for faculty/staff on service members and veterans issues.	79%	71%
i. None of the above.	7%	10%
j. Other.	21%	9%
3. Do you have currently enrolled students receiving Hazlewood benefits?		
Yes	98%	100.0%
No	2%	0.0%
Don't Know	0%	0.0%
3b. Do you anticipate an increase or decrease in the number of Hazlewood recipients?		
Increase	88%	90%
Decrease	12%	10%
4. What issues related to service members and/or veteran students have been identified by your institution as priorities? Please select the top three under each heading.		
Student Issues		
a. Financial aid.	58%	76%
b. Degree retention/completion.	58%	78%
c. Health care (PTSD, traumatic brain injury, etc.).	35%	29%
d. Social acculturation.	42%	24%
e. Non-traditional student issues (housing, employment for spouses, etc.).	35%	14%
f. No student issues related to service members or veteran students.	21%	22%
g. Other.	9%	12%
Institutional Issues		
a. Ensuring campus accessibility. For example: extended hours or night classes.	21%	31%
b. Addressing course withdrawals as a result of military deployment or mobilization.	26%	24%
c. Ensuring faculty/staff sensitivity to issues related to this population.	44%	45%
d. Locating funding sources for added campus programs and services.	37%	31%
e. Having sufficient staffing for military services and/or programs.	40%	38%
f. Training qualified staff to address service members'/veterans' needs.	61%	57%

Results of Survey of Higher Education Institutions Related to the Services Available to Student Veterans on Campus		
Response	Four-year and Health-related Institutions	Two-year Institutions
g. Developing strategies for service members and/or veteran students' when GI Bill benefits do not adequately cover college tuition and living expenses.	16%	17%
h. Addressing pressure to enroll service members/veterans who do not meet entrance requirements.	0%	0%
i. No institutional issues related to service members or veteran students.	19%	17%
j. Other.	0%	5%
5. Please indicate which of the following services and/or programs exist at your institution specifically for service members and/or veteran students. Please select all that apply.		
a. Academic advising.	49%	59%
b. Academic support/tutoring.	33%	52%
c. Campus social and/or cultural events.	47%	47%
d. Career planning/career services.	30%	48%
e. Employment assistance (students/dependents).	21%	28%
f. Financial aid/tuition assistance counseling.	72%	71%
g. Transition assistance.	26%	22%
h. Local veterans resource information.	51%	52%
i. Housing.	12%	19%
j. Orientation.	30%	35%
k. Support groups.	23%	22%
l. Veterans Affairs (VA) education benefits counseling.	81%	85%
m. Veteran students lounge or designated gathering place.	19%	5%
n. Online options for deployed or mobilized service members.	33%	29%
o. None of the above.	9%	3%
p. Other.	21%	16%
6. For what types of prior learning does your institution award college credit? Please select all that apply.		
a. College coursework at another institution.	93%	98%
b. Evaluated credit awards for military training.	84%	83%
c. Evaluated credit awards for military occupational training.	37%	62%
d. National testing programs.	65%	66%
e. Evaluated credit for corporate training programs.	12%	9%
f. Portfolio review or assessment.	12%	5%

Results of Survey of Higher Education Institutions Related to the Services Available to Student Veterans on Campus		
Response	Four-year and Health-related Institutions	Two-year Institutions
g. Challenge examinations or test-out procedures.	51%	64%
h. None of the above.	2%	0%
i. Other.	16%	14%
7. Does your campus offer any alternative curriculum delivery formats? Please select all that apply.		
a. Online education.	88%	98%
b. Evening/night courses.	81%	95%
c. Weekend courses.	56%	53%
d. Accelerated courses.	40%	72%
e. None of the above.	7%	0%
f. Other.	9%	3%
8. Does your institution have any of the following?		
a. Staff specifically trained to assist with active-duty military and veteran students' transition/orientation to college.	51%	50%
b. A staff member, such as a licensed counselor or psychologist, trained specifically to address the needs of veterans with disabilities.	49%	47%
c. Support groups or mentoring programs specifically for active duty and veteran students.	23%	10%
d. Support groups specifically for veteran students with disabilities.	7%	7%
e. Support groups specifically for family members of students serving on active duty.	7%	2%
f. Support groups specifically for dependents of deceased veterans.	2%	2%
g. Student organization for service members and/or veterans (excluding ROTC programs).	47%	29%
h. ROTC programs.	56%	12%
i. Veterans Upward Bound program.	2%	0%
j. None of the above.	14%	22%
k. Other.	19%	21%
9. Does your campus provide counseling to assist students who are veterans with the following issues? Please select al that apply.		
a. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).	72%	47%
b. Depression.	84%	55%
c. Social adjustment.	86%	59%
d. Stress/anxiety management.	86%	55%
e. None of the above.	14%	40%

Results of Survey of Higher Education Institutions Related to the Services Available to Student Veterans on Campus		
Response	Four-year and Health-related Institutions	Two-year Institutions
10. Does your institution have an office or department exclusively dedicated to serving service members and/or veterans?		
a. Yes	67%	55%
b. No	33%	45%
11. Is there a primary point of contact for students to receive information about institutional services and programs for military service members and/or veterans in any of the following offices?		
a. Academic affairs.	9%	7%
b. Admissions.	40%	26%
c. Counseling.	16%	29%
d. Registrar's office.	65%	26%
e. Student affairs/student services.	37%	35%
f. No primary point of contact.	0%	5%
g. Other.	44%	52%
12. Does your institution have at least one employee trained in state and federal student financial assistance applicable to veterans or their families in accordance with Texas Education Code, Section 56.006?		
a. Yes	98%	95%
b. No	2%	5%
13. Does your institution have an established policy regarding tuition refunds for military activations and deployments?		
a. Yes	84%	81%
b. No	0%	2%
c. No set policy (handled on a case-by-case basis).	16%	17%
14. What re-enrollment process must military students complete to enroll in classes following a military activation or deployment? Please select all that apply.		
a. Reapply to the institution and be readmitted.	33%	21%
b. Complete a standard re-enrollment process for all returning students.	44%	81%
c. Complete an expedited re-enrollment process to accommodate military students.	30%	5%
d. None of the above.	2%	0%
e. Other.	9%	10%
15. Does your institution provide tuition and fee deferment options for students experiencing delays in registration due to the backlog in processing GI Bill claims?		
a. Yes	95%	78%
b. No	5%	22%

Results of Survey of Higher Education Institutions Related to the Services Available to Student Veterans on Campus		
Response	Four-year and Health-related Institutions	Two-year Institutions
16. What communication methods does your institution employ to inform currently enrolled service members, veterans, and their families about existing programs and services designed specifically for them? Please select all that apply.		
a. College catalog.	77%	72%
b. On-campus advisers.	74%	70%
c. Targeted print advertising.	54%	51%
d. Targeted Web-based advertising.	72%	56%
e. Targeted postal mailings.	41%	37%
f. Targeted e-mail.	72%	54%
g. None of the above.	3%	7%
h. Other.	13%	19%
17. Does your institution engage in any of the following admissions or recruitment efforts specifically designed to attract service members and/or veteran students?		
a. Targeted print advertising.	37%	16%
b. Targeted Web-based advertising.	40%	22%
c. Targeted postal mailings.	16%	16%
d. None of the above.	35%	57%
e. Other.	37%	16%
18. Please list all programs or services that your institution provides for service members, veterans, and/or military family members that have not previously been identified in this survey.		
<p>Forty-three of the 101 responding institutions answered this question. Below is a selection of the other services/programs that the institutions reported they offered to student veterans:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hosting special events honoring local servicemen and women. ▪ Offering a military spouse career advancement program. ▪ Offering veteran-only courses. ▪ Providing undergraduate veteran advising services. ▪ Providing a computer lab for student veteran use only. 		

Analysis of Student Veteran-related Information on Selected Institutions' Web Sites

Auditors reviewed the Web sites of 20 Texas public higher education institutions⁸ (institutions) to determine whether the Web sites met eight best practices for creating a veteran-friendly Web site. The institutions were selected based on the enrollment of student veterans using federal and state benefits at each public institution and the veteran population by county. The information related to benefits and services offered to student veterans varied widely from one institution's Web site to another. Most of the Web sites contained information about the financial assistance and other benefits available to student veterans; however, this information was not always comprehensive or easily located. In addition, 11 (55 percent) of the 20 institutions did not have a direct link to veteran-related education benefits on their Web sites' home pages. Table 8 summarizes the analysis of the Web sites for the selected four-year institutions.

Table 8

Analysis of Web Sites of Selected Four-year Institutions							
Institution	Is there a link to veteran-related information on the Web site's home page?	Does the institution have its own veterans services Web page?	Is there information regarding federal education assistance available to student veterans?	Is there a link to state education assistance available to student veterans?	Is there information about health or transition services available?	Is there information about other services and resources available?	Is the institution's veterans services contact listed?
Texas A&M University www.tamu.edu	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi www.tamucc.edu	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Texas State University - San Marcos www.txstate.edu	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
Texas Tech University www.ttu.edu	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
University of Houston www.uh.edu	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
University of North Texas www.unt.edu	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

⁸ This included 10 four-year institutions and 10 two-year institutions.

Analysis of Web Sites of Selected Four-year Institutions							
Institution	Is there a link to veteran-related information on the Web site's home page?	Does the institution have its own veterans services Web page?	Is there information regarding federal education assistance available to student veterans?	Is there a link to state education assistance available to student veterans?	Is there information about health or transition services available?	Is there information about other services and resources available?	Is the institution's veterans services contact listed?
The University of Texas at Arlington www.uta.edu	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
The University of Texas at Austin www.utexas.edu	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
The University of Texas at El Paso www.utep.edu	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
The University of Texas at San Antonio www.utsa.edu	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Totals - Yes	5	10	10	10	6	8	10
Totals - No	5	0	0	0	4	2	0

Table 9 summarizes the analysis of the Web sites for the selected two-year institutions.

Table 9

Analysis of Web Sites of Selected Two-year Institutions							
Institution	Is there a link to veteran-related information on the Web site's home page?	Does the institution have its own veterans services Web page?	Is there information regarding federal education assistance available to student veterans?	Is there a link to state education assistance available to student veterans?	Is there information about health or transition services available?	Is there information about other services and resources available?	Is the institution's veterans services contact listed?
Alamo Community Colleges St Philip's College www.alamo.edu/spc/	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Austin Community College www.austincc.edu	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Central Texas College www.ctcd.edu	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes

Analysis of Web Sites of Selected Two-year Institutions

Institution	Is there a link to veteran-related information on the Web site's home page?	Does the institution have its own veterans services Web page?	Is there information regarding federal education assistance available to student veterans?	Is there a link to state education assistance available to student veterans?	Is there information about health or transition services available?	Is there information about other services and resources available?	Is the institution's veterans services contact listed?
Collin County Community College District www.collin.edu	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
Del Mar College www.delmar.edu	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
El Paso Community College District www.epcc.edu	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Houston Community College District www.hccs.edu/portal/site/hccs	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Lone Star College System www.lonestar.edu/lsc-online	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Tarrant County College District www.tccd.edu	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Temple College www.templejc.edu	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Totals - Yes	4	9	10	10	3	7	10
Totals - No	6	1	0	0	7	3	0

Web Site That Included Many “Veteran-Friendly” Elements

An institution’s Web site is typically the first resource used by students who are veterans/current military service members and their dependents (student veterans) for information on available benefits and resources. Texas A&M University’s Web site had many elements of a veteran-friendly Web site, including a separate veteran services page (see Figure 3) and a clear description of the State’s Hazlewood Act exemption.

Figure 3



Source: <https://veterans.tamu.edu/>.

Examples of Web Sites That Included Links to Student Veteran Information on Their Web Site's Home Page

Figures 4 and 5 are example of Web site's whose home pages included a direct link to information for students who are veterans/current military service members and their dependents (student veterans).

Figure 4



Source: <http://www.epcc.edu/Pages/default.aspx>.

Figure 5



Source: <http://www.tamu.edu>.

Web Page That Includes Detailed Instructions for Student Veterans

The University of Houston’s veterans Web page provides step-by-step instructions for the admissions and registration process (see Figure 6). It also serves as a portal to information on the veteran services office, federal and state education benefits, and other services on campus.

Figure 6

The screenshot shows the University of Houston's Veterans Web Page. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the University of Houston logo and a search bar. Below the navigation bar, there is a secondary menu with links for Home, About, Academics, Admissions, Student Life, Research at UH, Athletics, News & Events, and Giving to UH. The main content area is titled "VETERANS" and features a "Welcome Veterans" section. This section includes a list of seven steps for prospective and incoming veteran students:

- STEP 1 Admissions**: The admissions process is the first and most important step for all prospective and incoming UH Students. [Learn about the detailed steps pertaining to the admissions process.](#)
- STEP 2 Financial Aid**: Concerned about paying for college? A great education is the best investment you can make. [Learn about the detailed steps pertaining to the Financial Aid process.](#)
- STEP 3 Services for Veterans**: Visit the [UH Office of Veterans Services online](#) to learn about all of the many support programs and student services offered to our student veterans.
- STEP 4 Placement Testing**: Student success is dependent upon the university's ability to place entering students into classes appropriate for their academic skill level. [Learn about the detailed steps pertaining to the placement testing process.](#)
- STEP 5 Housing**: As a UH resident, students have the opportunity to meet new people, socialize, explore, get involved, and gain leadership experience. [Learn more about UH Housing.](#)
- STEP 6 Before you Enroll**: [Read a comprehensive list of pre-enrollment steps.](#)
- STEP 7 Enrollment and Post-Enrollment**: [Read a comprehensive list of enrollment and post-enrollment steps.](#)

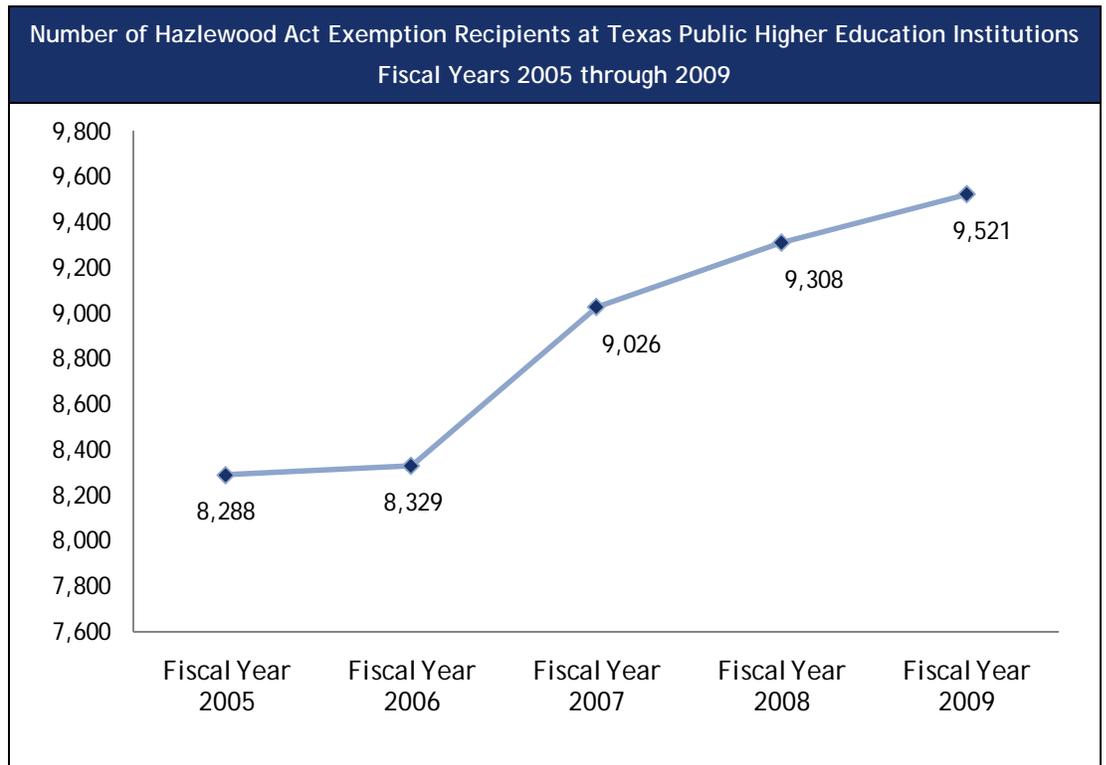
On the left side of the page, there is a "QUICK LINKS" section with various links related to veteran services, and a "UH VETERANS" section featuring a photo of U.S. Army National Guard Staff Sgt. Christopher Webb and a brief biography.

Source: <http://www.uh.edu/prospective-students/veterans/>.

Use of the State's Hazlewood Act Exemption

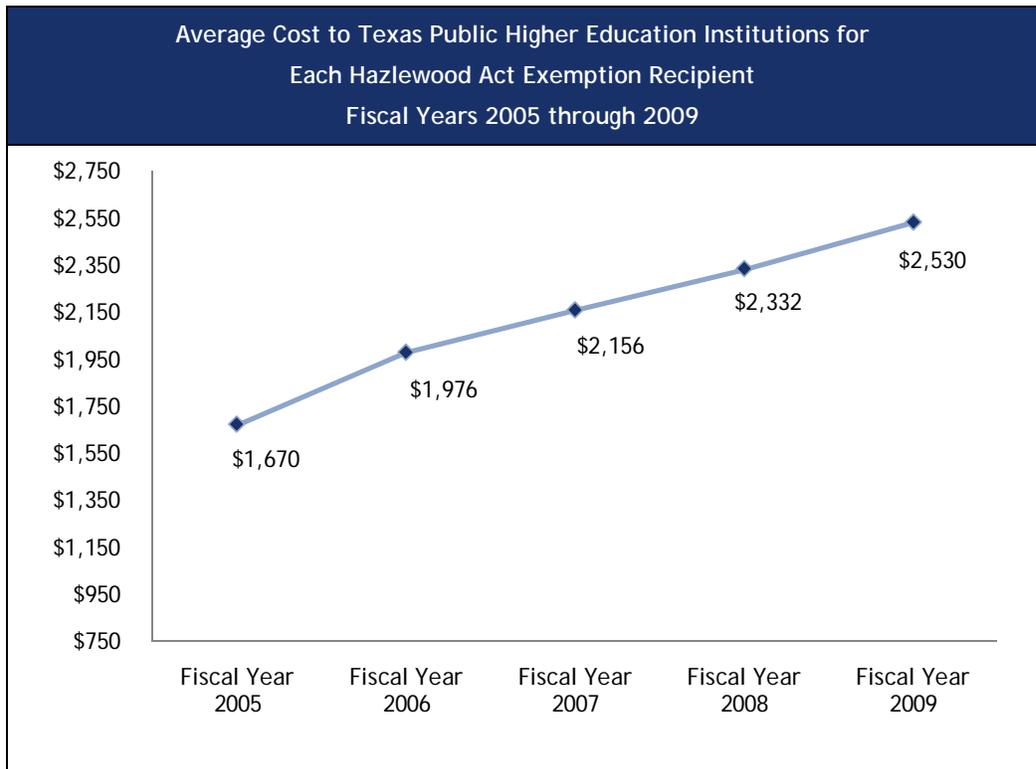
The State's Hazlewood Act exemption provides education-related financial assistance to eligible Texas veterans and their dependent children and spouses. The Hazlewood Act exemption provides eligible recipients financial assistance for up to 150 semester credit hours of tuition, dues, and selected fees at Texas public higher education institutions. Figures 7 through 9 show that the use of the Hazlewood Act exemption, as well as the average cost per student, has increased from fiscal years 2005 through 2009.

Figure 7



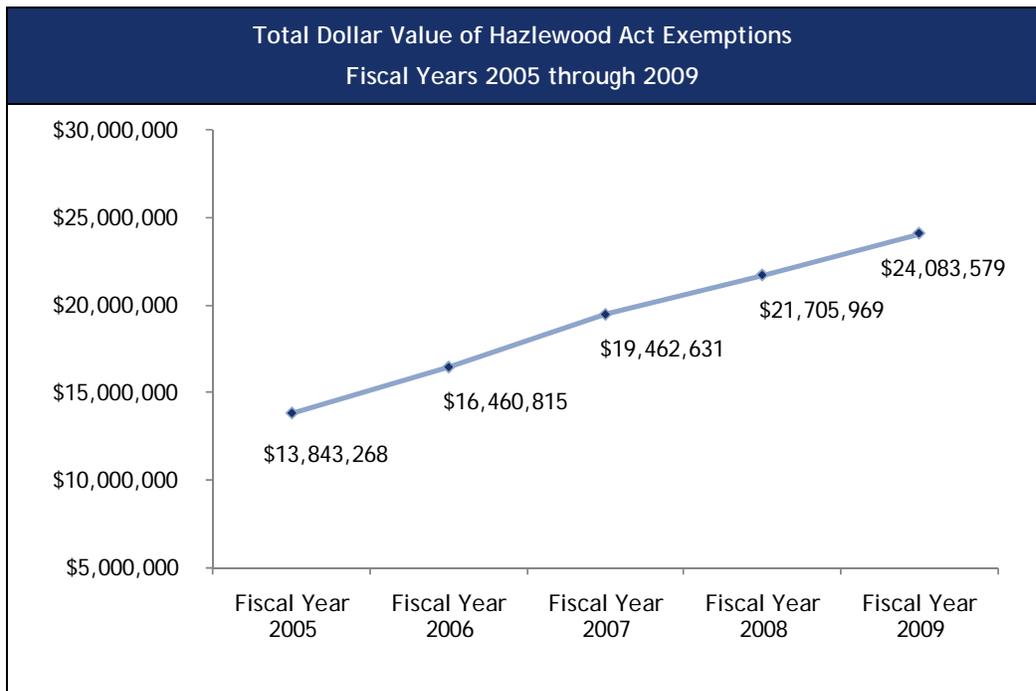
Source: Unaudited data from the Higher Education Coordinating Board.

Figure 8



Source: Unaudited data from the Higher Education Coordinating Board.

Figure 9

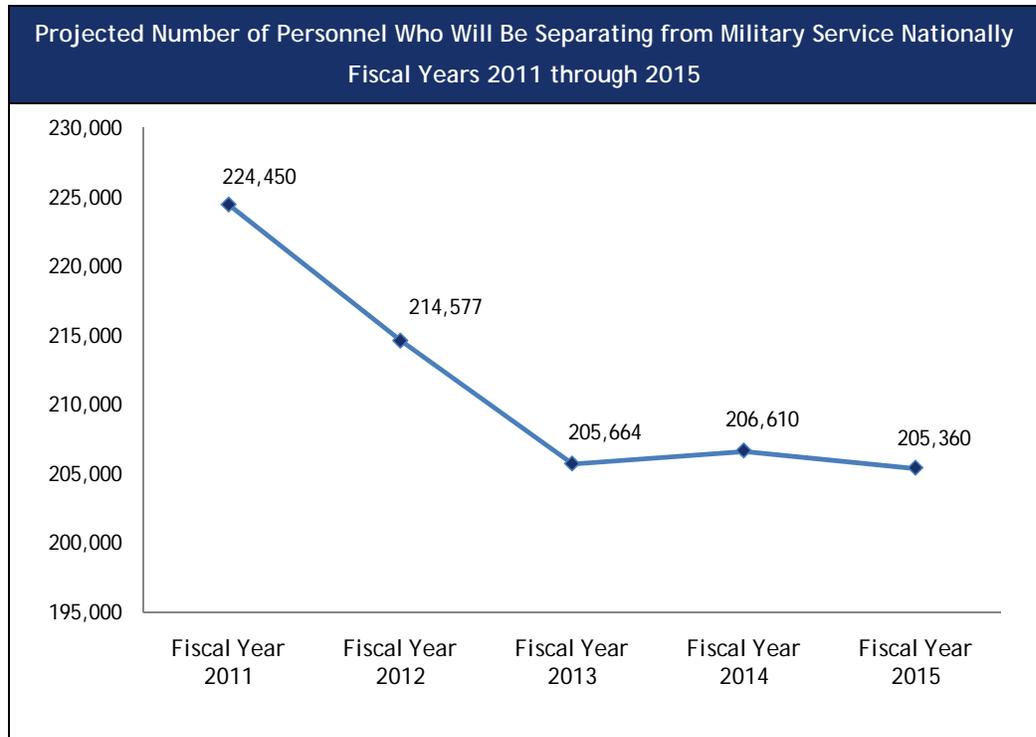


Source: Unaudited data from the Higher Education Coordinating Board.

National Military Personnel and Veteran Data

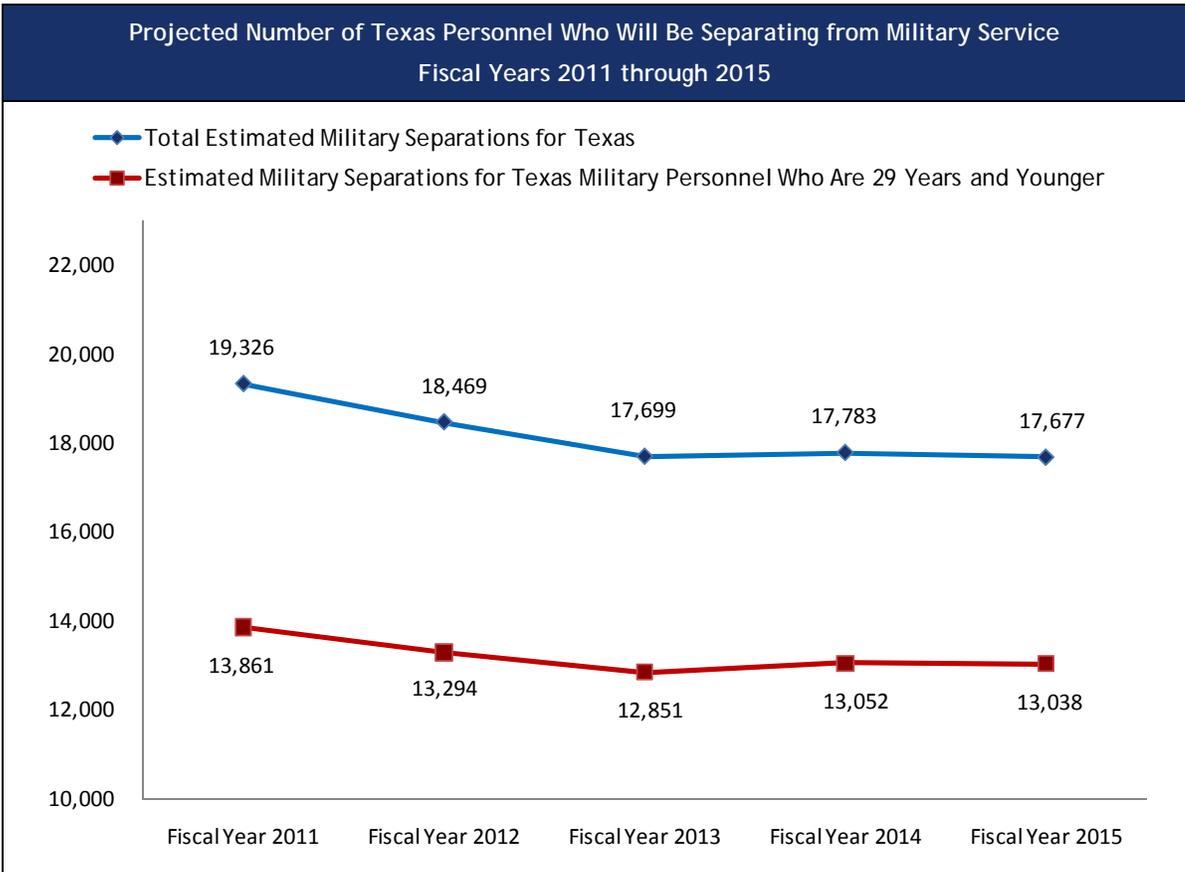
As Figures 10 and 11 show, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs projects that the number of personnel separating from the military will decrease from fiscal year 2011 to fiscal year 2015. It should be noted, however, that those projections, the most recent available, were made as of September 30, 2006, and may not account for subsequent events.

Figure 10



Source: Unaudited data obtained from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics.

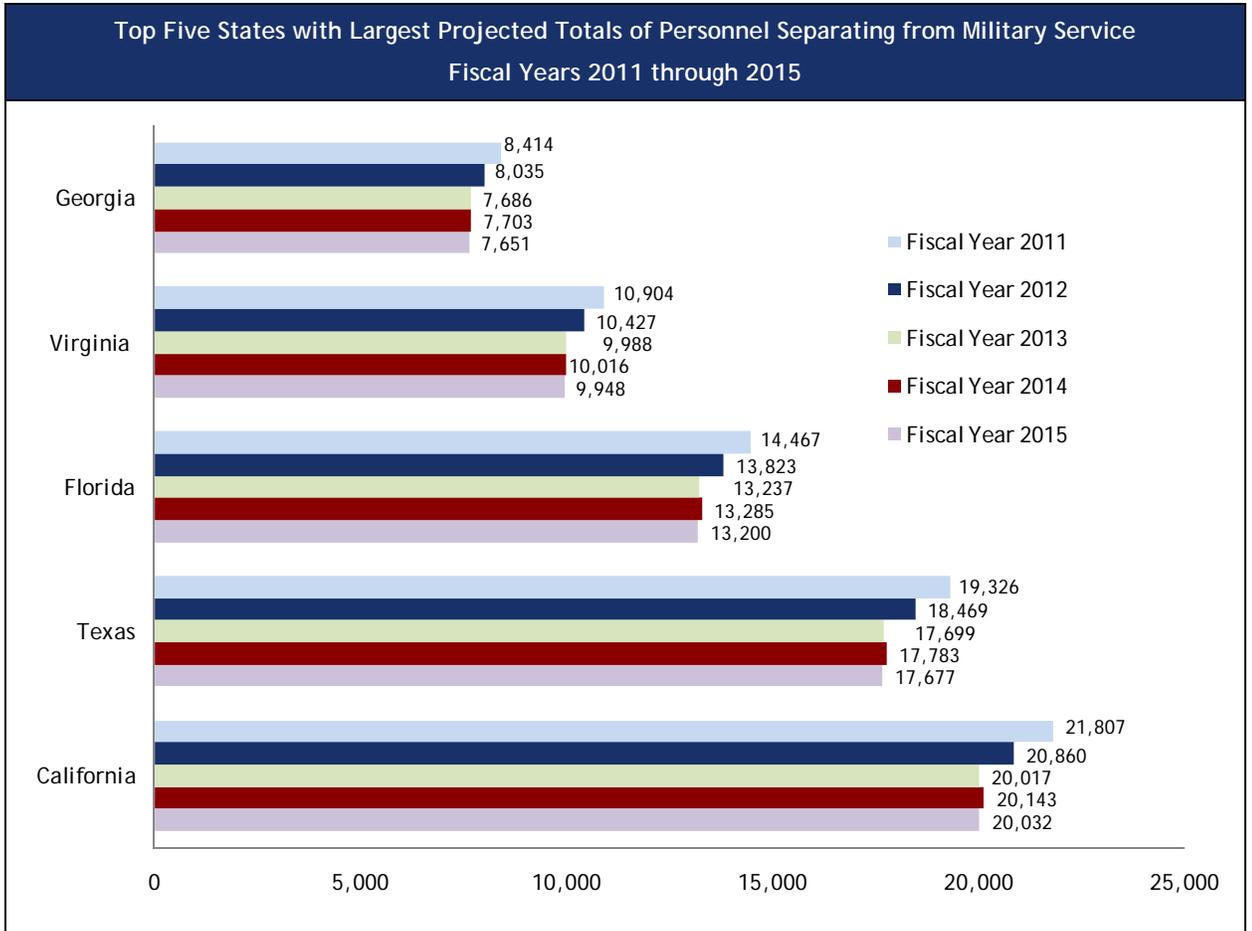
Figure 11



Source: Unaudited data obtained from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics.

Texas is projected to have the second largest number of personnel separating from military service through fiscal year 2015 (see Figure 12).

Figure 12



Source: Unaudited data obtained from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics.

Texas Institutions That Are Approved Providers of Veteran Education Programs by the Texas Veterans Commission

Table 10 lists the public four-year higher education institutions that were approved providers of veteran education programs by the Texas Veterans Commission as of February 3, 2010.

Table 10

Four-Year Institutions That Were Approved Providers for Veteran Education Programs As of February 3, 2010
Angelo State University
Lamar University - Beaumont
Midwestern State University
Prairie View A&M University
Sam Houston State University
Stephen F. Austin State University
Sul Ross State University
Sul Ross State University - Rio Grande College
Tarleton State University
Texas A&M International University
Texas A&M University
Texas A&M University - Central Texas ^a
Texas A&M University - Commerce
Texas A&M University - Corpus Christi
Texas A&M University at Galveston
Texas A&M University - Kingsville
Texas A&M University - San Antonio ^a
Texas A&M University - Texarkana
Texas Southern University
Texas State University - San Marcos
Texas Tech University
Texas Woman's University
University of Houston
University of Houston - Clear Lake
University of Houston - Downtown
University of Houston - Victoria
University of North Texas
The University of Texas at Arlington
The University of Texas at Austin

Four-Year Institutions That Were Approved Providers for Veteran Education Programs As of February 3, 2010
University of Texas at Brownsville
The University of Texas at Dallas
The University of Texas at El Paso
The University of Texas - Pan American
The University of Texas of the Permian Basin
The University of Texas at San Antonio
The University of Texas at Tyler
West Texas A&M University
^a The institution was approved to provide veteran education programs; however, it did not have students enrolled during the scope of this audit. Therefore, the institution did not complete the SAO's survey of veteran services (see Appendices 2 and 10 for more information about the survey).

Source: Veterans Commission.

Table 11 lists the health-related institutions approved as providers of veteran education programs.

Table 11

Health-related Institutions That Were Approved Providers for Veteran Education Programs As of February 3, 2010
Texas A&M Health Science Center
Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center
University of North Texas Health Science Center at Fort Worth
The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston
The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio
The University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston
The University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas
The University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center

Source: Texas Veterans Commission.

Table 12 lists the two-year institutions approved as providers of veteran education programs.

Table 12

Two-Year Institutions That Were Approved Providers for Veteran Education Programs As of February 3, 2010
Alvin Community College
Amarillo College
Angelina College
Austin Community College
Blinn College
Brazosport College
Brookhaven College
Cedar Valley College
Central Texas College - Main Campus
Cisco College
Clarendon College
Coastal Bend College
College of the Mainland
Collin County Community College
Del Mar College
Eastfield College
El Centro College
El Paso Community College
Frank Phillips College
Galveston College
Grayson County College
Hill College
Houston Community College System
Howard College
Kilgore College
Lamar State College - Orange
Lamar State College - Port Arthur
Laredo Community College
Lee College
Lone Star College System
McLennan Community College
Midland College
Mountain View College
Navarro College

**Two-Year Institutions That Were Approved Providers for
Veteran Education Programs
As of February 3, 2010**

North Central Texas College
North Lake College
Northeast Texas Community College
Northwest Vista College
Odessa College
Palo Alto College
Panola College
Paris Junior College
Ranger College
Richland College
San Antonio College
San Jacinto Community College District
South Plains College
South Texas College
Southwest Texas Junior College
St. Philip's College
Tarrant County College - Northeast Campus
Tarrant County College - Northwest Campus
Tarrant County College - South Campus
Tarrant County College - Southeast Campus
Tarrant County College - Trinity River Campus
Temple College
Texarkana College
Texas State Technical College - Harlingen
Texas State Technical College - Marshall
Texas State Technical College - Waco
Texas State Technical College - West Texas
Trinity Valley Community College
Tyler Junior College
Vernon College
Victoria College - East Red River
Weatherford College
Western Texas College
Wharton County Junior College

Source: Texas Veterans Commission.

Texas Public Institutions Not Responding to Auditors' Survey on Veteran Services

Table 13 lists the Texas public institutions of higher education that did not respond to the auditors' survey related to veteran services.

Table 13

Institutions of Higher Education That Did Not Response to Auditors' Survey Related to Veteran Services
Angelina College
Clarendon College
Del Mar College
Eastfield College
Frank Phillips College
Lamar State College - Orange
Lone Star College System
Mountain View College
Texarkana College
Tyler Junior College

Texas Benefits and Resources

Hazlewood Act Exemption – Administered by the Higher Education Coordinating Board, this benefit exempts eligible veterans, their dependent children, and spouses from payment of tuition and certain fees for up to 150 credit hours at Texas public institutions of higher education. For more information, see www.collegeforalltexans.com.

Texas Veterans Commission (Commission) –The Commission assists veterans and their dependents and survivors in obtaining state and federal veterans’ benefits through three programs: Claims Representation and Counseling, Veterans Employment Services, and Veterans Education. The Commission has more than 400 counselors in 27 cities across Texas. Under contract with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, the Commission acts as the state approving agency for Texas to determine which education and training programs in Texas may be approved for veterans training. For more information, see www.tvc.state.tx.us.

Veterans’ Land Board – The Veterans’ Land Board offers loans with below-market interest rates for land, housing, and home improvement. The Veterans’ Land Board also operates the Texas state veterans cemeteries and veterans homes. For more information, see www.texasveterans.org.

Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) – TWC’s Texas Veterans Leadership Program is a resource and referral network designed to connect veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan with available resources. Additionally, TWC employs veterans resource and referral specialists, each of whom is a veteran, in each of the 28 local workforce development areas to provide referrals to address employment, training, medical care, educational, and other needs of veterans. For more information, see <http://www.twc.state.tx.us/tvlp/tvlp.html>.

TexVet – TexVet promotes the health of military personnel, veterans, and their families by enhancing access to health care and social services and strengthening support systems through the various phases of the military life cycle, such as deployment or being medically disabled or injured. TexVet is a collaborative effort of organizations, including the Health and Human Services Commission, the U.S. Department of Defense, the Veterans Health Administration, Texas Military Forces, the 2-1-1 Texas Information and Referral Network, and the Texas A&M Health Science Center. For more information, see <http://www.texvet.com>.

Texas Veterans Portal – The Texas Veterans Portal provides links to federal and state benefits and services for veterans in Texas. Featured areas include

assistance and benefits programs, education, employment and jobs, and health and wellness. For more information, see www.texas.gov/en/veterans.

National Resources

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) – The VA provides various education benefits, including the Post-9/11 GI Bill, the Montgomery GI Bill, and the Reserve Education Assistance Program. These benefits cover a variety of education programs and have different levels of financial assistance, eligibility requirements, and time limits. For more information, see www.gibill.va.gov/GI_Bill_Info/CH33/Benefit_Comparison_Chart.htm.

Student Veterans of America (SVA) - SVA is a coalition of student veterans groups from college campuses across the country that works to develop new student groups; increase coordination between existing student groups; and advocate on behalf of student veterans at the local, state, and national levels. For more information, see www.studentveterans.org.

American Council on Education (ACE) – ACE offers several resources designed to increase the understanding of military transcripts and transfer policies. Additionally, ACE provides a collaborative link between the U.S. Department of Defense and institutions of higher education through the review of military training and experiences for the award of equivalent college credits for members of the U.S. military. For more information, see www.acenet.edu or http://www.acenet.edu/Content/NavigationMenu/ProgramsServices/MilitaryPrograms/Transfer_Guide.htm.

Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (SOC) – SOC provides educational opportunities to servicemembers who, because they frequently moved from place to place, had trouble completing college degrees. SOC functions in cooperation with 15 higher education associations, the U.S. Department of Defense, and active and reserve components of the U.S. military services to expand and improve voluntary post-secondary education opportunities for servicemembers. Approximately 1,900 colleges and universities have agreed to implement military-friendly practices as members of the SOC Consortium. For more information, see www.soc.aascu.org.

Checklist for Prospective Texas Student Veterans

The following checklist is intended to be a basic resource for Texas veterans looking to enroll in an institution of higher education. It is not designed to be comprehensive and does not cover all benefits. Texas veterans who wish to enroll in an institution of higher education should consult their veteran benefits contact at the higher education institution to which they are applying for additional information or a benefits consultation. Auditors adapted this checklist for prospective Texas student veterans from a checklist obtained from the Minnesota Department of Veteran Affairs.

Decide what school you wish to attend.

- Contact the Texas Veterans Commission for a list of approved schools.
- For more information, see <https://services.twc.state.tx.us/VETRPT>.

Apply for admission.

- Apply for admission to any Texas public university, as well as to participating community and private colleges, online at www.applytexas.org.
- Make sure to select your U.S. Military-Veteran Status (currently question no. 9 on the ApplyTexas form) on the application.

Send official transcripts.

- Have official transcripts for previous college-level coursework and any military training sent to the higher education institution that you plan to attend for evaluation of transfer credit.
- Information about military transcripts and how to request the transcripts is available from each branch of the military:
 - **Army (AARTS transcript)** at <http://aarts.army.mil>.
 - **Navy and Marine Corps (SMART Transcript)** at <https://smart.navy.mil/smart/welcome.do>.
 - **Air Force (CCAF Transcript)** at <http://www.au.af.mil/au/ccaf/transcripts.asp>.
 - **Coast Guard (CGI Transcript)** at http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cgi/ro/official_transcript.asp.
- Be proactive! Consult with your academic advisor if you have questions regarding any courses that did not transfer. Make sure that the higher education institution has all of the information necessary.

Apply for benefits.

- Depending on your length and type of service, residency, and other factors, you may be eligible for all or some of the following benefits (check with the veteran benefits contact(s) on your campus for specific information):
- **If eligible, apply for VA Educational Benefits:**
 - Apply online at www.gibill.va.gov or through the VA certifying official on your campus.
 - If you apply online, make sure to check with your VA certifying official regarding any other paperwork that you may need to complete for your campus.

- Notify the higher education institution's VA certifying official if there is a change in your classes to determine whether your financial assistance has been affected.
 - If federal education benefits do not cover the full cost of attendance, check your eligibility for the Texas Hazlewood Act exemption (see below).
 - Complete the certification form for the higher education institution as benefits are certified for each semester.
- **If eligible, apply for Texas Hazlewood Act exemption benefits (which offers tuition assistance for Texas veterans):**
 - The State's Hazlewood Act exemption provides education benefits to honorably discharged or separated Texas veterans.
 - Eligible veterans who declare Texas as their home of record are exempt from the payment of all tuition, dues, and selected fees for up to 150 semester credit hours at Texas public higher education institutions.
 - This state benefit may be combined with federal educational benefits. Check with your higher education institution's veteran benefits contact for more information about eligibility requirements.
 - Visit <http://www.collegeforalltexans.com/index.cfm?ObjectID=6D1D574C-EC9F-C46E-831E6865C9C6F882> for more information or to apply.

Apply for financial aid.

- Complete the Free Application for Student Aid (FAFSA), which can be obtained online at www.fafsa.ed.gov. FAFSA determines your eligibility for low/no interest student loans, as well as for state and federal grants.
- Make sure to report any veteran/military benefits you will be receiving.

Search for scholarships.

- Visit www.mymilitaryeducation.org or contact the veteran benefits office on your campus for a listing of military-related scholarships available.
- Check with the higher education institution's financial aid office for information about general scholarships available.

Take placement tests (if required).

- Check with your higher education institution for details as some institutions may require assessment testing for course placement.

Attend orientation (if required).

- Participate in the higher education institution's orientation process to learn about the various resources on campus.
- Some institutions offer veteran-specific orientations or break-out sessions for veterans during which you can learn more about federal and state education benefits and services available to you.

Register for classes.

- Consult with an academic advisor and register for courses.

Obtain information about other campus services.

- Contact your higher education institution's veteran services office for campus and/or local resources regarding the following:
 - Counseling – This may include both personal and career counseling.
 - Disability services – These services may help provide accommodations for students for disabilities.
 - Student organizations – Many campuses have veterans clubs.

Comparison of Texas Veteran Education-related Benefits to Other States' Benefits

There is a variety of financial assistance and other benefits that states offer to military service members, veterans, and their families. These include scholarships, exemptions of tuition and fees, waivers to obtain in-state tuition, and other forms of financial assistance. Among the 10 states with the largest estimated populations of veterans, Texas offers an in-state tuition waiver program for service members, veterans, and their families under certain conditions and an exemption program for up to 150 semester credit hours at public higher education institutions for eligible veterans and their dependent children and spouses. Table 14 summarizes the types of veteran education-related benefits offered by Texas and nine other states with large veteran populations.

Table 14

Comparison of Texas Veteran Education-related Benefits	
State	Description of State Benefits Offered to Student Veterans
California	<p>Provides college fee waiver programs. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tuition and fee waivers for veterans' dependents, which waive tuition and fees at public higher education institutions for eligible dependents of a veteran who is totally service-connected disabled or who has died of service-connected causes. There are some income limitations. ▪ Non-resident college fee waivers, which waive non-resident fees (pay at California resident rate) for public higher education institutions for eligible veterans and their dependents.
Florida	<p>Provides scholarships and waivers programs. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Scholarships for children and spouses of deceased or disabled veterans and service members, which provide scholarships for up to 110 percent of required credit hours for an initial baccalaureate degree or certificate program for dependent children or unremarried spouses of service-connected disabled or deceased Florida veterans or service members. ▪ Waivers for recipients of Purple Heart or Superior Combat decorations, which provide fee waivers to recipients of the Purple Heart or other combat decoration superior in precedence if the recipient (1) is enrolling in a Florida public community college or state university and (2) meets specific criteria.
Georgia	<p>Provides scholarships, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Georgia HERO Scholarships Program, which provides up to \$2,000 to eligible students per award year for current members of the Georgia National Guard or U.S. military reserves who were deployed to a location designated as a combat zone on or after February 1, 2003, and their dependents; and those whose spouses died in a combat zone or from injuries received in a combat zone, or were permanently disabled in a combat zone.
Illinois	<p>Provides scholarships and grants. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ MIA/POW Scholarship, which provides eligible dependents of a veteran who was declared a prisoner of war, missing in action, died of a service-connected disability, or was permanently disabled full payment of tuition and certain fees to any state-supported Illinois higher education institutions for the equivalent of four calendar years of full-time enrollment, including summer terms. ▪ Veterans' Grant, which pays tuition and certain fees at public higher education institutions to honorably discharged veterans who meet eligibility requirements.

Comparison of Texas Veteran Education-related Benefits	
State	Description of State Benefits Offered to Student Veterans
North Carolina	<p>Provides waivers and scholarships. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Waivers for in-state tuition, which provide in-state tuition rates for any member of the armed services qualifying for admission to a North Carolina public institution of higher education, but not qualifying as a resident for tuition purposes. ▪ Four-year scholarship program, which provides four-year scholarships at approved schools in North Carolina for the qualifying children of certain class categories of deceased, disabled, combat, or prisoner of war/missing-in-action veterans.
New York	<p>Provides tuition assistance and scholarships. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Veterans Tuition Award, which provides tuition assistance for full- and part-time study for up to the full cost of tuition for programs approved by the New York State Division of Veterans' Affairs for eligible veterans who served in certain combat operations. ▪ Military Service Recognition Scholarships, which provide tuition, fees, room and board, and allowances for books, supplies, and transportation for up to four years at a public higher education institution, or the equal benefit at a private institution, for veterans, children, spouses, and financial dependents of members of the U.S. armed forces who, while New York state residents, died or became severely and permanently disabled while engaged in hostilities or training for hostilities.
Ohio	<p>Provides waivers and scholarships. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ohio GI Promise, which provides waivers for in-state tuition for qualified veterans and active duty service members of the U.S. military, National Guard, and U.S. military reserves and their dependents who establish residency in the state. ▪ Ohio War Orphans Scholarship, which provides financial assistance in the 2010 and 2011 academic years for a percentage of tuition and general fees at public institutions of higher education and \$4,400 for tuition and fees at independent and private entities to children of deceased or severely disabled Ohio veterans who served in the armed forces during a period of declared war or conflict.
Pennsylvania	<p>Provides grants and waivers. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PA State Grants, which provides grants to qualified veterans who need financial assistance to complete approved programs. The amount of the award received will vary each academic year based on available funding. ▪ POW-MIA Program, which provides state grants to children of service members who have been a prisoner of war or reported as missing in action and were a previous Pennsylvania resident. ▪ Educational Gratuity Program, which awards up to \$500 per term for up to four years for the dependent children of service-related disabled or deceased veterans. ▪ Postsecondary Educational Gratuity Program, which waives tuition, fees, and room and board at public higher education institutions for children of a service member who was killed as a result of performing his or her official duties while on active duty.
Texas	<p>Provides waivers and tuition assistance. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hazlewood Act exemption, which waives tuition, dues, and selected fees for up to 150 semester credit hours at public higher education institutions for honorably discharged or separated Texas veterans and their dependent children and spouses. ▪ Tuition for Texans, which waives non-resident fees (pay at Texas resident rate) for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Service members who select Texas as their home of record upon entering the service, even if they officially changed their permanent resident to another state while in the military. ◆ Service members who continue to be a Texas resident, even if they are stationed out of the state or out of the country, and are taking classes via distance education. ◆ Spouses and dependents of eligible service members. ▪ Tuition for Non-Texans, which waives non-resident fees (pay at Texas resident rate) under certain conditions for service members and their dependents who did not select Texas as their home of record when they entered the service or who have not taken steps to change their permanent residence with the military to Texas. Conditions include service members currently assigned to duty in Texas or whose family intends to make Texas their home, and other specific situations.

Comparison of Texas Veteran Education-related Benefits	
State	Description of State Benefits Offered to Student Veterans
Virginia	<p>Provides waivers, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program, which waives tuition and fees to public higher education institutions or other public accredited postsecondary institutions granting a degree, diploma, or certificate and provides a stipend for room, board, books, and supplies to spouses and children of disabled or deceased service members or who are missing in action or a prisoner of war.

Example of a Streamlined Veteran Education Web Portal

The state of California has a streamlined Web portal at www.troopstocollege.ca.gov that presents veteran-related education information and links to veteran affairs offices at each public state university. Below is a screen shot of that portal's home page.

TROOPS to COLLEGE

Home Providing Quality Public Higher Education for All Who Have Served

Applying >>
Benefits >>
Resources >>
Degree Programs >>

Veterans Affairs Offices

The California State University >>

University of California >>

California Community Colleges >>

County Veterans Services Offices >>

SPOTLIGHT

Student Veteran News

Why apply to California College and University Campuses?

Student Veteran Groups & Organizations

Other Partners

Service Members Opportunity College
Student Veterans of America
Employment Development Department
Army
Navy
Air Force
Marines
Boots to Books
California National Guard
Military.com
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CAL VET
CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
California Department of Veterans Affairs >>

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger

CLICK HERE TO PLAY

Troops to College was created by **California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger** to attract more veterans to California's public universities and colleges by making campuses more veteran friendly. The initiative was designed to showcase the full range of curriculums and services available to veterans at California State University, the University of California, and California Community Colleges. Working with the California Department of Veterans Affairs, the Office of the **Secretary of Education**, the **Labor and Workforce Development Agency**, and military branches within the state, Troops to College is helping ensure veterans are aware of all their educational options.

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