



Discovering Listed PTSD Support on Campus in Higher Education: A Web Survey of Traditional Academic Institutions Home Pages

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ABSTRACT

Veterans are becoming a growing percentage of the total student population of the United States, and many have posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). However, veterans will be more likely to succeed when attending an academic institution that meets their unique needs. This study is an internet survey of 80 academic institutions' home pages and the links therein for available PTSD support and mental healthcare coordination with the Veterans Administration (VA). The purpose of this study was to provide a sample of what PTSD support is listed as available on campus and whether coordination with the VA is listed as an available resource at academic institutions. Identifying the types of academic institutions that best meet the needs of student veterans will allow them to consider an academic institution where they are supported, therefore, enabling them to succeed. Of the 80 institutions surveyed, eight declared themselves to be veteran friendly. Three institutions posted available mental health enrollment with the VA or listed VA counseling services available on campus. The data indicated an inconsistency of available, coordinated support with the VA available on campus. This study adds information on the state of PTSD support in the traditional academic environments. However, more research is necessary to identify available PTSD support at traditional and nontraditional academic institutions.

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Veterans first started to receive education benefits as authorized by the Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1944 at the end of WWII (Hammond, 2017; Tinoco, 2015). Known as the GI Bill, it has had four revisions before becoming the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008 (Hammond, 2017; Tinoco, 2015). The US Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) 2020 *Annual Benefits Report* stated that in 2020, 875,060 beneficiaries received education benefits. However, the report did not provide data on the percentages of veterans who utilized education benefits (US Department of Veterans Affairs, 2020a). The report also listed the data by the six specific educational assistance programs currently offered by the VA: Post-9/11, Montgomery GI Bill-Active Duty, Montgomery GI Bill-Reserve, the Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance Program, the Post-Vietnam Era Veterans Educational Assistance Program (VEAP), and the Reserve Educational Assistance Program (US Department of Veterans Affairs, 2020c). For the purpose of this study, the term student veteran describes a student who is on active duty, has retired honorably or medically, has been discharged under conditions other than dishonorable service since the start of the Vietnam War (November 1, 1955), and is part of an academic institution's total student population (Hitt et al., 2015; US Department of Veterans Affairs, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c). Veterans are classified as nontraditional students, regardless of full-time or part-time enrollment status (Bagby et al., 2019).

Common injuries among deployed veterans, no matter the theater of operation, for example, WWII, Vietnam, Desert Shield/Desert Storm I, Operation Enduring Freedom, or Operation Iraqi Freedom, can include the hidden injury of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). PTSD is a mental health condition triggered by a traumatic event experienced or witnessed as the diagnostic criterion, an intrusion symptom, and an avoidance (Stana et al., 2017). Symptoms of PTSD that would make it difficult for a student veteran to attend an academic institution or to use their GI Bill include depression, isolationism or avoidance of social environments, and hyperawareness resulting in anxiety (Burdick et al, 2020; Mayo Clinic, 2022). Additional symptoms that act as barriers include flashbacks, memory loss, and severe anxiety, occasionally resulting in feelings of alienation (Burdick et al., 2020; Mayo Clinic, 2022). PTSD is generally caused by experiencing a traumatic event; however, non-combat experiences also cause PTSD (Mayo Clinic, 2022). The prevalence of PTSD is becoming common among veterans (Osborne, 2016). Between January and June 2000, the number of PTSD diagnoses included 39,264 non-deployed and 138,197 deployed personnel (De Los Santos et al., 2019; Osborne, 2016). The *Veterans Benefits Administration Annual Benefit Report 2020*, does not list statistics on the current

number of non-service-connected diagnoses of PTSD (US Department of Veterans Affairs, 2020a).

More than half a million veterans have returned from service in the Middle East, Europe, Africa, and Asia and opted to utilize their GI Bill to enroll in college. However, many of these veterans face a shared experience of PTSD (Gonzales & Elliott, 2016; US Department of Veterans Affairs, 2020c), which has impacted student performance, GPA, motivation, and academic success (De Los Santos et al., 2019). Many veterans with PTSD who enroll in higher education are unaware of the resources available to assist them, which constitutes a barrier to seeking and receiving treatment (Cadigan et al., 2019; Osborne, 2016). According to the *Veterans Affairs' (VA) 2020 Annual Benefits Report*, 45,153 new beneficiaries received mental health benefits for PTSD. Adding to the 1,186,818 total PTSD-compensation recipients. The report also listed PTSD as a condition reported by 3.1% of new compensation recipients and 4.1% of all compensation recipients. The report data only reflected service-connected compensations. There was no information available in the report or supplemental files for non-service-related disability benefits (US Department of Veterans Affairs, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c).

Despite the increasing number of veterans with PTSD, the number of veterans in higher education continues to grow (Darcy et al., 2018). Veterans transitioning to student veteran status and student veterans currently enrolled, bring a unique set of support-service requirements to higher education, specifically PTSD support. With the geopolitical climate in a state of flux, it is likely that an educator will often interact with at least one student veteran during the day (Hammond, 2017). Interactions can occur with student veterans with PTSD in the classroom, social venues, common areas, and living quarters. However, the availability and types of PTSD support available on campus for student veterans, faculty, staff, administrators, or other students at higher-education institutions are not commonly known (Cadigan et al., 2019; Osborne, 2016; Possemato et al., 2018).

Falkey (2016) conducted a qualitative study centered on the veteran to student transition and integration into academic life and identified veteran-friendly institutions. However, it is unclear whether higher-education institutions are prepared to meet the support needs of student veterans with PTSD (Gordon et al., 2016; Kirchner & Biniecki, 2019). Student veterans with PTSD often have memory issues and must perform individual learning rituals to succeed, including counseling sessions or relaxation-therapy techniques to treat their symptoms and effects. These methods facilitate normal function within society. Student veterans with PTSD may experience short-term memory loss, loss of sleep, confusion, mood swings, anger, or seizures.

The more intense incidents may involve a student veteran experiencing a flashback (Medley et al., 2017). A student veteran may experience a trigger event that can initiate flashbacks and reliving a traumatic experience. Thus, adversely affecting the student veteran's academic performance (De Los Santos et al., 2019). A trigger event can happen with the information provided within the curriculum, presentation styles, curriculum venue, or the academic environment, providing numerous sensory stimuli (Ellison et al., 2012; Mayo Clinic, 2022). A consideration an instructor may not always take into account when interacting with student veterans. Often, although not always, the student veteran may sense the warning signs of an upcoming PTSD incident (Mayo Clinic, 2022). Knowing where to go for support on campus can be a valuable resource for student veterans. It is unclear where student veterans can seek such assistance on campus or if these resources are currently commonly available in higher-education academic institutions (Cadigan et al., 2019; Elliott, 2015).

Coordinating PTSD support received on campus with PTSD support received off-campus, such as with the VA, provides effective services to the student veteran (Elliott, 2015; Medley et al., 2017). Cadigan et al. (2019) listed veterans not knowing where to go for PTSD support as a barrier to receiving treatment. Elliott (2015) recommended that higher-education institutions and the VA establish policies to facilitate the student veteran's receipt of proper PTSD support, thus leading to success in their education. Elliott (2015) also recommended that academic institutions include properly trained therapists with experience treating veterans with PTSD and that academic institutions work directly with local VA facilities to ensure student veterans are registered and apply for their VA health benefits. Such linkages between higher-education academic institutions and the VA were also discussed by Medley et al. (2017). The literature reviewed also reaffirms that more research is needed in this area (Kirchner & Biniecki, 2019).

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The problem addressed by this study was how student veterans enrolled in higher education can often experience PTSD incidents and are not aware of resources or support services that are available on campus to meet their needs. Student veterans can experience PTSD incidents anywhere, with many incidents triggered visually (Hammond, 2017; Mayo Clinic, 2022). Sudden bright flashes of light or seeing an event similar to what was previously experienced, such as a small fire in a science lab, can bring back a memory. Audio stimulation is also common in facilitating a PTSD incident. Often this takes on the form of an audio file, a sound bite of

a film, or other types of auditory media (Hammond, 2017; Mayo Clinic, 2022), that uses loud, unexpected noises that can replicate gunfire or an explosive device. Presentations on the Tet Offensive from the Vietnam War, the liberation of Kuwait, or Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm I, can be a powerful facilitator to a PTSD event. Also, sensitivity to sound, light, and hyperawareness are some of the results of PTSD (Hammond, 2017; Mayo Clinic, 2022). Moreover, if the student veteran has a high anxiety level or is hyperaware of their surroundings, they can unknowingly be conducting threat assessments of their environment. For example, construction on campus, exposure to crowds at a sporting event, or a cramped classroom can cause anxiety or confusion impacting the student veteran (Ellison et al., 2012; Hammond, 2017; Mayo Clinic, 2022). Large numbers of people can cause apprehension due to the possibility of unwanted physical contact (Hammond, 2017; Mayo Clinic, 2022). The presentation style and subject matter within the curriculum are not always considered by the instructors and could negatively affect student veterans with PTSD, which was reflected in Kirchner and Biniecki (2019). A student veteran seeing a representation of military service during a presentation can be quite a powerful trigger. It is at times like these that the student veteran may seek additional support. Available support services for student veterans with PTSD facilitate academic success and a positive academic experience (Kirchner, 2015; Mayo Clinic, 2022; Medley et al., 2017; Osborne, 2016; Young & Phillips, 2019). However, if available, student veterans may not know where to find PTSD support facilities at their academic institution. The availability of information that informs veterans about such support services can be an effective tool when choosing an academic institution (Kirchner & Biniecki, 2019; Young & Phillips, 2019), and knowing where to go to receive that support can be a valuable resource for student veterans. However, it is unclear where student veterans can seek such assistance on campus or if these resources are not currently commonly available in traditional academic institutions (Osborne, 2016; Taylor et al., 2016). Little research is available on what support services are available in the higher-education academic community to support student veterans with PTSD. Academic institutions are often not prepared to meet this challenge (Osborne, 2016; Taylor et al., 2016).

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to provide a sample of what available PTSD support services are listed on campus and whether coordination with the VA is listed as being available at traditional academic institutions. This information was

obtained from 80 traditional academic institution's home page and accessed from the links thereon. This study provides information for the prospective student veteran on what is posted to be available at traditional academic institutions in providing PTSD support. This study was a logical step in identifying what types of PTSD support are available at traditional academic institutions and identifying institutions that provide such support to enable veterans with PTSD to consider traditional academic institutions to meet their specific and unique needs (Bagby et al., 2019). Traditional academic institutions are not always prepared to meet this unique need (De Los Santos et al., 2019; Taylor et al., 2016). Therefore, this study adds to the limited available research on the available PTSD support at traditional academic institutions. This study is an information resource to identify institutions that may be able to support those student veterans with PTSD and offer coordination with the VA for health benefits because all veterans do not have access to health benefits upon military separation. However, they may meet the eligibility requirements for applying to receive VA health benefits. These veterans may not have civilian health insurance and may have to rely on the VA.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The number of veterans utilizing their VA education benefits is significant. With the increasing student veteran population, academic institutions are more likely to have students with PTSD on campus (Radford et al., 2016). Not all academic institutions are prepared to support and meet the needs of student veterans because that support for faculty, staff, administrators, or other students is not always available (Gordon et al., 2016). Very little research is available in the higher-education community to support student veterans with PTSD and academic institutions are often not prepared to meet this challenge (De Los Santos et al., 2019). This study provides information on the available support for student veterans with PTSD by identifying the academic institutions that student veterans should consider that are better suited to fulfill their needs and provide support that is essential to succeed.

Academic institutions with perceived available support for student veterans could possibly be more appealing to student veterans when seeking admission (Bagby et al., 2019). Moreover, this study could guide traditional academic institutions in planning to increase the number of existing support personnel on campus, plan for new facilities, or upgrade/improve existing facilities to incorporate PTSD-support services and resources available on campus. This study is relevant in facilitating the academic success of student veterans. Identifying the need for PTSD support and

identifying where said support can be found is important for student veterans' success (Elliott, 2015). Support services for PTSD could facilitate positive change in academic life and academic performance (Kirchner & Biniecki, 2019). This basic interpretation and line of thought led the researcher to the following conceptual framework:

$$\text{Student veteran} + \text{Support Services for PTSD} = \text{Academic Success/Life Success}$$

This equation represents the path to achieving academic success. Understanding what types of PTSD support are available and where said support is available facilitates academic success (De Los Santos et al., 2019).

METHOD

There were no ethical, consent, or conflict of interest concerns for this study, and the retrieved data are free for public access. There was no funding for this study, no institution listed in this study, nor did the researcher receive any compensation. This study used a survey method to gather information on traditional academic institution home pages to provide the researcher with the perspective of a veteran searching for an academic institution that provided PTSD support. The survey of home pages from the veteran's perspective ensured the information and data collected would also be relevant to PTSD support and could be found by anyone replicating this study. This study provides information regarding PTSD support from the individual traditional academic institutions, thus building on the available research on PTSD support in higher education. Taking on the role of a potential student veteran enabled the researcher to focus on the relevant information, keeping the target audience in mind.

SAMPLE

The sample size for this study was retrieved from the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) College Football Bowl Championship Series; every school that played in a Bowl Championship Series game had its home page surveyed. There was an additional institution represented from Division II. The researcher combined parts of two Division I institutions names when reading from the bowl game list and typing for the home page and, as a result, included information from West Virginia State University. The aforementioned institutions, North Carolina State University, University of West Virginia (both Division I) and West Virginia State University (Division II)

are all represented in this study. This convenience sample was retrieved from the Bing® search engine providing the list of the bowl games for the NCAA 2021 academic year. The list was retrieved on January 16, 2022. The researcher surveyed a total of 80 institutions' home pages. Two were Tech institutions (Texas Tech University and Virginia Tech), and two were military academies (Army and Air Force). The remaining 76 were traditional academic colleges or universities. One institution, West Virginia State University, is a Historically Black College or University (HBCU).

The 80 institutions' pages investigated represent 38 states, broken down in order of appearance in the playoffs as follows: (1) Tennessee, 3; (2) Ohio, 4; (3) Illinois, 1; (4) South Carolina, 3; (5) Kentucky, 3; (6) North Carolina, 5; (7) Texas, 6; (8) California, 3; (9) Alabama, 3; (10) Vermont, 1; (11) Michigan, 5; (12) Virginia, 3; (13) Utah, 2; (14) Oregon, 2; (15) Louisiana, 2; (16) West Virginia, 3; (17) Oklahoma, 3; (18) Wyoming, 1; (19) Missouri, 1; (20) New York, 1; (21) Florida, 2; (22) Hawaii, 1; (23) Georgia, 2; (24) Indiana, 3; (25) Nevada, 1; (26) Massachusetts, 1; (27) Colorado, 1; (28) Mississippi, 2; (29) New Mexico, 1; (30) Iowa, 2; (31) Pennsylvania, 2; (32) Wisconsin, 1; (33) Arizona, 1; (34) New Jersey, 1; (35) Washington, 1; (36) Idaho, 1; (37) Arkansas, 1; and (38) Kansas, 1.

The 80 institutions represented two military academies, 69 public, and nine private institutions, broken down as follows.

- Six Public: (1) Middle Tennessee State University, (2) Coastal Carolina University, (3) Western Kentucky University, (4) Appalachian State University, (5) Fresno State University, and (6) University of Missouri.
- Thirty Public Research: (1) University of Toledo, (2) Northern Illinois University, (3) University of Texas-El Paso, (4) University of Alabama at Birmingham, (5) Eastern Michigan University, (6) Marshall University, (7) Old Dominion University, (8) Kent State University, (9) University of Texas-San Antonio, (10) San Diego State University, (11) University of Central Florida, (12) University of Memphis, (13) Georgia State University, (14) Ball State University, (15) Western Michigan University, (16) East Carolina University, (17) University of Houston, (18) University of Louisville, (19) Texas Tech University, (20) University of Oklahoma, (21) University of North Carolina, (22) University of South Carolina, (23) Arizona State University, (24) Central Michigan University, (25) Boise State University, (26) University of Cincinnati, (27) University of Michigan, (28) University of Arkansas, (29) University of Iowa, and (30) University of Ole Miss.
- Twenty-five Public Land-grant Research University: (1) Utah State University, (2) Oregon State University, (3)

University of Wyoming, (4) University of Florida, (5) University of Hawaii at Manoa, (6) University of Nevada, (7) University of Auburn, (8) Mississippi State University, (9) UCLA, (10) North Carolina State University, (11) University of West Virginia, (12) University of Minnesota, (13) Virginia Tech, (14) Clemson University, (15) Iowa State University, (16) University of Oregon, (17) University of Tennessee Knoxville, (18) Michigan State University, (19) Rutgers University, (20) Washington State University, (21) University of Georgia, (22) Oklahoma State University, (23) University of Ohio State, (24) University of Utah, and (25) Kansas State University.

- Two Public Land-grant Universities: West Virginia State University and Louisiana State University.
 - The West Virginia State University is this study's only HBCU.
- Two Public Flagship Research Universities: the University of Alabama and the University of Louisiana at Lafayette.
- Two Public Flagship Land-grant Research Universities: Perdue University, and the University of Wisconsin.
- Penn State University was the only Public State-Related Land-Grant Research Institution in the study.
- The University of Pittsburgh was the only Public State-Related Research University.

The nine private institutions broke down as follows: One Private: Liberty University (Evangelical). One Private Land-grant Research University: the University of Kentucky. Four Private Research (religious): Boston College, Jesuit; Notre Dame, Catholic; Brigham Young University, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints; and Southern Methodist University, United Methodist Church. Three Private Research (non-religious): University of Tulsa, Wake Forest University, and Baylor University. The Army and Airforce military institutions are classified as military academies and are considered separate academic institutions for this study. The demographics for the institutions are listed in [Table 1](#).

INSTRUMENT AND DESIGN

Using the internet survey method, each academic institution's home page provided all the information collected. These institutions were listed in the order of the games played, from the earliest to the latest date. Each institution was listed once on an Excel datasheet to list the information for a sortable, organized interpretation of data. (See [Table 1](#)).

SCHOOL/INSTITUTION	SELF-DECLARED “VETERAN FRIENDLY” (INSTITUTION TYPE), NCAA DIVISION	POSTED AVAILABLE PTSD/MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT AND/OR SERVICES ON CAMPUS (STUDENT INSURANCE, STUDENT HEALTH FACILITIES, COUNSELORS)	POSTED AVAILABLE COORDINATION WITH THE VA FOR PTSD/ MENTAL HEALTH CARE SUPPORT
Middle TN (State U) Blue Raiders	No (public university) I	Yes	Yes, VA counseling services listed
Toledo (U of) Rockets	No (public research university) I	Yes	No
Northern Illinois (U) Huskies	No (public research university) I	Yes	No
Coastal Carolina (U) Chanticleers	No (public university) I	Yes	No
Western Kentucky (U) Hilltoppers	No (public university) I	Yes	No
Appalachian State (U) Mountaineers	No (public university) I	Yes	No
UTEP Miners	No (public research university) I	Yes	No
Fresno State (U) Bulldogs	No (public university) I	Yes	No
UAB (U of Al at Birmingham) Blazers	No (public research university) I	Yes	No
Brigham Young (U) Cougars	No (private research, religious: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints) I	Yes	No
Eastern Michigan (U) Eagles	No (public research university) I	Yes	No
Liberty Flames	No (private, religious- evangelical) I	Yes	No
Utah State (U) Aggies	No (public land-grant research university) I	Yes	Yes, enrollment in health benefits
Oregon State (U) Beavers	No (public land-grant research university) I	Yes	No
Louisiana-Lafayette (U of, at) Ragin’ Cajuns	No (public flagship research university) I	Yes	No
Marshall (U) Thundering Herd	No (public research university) I	Yes	No
Old Dominion (U) Monarchs	No (public research university) I	Yes	No
Tulsa (U of) Golden Hurricane	No (private research, non-religious) I	Yes	No
Kent State (U) Golden Flashes	Yes, https://www.militaryfriendly.com/schools/ (public research university) I	Yes	No
Wyoming (U of) Cowboys	No (public land-grant research university) I	Yes	No
UTSA Roadrunners	No (public research university) I	Yes	No
San Diego State (U) Aztecs	No (public research university) I	Yes	No
Missouri (U of) Tigers	No (public university) I	Yes	No
Army (West Point) Black Knights	NA (military academy) I	NA	NA
UCF (Central Florida) Knights	No (public research university) I	Yes	No
Florida (U of) Gators	No (public land-grant research university) I	Yes	No
Memphis (U of) Tigers	No (public research university) I	Yes	No

SCHOOL/INSTITUTION	SELF-DECLARED “VETERAN FRIENDLY” (INSTITUTION TYPE), NCAA DIVISION	POSTED AVAILABLE PTSD/MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT AND/OR SERVICES ON CAMPUS (STUDENT INSURANCE, STUDENT HEALTH FACILITIES, COUNSELORS)	POSTED AVAILABLE COORDINATION WITH THE VA FOR PTSD/MENTAL HEALTH CARE SUPPORT
Hawaii (U of) Warriors (at Manoa)	No (public land-grant research university) I	Yes	Yes, enrollment in health benefits
Georgia State (U) Panthers	Yes, military outreach (vet friendly 21/22) (public research university) I	Yes	No
Ball State (U) Cardinals	No (public research university) I	Yes	No
Nevada (U of) Wolf Pack	No (public land-grant research university) I	Yes	No
Western Michigan (U) Broncos	No (public research university) I	Yes	No
Boston College Eagles	No (private research, religious–Jesuit) I	Yes	No
East Carolina (U) Pirates	No (public research university) I	Yes	No
Houston (U of) Cougars	No (public research university) I	Yes	No
Auburn (U of) Tigers	No (public land-grant research university) I	Yes	No
Air Force (Academy) Falcons	NA (military academy) I	NA	NA
Louisville (U of) Cardinals	No (public research university) I	Yes	No
Mississippi State (U) Bulldogs	No (public land-grant research university) I	Yes	No
Texas Tech (U) Red Raiders	No (public research university) I	Yes	No
UCLA Bruins	No (public land-grant research university) I	Yes	No
North Carolina State (U) Wolfpack	Yes, military and veterans services page (public land-grant research university) I	Yes	No
West Virginia State (U) Yellow Jackets	Yes, military and veterans services page (public land-grant university) II (HBCU)	Yes	No
West Virginia (U of) Mountaineers	No (public land-grant research university) I	Yes	No
Minnesota (U of) Golden Gophers	No (public land-grant research university) I	Yes	No
SMU (Southern Methodist University) Mustangs	No (private research, religious–United Methodist Church) I	Yes	No
Virginia Tech Hokies	No (public land-grant research) I	Yes	No
Clemson (U) Tigers	No (public land-grant research) I	Yes	No
Iowa State (U) Cyclones	No (public land-grant research) I	Yes	No
Oregon (U of) Ducks	No (public land-grant research) I	Yes	No
Oklahoma (U of) Sooners	No (public research university) I	Yes	No
North Carolina (U of) Tar Heels	No (public research university) I	Yes	No
South Carolina (U of) Gamecocks	No (public research university) I	Yes	No
Tennessee (U of) Volunteers (Knoxville)	No (public land-grant research university) I	Yes	No

SCHOOL/INSTITUTION	SELF-DECLARED “VETERAN FRIENDLY” (INSTITUTION TYPE), NCAA DIVISION	POSTED AVAILABLE PTSD/MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT AND/OR SERVICES ON CAMPUS (STUDENT INSURANCE, STUDENT HEALTH FACILITIES, COUNSELORS)	POSTED AVAILABLE COORDINATION WITH THE VA FOR PTSD/MENTAL HEALTH CARE SUPPORT
Purdue (U) Boilermakers	No (public flagship land-grant research university) I	Yes	No
Wisconsin (U of) Badgers	No (public flagship land-grant research university) I	Yes	No
Arizona State (U) Sun Devils	No (public research university) I	Yes	No
Wake Forest (U) Demon Deacons	No (private research, non-religious) I	Yes	No
Rutgers (U) Scarlet Knights	No (public land-grant research university) I	Yes	No
Washington State (U) Cougars	No (public land-grant research university) I	Yes	No
Central Michigan (U) Chippewas	No (public research university) I	Yes	No
Boise State (U) Broncos	No (public research university) I	Yes	No
Cincinnati (U of) Bearcats	No (public research university) I	Yes	No
Alabama (U of) Crimson Tide	Yes, home, office of veterans and military affairs (public flagship research university) I	Yes	No
Georgia (U of) Bulldogs	Yes, home, student veteran resource center (public land-grant research university) I	Yes	No
Michigan (U of) Wolverines	No (public research university) I	Yes	No
Penn State (U) Nittany Lions	Yes, home, resources, veterans, and military (public state-related land-grant research university) I	Yes	No
Arkansas (U of) Razorbacks	No (public research university) I	Yes	No
Oklahoma State (U) Cowboys	No (public land-grant research university) I	Yes	No
Notre Dame (U of) Fighting Irish	No (private research, religious-Catholic) I	Yes	No
Iowa (U of) Hawkeyes	No (public research university) I	Yes	No
Kentucky (U of) Wildcats	No (private land-grant research university) I	Yes	No
Ohio State (U of) Buckeyes	No (public land-grant research university) I	Yes	No
Utah (U of) Utes	No (public land-grant research university) I	Yes	No
Baylor (U) Bears	No (private research university) I	Yes	No
Ole Miss (U of) Rebels	No (public research university) I	Yes	No
LSU Tigers	No (public land-grant university) I	Yes	No
Kansas State (U) Wildcats	Yes, nontraditional and student veteran student services page (public land-grant research university) I	Yes	No

Table 1 Summary of Data by Institution.

The method of inquiry for this study is qualitative. The researcher used a phenomenological approach and assumed the role of a veteran with PTSD searching for an academic institution that would provide PTSD support. This approach will allow the researcher to examine their lived experiences and determine if certain experiences are felt across a group of people (Creswell, 2013; Given, 2008). This approach was logical to promote a deeper understanding of a social phenomenon as viewed from the researcher's perspective and emphasizing exploration and discovery (Lapan et al., 2012; Suter, 2017). Also, allowing the researcher to describe subjective representations of objective reality and how they experienced the phenomena (Creswell, 2013; Teherani et al., 2015). The researcher believed that collecting the data utilizing the same means as a prospective student, then compiling the appropriate data and information about PTSD support in the same or similar process as a future student-veteran provided the researcher an idea of what perspective student veterans experience in their search for an academic institution. The researcher experienced the phenomenon of looking for an institution that would support the needs of student veterans with PTSD.

The home pages were inspected for the terms "veteran friendly" and "PTSD." Then, major links to possible divisions were explored. Some academic, administrative, and other offices had their own links on the home page. Student Support Services, Financial Aid, Academic Affairs, Library, and Athletics were common links from each institution's home page. Many offices had links accessible from the main menu button. Student Affairs/Student Life/Student Health/Student Support was the most common beginning points for the paths to the desired information. After the links were explored, their paths were recorded on the datasheet.

Then, the terms "PTSD support," "PTSD education," "student veteran support," "medical care," "mental health care," "student affairs," "student services," and "VA coordination" were searched through the home page search bar. Only the first page of search results was examined. As posted by each search term, information, such as specific support resources and support facilities, was recorded on the data sheet. The researcher spent an hour on each institution's home page and links thereon to ensure a thorough search for information. It often took the researcher many link clicks from the home page or search bar to get to the relevant page. The data were collected, analyzed, then sorted by various demographics based on data analysis and grouping of the demographics as a summary in the results section. The groupings and demographics are discussed in the sample section, listing

the number of institutions, the types of institutions, and by state. As the data were collected, they were coded by type set (normal = no; bold = yes), and different themes/items of note or exceptions were notated on the data sheet and listed for discussion later in the results section.

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to provide information on PTSD support listed as being available at traditional academic institutions. The data collected was from the traditional academic institution home pages and the links thereon. The data provided information on where and what PTSD support, if any, was available. The data collected from the 80 academic institution home pages provided data on how many traditional academic institutions declared themselves to be veteran friendly, eight institutions self-declared; data on the type of institution and NCAA Division; and data on the number of institutions that have posted available PTSD/mental health support and/or services on campus, such as school-sponsored student insurance, school-sponsored health facilities, or counselors, provided at each of the 80 institutions; and the posted available coordination with the VA for PTSD/mental health care support, three institutions posted said coordination. All results and findings are located in [Table 1](#).

FINDINGS

Some home pages have health services listed as available, either as student insurance, facilities with specific services, departments on their home page, or when entered in the search bar. Such school-sponsored PTSD support falls under the mental health services or counseling services offered at clinics or other facilities on campus. Coordination with the VA for education benefits was commonly found among the institutions. It was uncommon to find coordination with the VA for PTSD/mental health. However, Middle Tennessee State University, Utah State University, and the University of Hawaii at Manoa have VA counseling with a posted link to enroll in the VA medical benefits. Self-declaration of being a veteran-friendly school was usually located on the veteran services-related page. Eight institutions fell into this category: Kent State University, Georgia State University, North Carolina State University, West Virginia State University, University of Alabama, University of Georgia, Penn State University, and Kansas State University.

EVALUATION OF THE FINDINGS

Falkey (2016) and Sullivan and Yoon (2020) discuss the veteran-friendly institution and facilitating academic success. Part of their research includes PTSD support. The veteran and academic worlds are merging to meet the needs of student-veterans with PTSD. Providing school-sponsored health care or student insurance is common among the institutions surveyed. This option sometimes is already included in the tuition, while other institutions add it as a separate cost to the overall tuition, allowing students not needing this benefit not to be assessed at an additional cost to their education. It is unclear whether student veterans are aware of school-sponsored services included in the cost of tuition. Student insurance or school-sponsored counseling services are commonly available. However, they do not always cover PTSD support on campus. Coordination for mental health support, school-sponsored or coordinated with the VA, is limited and has room for improvement.

All the traditional academic institutions posted having some type of school-sponsored available PTSD and mental health support in the form of counseling or facilities. None of the institutions to self-declare as veteran-friendly post availability of coordination with the VA for PTSD/mental health support. The inconsistent availability of coordination with the VA indicated that more effort to provide this service is necessary. Coordination with the VA for education benefits could be a model for coordinating VA mental health support and services staying consistent with the existing literature (Hooyer et al., 2020). Such coordination would be an available resource for student-veterans (Kirchner & Biniecki, 2019). More improvement in this area is necessary.

The consistency of all the traditional academic institutions in this study providing access to institution-sponsored PTSD/mental health support, often as a part of the tuition with an option to opt-in or opt-out, is an indicator of the importance the academic world places on the mental health of their students. Research has shown that academic performance is affected by the state of mental health of the student (Bailey et al., 2019; De Los Santos et al., 2019; Elliott, 2015; Kees et al., 2017).

Having access on campus to a VA health office or representative to facilitate PTSD support would be convenient for student veterans. Medical benefits provided by the VA or military retirement are essential for facilitating student veterans to seek out health care/mental health care facilities. Health and PTSD/mental health support could, if implemented, become common among traditional academic institutions, facilitating status or identification as a veteran-friendly institution (Falkey, 2016; Sullivan

& Yoon, 2020). Posting the availability of programs that offer PTSD support can be a marketing tactic to attract veterans to enroll in an institution. Having access to a VA office or representative is one step in ensuring academic success by facilitating access to mental health treatment and PTSD-support services (Kinney et al., 2020; Kirchner & Biniecki, 2019). Coordinating support services received on campus with support received off campus, specifically the VA, provides effective mental health support services to the student veteran with PTSD. The effects and treatment methods of PTSD are readily known.

DISCUSSION

The researcher, also a former student veteran, is aware of the types of experiences veterans have faced, combat missions, and humanitarian missions, just to name a few, and the importance of having PTSD support when on campus. Having coordinated support that the VA accepts and offering on-campus enrollment for VA health benefits would ensure access to mental health services when needed, and facilitate academic success (Cadigan et al., 2019; Elliott, 2015). Institutions market themselves to veterans utilizing various media, often displaying acceptance of VA Education benefits. An institution's home page is often the center of attention to the prospective student. Utilizing the convenient headers or links to their individual elements: Academic Affairs, Admission, Enrollment, Student Life/Student Affairs, Financial Aid, and Library can provide the prospective student veteran their first impression of which services are offered.

One major marketing tool to attract veterans is the availability of coordination with the VA for education benefits. Veterans Benefit Centers and Veterans Resource Centers are commonly found on an institution's home page. These centers offer transition services to facilitate the veteran's integration into the academic world. Unfortunately, mental health services are not commonly found at these centers. These centers focus more on financial, academic, and peer social-support organizations. Uninsured veterans and veterans who do not qualify for medical benefits other than what is available from the VA may not realize they are authorized to utilize the institution-sponsored health services provided, if available, for PTSD support. Student insurance or school-sponsored counseling services are commonly available and often included in the tuition costs. However, they do not always cover PTSD support on campus, and coordination with the VA for PTSD support is limited.

Knowing where to go for PTSD support on campus can be a valuable resource for student veterans. It is unclear

whether student veterans know where they can go to seek such assistance on campus or if the resources are even available on campus (Cheney et al., 2018). Coordinating support received on campus with the VA provides effective services to the student veteran (Peterson et al., 2017). The data retrieved provided information on the state of preparedness of traditional academic institutions on the posted availability of PTSD/mental health support on campus. Specifically, that institutions with NCAA affiliation provided school sponsored health care and school sponsored counseling services for depression, anxiety, crisis management, and other services; however, PTSD support was not always specifically listed as an available service. This shows that efforts are being made in the higher education community to meet the health and mental health needs of our students.

The limited number of institutions that posted coordination with the VA for health services, including mental health, shows the need for improvement in this area, thus improving the overall preparedness of academic institutions to meet the unique needs of student-veterans with PTSD. Improving this readiness is also reflected in Cadigan et al. (2019) and De Los Santos et al. (2019). This information about coordination with the VA align with the researcher's previous study (Burke, 2021) in that coordination with the VA is difficult to access or inconsistent in availability, and that improvement in this area is necessary, a view also supported by Cadigan et al. (2019). This preparedness to meet the unique needs of the student veteran with PTSD can be utilized in choosing a traditional academic institution (Cadigan et al., 2019). Improvements in these areas can facilitate a positive academic life and academic success (De Los Santos et al., 2019; Sullivan & Yoon, 2020).

This study adds to the available information for PTSD support services/mental health services available on campus. Much can still be done to ensure PTSD support is available for student-veterans. This is echoed in the study by Bagby et al. (2019), which indicated only a small percentage of student veterans choose their traditional academic institution based on available support for PTSD. This study was the next step from Burke (2021), a qualitative descriptive analysis that focused on the student veterans perspective on available PTSD support at their academic institution and added more information on the availability of support for PTSD in the academic setting. A next step would be to duplicate this study utilizing technical institutions, trade schools, other specialty institutions, and other non-traditional learning institutions as the sample population. The need for programs available on campus that support student-veterans continues to grow (Kees et al., 2017).

IMPLICATIONS

Future student veterans will have information that may result in facilitating, receiving, or seeking out PTSD support when on campus. This can have an impact on reducing the average number of veteran suicides, currently at 22 per day, as stated on numerous institutions' webpages pertaining to veteran's transition to the academic life or their veterans' benefits or veteran counseling pages, which was discussed by Mastrocola and Flynn (2017). Information provided by this study can impact future VA or US Department of Education policies and practices by implementing programs that authorize and fund staffing and facilities for coordinating PTSD/mental health support between the VA and the academic institution. Once established, the policy can be put into practice based on each institution's strategic plan. Institutions can plan and prepare to meet the unique needs of student veterans. Such coordination would be welcome as an available resource, supported by the existing literature of Falkey (2016), Kinney et al. (2020), and Kirchner & Biniiecki (2019).

Academic institutions, the US Department of Education, or the VA could develop policy recommendations to facilitate the probability of student veterans success in higher education. Creating policies to ensure availability and accessibility to school-sponsored support facilities and personnel can improve student-veterans overall mental health and academic success. Academic institutions working with these government agencies can facilitate the advancement of mental health treatment and hopefully alleviate the stigma of having PTSD.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of this study, future research is needed to further identify where PTSD support is available or where it is needed. This information is essential for facilitating the coordination of services between the VA and the academic institution (Ellison et al., 2012). The recommended study could be a qualitative survey of student veterans to identify what support they perceive is available. A quantitative survey of institutions or student veterans can be conducted to provide information on the numbers of institutions with PTSD support on campus or accepted in the VA network or the numbers of student-veterans who have access to such support.

It is also recommended that this study be replicated utilizing a different set of institutions to create a database of information, allowing institutions to add to the information provided in this study. Also, have a study that focuses on nontraditional institutions (technical and trade schools). In contrast, other studies could focus specifically on the

independent nontraditional academic institutions, such as the DeVry Institute and Lincoln Tech. The researcher intends to duplicate this study utilizing a different academic-institution population. The upcoming study will summarize the independent nontraditional academic institutions (excluding those independent institutions from this study), such as technical schools, trade schools, information-technology schools, and other specialty institutions. Combining information from this study, surveys of nontraditional academic institutions home pages, and the upcoming study utilizing nontraditional institutions, will provide a foundation for a database of information regarding PTSD support at non-traditional academic institutions.

It is also recommended that coordination of traditional academic institutions, the VA for PTSD and mental health support, and application of enrollment for VA health benefits take place in more traditional academic institutions. Traditional academic institutions need to work closely with local or national VA facilities to refer student-veterans when necessary. Academic institutions are recommended to ensure therapists with training and experience treating veterans with PTSD are on staff at their student counseling centers to work with the VA. This will ensure that student veterans are registered to receive VA health benefits, if applicable, and ensure student health resource centers are equipped with providers familiar with the types of injuries commonly found among student-veterans with PTSD.

Some traditional academic institutions had an opt-in alternative for school-sponsored PTSD and mental health services or support posted on their home page, leaving uninsured veterans and those who cannot afford to opt-in for coverage without PTSD and mental health support. It is recommended that the choices of opt-in/opt-out be made more explicit to find on the student bursar account statement and that the school-sponsored services available to be clearly listed and posted on the institution's home page.

It often took the researcher many link clicks, more than three, from the home page or from the search bar to get to the relevant page. This may discourage veterans if they cannot quickly find PTSD support information. It is recommended that the home pages and the links thereon be redesigned or reorganized so that the desired information can be located and accessed in a timely manner. When PTSD-related incidents occur, understanding non-invasive interaction methods can avoid bodily injury or confrontation. Supported Education (SEd) is a promising intervention for student veterans with PTSD. Many Post-9/11 veterans experienced PTSD during their military service. SEd interventions have been specified based on the needs of the student veteran, educators must advance their understanding of the needs of student veterans with

PTSD seeking SEd services, such as support for PTSD (Kinney et al., 2020).

This study can guide traditional academic institutions who are planning to increase the number of existing support personnel on campus, plan for new facilities, upgrade or improve existing facilities, and incorporate PTSD support services and resources available on campus. Prior strategic planning is important in being prepared to meet the needs of student veterans with PTSD on campus. Such prior strategic planning will facilitate meeting the unique needs of student-veterans with PTSD. One further recommendation would be for the VA to make enrollment in VA health benefits an automatic benefit effective upon the date and type of discharge, not a benefit that must be applied for and approved. This would facilitate student veterans seeking out and receiving treatment either regularly or on the occasion when such a need would arise. Such a policy would also be a step toward becoming a veteran-friendly institution (Burke, 2021; Falkey, 2016; Sullivan & Yoon, 2020).

CONCLUSION

This study met the researcher's intent in providing information to the future student veteran on the posted availability of PTSD support in traditional higher-education academic institutions. This study identified seven institutions that declared themselves veteran friendly and three institutions that either had VA counseling services listed or offered enrollment in VA health benefits posted. All the institutions provided either some type of student insurance or student-health facility on campus, with some including it in the cost of tuition and others allowed students to opt-in or opt-out. Identifying or determining what PTSD support services are available or needed at a traditional academic institution may empower veterans to enroll in the traditional academic institution that will meet their unique needs and provide them the best opportunity for success in their academic journey. Knowing where to go for support is just the beginning.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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