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Realizing federal policy outcomes of the post-9/11 GI Bill: Veterans' and active duty/reservist perceptions

Lydia Leporte

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REALIZING FEDERAL POLICY OUTCOMES
OF THE POST-9/11 GI BILL:
VETERANS' AND ACTIVE DUTY/RESERVIST PERCEPTIONS

A Dissertation
Presented to
The Faculty of the School of Education
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

by
Lydia Leporte
March 2013
Realizing Federal Outcomes of the Post-9/11 GI Bill:

Veterans’ and Active Duty/Reservist Perceptions

by

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I started my quest over eight years ago. My goal was to just get the 30 graduate credits I needed to qualify for my promotion to full professor. I never intended to attempt or even successfully complete a dissertation. Most of the credit for pushing me beyond my laziness goes to my father, Dr. Hal Vogel, for his assistance in helping me choose a topic that was interesting and attainable, and to my advisor, Dr. Pamela Eddy, for her constant nudging, advice and encouragement through the long, oftentimes mentally painful process.

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Abstract

The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 (Public Law 78-346), generally referred to as the GI Bill, provided any veteran, who had served for at least 90 days from the time period of September 1940 to July 1947, paid full-time education. The original Act also called for the creation of a central agency dedicated to the administration of all veterans' benefits, which ultimately became the Veterans' Administration (VA). The GI Bill has been revamped five more times since its initial inception, with the most recent iteration, the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008, being hailed to be potentially as powerful a social policy groundbreaking as the original GI Bill.

The purpose of this research was to conduct a study and evaluate the data regarding the use of the benefits of the Post-9/11 GI Bill by veterans and active duty military college students. The overarching research question was: What are the Tidewater Community College (TCC) veteran and current active-duty military member/reservist perceptions of the Post-9/11 GI Bill and does their usage of benefits align with the federal policy goals of recruitment, retention, and rewarding our military members for their service?

An analysis of the results of the online survey showed that of the three federal policy goals, retention of quality personnel and the feeling of reward for military service were being met through the perception of TCC student veterans. While the Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits were not a primary recruitment reason for the majority of respondents, most felt that the Act would aid in future military recruitment. This research also found that Post-9/11 GI Bill users were using their benefits primarily for degree attainment and increased job opportunities. Military students appeared to be positively using educational
swirl in order to alleviate the 36-month time limits and to continue receiving their living stipend. Specifically, they were attending more than one institution concurrently and/or in series because they were driven to complete their degree as efficiently as possible.

Dissatisfaction exists, mainly with the implementation of the policy, time limitations on usage, and changes to the living stipend payments. This dissatisfaction may be the main reasons those eligible are not using the Post-9/11 GI Bill. Other reasons for current non-use that should be explored further include the possibilities that students are waiting to use their Post-9/11 benefits after other federal monies have been used, and they may have already depleted their GI Bill benefits. Modifications to alleviate students' perceived issues could ultimately increase the attainment of the Post-9/11 federal policy goals of recruitment, retention, and rewarding military members for their service.
Chapter I

Introduction

Federal educational support for veterans has been in place for over 65 years and has had an important impact not only for the individuals taking advantage of government benefits, but for society as a whole. The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 (Public Law 78-346), generally referred to as the GI Bill, provided any veteran, who had served for at least 90 days from the time period of September 1940 to July 1947, up to one year of paid full-time education plus an additional period equal to their time in service, not to exceed 48 months. The payment included full tuition (up to $500 annually), fees, books, plus a monthly living stipend of $65 per month for singles and $90 per month for married veterans. At the time, the tuition payment was enough to cover tuition at even the most prestigious universities. The original Act also called for the creation of a central agency dedicated to the administration of all veterans' benefits, which ultimately became the Veterans' Administration (VA). The GI Bill has been revamped five more times since its initial inception, with the most recent iteration, the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008, being hailed to be potentially as powerful a social policy groundbreaking as the original GI Bill (Keillor, 2009).

The original GI Bill was partially enacted out of sense of obligation to the millions of returning World War II (WWII) veterans (Greenberg, 1997). However, the government's primary motivation was concern over the millions of WWII veterans flooding the job market, and the threat of this influx of individuals seeking employment plummeting the country into economic turmoil and political instability, reminiscent of the Great Depression. Returning World War I (WWI) veterans received limited benefits
upon their arrival back home due to the state of the economy leading up to the Great Depression. However, after WWI, organized groups specifically lobbied for veteran benefits (Daniels, 1971).

Table 1.1 illustrates the various iterations of the bill and the contextual elements occurring at the time of the passing of the legislation.

Table 1.1 *The Social Environment Correlation to GI Bill Benefits*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bill</th>
<th>Federal Policy Goals</th>
<th>% of yrly tuition +Living expenses covered</th>
<th>Social Context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WWII (1944-1952)</td>
<td>Prevent another depression. Reward veterans.</td>
<td>100%+</td>
<td>Peak of support for the military &amp; the war.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam War (1966-1972)</td>
<td>Compensate veterans for wartime service.</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>Height of antimilitarism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vet Education Assistance Program (1972-1985)</td>
<td>Recruitment/retention in an all-volunteer peacetime military.</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>Antimilitarism waning. End of mandatory military draft. No major conflicts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montgomery GI Bill (1985-pres)</td>
<td>Recruitment/retention in an all-volunteer military.</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>Support for the military and its mission rising. Conflicts in the Middle East.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-9/11 (2009-present)</td>
<td>Recruitment/retention Reward veterans.</td>
<td>100%+</td>
<td>Strong support for military members, not just the mission. War on Terror ongoing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Implicitly nestled within Table 1.1 is the influence of public sentiment for each war, specifically the influence on the policy goals and benefits of the iterations of the legislative acts and how this translated into aid for military members. Benefits to veterans decreased significantly with the Korean War GI Bill of 1952 and continued to decrease in
value with the Vietnam War era GI Bills. Starting with the Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB) in 1985, the monetary value of the benefits began to increase, showing at face value an inverse correlation between public sentiment toward the military, and goals to help with recruitment and retention, as well as the education benefits to veterans from the legislation. Ultimately, the 2009 implementation of the Post-9/11 GI Bill returned the levels of benefits to a value equivalent to the original Act, which covered 100% of tuition and living expenses.

In addition to the educational benefits outlined above, the original Bill included assistance in the form of unemployment dollars, guaranteed low interest rate farm, business, and home loans, as well as the creation of a federal organization responsible for overseeing the administration of the monetary and medical benefits for veterans. At the urging of the American Legion, the benefits for higher education were added to the final Bill by congressional legislators, almost as an afterthought, and represented the first time veterans' received support from the federal government for post-secondary education (Johnson, 2009).

The passage of time highlighted the true impact of the educational benefits contained in the 1944 GI Bill. The federal government did not intend the college education program to become the hallmark of the Act at the time it was created. Indeed, less than 20% of funds set aside for unemployment pay were used, and money had to be shifted to the education program benefits, as there were more than triple the number of veterans (2.2 million vs. 700,000) than expected taking advantage of the higher education benefits at a total cost to the federal government of $5.5 billion (Olson, 1973).
Since the passage of the original Act, the five succeeding pieces of legislation have continued providing benefits for America's military, expanding the eligibility of benefits to not just veterans, but active service members and their dependents, as well as reservists and National Guard members. Just as in the initial GI Bill, the passage of subsequent iterations of the bill occurred within the context of the current social environment and varying federal policy goals at the time of the enactment.

Statement of the Research Problem, Background & Context

Although economic conditions and the need for increased strength in our military forces have been the driving factors behind the issue definition and agenda setting for the various iterations of the GI Bills (Fowler, 2009), the formulation of the policy was also influenced at the time by the current cultural context and public sentiment regarding military roles in general. Public sentiment for support for veteran's benefits reflects broadly the values and beliefs of a social group, in this case the majority of the American public (Fowler, 2009). The shifts in support evident in Table 1.1 may indicate different social group values present during each timeframe in which the legislative acts to support our veterans and military occurred (Fowler, 2009). These values undoubtedly impacted American views of military interventions and seem to be directly transmitted into the benefits the society wanted for the veterans associated with the time periods. Though nobody likes war, some conflicts gain more support from a public perspective, and have a more defined sense of purpose than others. To this point, Fowler (2009) cited ideology as defining the important policy issues at a particular time and noted that ideology may differ by region of the country. The overarching American ideology has a significant
impact on setting the agenda for policy and the formulation of benefits within the policy implementation arena.

The different rationales and social contexts behind the policy formation of each of the GI Bills resulted in conflicts between policy goals and outcomes once the legislation was implemented. For example, an evaluation of the goal attainment of the GI Bills implemented Post-Vietnam to the start of the Montgomery GI Bill (1972-1985) finds that the all-volunteer military did not attain the recruitment targets that the federal government had predicted (Altschuler & Blumin, 2009). A mismatch between the goals and actual outcomes for these bills occurred. As shown in Table 1.1 above, this time period between the WWII Act and the start of the Montgomery GI Bill illustrates a marked decrease in the value of the GI Bill benefits offered to veterans. During these years, veterans expecting to be rewarded for their service through the promise of higher education, found the GI Bill tuition payments and living stipends inadequate in pursuing full-time education (Spaulding, 2000). The benefit payout, see Table 1.2, illustrates the average monetary benefits paid for each bill, as well as the average yearly tuition and fees at a public college/university in current dollars. The figures for WWII through the Vietnam War come from Spaulding’s (2000) dissertation (p. 58), while the last three values for average yearly state tuition were extracted from the following website:

Table 1.2 *Monetary Value of the GI Bills*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bill</th>
<th>Expenses Paid monthly</th>
<th>Ave yrly State Tuition</th>
<th>Ave % of yrly tuition+living expenses covered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>WWII (1944-1952)</strong></td>
<td>$500/yr tuition +$90 cost of living</td>
<td>$400</td>
<td>100%+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Korean War (1952-1966)</strong></td>
<td>$110/month=$880 per school yr.</td>
<td>$1051</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vietnam War (1966--72)</strong></td>
<td>$100/month=$800 per school yr</td>
<td>$1668</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vet Education Assistance Program (1972-1985)</strong></td>
<td>$140/month=$1120 per school yr</td>
<td>$3637</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Montgomery GI Bill (1985-pres)</strong></td>
<td>$400/month=$3200 per school yr</td>
<td>$7507</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Post-9/11 (2009-pres)</strong></td>
<td>Full tuition pd +living stipend</td>
<td>$14,060</td>
<td>100%+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As depicted in Table 1.2, the 1944 GI Bill was undeniably generous in its monetary benefits for higher education, providing all of the tuition, as well as additional living and book stipends. The decline in monetary benefits for the coverage of college tuition for the veterans returning from wars after the initial GI Bill legislation coincided with a strong public sentiment of antimilitarism. In turn, the legislation impacting the Korean veterans, and those veterans receiving benefits up to the Post-9/11 GI Bill, markedly dropped the percentage of tuition paid, and ultimately provided no additional living expenses. This sharp decrease in funding influenced the achievement of the policy goals of recruitment and retention, especially immediately following the Vietnam War (Spaulding, 2000).

The goals of the GI Bills provided from Vietnam through the Montgomery GI Bill were to provide and retain ample military strength during the period of the all-volunteer
force (Mettler, 2005). Yet, despite these policy ambitions, recruitment targets fell well short of the numbers expected (Severo & Milford, 1989). Thus, from a demand and supply perspective, the amount of rewards provided through these Acts did not generate an adequate supply of individuals willing to enlist. Additionally, Taylor (2007) and Olson (1974) have noted the difference in reception of our returning veterans over time, in particular documenting the recent upsurge in the pride and gratitude being given to our veterans starting with the Persian Gulf War (1991) and continuing with the War on Terror (2001 to present).

The Post-9/11 GI Bill created a distinctive shift in veteran benefits. The current bill returns ample benefits to veterans and dependents, at a much larger cost to the federal government. A content analysis of the current act (Public Law 110-252, 2008) shows that recruitment and retention of military members, as well as rewarding our military for their service, are the main policy goals of this newest iteration. Verbiage pervasive throughout the 2008 senate hearings prior to the passage of the Bill consistently point to these three main goals. These goals are further explicated in the literature review. A transcript from the senate hearings is provided in Appendix A. The sponsors/cosponsors of the Post-9/11 Act specifically were reacting to the Montgomery GI Bill, which was insufficient for wartime service in aiding the government in military recruitment and retention during an “an especially arduous time for the members of the Armed Forces…” (2008 S. 22; 110 S.22). Additionally, the significant increase in the financial incentives provided by the current GI Bill symbolizes a throwback to a main policy goal of the original 1944 version, namely that it will truly honor today’s veterans and their families (Lay, 2009).
Recent studies about the higher educational experiences of the student-veteran have used transitional theories to show how veterans use and interpret their GI Bill benefits. DiRamio, Ackerman, and Mitchell (2008) conducted a study involving 25 returning student-soldiers as they transitioned from a combat environment in Afghanistan or Iraq to college life. Glasser, Powers, and Zywiak (2009) used focus groups to determine the transitions and expectations of the student veterans. Among the top reasons expressed by participants in both studies for enlisting included the promise of benefits for future higher education. However, most of the research participants did not intend to make the military a career. Thus, the incentives for these study participants did not translate to increased retention in the military branches. These studies did not address the perceptions of veterans regarding the policy goal of rewarding them for their service.

In November 2008, the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) released results of a survey of over 9,000 Navy enlisted personnel respondents regarding reenlistment intentions (DMDC, 2008). One of the main points covered in the survey addressed how the respondents felt about the proposed new higher educational benefits in the Post-9/11 GI Bill, in particular regarding the main federal policy goal of retention. Over 22% of respondents indicated that they intended to leave the military as soon as their enlistment commitment expired in order to take advantage of the new benefits in the Post-9/11 GI Bill, while 54% indicated a likelihood of extending their enlistment in order to transfer the benefits to their spouse and children (DMDC 2008). What remains unknown is how the veterans in fact acted once the Post-9/11 GI Bill was enacted, over eight months after this survey.
The American Council on Education (ACE) published a report in November, 2010 which, for the first time, provided quantitative data on the experiences of student veterans and higher educational administrators overseeing campus veteran benefits following the first full year of implementation of the Post-9/11 GI Bill. The report also conducted focus groups and touched on whether the educational benefits provided by the Post-9/11 GI Bill influenced their decision to enlist. This report found that 24% of respondents (p. 18) pursued higher education because of the generous benefits of the new GI Bill. About 18% of respondents (p. 18) said the benefits allowed them to attend a private institution that would ordinarily be too costly to attend. While these studies represent a start to understanding the needs and expectations of the current student-veterans, they did not take into account the veterans’ and other eligible student reactions to the changes in the policy from the previous iterations of the GI Bill, specifically, the greatly increased benefits and the increase to those eligible to use those benefits. What also remains unknown is the experiences of veterans using the Post-9/11 GI Bill specifically at community colleges.

The problem at the heart of this research addresses the tension between the intended policy goals of the Post-9/11 GI Bill and the perceptions of its users, namely veterans and active service personnel. The federal government’s new policy updates educational benefits to military personnel to levels not seen since 1944. The Post-9/11 Bill is generous in the benefits provided, funding full tuition and stipend payments to qualified military and veterans, and allows transfer of the benefits to their dependents. The goals of this new policy are to support recruitment and retention of military personnel, and to reward veterans for their service. What remains unknown is
how those eligible for the Post-9/11 GI Bill perceive and utilize the outlined benefits with respect to the original policy intentions, and if indeed these goals are met in practice. Also, it is not known why eligible college student veterans are not using their benefits.

The purpose of this research was to conduct a study and evaluate the data regarding the use of the benefits of the Post-9/11 GI Bill by veterans and active duty military college students. A case study at Tidewater Community College (TCC), the community college with the largest population of Post-9/11 GI Bill users, provided the site for this study, and the research determined the perceptions of the respondents on how they are using their eligible benefits. The research also sought to determine why eligible non-users were not using their benefits.

Research Questions

The overarching research question is: What are the TCC veteran and current active-duty military member/reservist perceptions of the Post-9/11 GI Bill and does their usage of benefits align with the federal policy goals of recruitment, retention, and rewarding our military members for their service? The questions guiding this study are:

A. Have the stated federal goals of recruitment/retention and rewarding veterans for their service been met through the perception of the users and those eligible for Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits but not currently using themselves at Tidewater Community College (TCC)?

B. How are active duty/reservists and veteran students at TCC using their Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits in pursuit of higher education?

C. Why are eligible non-users (both active duty/reservists and veterans attending
TCC) enrolled at the community college not using the benefits of the Post-9/11 GI Bill?

Significance of the Study

Investigation of the link between military member perceptions of the bill and the policy intentions of recruitment and retention provide insight into the viewpoint of users of the GI Bill. One feature of the new GI Bill is that active duty members can transfer the benefits of the Post-9/11 GI Bill to a dependent if they extend their time in service, an addition specifically aimed at retention of personnel. It is important to understand if current military members are opting to stay in the service, fulfilling the retention goal, in order to take advantage of this transfer of benefits option. Likewise, it is important to know if the general benefits of the new GI Bill are aiding in the recruitment and retention of military personnel. Because not all eligible users are taking advantage of the benefits provided by the Post-9/11 GI Bill, it is important to understand their choice more fully.

Though researchers have evaluated the sociological (MacLean, 2005), economical (Spaulding, 2000), and political (Mettler & Welch, 2004) aspects of the previous GI Bills on various constituencies, due to its recent passage, little has been done concerning the most recent iteration of the Post-9/11 GI Bill. Of the scant research conducted on the contemporary bill, transitional studies have been performed on the current student veterans (Lokken, Pfeffer, McAuley, & Strong, 2009) in order to determine what their personal goals and expectations are regarding higher education. Recent research focused on the vantage point of student affairs noting the type of student supports required to help military veterans achieve both academic and social success in higher education (Hopkins, Herrmann, Wilson, Allen, & Malley, 2010). Yet what remains unknown are how
veterans and active duty military/reservists/National Guard are using the benefits outlined in the Post-9/11 GI Bill, and if their usage aligns with the intention of the policy goals.

This research study is significant for several reasons. First, little research exists on how eligible students are actually using the benefits of the bill. Perceptions of the users and eligible non-users will contribute to the knowledge of how well the Post-9/11 GI Bill meets the federal policy goals of recruitment and retention. Additionally, knowing how student users are utilizing the benefits, as well as why eligible students are not using their higher educational benefits can help policymakers fine tune the policy to better achieve the federal goals, and potentially decrease financial outlays from those (institutions as well as users) who may be abusing the benefits. As well, college personnel can aid students in accessing benefits to which they are entitled. Finally, with the US now seeking higher numbers of college graduates, knowing more of how veterans are accessing benefits and persisting can contribute to these targets.

**Definition of Terms**

**GI Bill:** a short-hand term for the educational benefits provided in the six veterans’ readjustment Acts (applies to all of the Acts.)

**Reenlistee:** a current military service member who has voluntarily extended his obligated service requirement in the military.

**Student veteran:** a former military member who has been honorably discharged or retired from the service and is attending an institution of higher education.

**Tuition:** includes payments for costs and all associated fees for academic coursework at the college. It does not include room and board, transportation or other living costs.
Veterans’ Readjustment Act: terminology to generally describe federal policy which provided veterans’ benefits for the first three Acts (World War II, Korean War, & Vietnam War). This paper focuses on the educational benefits of the Acts only.

Assumptions

This study assumed that the federal government maintains an interest in obtaining the policy goals of recruitment, retention, and reward of military veterans, as outlined in the Post-9/11 GI Bill, and that our nation has a desire and sufficient resources to continue the pursuit of these goals through providing ample benefits to future veterans. It was assumed that active duty/reservist and veteran college students at TCC would participate in the survey, and that the survey would allow for measurement of perceptions. Finally, it was anticipated that a meaningful survey analysis of the veteran and active duty/reservist population at TCC could be conducted, and truthful responses would be elicited from the participants.

Overview of Literature Review, Theoretical Framework, & Methodology

The literature review presents the key concepts from this introduction and provides an overview of the history, policy formulation and implementation of each of the GI Bills. Evidence highlights the specific federal policy goals for all of the legislative iterations. Given that the site for this research is Tidewater Community College, the number one enroller of Post-9/11 GI Bill users of all community colleges, and the institution in the nation with the 4th largest enrollment of veteran GI Bill users overall (Sewall, 2010a), the literature on community colleges aids in showing how the educational context influences veteran utilization of benefits. As non-traditional students, veterans are more apt to first pursue their post-secondary education at a two-year college.
This research employed a quantitative methodology. Quantitative methods allow for questions that aid in the understanding of the predictors of outcomes (Creswell, 2009). The methodology section provides a rationale for the specific policy evaluation approaches selected and reviews the forms of data collection. The population for this study was all of the enrolled active duty/reservist and veterans at Tidewater Community College (TCC) in southeastern Virginia. The group included both users and non-users of the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

Descriptive statistics provide a portrait of the perceptions of active duty/reservist and veteran student respondents. Correlations between perceptions and demographics showcase how the policy is implemented in practice, and show if there were differences by type of user. The final analysis includes how the users of the current GI Bill perceive the attainment of the Act’s policy goals. Implications for practice are reviewed and recommendations for future research offered.

**Limitations and Delimitations**

This study is delimited to Tidewater Community College, one community college out of the approximately 1200 located throughout the nation. This study is further delimited to active duty/reservists and veterans enrolled at TCC during the Spring and Fall 2012 semesters. Finally, data collection is delimited to data collected by the TCC Office of Institutional Research, as well as the survey responses.

Limitations to the study include the fact there may be differences in the type of student veteran that enrolls at a community college versus a 4-year institution. The location of the community college near several military bases may influence how participants view the benefits due to the heavy economic influence of the military
institutions in the area and, thus, may not be generalizable to participants receiving benefits in areas of the country with a lesser military presence. Finally, response to the online survey may have been limited due to student lack of access to a computer with email, and the ability to handle the survey software.

Conclusion

The focus of this study is on providing an evaluation of the federal policy goals of the newest GI Bill through the eyes of the veterans and active duty/reservists military students at TCC. The intention of the newest GI Bill is to support recruitment and retention of military personnel, and to reward military members for their service.

Chapter Two provides a review of the literature on the history of the GI Bills, as well as current research studies that focus on the last two Acts (the Montgomery GI Bill and the Post-9/11 GI Bill). Chapter Three includes details on the research design for this study, and the methodology used for data collections. Data consist of information supplied by the Office of Institutional Research at TCC, as well as the online survey responses. The survey was administered in order to gather more data on perceptions of college student veterans and active military member students at TCC regarding policy goals of the Post-9/11 GI Bill, and details on how they are using or not using the benefits of the newest Act. Ultimately, this study aims to provide insight into whether the veterans and active duty/reservists are using their Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits in concert with intended federal policy goals.
Chapter II

Literature Review

The Serviceman’s Readjustment Act of 1944 (GI Bill) was landmark legislation that ultimately improved the socioeconomic standing of millions of American citizens returning from World War II (Greenberg, 1997). The Act provided instant financial support in the form of unemployment insurance to help ease the stress for returning veterans during their job search. The legislation also included mortgage assistance to aid in home ownership, as the Veterans Assistance mortgage required no money down, and the seller had to pay for the majority of closing costs. The ability to purchase a home was not only a large boon to the veterans, it also helped in jump-starting the economy after the war. However, it is the provision for financial scholarship to assist in educational opportunities from vocational training to graduate school that has arguably (and surprisingly to legislators) made the largest impact on American society (Greenberg, 1997).

As previously noted, the addition of the educational benefits to the first GI Bill occurred due to lobbying by veterans groups, and occurred at the last minute prior to passage. The addition helped returning veterans have an option to attend college instead of receiving unemployment benefits (Greenberg, 1997). The overwhelming usage of the education benefits established the precedent that has made this provision a necessary component for all of the follow-on iterations of the GI Bill. Thus, this backdrop creates a particular context when researching how veterans perceive the educational benefits of the current Post-9/11 GI Bill.
This chapter first reviews the literature on the history of the original GI Bill and includes a summary of the research regarding the affects the provisions of the Bill have had on higher education over time. Next, a review of the policy implementation process and provisions in each of the iterations of the Acts includes background regarding the public sentiment for each war. Policy is always influenced by context, thus a review of the social environment at the time of the passage for each iteration of the GI Bill is included. The federal policy goals are defined for each of the Acts. Particular attention is given to the goals of the Post-9/11 GI Bill. The goals of recruitment, retention, and reward for the current Act are reviewed and discussed. As well, background on community colleges occurs in order to understand how the two-year college context influences the perceptions of the participants.

**History and Implementation of the 1944 GI Bill**

This section of the literature review presents the historical backdrop and context at the time of passage of each of the GI Bills. The original GI Bill is reviewed, and singly, because this Act created the backdrop for all subsequent legislation, and because it was groundbreaking legislation. The longer term impact of the first act also provides a means to understand the breadth of the legislation in a different manner. The second portion of this section includes a review of the subsequent acts.

**1944 GI Bill**

Few returning WWII veterans had even a high school education because during the Depression years, many school-age young men were forced to go to work and forgo education to help support their families. Thus, these returning veterans needed support in integrating into a post-war society that had changed during their time of service. While
providing limited federal benefits for America’s war veterans was not a new concept, this
was the first time higher education incentives were included in the benefits. It was these
higher education benefits of the GI Bill that firmly established higher education as a
nondiscriminatory, graspable path to achievement and upward mobility for veterans
(Olson, 1974).

The initial GI Bill not only resulted in direct social improvements, it served as a
tool to enhance individual and group socioeconomic gains because those with a college
education have more earning potential (Angrist, 1993). Also, for the first time, the
federal government had planned for their returning war veterans before demobilization
started. The GI Bill provided, for the first time, the ability of individual servicemen to
decide when to attend college, and gave them the choice of what college to attend. Once
the college selection was made, payment was remitted to the student-veteran, not directly
to the college. This principle that federal money would be managed by the student, not
by the educational institution, became the impetus and cornerstone behind the federal
government’s overarching financial educational policy (Olson, 1973).

Finally, the GI Bill was the first universal access educational federal program that
provided resources based on military service, rather than an ability-to-pay policy
specifically targeting low-income individuals (Mettler, 2002). According to Mettler
(2002), the open access to educational opportunities provided veterans a means to take
advantage of the program, compared to the previously targeted programs that required
public acknowledgement of low-income. Pride prevented some from claiming benefits
due. The benefits of the GI Bill of 1944 led to better job prospects, and ultimately helped
create the middle class in modern American society (Johnson, 2009).
The enormous public support for America's victorious returning war veterans helped create backing for the provisions of the 1944 law. However, the bill still met opposition when first proposed. College educators saw it as a threat to the quality of admitted students (Greenberg, 1997). James Conant, president of the University of Chicago at the time, warned that the free money would turn the nation's institutions of higher education into "educational hobo jungles" (as cited in Greenberg, 1997, p. 39). Some veterans' organizations feared the bill would divert funds from disabled veterans. As well, bankers did not want the government involved in their loan operations (Greenberg, 1997). Lastly, a few legislators felt the educational benefits would give the federal government leeway to interfere in state higher educational policies (Johnson, 2009).

Although most constituencies and legislators agreed that something must be done to help our millions of returning WWII veterans, there was disagreement on exactly what benefits to provide. The most debated provision of the Act concerned unemployment benefits, not whether to grant them, but rather for how much and how long. After many months of debate, the bill became law on June 22, 1944, passing the combined House and Senate by one vote.

Initial government estimates anticipated a mere 150,000 student increase in college enrollment per year due to the Act, with an expected grand total veteran usage of approximately 600,000 to 700,000 by the time the Act expired in 1951. The government estimates proved to be well below reality. By 1947, three years after the original GI Bill was enacted, over 1,164,000 veterans were registered for college using the GI Bill, and veteran enrollment accounted for 49% of all college enrollments (Greenberg, 1997).
Veterans began to realize that they could afford to go to college. By 1951, 2.2 million veterans, over three times the legislative estimates, had utilized the Bill to enter college. “A permanent and vital legacy of the educational provisions of the GI Bill is a change in the very idea of who could be a university student. The sons of unemployed depression victims, the sons of immigrants, the children of sharecroppers…” could go to college (Greenberg, 1997, p. 51).

Changes to the colleges and universities, both in the academic and the residential arenas, were instituted in order to accommodate the new class of students-veterans, and their families (Clark, 1998). Curriculum was expanded to meet their demands for practical coursework, in business and trade skills. Temporary student housing had to be erected, and, as an unexpected employment boon, more faculty had to be hired (Olson, 1974).

The reputation of these student-veterans of being highly competent and hard-working belied initial expectations regarding their academic ability and quality. According to noted historian Keith Olson (1974), the World War II veterans established “perhaps the most distinguished record in the history of higher education” (p. 604). The provision for funding veteran higher education was no longer an afterthought to appease lobby groups but had become the cornerstone for all future GI Bills. The resulting surge in student-veterans at colleges and universities created a major opportunity for access to higher education (Sewell & Shah, 1967).

Stanley (2003) asserted that the economic incentives of the first two GI Bills increased the post-secondary educational attainment of the young men during the 1940’s and 1950’s. Furthermore, Angrist (1993) found that GI Bill users had, on average, 6%
higher annual earnings than their veteran contemporaries. The leverage for upward mobility provided by the GI Bill creates a powerful inducement tool for military recruitment and retention. According to Johnson (2009), “It was the education provision of the GI Bill that proved to have the most far-reaching impact on American society” (p. 202). A college education leads to more earning potential and a respectable job that elevates socioeconomic standing.

The unexpected and overwhelming use of the higher education benefits of the original GI Bill, coupled with the sociological effects on upward mobility, led the U.S. government to view higher education from a different perspective (Brint & Karabel, 1989). The culminating outcome was the issuance of the first federal doctrine extolling the benefits of higher education to both individuals and society. The 1947 Truman Commission Report on Higher Education advocated for higher levels of education and supported the opening of community colleges to create access for larger portions of society (Hutcheson, 2007).

Despite the benefits of the original GI Bill, there were implementation problems (Olson, 1974). Although the GI Bill itself was nondiscriminatory, racial strife in higher education made it difficult for returning black servicemen to fully take advantage of the benefits of the Bill. Black veterans were denied admission to white-only universities, and the traditionally black colleges and universities could not accommodate the 70,000 black veterans seeking admission. Financially, many colleges, wishing to reap the benefits of the GI Bill provisions, raised tuition dramatically, as the Bill provided full tuition reimbursement without limit. New, questionable institutions, most often proprietary schools, were also springing up. The Veterans Administration responded by
implementing a registration process for all educational institutions, which required an accounting of their educational practices, including financial charges. Once this process was enacted, over 1200 schools were found ineligible for GI Bill funding (Johnson, 2009).

The original GI Bill did indeed improve higher education. First, the benefits provided helped to democratize higher education, opening the doors for other than the upper class to attend even the most prestigious universities. Returning veterans were non-traditional learners who forced changes in all aspects of these academic institutions from residential living to curriculum. Second, the first-time provision of federal benefits for higher education set a precedent, and produced national discussion on continued federal financial aid for higher education, starting with the 1947 Truman Commission Report on Higher Education (Hutcheson, 2007). Despite provisions in the next three iterations of the Bill to provide financial assistance for college, the educational benefits declined and resulted in lower levels of participation by veterans.

Korean War, Vietnam War, and VEAP/Montgomery

The amount of the GI Bill benefits provided to veterans has varied widely across time, and appears directly associated to the social attitudes and political context of the various eras, as well as the value placed on higher education by American society (Teigen, 2007). Americans were jubilant at the decisive victory of the US military at the end of World War II. American pride ran deep for being at the spearhead of defeating the oppressive Axis powers. Additionally, production for war time needs seemed to be what the country needed for the final economic push out of the Depression era (Severo & Milford, 1989). Public sentiment ran strong to reward our veterans for their service, and
the resulting federal policy was generous and easy to approve and fund in this era of
general good feeling and economic prosperity.

The benefits of the original GI Bill expired in 1951. In this same decade, the
Korean Conflict was waged. Then, in the 1960's, the Vietnam War followed. Both
military actions resulted in the renewal of legislation targeting veteran benefits. Yet, both
subsequent Acts provided significantly fewer higher educational benefits. The Veteran’s
Readjustment Act of 1952 (Public Law 82-550) provided only $110 per month ($135 per
month with one dependent, and $160 per month for the veterans with two or more
dependent) for up to 36 months from which the veteran had to pay for tuition, fees,
books, and living expenses. This level of support was much lower than the benefits
provided in the initial GI Bill, which covered total tuition and supplemental income for
housing that enabled a student-veteran to go to school full time, and not have to get a job
to support his family while he attended college. In the 1950s, a little over 1.2 million
veterans, 41% of those eligible, attended college through the benefits of the Korean War
GI Bill (Greenberg, 1997). Although the percentage was about twice that of the usage of
the original GI Bill, the total number of veterans who partook were about half of those
serviced by the original GI Bill, with the financial support being much less. The
comparison of the benefits provided is located in the first chapter of this dissertation in
Table 1.2.

The Korean War, itself, was presented to the American public as an important action
against the spread of Communism. However, Americans were content with the economic
times and saw no need to engage in another major war. Without public support,
mustering a large mature military force was difficult, especially with the new college
deferments from the draft available for the Korean War, that were not available to those who were drafted to serve in WWII (Severo & Milford, 1989). Trying to garner more favorable public opinion was further hampered when the Army found itself in a position where a decisive victory seemed unobtainable. Furthermore, captured American soldiers appeared to be professing their newfound belief in communism (Severo & Milford, 1989). A propaganda campaign was waged by the Department of Defense and top military officials, who claimed that American prisoners of war succumbed relatively easily to communist brainwashing, and the degradation of values and standards of American society was to blame for the mental state of the American soldier (Severo & Milford, 1989). Furthermore, these same officials charged that the lack of fortitude and moral character of the military was the result of passive teachings at our schools and colleges (Severo & Milford, 1989). Ultimately, the military hierarchy helped turn American public sentiment against its own service members.

The media touted that the Korean War veteran was nothing like the honorable and courageous WWII returning veterans (Severo & Milford, 1989). They were described as mindless robots with no interest in individualism, perhaps because of the extreme unpopularity of the war among the American public. Additionally, the media may have wanted to instill fear about the rise of communism and how our trained soldiers were not capable of resisting its brainwashing affects.

The veterans of World War I and World War II, who comprised the membership of the strong lobbying groups such as the American Legion, were even critical of their newest brethren, with the Korean War veterans having to go through intense scrutiny before being admitted into these groups (Severo & Milford, 1989). The VA also
followed suit holding special hearings to rescind benefits from military veterans with subversive tendencies.

As unpopular as the Korean War was, the American public viewed the Vietnam conflict as having no purpose. In general, there was disinterest in foreign affairs that had no seeming direct effect on the U.S. Not surprisingly, sentiment against the Vietnam War was mostly negative. The soldiers who fought in the war were described by the US media as confused as to their mission. Documented instances of misguided unchecked platoons inflicting horrible atrocities on civilian villagers shocked the American public (Taylor, 2007). Thus, hundreds of thousands of returning Vietnam War veterans were greeted with open hostility. The anger aimed at the Vietnam War veterans was evident in the climate on college campuses and the ill treatment of the veteran student population by students and faculty alike (Rumann & Hamrick, 2009). Now, not only were college and university administrators responsible for easing the transition from military to college, but they were also tasked with ensuring the safety of the veteran college student (Livingston, 2009).

The Vietnam War was also costly, without the benefit of special levies to help fund it (Severo & Milford, 1989). It grew even costlier, as the VA healthcare system had to prepare for the potential of long-term care for not only the psychological trauma, but also the irreversible physical effects of the tens of thousands of veterans exposed to the widespread use of foliage-reducing chemicals. Consequently, the federal government acknowledged the need for stringent fiscal management over the benefits provided for the Vietnam War veterans. The benefits of the GI Bill became an open target, and were reduced to their lowest levels yet (Severo & Milford, 1989).
The Veterans Readjustment Benefits Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-358) provided $100 a month for educational payments, less than the benefits provided by either GI Bill before it and covering less than 50% of average tuition alone at the state universities. While benefits were inflation-adjusted, and had increased to $376 per month by the Bill's end in 1976, the package was still not enough to cover living expenses as well as tuition and fees. Additionally, total payments provided maxed out at $14,000 to a single veteran, and $16,500 for a married person. However, for the first time, military on active duty were entitled to use the benefits. A little over five million veterans went to college through the aid of this Act. While this number seems large, it represented only 25% of those eligible for benefits. Finally, many of these veterans who took advantage of the higher educational GI Bill benefits did not complete their education because of the total benefit cap was insufficient to cover all costs (Spaulding, 2000). Thus, they did not gain the full economic benefit that corresponds with having a college degree.

The first peacetime GI Bill, titled the Veterans Educational Assistance Program (VEAP), was enacted in 1976 to aid military recruitment for an all-volunteer force (Public Law 94-502). Benefits were even less than the previous four Acts and, VEAP was the first iteration that required the service member to contribute monetarily to the plan. The Veterans Administration would then match two dollars for every dollar contributed up to a maximum total match of just $5400, a little over a third of total benefits provided by the Vietnam-era GI Bill. Benefits used were paid monthly for up to 36 months. Approximately 668,000 veterans received education and training using the VEAP benefits. Ultimately, VEAP was not considered a successful policy by legislators or the military (Spaulding, 2000).
In 1985, VEAP was modified to increase benefits, as it was proving ineffective at adequately increasing recruitment numbers, its primary stated policy goal (Mettler, 2005). The new iteration, titled the Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB), required participants to voluntarily contribute $100 per month for their first 12 months on active duty in exchange for up to $400 a month for 36 months in educational benefits, for a grand total of benefits not to exceed $14,400 (Public Law 100-48). By 2004, the benefits under the MGIB had expanded to a total of $36,000. Service members had to make the decision to participate when they first entered active duty. The reduction in pay was non-refundable should the benefits go unused. This bill was the first one to extend benefits to reserve military personnel (Altschuler & Blumin, 2009).

Even with the expanded generous benefits of the MGIB, the ongoing war on terror that started in 2001 lasted much longer than first anticipated and resulted in millions more war veterans (Devarics, 2008). Recruitment and retention were increasing battle cries coming from a military that was stretched beyond the limit due to the war on two fronts. Additionally, the sentiment of the public for our veterans and the hardships endured by their families allowed legislators to lobby for greatly increased benefits through a revamped GI Bill. In June 2009, legislators enacted the most recent veterans’ assistance act, the Post-9/11 Veterans Education Assistance Act, bringing educational benefits up to levels that would cover full tuition at the most costly public colleges and universities. This most recent GI Bill has been touted as just as beneficial to the veterans as the original (Greenberg, 2008). Of note, this is the first time two GI Bills are being offered concurrently, as current members of the MGIB must elect to change to the Post-9/11, and new enlistees have the option of selecting from the two GI Bills.
Post-9/11 GI Bill

The Post-9/11 GI Bill (Public Law 110-252) offers full tuition and fees that are capped at the level of the most expensive public undergraduate rate for the state of attendance. The veteran may attend a private institution, but must pay tuition costs over and above the state cap. The Bill has an additional provision that is voluntary for individual private colleges and universities. Under the Yellow Ribbon Program, the Veterans Administration will fund up to 50% of additional tuition and fees (over the cap) at enrolled institutions that agree to waive the remainder of the cost (Greenberg, 2008).

Not only is there a tuition cap, but there is also a time limit for the use of the benefits. The benefits will only be paid out for a maximum of 36 consecutive months of higher education pursuit. The amount of benefits you receive per term is based upon number of enrolled credits. However, regardless of being enrolled part-time or full-time each month of payout counts towards the maximum 36 months of benefit time period.

In addition to receiving funds for tuition payments, service members going to college full-time would receive up to a $2,700 per month cost-of-living stipend based upon the locale of the school being attended. The new law also provides up to $1,000 per year payment for books and other associated fees. Neither of these supplemental stipends is available to those using the benefits while on active duty. Also, these benefits may be transferred to a veteran's dependent, but only as a retention tool/reenlistment bonus.

Unlike the MGIB, the Post-9/11 GI Bill has no cost to participate. Those under the MGIB who choose to switch to the new act will be refunded their $1200 enrollment fee. Post 9/11 GI Bill participants have up to 15 years after military discharge to use the benefits, an increase of five years over the MGIB. If the benefits were transferred to a
dependent, the dependent has 15 years from the date of transfer to use the benefits.

Another difference between the Post-9/11 Bill and the MGIB is that only the MGIB paid for vocational/occupational programs that did not lead to a degree. This difference may be a reason individuals opt for benefits under the MGIB versus the more lucrative benefits available with the Post-9/11 GI Bill. However, as of December 2011, payment for vocational/occupational programs has been added to the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

Unlike the original GI Bill of 1944, this most recent iteration is being endorsed by most major constituency groups, including college educators. Ironically, the major opponents are retired and active military leaders, who fear the large benefits package will actually hurt reenlistment/retention, with current military personnel choosing to leave active service in order to take advantage of the fully-paid college education (Devarics, 2008). Initial numbers regarding participation were promising as 82,000 service members applied for educational benefits under the Post-9/11 GI Bill in the first two months. VA statistics as of June 23, 2010 show that $3.6 billion had been issued to more than 285,000 veterans. As of January 2012, over 550,000 veterans have used the higher educational benefits provided by the Post-9/11 GI Bill, 29% of those eligible (Sander, 2012). The VA anticipates that close to two million veterans will take advantage of the benefits over the course of the bill. Yet, some public college administrators are expecting the program will have less of an impact on their institutions because more student-veterans are using the increased funding to attend more expensive for-profit institutions (Eckstein, 2009). Reasons why these non-traditional adult learners are attending the for-profit institutions may be attributable to the various options for flexible learning formats and shortened time to a degree.
Policy implementation problems with the Post 9/11 GI Bill

The new GI Bill is currently in the implementation stage (Fowler, 2009) and problems are occurring during the implementation process due to bureaucratic operations. As of November 2009, there was a processing backlog of 200,000 applications for educational benefits, representing a serious implementation issue (McBain, 2009). The VA claims that the complexity of the payments, with limits differing by state and Yellow Ribbon program participants, is exacerbated by an outmoded computer system that cannot handle the influx of those claims. There was great improvement in Spring semester 2010 payouts, in which the VA reported in March 2010 that all benefits for the Fall 2009 and Spring 2010 semester had been processed (Nelson, 2010). Still, payments were late and implementation hurdles remain. Processing of the benefits seemed to improve greatly in Spring 2011, after a new automated payment system was put in place. Indeed, the Fall 2010 backlog was completed and there was only a two to four week delay in Spring and Fall 2011 semester payments. While the backlog seems to be manageable, changes to the law frustrate its users. For example, in December 2011, revisions to the bill revoked payments of the living stipend during semester breaks (Sander, 2012).

There are other concerns regarding the provisions of the Act. First, unlike in the previous bills, the language of the current Act does not provide for a termination date for eligibility of benefits. As of January 2012, anyone joining the military is still eligible to receive benefits based upon time served on active duty. The cost of the indefinite rewards may be borne by future generations of taxpayers. The financial onus has already been increased, as a new bill (S. 3447), approved by the Senate Veterans’ Affairs
Committee in August 2010 revises the maximum tuition payments to a national, instead of state average, and increases the number of people qualified to receive payments (Sewall, 2010b). Also, this is the first era where veterans need to make a choice between two competing GI Bills. While there are rare instances where the MGIB would be more beneficial than the Post 9/11, the confusing language of the Acts may result in those currently covered under the MGIB not switching to the more lucrative Post-9/11 Bill out of confusion and apathy. Thirdly, it is probable that colleges and universities will alter tuition practices (raising nominal tuition for veterans, while keeping net tuition down for non-veterans) to fully take advantage of the Post 9/11 payment plan, which were an outcome after the implementation of the original GI Bill (Keillor, 2009).

Private and for-profit institutions are in a position of financially benefitting the most from the new GI Bill. If accepted for enrollment in the Yellow Ribbon program, which involves the college applying to the VA, not only are these institutions guaranteed tuition payments from Post-9/11 GI Bill recipients equal to 100% of the highest public state tuition, but also, these colleges can get half of the difference between their higher tuition and those of the public colleges/universities (Field, 2008). As a stipulation for the Yellow Ribbon program, these accepted colleges agree to wave the other half of the tuition difference. In the end, the students are the winners as they are obtaining a private college education of their choice at no tuition cost. In fact, statistics for the 2009-2010 school year show that for-profit institutions are where veterans are using their GI benefits the most. In 2010, the University of Phoenix, the largest for-profit online institution, was at the top of the list, enrolling more than 10,000 student-veterans using their new GI Bill benefits (Sewall, 2010a).
The policy and benefits of the Post-9/11 GI Bill provides problems and rewards to the student users, higher educational institutions, and the government. The passage and the implementation of the Bill were wrought with great congressional debate, as are numerous other legislative policies, especially those with large price tags. Ultimately, the policy will produce much scholarly research. The research reported in this evaluative study will contribute to enhanced understanding of the federal policy goals of the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

**Policy Goals for the Six GI Bills**

The federal government’s main policy goal for the 1944 GI Bill was to stave off the risk of plunging back into an economic depression from the impact of over 12 million returning, suddenly unemployed, undereducated, unskilled returning veterans. Additionally, the upsurge in demand for limited federal funds through military/disability pensions threaten to bankrupt defense budgets (Johnson, 2009). Pointedly, the number of returning veterans was three times the size of demobilizing veterans from WWI.

The Korean War time period was the first time potential draftees could get a deferment from involuntary military service due to full-time college study. This policy directed men, who could afford college, away from military service, thus, resulting in mainly lower income men joining or being drafted into the military (Altschuler & Blumin, 2009). Additionally, the federal government was concerned about the educational fraud and fly-by-night diploma mills that popped up in response to the GI Bill of 1944. Thus, federal policy goals for this second iteration of the GI Bill were supposedly to aid those who performed military service during the Korean War, while not making the benefits so lucrative for continued educational fraud. To that end, the $500
per year tuition payment to the college of choice was not extended, in favor of an increase in the monthly stipend paid directly to the individual to now cover tuition, as well as all other expenses. The lower benefits provided a beneficial effect on public colleges and universities because they charged lower tuition than their private institution counterparts (Johnson, 2009). Thus, more veterans chose this option for college attendance.

The Vietnam Era GI Bill dramatically reduced benefits relative to previous versions of the GI Bills, with a policy goal seemingly to save the government money during an extremely unpopular war. The fourth version of the Act, and the first peacetime GI Bill (VEAP), was enacted in 1976 for the primary purpose of aiding in recruitment for the new all-volunteer force. Because of the failure in its recruitment goal, VEAP was improved under the 1985 iteration (MGIB). However, though the benefits were improved, and provided for inflationary increases, as of 1999, the GI Bill benefits were still not sufficient to cover full tuition at a public college, not to mention living expenses. Benefits had increased by 40%, but college costs had risen over 200% over the same period (Spaulding, 2000). Thus, despite the increase in educational funding support, the funding was insufficient to fill the gap of increased college costs. As a result of the low educational benefits, the GI Bill had lost its appeal to veterans from the Vietnam War to the late 1990s. The MGIB had the lowest utilization rate compared to any of the four previous GI Bills. The low participation rate translated to the MGIB having the lowest societal economic impact (Johnson, 2009), and, it failed to achieve its primary goal of increased recruitment (Greenberg, 2008).
The Congressional discussion to determine the policy intentions of the Post-9/11 GI Bill shows the newly established Act has benefits comparable to the original, with the policy goals also aligned to the original 1944 GI Bill, namely: 1) breaking out of the roughest economic times since the Great Depression, and 2) being a tribute to our returning war veterans (Keillor, 2009). Additionally, the text from the U.S. Senate transcript (see Appendix A) of Public Law 110-252 states, “Educational assistance for veterans helps reduce the costs of war, assist veterans in readjusting to civilian life after wartime service, and boost the United States economy, and has a positive effect on recruitment for the Armed Services” (Sec 2, para 3). The cosponsors of the bill further cited that the Montgomery GI Bill has proven ineffective in reaching military recruitment and retention goals. Ultimately, what appears to be expressed through the documented legislative discussion is that Congress agreed more generous benefits were needed, specifically to aid in military recruitment and retention during the current period of wartime (Dortch, 2012).

Retention of its military personnel was the strongest opponent battle cry against the generous benefits provided by the Post-9/11 GI Bill (Keillor, 2009). With their college and living expenses paid, opponents pondered, why would anyone want to stay in the military? Thus, refinement was made to some important aspects of the bill. While this was the first GI Bill in which benefits could be transferred to eligible service member’s spouse or children, this benefit is only allowed for active duty members who extend on active duty for a period of four years or greater (S. 3447). Additional provisions were added to specifically aid in retention, including the time limit for the expiration of 36 continuous months of educational benefits is halted if the member
reenters active duty prior to the end of the three years. Also, unlike the MGIB, the Post 9/11 GI Bill can be used while the service member is still on active duty.

Despite the outwardly similar policy goals of the new GI Bill to the 1944 version, the characteristics of the military force and socioeconomic status do not compare to the WWII era. First, the military today is comprised of approximately 1.5 million active duty and about 1.4 million reserve troops, compared to the nearly 12 million who were demobilized in 1944. Today’s enlisted, unlike in 1944, tend to have their high school diplomas, and over a quarter of the troops have at least some college credits (Mettler, 2005). Thus, the effects on higher education institutions will not be nearly as great of an impact as the original Bill (Greenberg, 2008). Finally, while the nation is currently trying to climb out of its deepest recession in over 70 years, the economic outlook does not appear to be as grim as the post-Depression years. Thus, the main policy goals of the Post-9/11 GI Bill are recruitment and retention of an educated military force during a period of the wartime all-volunteer military, and rewarding service members for their duty, with a secondary policy goal of economic stimulation (Dortch, 2012). Legislators have stated that the Act is also intended to improve civil-military relations (Keillor, 2009).

**Public Sentiment and Policy Changes for the six GI Bills**

In the Introduction, Table 1-2 provided an initial summary of the six iterations of the GI Bills. Here, Table 2-1, expands this information to include a summary of the significant changes over time with the passage of each Act.
Table 2.1: Benefit and Policy Changes for each iteration of the GI Bills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bill</th>
<th>Expenses Paid monthly</th>
<th>Ave yrly State Tuition</th>
<th>Ave % yrly tuition+living expenses covered</th>
<th>Significant Changes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1944</td>
<td>$500/yr tuition +$90 cost of living</td>
<td>$400</td>
<td>100%+</td>
<td>First time federal higher ed benefits offered to vets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>$110/month=$880 per school yr.</td>
<td>$1051</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>Decreased benefits did not cover cost of living.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam (1972-73)</td>
<td>$100/month=$800 per school yr</td>
<td>$1668</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>Active duty able to use benefits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VEAP (1985)</td>
<td>$140/month=$1120</td>
<td>$3637</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>Required monetary contribution from service member.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montgomery Persian Gulf (1990-91)</td>
<td>$400/month=$3200 per school yr</td>
<td>$7507</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>Reserve forces eligible for benefits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-9/11 (2009-2010)</td>
<td>Full tuition pd +living stipend</td>
<td>$14,060</td>
<td>100%+</td>
<td>Monetary benefits significantly increased.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the end of the Vietnam War (1973) until the start of the War on Terror (2001), the US military was involved in no major wars, but the country was engaged in small skirmishes in Beirut, Grenada, Panama, and Iraq. This era was officially a period of peacetime for the US, supported by the smallest military force in US history. Sentiment for the service members during this timeframe was neutral at best, as both the military and the civilians were healing from the confrontations of the Vietnam War (Taylor, 2007). There did not appear to be a need for a larger military force, at least from a civilian perspective, and the corresponding federal benefits provided by the VEAP were the poorest ever among the GI Bills.

However, American sentiment started to become more positive for our military service members as militant leaders of little known third-world countries showed...
aggression. The need for heavier recruitment for the all-volunteer force (the draft officially ended in 1973) was supported by most constituencies. Additionally, the US began to rely more heavily on its National Guard and reserve forces (Rumann & Hamrick, 2009). Consequently, the benefits of VEAP were increased (to include the reserve forces), and incremental inflationary increases were also written into the modified Act.

Starting in 2001, the ongoing battles in Afghanistan and Iraq were officially declared as wars. Veterans returning from the War on Terror seemed to be changed from their combat experiences, with psychological trauma similar to that documented by Vietnam War veterans. However, the smaller, all-volunteer army meant more frequent year-long deployments, unlike during the Vietnam and Korean conflicts that had typical deployments with at least a year in between deployment cycles. Beginning in 2001, soldiers barely had time to settle back into family life before being deployed again. High divorce rates and overly-aggressive domestic behavior were reported for many of these veterans (Taylor, 2007). The government and civilians responded with more comprehensive medical/psychological programs than ever before (Taylor, 2007).

Though the country continues to be divided on the seemingly endless war on terrorism, the majority of Americans values the importance of the military members as exemplified by a 2005 national study that found the professional leadership that garners the most confidence in American society is that of its military force (Yankelovich, Inc., 2005). This appears to be the first time in US history that the American public can separate the conflict from the military members who are participating in them. Many military members, veterans, and organizations affiliated to the military, are openly
opposed to the current Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts, a phenomena Leitz (2011) terms the contemporary Military Peace Movement (MPM). The MPM, while opposed to the ongoing wars, claims to be patriotic to the nation as whole, and the military personnel performing their duties. Additionally, the events surrounding the 9/11 attacks created an upsurge in public patriotism. The American public rallied and demonstrated their devotion to the nation and ways that were different from previous decades (Leitz, 2011). People displayed not just the flag but other emblems representing the US military, such as aircraft carriers, military jets, helicopters, and even depictions of military personnel.

Ultimately, the feelings of the American public towards its returning military seemed to have a direct correlation to the monetary benefits provided in each of the Acts. Fowler (2009) asserted that educational policy must take into consideration community ideals and beliefs, as any policy that diverges from these values will not garner support. Value systems lead people to propose social policy. Examples of general values that drive people and policy include economic health/growth, order/safety, and social equality, with this last value seeming to be the driving force behind veterans’ higher educational benefits (Fowler, 2009).

**Downsizing, Recruitment, Retention, and Rewarding Service Members**

Historically, the US military force experienced a number of drawdowns in the 20th century after the end of every military skirmish. In the opinion of Burton (2010), after each and every drawdown, the reduction of active military personnel hollowed out the armed services to the point where it could not be expected to meet any impending challenges to US security. President Obama presented his 2012 strategy for downsizing the military as a result of the military pullout from Iraq. Even though active duty Army
soldiers will be cut by about 2% and Marines by about 10%, active duty military end strength will still be above 2001 numbers (Vanden Brook, Michaels, & Madhani, 2012). Current military leaders agree with the Obama plan and assert that the anticipated end-strength still gives the United States the capability of fighting more than one conflict at a time, situations that had not been planned for in previous drawdowns (Vanden Brook et al, 2012).

The challenge of the current post-war drawdown is to maintain sufficient military capability for current security challenges, as well as to maintain preparedness for unexpected situations where a military force is needed, all in the midst of a call for fiscal savings (Burton, 2010). The 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review lays out the objectives to be met by the military force of the next five years, with the primary consideration being to preserve and enhance our all-volunteer force through quality recruitment and retention programs and benefits. Only through the ability to recruit and retain the best people possible, can the armed forces be able to build and maintain a smaller, yet extremely capable force to meet the challenges of the middle of the 21st century (Thomas, 2009).

As the military seeks a smaller, yet capable force, it must consider what motivates the individuals it seeks to enlist and to stay in the armed forces. Motivation theory can provide a platform for explaining incentives and benefits provided during, and for military service. There are two elements for eliciting a desired response or action from an individual (Sansone & Harackawicz, 2000). On the one hand, intrinsic motivation is based more on the feelings of pride and self-worth an individual feels from his or her accomplishments. These intrinsic feelings are probably most important for military leaders to see as they are embodied in military core values, and address the unique nature
of the job for active duty service members (Clemmer, 2011). Extrinsic motivational
tools, on the other hand, are tangible rewards that are external to the job. Ultimately, pay,
promotion, awards (both financial and visually symbolic), as well as retirement benefits
are the bases for extrinsic motivation in both the military and corporate worlds (Clemmer,
2011). In light of the demands during this period of military downsizing, it is important
to understand how the policy goals of recruitment, retention, and reward will be viewed
by veterans and active duty/reserve military.

**Recruitment**

Given the historic use of the draft, recruitment of soldiers was not an issue prior to
1973, when the nation switched to the all-volunteer force (Thomas, 2009). With the end
of the mandatory drafting of military personnel, active recruitment of qualified personnel
became a major job component for all of the armed services. Motivational incentives had
to be utilized in order to entice individuals into the military. American sentiment, the
state of the economy, and the military skirmishes happening at the time all play critical
roles in the ease or difficulty of the jobs of military recruiters.

Recruitment of quality first-term enlistees is more difficult and costly today
despite the lagging economy because there is a real threat to the lives and well-being of
the nation’s soldiers in a war action, especially given the declining public support for the
current wars (Thomas, 2009). The intrinsic motivations of patriotism, pride, and travel
are not always enough to get quality recruits. Even the extrinsic rewards of a steady job
with steady pay, and the learning of job skills are not enough to potentially put one’s life
on the line for a war that has been going on too long in the eyes of the American public.
According to the Commission on the National Guard and Reserves (CNGR), the military services are competing with civilian employers, who are also looking to seek the same quality workforce required to succeed into the future. A 2-year degree has become an essential minimum in order to be competitive in the corporate civilian world, especially during hard economic times (CNGR, 2008). One of the major extrinsic motivational tools the military has for recruitment incentives is the higher education benefits provided by the GI Bill. These benefits, especially the newly expanded benefits provided in the Post-9/11 GI Bill, provide a powerful recruitment incentive to quality recruits who cannot afford higher education (Thomas, 2009).

Retention

Despite the downsizing of the military, retention of key experienced personnel remains important, as turnover and retraining is costly. However, as in the civilian job environment, higher education has become a necessity in today’s military for retention and advancement. Military members, who have had the opportunity to earn some higher education credits while on active duty, have higher promotion rates, as well as lower attrition rates (Thomas, 2009). The main financial assistance program for active duty members to pursue higher education has been the Tuition Assistance (TA) program, which provides 100% of tuition and fees, not to exceed $250 per credit hour for an undergraduate class. In order to take advantage of the program, the military member must be currently serving, be eligible for advancement and commit to one year in the service past the date of the last class taken. In other words, it requires a retention commitment. The Post-9/11 GI Bill can be used in conjunction with TA. However, TA
can be used immediately upon entering active service, while the Post-9/11 GI Bill requires at least one year of service before usage eligibility.

Several studies have been done to show the effects of the employer-provided tuition assistance benefits on retention (Mehay & Pema, 2008). The most recent of these, related to the military, shows first-term enlistees who take advantage of TA and complete some undergraduate coursework have a significantly higher probability of reenlistment and promotion (Mehay & Pema, 2008). Retention of quality personnel has also been incorporated into the Post-9/11 GI Bill, as now active duty can take advantage of the benefits, or they can extend their time in active service and transfer their benefits to a spouse of child.

Another retention incentive is reenlistment bonuses, which provide a graded scale of financial reward for reenlisting in certain in-demand military job ratings. Generally, the higher the learning curve for the job skill, the higher the financial bonus. There are also non-financial rewards that evoke an intrinsic feeling of self-worth and pride in the job. Examples include awarding of medals and ribbons that can be displayed on the uniform, as well as public recognition and time off for a job well-done by superiors.

**Reward**

By providing extrinsic financial rewards to those veterans transitioning out of the military, the benefits of the GI Bill are really dual-purpose, as not only a recruiting and retention incentive, but also rewarding the veterans for a job well done (Asch, Fair, & Kilburn, 2000, p. 7). There may also be intrinsic value in an extrinsic award, even to those eligible individuals who do not use the benefits provided in that the government is recognizing and honoring the military members for the hardships suffered on behalf of
their country, through the significantly increased monetary benefits of the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

The concept of rewarding individuals for military service is not unique to the GI Bills. The pension offered for military service allows personnel to retire after just 20 full-time service years and is based solely on rank at retirement and time in service, which is the shortest service time for a defined-benefit contribution in civil service (Kang, 2006). Also, most federal and state civil service positions give an employment point preference for military service. Some civilian corporations also have a veteran-preference hiring policy (Browne, 1980). While the amount and type of reward given to the veterans is a source of debate, there is little argument that across the centuries, rewarding veterans for their service occurred, with the Post-9/11 GI Bill being the latest federal policy with a goal of rewarding both active duty/reservists and veterans for their military service.

The Community College: Platform for the student veteran & their GI Bill benefits

The community college has played a large role in providing higher education to those without the ability to attend a four-year college/university. Immediately following World War II, a new demand was thrust upon the two-year colleges as a flood of millions of returning soldiers expected access to educational opportunities in order to be trained for useful peacetime work skills (Brint & Karabel, 1989). Terminal/vocational education functions, instead of just attainment of a degree or transfer, leapt to the forefront of mission functions at community colleges, as returning veterans needed alternative job skills quickly. Additionally, this influx of veterans in the 1940’s was not like “traditional” college students. These adults needed not only job skills, but also educational and career services. Due to this need and to the passage of a huge federal
financial incentive to these veterans, namely the GI Bill of 1944, the federal government felt the need to step in and form a commission to help answer the perceived need for a reorganization of higher education.

The Truman Commission Report of 1947 called for true equality in higher education. The Report (1947) stated that no qualified individual should be denied the right to education at any level, from high school through graduate school, because of economic barriers, and ultimately called for education for at least two years past high school to be made as readily available as secondary education now was (Hutcheson, 2007). This declaration set the stage for need-based federal funding for higher education, and a potential huge influx in the college population. Thus, the need for a major expansion of higher education institutions was needed. The junior college was central to this planned expansion. The Commission suggested that it was to become necessary to develop and fund public two-year colleges to service as many local communities as possible. This focus effectively shifted the role of the two-year college from institutions providing the first two years of a four-year degree to that of providing varying levels of educational/vocational training to the community as a whole (Cohen & Brawer, 2008).

The Truman Commission Report of 1947 also triggered the name expansion from junior college to community college, for those two-year institutions that were publicly funded. Community colleges started being established with more frequency, and two-year college enrollments in the years immediately following the war rose at a modest rate, reaching the 200,000 mark in 1949. The mission and enrollments at the two-year colleges continued to rise and experienced another large expansion in the late 1960s.
This latest expansion was due to the boon in economy with job openings for college-educated employees outpacing the increase in college graduates (Brint & Karabel, 1989). This economic uplift caused an increase in adult (non-traditional student) education for those wishing to take advantage of the increased opportunities. The change in the make-up of the college student led to more occupational and vocational programs being offered and an open admissions policy. These new practical offerings, coupled with its affordable tuition (less than half of a comparable 4-year state college), and the fact that GI Bill benefits would also pay for these vocational programs, made the community college even more enticing to those adult learners thinking about partaking in higher education, including the student-veteran (Neufeldt, 1982).

The increasing popularity of the community college provided for a burst of growth in state bills allowing for the establishment of public (state-funded) two-year colleges. These new state-driven establishments carried the public community college concept from mostly a West/Midwest phenomenon to the Atlantic states. By the end of the 1960's new public community college campuses were opening across the nation at the stunning rate of more than one a week (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). Thus, according to Neufeldt (1982), was the rise of the true “people’s” college.

With the history of military veterans attending community colleges, as well as the expansion of the role and curriculum offerings of these two-year higher education institutions, specifically after WWII, a community college with a significant percentage of military users was sought as the target site for this evaluative study. Tidewater Community College (TCC), with four campuses servicing the South Hampton Roads region of Virginia, was established in 1968. TCC’s Office of Institutional Effectiveness,
as of the Fall 2012 semester, reported 3,133 Post-9/11 GI Bill TCC student users, with a
total dollar figure payout of benefits used of $5,322,612.91. Currently, TCC is fourth on
the list of Post-9/11 GI Bill student users, and is the only community college in the top 10
list of users (Sewall, 2010a). The high number of Post-9/11 GI Bill recipients, coupled
with its convenient access, makes TCC the best choice as a research site. The next
chapter reviews the methodology for this study and includes a discussion of the
conceptual framework. The chapter also details how the data were collected and
analyzed, as well as the generalizability of the data, given the established target group of
TCC veteran and active duty/reservists student users.
Chapter III

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to conduct and evaluate the use of the benefits of the Post-9/11 GI Bill by veterans and active duty/reservist military college students. This research used a quantitative method to collect data. A quantitative approach is appropriate when looking for indicators of outcomes to an implemented treatment or policy (Creswell, 2009). This method is particularly useful for a cause-effect analysis. In this study, the cause was the implementation of a new policy, with the effect being perceived attainment of the policy goals by users.

The population for this study was drawn from Tidewater Community College (TCC), the fourth largest provider of Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits in higher education, and the largest provider within the community college sector (Sewall, 2010a). This chapter provides the details on the framework for the policy evaluation study, as well as details about the sample population and the survey instrument, the primary instrument of data collection. Results and respondent characteristics of the survey were compared to TCC summary data on who is using the Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits. Finally, the chapter outlines the type of statistical analysis that was performed. The research questions guiding this study were:

What are the TCC active duty/reservist and veteran perceptions of the Post-9/11 GI Bill and does their usage of benefits align with the federal policy goals of recruitment, retention, and rewarding military for their service?

A. Have the stated federal goals of recruitment/retention and rewarding veterans for their service been met through the perception of the users and those
eligible for Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits but not currently using themselves at Tidewater Community College (TCC)?

B. How are active duty/reservists and veteran students at TCC using their Post-9/11 GI Bill in pursuit of higher educational goals?

C. Why are eligible non-users (both active duty/reservists and veterans attending TCC) enrolled at the community college not using the benefits of the Post-9/11 GI Bill?

Studies have been published on the college expectations (ACE, 2010) and experiences (DiRamio et al., 2008) of Post-9/11 veterans, but little is known about the expectations and achievements of the policy goals from a student perspective. This research sought to answer the question of whether the policy set forth in the current iteration of the GI Bill is achieving its federal policy goals from the perspectives of the active duty/reservist and veterans using the higher educational benefits at TCC, the case site for the research.

**Framework for Evaluation**

A great deal of research exists regarding the intended and unintended policy effects of the 1944 GI Bill (Greenberg, 1997; Olson, 1973; Clark, 1998). The current focus of research on student veterans continues to ask questions about the influence of the policy on the student experience (DiRamio et al., 2008), the educational attainment of those receiving benefits (Livingston, 2009), and the effectiveness of the policy (Johnson, 2009). Ultimately, the original GI Bill seemed to have exceeded the federal policy goals of the era that sought economic stability and rewarding our veterans for their service,
especially through the unprecedented use of the higher educational benefits (Clark, 1998).

Fowler (2009) offered seven steps in the process of evaluating policy. First is to determine the policy goals. For the current GI Bill, these goals are recruitment and retention of an all-volunteer military, and to reward our military for their service during the War on Terror (Keillor, 2009). Fowler’s (2009) second step is to select indicators as a sign that specific goals have been reached. The main indicator regarding the aim of retention of service members is whether active duty students are extending their service in order to transfer their Post-9/11 benefits. For recruitment, the indicator would be if the benefits provided by the Act were a primary reason for their initial enlistment. Indicators for rewarding our veterans include usage of the benefits, as well as directly asking the veterans about their satisfaction with the provided benefits.

The third step in Fowler’s (2009) policy evaluation process is selecting the type of data being sought and developing the data collection instrument, in this case, a population survey. A population survey includes all the members of a designated population (Orcher, 2005). The fourth step is to use the instrument to collect the data. For this study, the survey was administered online, through the use of the online Qualtrics software tool offered through the College of William and Mary. Descriptive statistics were generated based on the data supplied by the respondents, as well as TCC provided statistics. The fifth step in evaluating the policy is to display the data collected in a summary report format (Fowler, 2009). In the sixth step, the measurement data from the selected indicators is correlated to the policy goals. Lastly, recommendations are offered and received other researchers can build on the findings.
Research Design

The policy evaluation in this study utilized a quantitative approach. Creswell (2009) noted that the quantitative research design is typically used to determine the effects from an implemented change, in this case the federal policy implementation of the Post 9-11 GI Bill. Data were collected via a self-administered online survey, and were augmented by data supplied by TCC’s Office of Institutional Effectiveness on the numbers and characteristics of those using the benefits provided by the Post-9/11 GI Bill at TCC only. According to Orcher (2005), a non-experimental approach is applicable when describing conditions that currently exist, and a social survey is the most popular approach to gathering non-experimental data. A social survey is a “a technique for gathering statistical information about the attributes, attitudes or actions of a population by administering standardized questions to some or all of its members” (Buckingham & Saunders, 2004, p. 13).

The sampling design used a single-stage approach (Creswell, 2009); a list was generated by the TCC Office of Institutional Effectiveness of VCCS email addresses for all current student veterans and TCC student active duty/reservist military personnel. The target population included 4,390 veteran and active duty/reserve/National Guard TCC students enrolled for the Fall 2012 semester. This group was sent a link to the online survey via email, using my TCC email address, with the cover email jointly signed by me, and the TCC’s Director of Military Programs (See Appendix B). A statement regarding informed consent was included in the email, as well as on the online survey introductions page. The online instrument was available to the target population from October 7, 2012 to November 2, 2012. Follow-up emails were sent to the entire
population on October 19, 2012 and then again on October 28, 2012. The survey was closed on November 3, 2012. The full 42-question survey, along with respondent counts to each question are included in Appendix C.

In advance to the administration of the survey to the TCC student population, the survey was analyzed for face validity, which is assessing if the questions are appropriate for measuring what the researcher intended (Creswell, 2009). The survey instrument was first analyzed by Dr. Pamela Eddy, associate professor of higher education at the College of William and Mary, as well as Dr. Chris Widmer, retired professor of accounting at TCC and a military veteran. Expertise regarding data collection was also available with the institutional assessment personnel at TCC and Dr. Bruce Brunson, Executive Director for TCC’s Center for Military and Veteran Education. The expert panel review resulted in additions to the choice selections for five of the questions asking about reasons for using or not using the Post-9/11 GI Bill, as well as satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits, and reasons for leaving active military service. Two questions were added with regards to how the TCC student-veterans were using their benefits from a non-traditional standpoint. Were they getting more than one degree/credential and had they been attending more than one higher education institution? Three open-ended questions were added at the end of the survey asking for any amplifying information on the respondents’ perceptions of the government’s intentions and their perceptions of the benefits of the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

Once face validity had been confirmed, the survey was pilot-tested with veteran students at Thomas Nelson Community College (TNCC) in Hampton, VA. The Vice President of Academic Affairs at TNCC was contacted to ask for approval to perform the
pilot, duplicating the online conditions with veterans at their institution, through a population sample of 30 student veterans, ultimately nine actually participated in the survey. The pilot group was specifically asked about clarity of the survey. The data collected from the pilot survey were analyzed using the statistical tests outlined for the study. The following changes and adjustments were made based upon the evaluation of the survey instrument during the pilot. Five questions targeting the respondents’ perceptions of the three policy goals were changed from yes/no to five-point Likert scale questions. The final revised survey was then emailed to the target population (all TCC veteran and active duty/reserve students) through their Virginia Community College System (VCCS) email addresses.

Reliability is a measure of whether an instrument will produce consistent results (Orcher, 2005). The results of the survey respondents from the pilot test were compared to the results from the respondents of the actual TCC population survey to assure consistency. Specifically, reliability was assessed by comparing the respondent mean statistics for the survey questions measuring recruitment, retention, and reward for service. This comparison concluded that the mean responses of the TNCC students were in line with that of the TCC respondents.

Target Population

As described in the literature review, the community college is the higher educational public institution of choice for the majority of military and veterans due to location and class-scheduling flexibility. Additionally, TCC has the largest population of Post-9/11 GI Bill users among all of the nation’s community colleges. Thus, all veteran and active duty/reserve students enrolled at Tidewater Community College for
the Fall 2012 semester were chosen as the target population for this study. As all of the students identified in the target population were contacted and asked to participate in the survey, this research instrument is defined as a population or census survey (Buckingham & Saunders, 2004). Based upon this target population, while this study may not be generalizable to all military and veteran GI Bill users, it could help inform leaders, faculty, and students at the nation’s community colleges.

TCC, according to the Carnegie classifications, is a very large community college (VL2), with over 33,000 in full-time equivalent enrollment distributed over four campuses in southeastern Virginia. The military students in this target population were non-traditional, given their prior military service. According to Gumport (2007), almost two-thirds of all undergraduate students are considered non-traditional, which means they exhibit at least one of the following characteristics, they: delay college until at least a year after high school graduation; work part-time or full-time while attending college; have dependents; and/or are financially independent of their parents. An additional factor to take into consideration for the non-traditional student is whether these military-affiliated students are taking classes concurrently at other institutions, if they are doing this as a second degree/certificate, and/or whether they are continuing a college career after an extended break (Borden, 2004).

All members of the target population had delayed college due to their military service. Most were financially independent from their parents, and were working at least part-time. Information regarding their financial and working situations was queried as part of the demographical questions in the survey. An undetermined number have had a break in attendance, with some attending more than one institution concurrently.
Questions were asked in the survey to ascertain how many of these students fit the dual college attendance non-traditional role. Finally, this non-traditional student group share military experiences, with many having served in combat.

According to the TCC Office of Institutional Effectiveness, a total of 4,390 veterans and active duty/reservists were enrolled in at least one class at TCC for the Fall 2012 semester. Of this total, a little over half were using the higher educational benefits of the Post-9/11 GI Bill (1,642 student-veterans and 840 active duty/reservists students). While the active duty/reservists are all eligible for the Post-9/11 GI Bill, it is unclear whether all of the veterans qualify. The eligibility of use of the Bill was asked in the survey. Veteran students attending TCC, who were using other federal military education benefits, rather than the Post-9/11 GI Bill, totaled 1,680. Active duty/reservist TCC students not taking advantage of the Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits numbered 228 during the same enrollment semester. See Table 3-1 for a breakdown of the target population broken out into user and non-user statuses based on Fall 2012 enrollment.

Table 3.1 *TCC Veteran/Active Duty/Reservist Student Status, Fall 2012*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GI Bill Benefits</th>
<th>Veteran or Active Duty/Reservist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Using Post-9/11</td>
<td>1,642 veterans 840 active/reserves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using other federal benefit program instead of Post-9/11 GI Bill: Montgomery GI Bill, Tuition Assist, Vocational Rehab</td>
<td>1,680 veterans 228 active/reserves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total TCC Vets/active/reservists Fall 2012</td>
<td>4,390</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other choices for federally supplied higher educational benefits for veterans would primarily include the Montgomery GI Bill, which does not provide a living
stipend, and only allows for a set maximum dollar figure per undergraduate or graduate credit hour. However, the MGIB does provide support for vocational and technical certificates, features that were added to the December 2011 modification to the Post-9/11 GI Bill, but was not included in the original version of the newest Act. The dollar figure for the MGIB falls short of average tuition at a public institution (www.nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d09/tables/dt09_334.asp). However, the benefits supplied by Vocational Rehabilitation (Chapter 31) could also be a choice for those veterans discharged from service with a documented, service-connected disability (http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/vre/). Benefits provided by this program vary by percentage of disability, but can provide as much as the Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits. Additionally, usage of the Vocational Rehabilitation program does not negate eligibility for the Post-9/11 GI Bill. For active duty military personnel, Tuition Assistance for Active Duty Service Members would be the main alternative to receiving benefits from other GI Bills, as the Montgomery GI Bill cannot be used by military on active duty. Reservists have two alternative programs: The Montgomery GI Bill-Selected Reserve and the Reserve Education Assistance Program.

As the focus of this research was current service member and veteran perceptions of the Act, all current TCC student veterans, active duty and reservists were included in the survey regardless of whether they were using or even eligible for the benefits provided in the Post-9/11 GI Bill. Thus, a total of 1,068 active duty/reservists and 3,322 veterans represent the numbers expected in the sample population. Active duty and reservists were combined into one main group, with veterans being the second main
category. A separate grouping compared user to non-user responses. The total sample size for the group was 4,390 students.

**Data Collection**

Data on the perceptions of the veterans and active duty/reservist military themselves required direct contact with these participants in an expeditious and non-time consuming manner in order to improve response rates. Thus, a cross-sectional, self-administered survey (Creswell, 2009) was constructed in order to provide quantifiable data on how TCC students are using their benefits, and how they feel the benefits are impacting recruitment and retention at a specific point in time.

An online survey was used for data collection. External web-based survey response rates for college students vary widely based upon numerous factors such as computer access and traditional versus non-traditional student. Sax, Gilmartin, and Bryant (2003) found their emailed survey response rate to be between 17% and 20%, which they considered disappointing because of personal contact before the survey, as well as repeat contact with non-respondents. However, the rate was consistent with other researchers’ response rates of similar groups through an email survey (Dillman, 2008).

TCC’s Office of Institutional Effectiveness sends out an online population survey to all TCC graduates at the end of every even-numbered year. The response rates to the Graduate Survey had been as high as 40% in 2002 and 2004. In 2006, 2008 and 2010, the response rate dropped to 32%, 30%, and 34% respectively. This decline in response was attributed to the lack of follow-up to non-respondents.

Non-response bias (Sax et al., 2003) would only be a factor in this population survey from the standpoint of differences in the demographic categories of respondents to
those of the total population. A review of the demographic statistics showed that the respondents differed from the total population based upon Post-9/11 GI Bill users versus non-users, affiliated branch of the military, and gender. Responses were statistically analyzed to assure that those responding did not differ from non-respondents on the specific demographic variables that did not correspond to the total population.

**Survey Development**

Due to the lack of research on Post-9/11 veteran and active duty/reservist perceptions on the value of their educational benefits, a survey instrument was not found that fit the goals of this study. However, the recent ACE (2010) survey, conducted by the Rand Corporation concentrated on the usage of the Post-9/11 benefits by eligible military personnel, corresponding to research question A. Specifically, demographic questions from the Rand survey were used (see survey Appendix C, 44, 46 and 47) (http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG1083.html). Additionally, recent dissertations by Van Dusen (2011) and Thomas (2009) polled student veterans’ regarding persistence to understand better their higher educational goals, and the effects of the benefits of the GI Bills, up to the Montgomery GI Bill, on recruitment and retention, respectively, which corresponds to research question B. Questions modified from Thomas’ (2009) survey pertained to reasons for leaving the service (see survey Appendix C, 13, 15, and 16), as well as reasons for entering military service (see survey Appendix C, 29, 30, and 31). Questions that were derived from Van Dusen’s (2011) questionnaire involved usage of the benefits in pursuit of higher education goals (see survey Appendix C, 10 and 25).
No recent research was found that concentrated on determining if our veterans felt rewarded for their service through the benefits provided by the Post-9/11 GI Bill. The questions developed for surveying this goal (corresponding to research question B) were created specifically for this study (see survey Appendix C, 36 and 39). Questions that aid in answering specifically about the retention goal are survey questions 13, 15, 16, 17, 33 and 34. Questions related to the specific goal of recruitment are survey questions 29, 30, 31 and 35. Four open-ended questions were asked at the end of the survey in the hopes of gathering more specific and personal responses from the respondents as to their perceptions of the goals and benefits provided by the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

The final survey instrument used for this study is found in Appendix C. A table linking each survey question to the associated research question is indicated in the crosswalk table found in Appendix D. About half of the questions are structured with “yes” or “no” responses, with a no answer being coded as a zero, and yes coded as “1.” Five of the questions were five-point Likert scale responses. There were three questions with regards to recruitment and retention that drill down further to determine the respondents’ reasoning for joining, staying in, or leaving active military service. An additional two questions list potential reasons for satisfaction and dissatisfaction to the benefits provided by the Post-9/11 GI Bill. Room for amplifying comments, if any, were also provided. Written responses were analyzed for consistent themes and served to corroborate the survey responses regarding the goals of recruitment, retention, and reward. Several questions, including reasons for leaving the military and non-use of the GI Bill, required the respondent to pick the best answer. Demographic data were used descriptively to further categorize the responses to the three policy goals, with marital
status, military pay-grade, age range, income, and gender tested for correlation with each of the goals.

**Education Internal Review Committee (EDIRC)**

As the survey instrument was presented to human subjects for response, ethical issues were taken into consideration. As required, the proposal was presented to the College of William and Mary's School of Education Internal Review Committee (EDIRC) for review. An expedited approval process was submitted for TCC, the institution where the study occurred. The TCC board needed a copy of the proposal, survey and a copy of the proposed survey consent form, as well as the approval paperwork from the EDIRC.

An anonymous email list of the target population was received from TCC's Office of Institutional Effectiveness. The names of the participants (both respondents and non-respondents) were not known to the researcher, unless the participant emailed for further information. The personal email received from the target population was not saved. Information of a personal nature was asked in the survey. However, the data were presented in total anonymity. Any email/printed material which used a name will be destroyed after the final report has been issued and accepted.

Consent form information was included in the email that requested participation and was also included in the first page of the survey. The consent form in the online survey included a check box consent acknowledging agreement to participate in the survey, informed potential respondents of their voluntary participation, as well as the right to withdraw, and noted that links with their name and data will be destroyed. The purpose and procedures for data collection and presentation was also explained.
Participants were informed that they had the right to ask questions at any point during the study, and will be sent a copy of the study results if they so desire (Creswell, 2009). In order to continue on to take the survey, the online consent box had to be checked.

**Data Analysis**

The results of the survey were presented descriptively and grouped by the three research questions. The respondent was asked demographic questions at the end of the survey for additional grouping purposes, tested for response bias, as well as further amplification to the research questions from a socioeconomic standpoint, and to see if certain demographics showed a correlation to responses elicited relative to the main research questions. Specifically, One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and t-tests of significance tests were performed, using the SPSS statistical software, on the means to determine if there was any statistical relationship between the survey questions targeting perceptions on recruitment, retention, and rewarding military with the demographical data targeting gender, income, marital status, age, and military pay grade. The t-test for significance was performed on the gender question, with the ANOVA used for the other four demographic questions. At least one survey question targeting recruitment, retention, and rewarding our military was paired separately with each of the five demographic questions in order to determine if the two variables are independent of each other. A p-value less than .05 was considered to show that a relationship does exist between the two variables tested (Orcher, 2005).

The survey responses to questions specifically targeting the three policy goals of recruitment, retention, and rewarding our military for their service are shown in table format, and used descriptively to draw conclusions on the accomplishment of each goal,
outlined in Research Question A, through the perception of the veterans and active duty/reservists. Specifically, frequency counts, given as percentages were used for variables designated as 1) recruitment, 2) retention, and 3) rewarding our military. Means are also presented for some of the previous questions. Compiled statistics are presented as a percentage of total respondents on the usage of benefits. Survey responses are used to provide anecdotal data on usage of the Post-9/11 GI bill benefits toward the respondent’s higher educational goals at TCC (Research Question B). Additionally, why eligible active duty/reservist and veterans are not using their benefits are presented anecdotally in pursuit of Research Question C. Demographic information are used to further classify the results of the three research requirements based upon age, marital status, military pay grades, self-reported income levels, and gender of the respondents. A table with the questions referenced to the statistical test is provided in Appendix D.

Summary

This chapter described the framework, research design, and methodology for data collection and analysis for this research. The use of the quantitative method for this non-experimental study, as well as the social survey used as the instrumentation fits the research questions in this study (Creswell, 2009). Details were provided on the process for the development of the survey instrument and the relevance of the questions to each research requirement.

The review of Data Collection and Analysis follows, and outlines and summarizes the data by research question, principally using the descriptive statistics of frequency, mean, and standard deviation. Correlations are calculated and presented in order to determine if there were any relationships between demographics of participants and
perceptions regarding the policy goals of recruitment, retention, and rewards. Finally, data from the analysis of the survey is presented in both descriptive and table format. Fowler’s (2009) policy evaluation framework provided the steps required for this research study.
Chapter IV
Data Collection and Analysis

This chapter reviews the results from the pilot survey and discusses changes made to the final survey given outcomes from the pilot. The pilot test aided in testing for validity and reliability. The pilot test was administered at Thomas Nelson Community College (TNCC) during the last week of June 2012 through the first week of July 2012. Administration of the pilot was possible due to assistance of the TNCC Financial Aid Coordinator, Nicole Derry.

The findings from this research first present the demographics of the survey respondents and address response bias. As noted in the previous chapter, the demographics provide the ability to analyze the data based on gender, age, branch of service, and use of benefits. Next, frequency counts and personal anecdotes are used to provide insight into respondent perceptions of the three federal policy goals, as well as explain how they are using the benefits, and why they are not using their benefits. Reasons for satisfaction and dissatisfaction are presented, including written in responses. ANOVA and t-test analyses are performed in order to assess if there is any correlation between the demographic groupings of pay grade, marital status, age, income level and gender, with five questions pertaining to the three federal policy goals of recruitment, retention and reward.

TNCC Pilot Test

The survey was pilot tested with veteran and active duty military students at TNCC. TNCC provided a similar institutional context as a community college located in the region with a high military presence. The online link to the survey was sent to 30
users of the Post-9/11 GI Bill at TNCC. There were no non-users in the pilot target group. Six individuals responded within the first week. A reminder email was sent out one week after the initial email invitation. Four more responded at this stage, but one did not finish the survey. In total, nine valid responses were obtained from the pilot test, a 30% response rate. Of the nine responses, eight were veterans and one was still actively serving in the military. However, the one active duty member was planning on leaving active service within the year.

The survey results were analyzed using a cross-tabulation tool through the SPSS statistical software, version 20. Frequency counts for the recruitment, retention, and reward questions were determined. These frequency data were analyzed for correlation using a chi square relationship testing in SPSS, with the demographic questions of pay grade, gender, marital status, age range, and household income. Results were invalid or inconclusive using the chi square relationship testing because for many of the questions, the respondents answered unanimously, giving a constant number instead of a variable. Because of these results, seven of the questions on the survey that focused on recruitment, retention, and reward were changed to a Likert scale ratings instead of a "yes" or "no" response, giving a wider range of responses. The correlation test was also changed to a one-way ANOVA of the means instead of a chi square on the frequency counts, as the initial chi square produced invalid results because of the limited data and because the survey change resulted in calculation of means versus frequencies. Additionally, an analysis of the cross-tabulation of the frequency counts for the TNCC pilot did not show any relationship exists between the three policy goals and each of the
demographic questions. This may have been due to the limited size of the pilot test response rate.

A few items of note came from an analysis of the frequency counts for several of the individual questions. Surprisingly, eight members responded "no" to the question of whether the benefits provided by the Post-9/11 GI Bill were the primary reason for entering military service. Additionally, seven respondents answered "no" to the question of whether usage of the Post-9/11 GI Bill was the primary reason for leaving military service, important for the retention question. These numbers may be indicative of the newness of the Bill, and provide an interesting comparison with the full survey run several months after the pilot.

Eight of the nine respondents in the pilot test responded positively to the question of whether they felt the Post-9/11 GI Bill would increase recruitment of new enlistees. Seven were satisfied with the benefits provided by the Bill, with the cap on tuition payments and the amount of the living stipend listed as both the most and least satisfying of the Bill’s provisions. Comments supporting these frequency counts include “It’s a very good bill and I personally enjoy it because student loans are a hassle.” And, “It was a great bonus for serving just four years in the Navy.”

In response to the write in questions of whether you would change anything about the Bill, several responded that the certification and wait times in order to receive payment still seemed too long. The respondents also noted a desire to eliminate the recent change where the stipend payment is not received during school breaks. Finally, the testers noted the need for staff members responsible for giving advice on the Post-9/11 GI Bill to be better informed.
TCC Survey Results

The online Tidewater Community College (TCC) survey was available from October 7, 2012 to November 2, 2012. A total of 4,390 TCC students were emailed a link to the online survey, which was administered using Qualtrics Survey software. The email was sent from my TCC faculty email account and was dual signed by me, as well as Dr. Bruce Brunson, Executive Director of TCC’s Center for Military and Veteran Education. Two follow-on reminder emails were sent about one and half weeks apart. At the time of the survey closing date, 821 valid responses were obtained for an 18.7% response rate.

While the response rate was lower than anticipated given the pilot survey response rate of 30% and the higher response rates to previous surveys of TCC students, it did fall within the 17% to 20% range that Sax, Gilmartin, and Bryant (2003) achieved on their emailed surveys and is consistent with other identifiable response rates to emailed surveys (Dillman, 2008). A reason for the lower than expected rate of response could have been the use of only the VCCS student email address, instead of alternate personal email addresses. Although this was the same method employed for the TCC graduate survey, this survey concentrated on military-affiliated, non-traditional students. If students are not in an online class, they tend to check their student email account much less frequently than their personal email service. Additionally, there were over 20 emails received from students who claimed they were ineligible for the Post-9/11 GI Bill and were not going to complete the survey.

It remains unknown how many others did not take the survey believing they were ineligible for benefits. Based upon the general response norm and the size of the
population, statistical tests were still able to be applied and conclusions can be surmised. However, the possibility exists for response bias. The following two sections present survey demographics and the tests regarding response bias.

**Population Statistics and Demographics**

Veterans comprised 85% of those who responded to the survey, with the remaining 15% classified as active duty, reservist or National Guard. The majority of the responders (69%) reported themselves to be mid-grade enlisted (E4-E6), with only 3% being from the officer ranks. Rounding out the ranks, 12% stated they were in the E1-E3 grouping and 16% self-reported as E7-E9. The age groupings were fairly evenly dispersed with 72% falling into the three middle age ranges (between 27 to 50 years of age). Sixty percent of the respondents reported themselves as married. Median income fell across two categories representing $15,001 to the $50,000 range (54%).

As expected, given that the Hampton Roads area has a high concentration of Navy personnel, well over half (66.5%) of the responders were affiliated with the Navy, as Navy veterans and military were reported at 67.1% of the total TCC population surveyed. A table showing number and percentage of respondents’ service affiliations versus total sample population (provided by TCC’s Office of Institutional Effectiveness) follows in table 4.1:
Table 4.1 *Respondent Breakdown by Branch of Service*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Military Branch</th>
<th>N responders</th>
<th>% Respond (Actual)</th>
<th>% Total Pop (Expected)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Navy</td>
<td>546</td>
<td>66.5%</td>
<td>67.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Army</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marines</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air force</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coast Guard</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Guard</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>.9%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There were some deviations in the percent of the total population versus the percent of responder affiliation for the Army, Marines, and Coast Guard populations. Thus, testing for response bias was done based upon all service affiliations number of respondents as compared to the expected percentage based upon the total sample population.

**Response Bias**

Response bias was tested not just for military service affiliations, but also gender, and user/non user using a chi square analysis. A p-value less than .05 was considered to suggest that response bias may exist. Table 4.1 above shows the branch of service, respondent numbers, actual percentage of the total for respondents, as well as expected percentage. The chi square test value was 332.586 with a p-value of .0001. This small of a p-value is extremely significant, and indicates that response bias more than likely exists based upon the actual and expected percentage of respondents in the military service branch categories.
Gender responses were only answered by 729 of 822 respondents with 64% reporting male and 36% reporting female. According to TCC’s Office of Institutional Effectiveness, female Post-9/11 GI Bill benefit users comprised 40% of the population survey, while 60% were men. A chi square analysis was run in order to determine if there may be response bias due to the difference in percentage of responders by gender versus the total population percentage. The results follow in the table 4.2:

Table 4.2 Gender Response Bias

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Respondent#</th>
<th>Actual %</th>
<th>Expected %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>467</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The chi square test value for gender (actual vs. expected) was 5.008 with a p-value of .0252 which is less than the .05 limit, indicating a probability of response bias based upon gender.

The majority of the survey responders (77.2%) were currently using the benefits provided by Post-9/11 GI Bill, while only 22.8% reported themselves as non-users. According to TCC’s Office of Institutional Effectiveness, 47.2% of the total population was benefit users, and 52.8% were coded as eligible non-users. It is surmised that Post-9/11 GI Bill benefit users have a greater interest in a survey regarding benefit usage. However, response bias was tested using a chi square analysis of the frequency counts for the responders versus the percentage of users and non-users expected given the make-up of the total sample population. The following table summarizes the results of the analysis:
Table 4.3 *Response Bias Analysis for Users vs. Non-Users*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Respondent#</th>
<th>Actual %</th>
<th>Expected %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>User</td>
<td>634</td>
<td>77.2%</td>
<td>47.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-User</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>22.8%</td>
<td>52.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The chi square value for the user versus non-user groupings was 296.943 with a p-value of .0001, an extremely statistically significant finding with a high probability of response bias.

Demographic variables for branch of military, gender, and user/non user were tested for response bias. The survey participants differed for each of these variables from the actual population, especially regarding military branch. Thus, response bias was evident in this research and conclusions based on the findings must be used with caution.

**Have Federal Policy Goals Been Met?**

Research Question A asked whether the federal policy goals of recruitment, retention, and rewarding our military have been met in the eyes of the TCC student veterans, active duty, and reservist/National Guard. Four survey questions specifically targeted the recruitment goal. One survey question asked if the benefits provided by the Post 9/11 GI Bill were a primary reason for entering military service. This question included a 5-point Likert-scale question with “0” coded as “strongly disagree” and “4” coded as “strongly agree.” The majority of respondents (39%) answered “strongly disagree” with a mean for the responses being 1.24. In another of the survey questions, respondents were asked if they enlisted after the Post-9/11 benefits were available, would they have still done so if the Bill did not exist. Sixty-two percent of the 515 students who responded agreed to this question, with only 15% answering negatively. These responses
indicate that currently other factors are driving the desire to enlist beyond the GI Bill benefits, and that only a small minority of respondents indicated that they were influenced by the benefits of the GI Bill for their initial recruitment.

Respondents were asked if the Post 9/11 GI Bill benefits were not the primary reason for entering military service, what was? This question allowed for multiple answers. A total of nine possible answers were provided plus an “other, write-in” category. “Stable work and pay” was the most chosen category, garnering 57% of the responses. “Patriotism/Service to my country” came in a close second at 53%, and “travel/adventure” was third at 50%. The table that follows shows a summary of the frequency percentages (bearing in mind that this question allowed multiple answers) and number of responses checked for each of the 10 categories, including the “other/write-in.”

Table 4.4 Primary Recruitment Reason

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>Freq%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stable Work/Pay</td>
<td>421</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patriotism</td>
<td>389</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>368</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn Job Skill</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Benefits</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuition Assistance</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Tradition</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/Write-in</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor Civilian Job Market</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The top two reasons for enlisting represented both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation factors. Stable work and pay, an extrinsic motivator, was listed as the number recruitment reason, while patriotism, an intrinsic motivator came in a close second. These factors align with historic recruitment efforts by the military, and illustrate that the marketing
policies for recruitment seem to be working. This research study found that the Post-9/11 GI bill was not as strong a factor for recruitment as the factors of serving country, employment, and seeing the world.

Another survey question specifically asked respondents if they thought the benefits of the newest GI Bill would help to increase recruitment. The majority felt the new bill would indeed help enhance the recruitment prospects (52%) but tellingly 34% were neutral in their assessment, and 15% thought the Bill would not aid recruitment. A slight majority of respondents felt the new bill would aid recruitment, but noted it did not contribute to the reasons they enlisted.

Retention perceptions were the focus of six of the survey questions. One of the questions focused on those on active duty who decided to leave active military service in order to take advantage of the Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits. Recall that 85% of the respondents were veterans, thus it is not surprising that this population answered the question with a resounding “no” (98%). They were already out of the service, so the question did not apply to their current status. Of those still on active duty, over half (59%) answered that they were unlikely to leave the service within the next year. Thirteen percent gave a neutral response, and the remaining 27% answered they were likely to very likely to leave the service within the next year.

When veterans were asked how strongly the benefits of the Post 9/11 GI Bill influenced their decision to leave the military, 69% answered “not at all.” The survey posed questions to understand other reasons for leaving the military beyond the GI Bill benefits. This question was intended to be a forced single answer response from a listing of nine specific reasons and one “other, write-in.” However, it did not appear to be set up
properly and multiple answers were given. The majority of responses (38%) gave retirement as the reason for leaving the military. Twenty-nine percent answered that their commitment time had ended and they just chose not to reenlist. The write-in responses seemed to express some bitterness at being forced out due to cutbacks and “PTSD.” A table showing the number of responses and frequency percentages for the 10 answers to this question follows:

Table 4.5 Reasons for Leaving the Military Frequency Counts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>Freq%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retirement</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of Commitment</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Obligations</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/write-in</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medically discharged</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forced out of service/drawdown</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Got a civilian job</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fully Use Post-9/11 GI Bill</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unhappy with pay/benefits</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There were only 28 responses to the survey question that asked those respondents still on active duty whether they extended their time on active duty in order to transfer benefits. Of this group, only 32% of the respondents to this question answered “yes,” leaving not enough data to determine whether the transfer of benefits was aiding in the retention federal policy goal. Only 8% of the 722 veterans who responded to the question regarding whether the benefits offered by the Post-9/11 GI Bill influenced their decision to leave active duty, answered positively to this question. Ultimately, it looks as if the fear that service members would be leaving the military in droves due to the generous benefits of the newest GI Bill is not valid and retention is currently not an issue.
The final federal policy goal regarding rewarding military members for their service, queried TCC military-affiliated student respondents how strongly they felt rewarded for their military service through the benefits provided by the Post-9/11 GI Bill? This question utilized a 5-point Likert scale with “1” being “not at all” and an answer of “5” coded as “strongly agree.” Fifty-eight percent either agreed or strongly agreed with this survey question, while 22% were neutral, 13% disagreed, and 7% strongly disagreed. The mean for this question was 3.58.

Another survey question asked all survey respondents, both users and non-users, how satisfied they were specifically with the higher educational benefits provided through the Post-9/11 GI Bill. The response percentages regarding feeling rewarded for their service were similar to the survey question that asked how satisfied the respondents were with the provided benefits. A combined 56% answered as satisfied or very satisfied, and only 12% responded with dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. The mean answer was slightly higher (3.75) than the mean noted for the reward question. Ultimately, satisfaction level with the benefits of the Post-9/11 GI Bill was aligned with feeling rewarded for service for both users and non-users.

**Reasons for Use of Post-9/11 GI Bill Benefits**

Research question B asked how TCC students were using the Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits in pursuit of higher education. Six hundred and thirty-one of the respondents reported themselves as current Post-9/11 GI Bill benefit users. When asked to identify the main reason for using the higher educational benefits provided by the Post-9/11 GI Bill, the largest response answered was to earn a degree (48%). This question was a forced single answer response to six possibilities plus a seventh for other/write-in.
Coming in a distant second at 23% of the responses was “increased income through better job opportunities.” Four percent wrote-in responses. However, the majority of write-in responses essentially restated the top two chosen answers of job/career training and earning a degree. One respondent stated, “Need some sort of skills for success.” Another response was “For a career, not just a job.” A table showing the responses with their count total and frequency percentage follows:

Table 4.6 Primary Reason for Using the Post-9/11 GI Bill

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>Freq%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Earn a degree</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased income through better Job opportunity</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal growth</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Augment monthly income</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earn credential/certification</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/write in</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skill enhancement</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More than half (54%) of all respondents stated using their GI Bill benefits at another institution. What is unclear is how many of these 432 respondents were current non-users. These results raise a need for a response not provided in the survey question asking for reasons eligible students were not using the Post-9/11 GI Bill. Choices that need to be added include: planning to wait to use the benefits at another institution in the future, and already used the benefits or currently using them at another institution.

Five hundred and ninety-four respondent Post-9/11 GI Bill users (75%) stated that TCC is currently the only place they are using their Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits. For 63% of the responders that are users, the newest GI Bill benefits would allow them to finish the credential/degree they are pursuing. However, 64% of users responded that their intentions would be to complete their credential/degree even without the benefits.
When asked to identify the benefit that satisfied them the most within the array available in the Post-9/11 GI Bill, 47% of all respondents to this single choice question, answered that the living stipend was the benefit that satisfied them the most with tuition payments running a distant second at 27%. Write-in responses mostly included areas of dissatisfaction, noting difficulty in obtaining answers to benefit eligibility, and the hassle experienced in certifying and receiving the benefits. An interesting quote sums up one respondent’s feelings of satisfaction, “A good chance for me and other vets who have been out of school for years and spent time running from death and given this chance to educate our minds and reclaim our families.”

For the question asking which benefits dissatisfies you the most, the area most noted in responses (46%) were write-ins. The majority of the dissatisfaction seemed to center around complications with getting certified to receive the benefits. Other write-ins included the fact that limiting benefits to a maximum of 36 months tuition was not enough, especially if the student cannot go to school full time. Many were dissatisfied that there was no “gap pay” anymore. Gap pay is the living stipend that used to be paid during the academic breaks, but was eliminated in the December 2011 amendments to the Post-9/11 GI Bill. A table showing the n counts and frequency percentages for each category for what satisfied and dissatisfied the respondents most follows:
Table 4.7 Reasons for Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction Among All Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th># Satisfied Freq %</th>
<th># Dissatisfied Freq %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stipend amount</td>
<td>337 47%</td>
<td>85 12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuition payments</td>
<td>194 27%</td>
<td>49 7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>73 10%</td>
<td>312 46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer benefits</td>
<td>49 7%</td>
<td>46 7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Failed Class payment</td>
<td>24 4%</td>
<td>78 11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eligible $ based on time served</td>
<td>24 3%</td>
<td>24 11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eligibility expanded to reserve and guard</td>
<td>11 2%</td>
<td>72 4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eligibility expanded to active duty</td>
<td>6 1%</td>
<td>17 2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the frequency counts, the money paid out, whether it be in tuition and fees or the living stipend were obviously the most liked. None of the benefit features themselves seemed to be dissatisfying to the respondents, as almost all chose to write in their unhappiness, mainly with the implementation and certification processes.

**Eligible Non-user**

Research question C asked why eligible non-users were not using their Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits. One hundred and eighty-six of the TCC student respondents reported that they were not using the benefits provided by the current GI Bill. The prime reason for non-usage was reportedly because of ineligibility (40%), although the target group was supposed to be comprised of all military affiliated TCC students who were eligible for the Bill. It is unclear whether these students were actually ineligible or just thought
they were. Well over half, 123 (66%) of 180 non user respondents of the Post-9/11 GI Bill, were using other federally provided higher education benefits.

A full third of the non-users provided write-in responses for reasons for not using the Bill. The majority of the written in reasons seemed to trend towards the difficulties in initially applying for benefits and the lag between application and receiving of the benefits, as represented by the following written responses:

- I applied for the benefits in June 2012, and was approved for the benefits in August 2012 but have not received any of the benefits to date.
- My paperwork is STILL being processed.
- I've been in school for about six weeks and have not received any of my benefits that I'm entitled too.
- Vets out here are struggling. Speed up the process!

Others commented on their ineligibility or their inability to determine if they were eligible. One comment that was disturbing was a respondent who noted, “I had never heard of the Post-9/11 GI Bill.” Several were using other federal benefits or waiting until they went to a more expensive school before using the Post-9/11 GI Bill. Twenty-three percent (42 respondents of the total 186 non-users) were waiting until they left active duty to take advantage of the Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits.

**Correlation Analysis**

Five survey questions that focused on the three main policy goals of recruitment, retention, and rewarding our military were utilized to see if there was any correlation between the respondent perceptions and certain demographics. The specific questions tested all used a five-point Likert responses with a “1” indicating a “strongly
disagree/dissatisfied” with the statement, a “3” indicating “neutral,” and a response of “5” meaning “very strongly/very satisfied.” The first question listed in the tables asked if the education benefits provided by the Post-9/11 GI Bill were a primary reason for entering military service, while the second question asked if the respondents believed the benefits of the Post-9/11 GI Bill would increase recruitment of new enlistees. Both of these questions queried perceptions of the respondents to the recruitment federal policy goal. In pursuit of the perceptions on the retention federal policy goal, the next question tested asked how strongly the education benefits of the newest GI Bill influenced their decision to leave military service. The last two of the five questions asked how satisfied the respondents were, and how strongly rewarded, the respondents felt with the benefits provided by the Post-9/11 GI Bill. The mean responses to these five questions were tested for correlation with the specific demographic variables of pay grade, marital status, age range, household income level, and gender.

The following chart compares the means of the responses to the five questions, using a One-way ANOVA at a 95% confidence level, in order to determine if there is correlation to the mean responses among any of the pay grade groups, with the E1-E3 being the lowest enlisted ranks and making the least amount of monthly income. The left half of the chart shows the means for each group and the right half shows the significance between the means for the pay grade groups, using the Tukey HSD measure of significance, a commonly used post-hoc test which would show specific pairwise significance. A significance measure of less than .05 would indicate a statistically significant correlation. The statistics that fall into the significant category are highlighted in bold italics on the left hand side of the chart.
Table 4.8 Correlation of the Pay Grades to the Federal Policy Goals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question var</th>
<th>E1-E3 Mean</th>
<th>E4-E6 Mean</th>
<th>E7-E9 Mean</th>
<th>Officer Mean</th>
<th>Sig E1-E3</th>
<th>Sig E4-E6</th>
<th>Sig E7-E9</th>
<th>Sig ofcr</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q29-recruitment</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>E1-E3 .180</td>
<td>E4-E6 .008</td>
<td>E7-E9 ofcr .011</td>
<td>.0207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># responders(n)</td>
<td>(84)</td>
<td>(492)</td>
<td>(118)</td>
<td>(22)</td>
<td>E7-E9 ofcr .001</td>
<td>.849</td>
<td>.011</td>
<td>.207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q35-recruitment</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>E1-E3 1.04</td>
<td>E4-E6 1.00</td>
<td>E7-E9 ofcr .994</td>
<td>.435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># respondents(n)</td>
<td>(86)</td>
<td>(493)</td>
<td>(116)</td>
<td>(22)</td>
<td>E7-E9 ofcr .059</td>
<td>.435</td>
<td>.991</td>
<td>.911</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q34-retention</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>E1-E3 .255</td>
<td>E4-E6 .001</td>
<td>E7-E9 ofcr .007</td>
<td>.927</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># respondents(n)</td>
<td>(84)</td>
<td>(494)</td>
<td>(117)</td>
<td>(23)</td>
<td>E7-E9 ofcr .353</td>
<td>.838</td>
<td>.927</td>
<td>.927</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q36-reward</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>E1-E3 .923</td>
<td>E4-E6 .016</td>
<td>E7-E9 ofcr .599</td>
<td>.995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># respondents(n)</td>
<td>(86)</td>
<td>(492)</td>
<td>(117)</td>
<td>(21)</td>
<td>E7-E9 ofcr .004</td>
<td>.512</td>
<td>.995</td>
<td>.995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q39-reward</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>E1-E3 .974</td>
<td>E4-E6 .008</td>
<td>E7-E9 ofcr .974</td>
<td>.827</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># respondents(n)</td>
<td>(86)</td>
<td>(499)</td>
<td>(118)</td>
<td>(23)</td>
<td>E7-E9 ofcr .001</td>
<td>.893</td>
<td>.707</td>
<td>.707</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regarding responses to the recruitment question of whether the Post-9/11 GI Bill was a primary reason for entering military service, there was a statistically significant difference in the E7-E9 and the officer groups' means, as opposed to the two lower enlisted groupings. Those in the lowest pay grades were more likely to have enlisted given the higher education benefits relative to those in the higher pay grades. These results seem appropriate given the fact the Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits were probably not available when the highest enlisted group members were recruited. Another survey question was also dealing with recruitment, but this question asked if the respondent felt that the Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits would aid in the recruitment effort, rather than asking them if they specifically were recruited because of the benefits. There was no
significance noted in how the different groups responded. All pay level groups perceived that the generously increased benefits would aid in future military recruitment.

Respondents were asked if they had left the military in order to take advantage of the benefits provided by the Post-9/11 GI Bill, utilizing a five-point Likert scale. The E7-E9 pay grade had a statistically significant lower mean than the E1-E3 and E4-E6 groups to this retention question, indicating they were less likely to have gotten out because of the benefits. This difference could be based on several factors. First the higher pay grades may be closer to retirement, and they could have already earned a degree, possibly using their GI Bill benefits. Second, those in lower pay grades may have entered the military with less higher education.

The survey questions asking if the respondents felt rewarded and satisfied by the benefits provided by the Post-9/11 GI Bill allowed for responses indicating a “1-not at all” to an answer of “5” indicating “very strongly” rewarded. Results of the one-way ANOVA show there is a statistical significance between how the E7-E9, the higher enlisted grade, answered as opposed to both lower enlisted groups, E1-E3 and E4-6, with the E7-E9 mean answers to the two questions indicating a higher feeling of reward. Those in higher pay grades may have felt more rewarded for their service by the benefits provided by the Post-9/11 GI Bill because they are financially more well off and, while they appreciate the significantly increased benefits, they do not necessarily need them as much as those in the lower paygrades.

The next table shows the means for responses to the five federal policy goal questions associated with marital status. The left half of the chart shows the calculated
Tukey HSD significance for the mean responses between the groups. Statistically significant numbers are marked in bold italics.

**Table 4.9 Federal Policy Goal Means Correlation between Marital Status Groups**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question var</th>
<th>Single Mean</th>
<th>Married Mean</th>
<th>Divorced Mean</th>
<th>Widowed Mean</th>
<th>Sig Single</th>
<th>Sig Married</th>
<th>Sig Divorced</th>
<th>Sig Widowed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q29-recruit</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.368</td>
<td>.277</td>
<td>.866</td>
<td>.980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#respond(n)</td>
<td>(183)</td>
<td>(436)</td>
<td>(100)</td>
<td>(6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q35-recruit</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>.959</td>
<td>.856</td>
<td>.034</td>
<td>.069</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#respond(n)</td>
<td>(181)</td>
<td>(429)</td>
<td>(100)</td>
<td>(6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q34-retention</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>1.59</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>.014</td>
<td>.067</td>
<td>.445</td>
<td>.445</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#respond(n)</td>
<td>(181)</td>
<td>(428)</td>
<td>(100)</td>
<td>(7)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q36-reward</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>.766</td>
<td>.980</td>
<td>.987</td>
<td>.987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#respond(n)</td>
<td>(181)</td>
<td>(431)</td>
<td>(99)</td>
<td>(6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q39-reward</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>.995</td>
<td>.970</td>
<td>.676</td>
<td>.601</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#respond(n)</td>
<td>(180)</td>
<td>(432)</td>
<td>(98)</td>
<td>(6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When asked if their specific primary recruitment incentive was the Post-9/11 GI Bill there was no statistical significance between the groups by marital status. However, for the question asking respondents if they felt the benefits of the Post-9/11 GI Bill would aid in recruitment, there was a statistical significance in the way those who classified themselves as widowed answered against the single and married groups. Widowers did not feel the Bill would aid in recruitment. However, widowers comprised less than 1% of total respondents.
For the retention question, which asked whether the respondents left active service because of the benefits provided by the Post 9/11 GI Bill, the mean steadily decreased from single to married to divorced to widowed, the largest and most significant decrease was between the single and married groups, according to the Tukey HSD coefficient with the single group being more likely than the other groups to have left active service because of the Post-9/11 GI Bill. The ANOVA analysis coupled with Tukey HSD coefficient showed no significance between the response means of the marital status groups regarding reward.

The means and the Tukey HSD test of significance between the age range group mean responses to the five questions dealing with the federal policy goals are presented in the two tables that follow. Statistically significant numbers are marked in bold italics.

Table 4.10 Federal Policy Goals Mean Responses Shown by Age Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Var</th>
<th>18-26 Mean</th>
<th>27-34 Mean</th>
<th>35-42 Mean</th>
<th>43-50 Mean</th>
<th>50+ Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q29-Recruit # (n)</td>
<td>1.59 (113)</td>
<td>1.38 (204)</td>
<td>1.38 (123)</td>
<td>.85 (195)</td>
<td>1.04 (92)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q35-recruit # (n)</td>
<td>3.71 (112)</td>
<td>3.35 (199)</td>
<td>3.53 (125)</td>
<td>3.59 (192)</td>
<td>3.57 (90)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q34-retention # (n)</td>
<td>2.71 (113)</td>
<td>1.73 (198)</td>
<td>1.54 (123)</td>
<td>1.23 (190)</td>
<td>1.57 (93)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q36-reward # (n)</td>
<td>3.70 (112)</td>
<td>3.64 (200)</td>
<td>3.59 (125)</td>
<td>3.92 (192)</td>
<td>3.90 (90)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q39-reward # (n)</td>
<td>3.54 (113)</td>
<td>3.52 (199)</td>
<td>3.56 (122)</td>
<td>3.69 (192)</td>
<td>3.55 (92)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There was a statistically significant difference in the way the two oldest age groups versus the younger three age groups answered the question of whether the Post-9/11 GI Bill was a primary reason they entered service. The younger cohorts were more likely to state the benefits were a reason for enlisting compared to the older groups. These results seem appropriate as the Post-9/11 GI Bill was not being enacted at the time the older cohorts were recruited into the military. Another correlation was noted in the mean rate of response between the 18-26 and 27-34 categories in their answers to question regarding whether they believed the benefits provided by the Post-9/11 GI Bill

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Var</th>
<th>Sig 18-26</th>
<th>Sig 27-34</th>
<th>Sig 35-42</th>
<th>Sig 43-50</th>
<th>Sig 50+</th>
<th>Age Var</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q29-Recruit</td>
<td>.574</td>
<td>.688</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>.014</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>18-26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.656</td>
<td>.996</td>
<td>.999</td>
<td>.664</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>27-34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.068</td>
<td>.472</td>
<td>.086</td>
<td>.079</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>35-42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.861</td>
<td>.992</td>
<td>.387</td>
<td>.661</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>43-50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q34-retention</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>18-26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.476</td>
<td>.086</td>
<td>.079</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>27-34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>35-42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.729</td>
<td>.999</td>
<td>.664</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>43-50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q36-reward</td>
<td>.992</td>
<td>.994</td>
<td>.387</td>
<td>.661</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>18-26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.995</td>
<td>.995</td>
<td>.387</td>
<td>.661</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>27-34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.068</td>
<td>.307</td>
<td>.999</td>
<td>.661</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>35-42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.661</td>
<td>.226</td>
<td>.999</td>
<td>.661</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>43-50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q39-reward</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.833</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>18-26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.999</td>
<td>.647</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>27-34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.833</td>
<td>.647</td>
<td>.879</td>
<td>.903</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>35-42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.903</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>43-50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.11 Correlation of Age Group Responses
would aid in military recruitment efforts. Interestingly, the 27-34 year old age grouping, while still having an overall positive response, answered this question with the lowest mean response rate of any of the other groupings. The youngest age grouping predictably had the highest positive response out of all five cohorts as to whether the benefits provided by the Post-9/11 GI Bill would aid in current and future recruitment efforts.

There was also a strong difference between the mean responses for the youngest age group versus all four of the older age categories to the question asking respondents whether they had gotten out of the military in order to fully take advantage of the Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits. The 18-26 year olds trended toward a neutral answer, while all other groups were in disagreement with this Likert-scale question. The older age groups indicated they did not leave service to take advantage of the benefit. There appeared to be no correlation between age groups and their feeling of reward and satisfaction.

Family net income means and correlation tests of significance are given in the two separate tables that follow:

Table 4.12 Presentation of Mean Responses Based on Family Income Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question var</th>
<th>&lt;$15k Mean</th>
<th>$15,001 To $30k Mean</th>
<th>$30,001 To $50k Mean</th>
<th>$50,001 To $75k Mean</th>
<th>$75,001 To $115K Mean</th>
<th>&gt; $115k</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q29-recruit#(n)</td>
<td>1.36 (105)</td>
<td>1.37 (174)</td>
<td>1.27 (209)</td>
<td>1.29 (121)</td>
<td>.82 (84)</td>
<td>.65 (23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q35-recruit#(n)</td>
<td>3.41 (104)</td>
<td>3.50 (177)</td>
<td>3.42 (201)</td>
<td>3.56 (121)</td>
<td>3.48 (82)</td>
<td>3.52 (23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q34-retent#(n)</td>
<td>1.85 (104)</td>
<td>1.86 (175)</td>
<td>1.73 (205)</td>
<td>1.59 (119)</td>
<td>1.35 (81)</td>
<td>1.43 (23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q36-reward#(n)</td>
<td>3.35 (104)</td>
<td>3.71 (174)</td>
<td>3.74 (204)</td>
<td>3.93 (121)</td>
<td>4.00 (83)</td>
<td>4.09 (23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q39-reward#(n)</td>
<td>3.13 (104)</td>
<td>3.59 (174)</td>
<td>3.56 (205)</td>
<td>3.79 (120)</td>
<td>3.72 (82)</td>
<td>3.82 (22)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.13 Correlation Analysis Between Income Groups and Federal Policy Goals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question var</th>
<th>&lt;$15k Sig</th>
<th>$15,001 To $30k Sig</th>
<th>$30,001 To $50k Sig</th>
<th>$50,001 To $75k Sig</th>
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<td></td>
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<td>.001*</td>
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<td>&lt;$15k</td>
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<td>.029*</td>
<td>1.00</td>
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<td>.001*</td>
<td>.503</td>
<td>.621</td>
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<td></td>
<td>&gt;115k</td>
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<td>Q39-reward</td>
<td>.026*</td>
<td>.033*</td>
<td>.001*</td>
<td>.011*</td>
<td>.136</td>
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<td>&lt;$15k</td>
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<td></td>
<td>.011*</td>
<td>.959</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&gt;115k</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Statistically significant correlations are marked with an asterisk in the table above.

While they were much less likely to have been recruited based upon the benefits of Post-9/11 GI Bill, the two highest income groups felt just as strongly as the lower income cohorts that the benefits will indeed aid the military in its recruitment efforts. For the question regarding whether the Post-9/11 GI Bill was a primary reason for their
recruitment, as well as the question asking if they had left the military in order to take advantage of the benefits of the newest GI Bill, there was a statistically significant difference in the mean responses from the two lowest income groups versus the second highest ($75,001-$115,000), with the higher income group displaying a much lower mean to the recruitment question, as well as whether they had left the military because of the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

Statistical significance was noted in how all five higher income categories answered the satisfaction question versus the lowest income category of less than $15,000, who responded with a lesser degree of satisfaction regarding the three federal policy intentions. All but the highest income grouping differed significantly in their response from that of the lowest income group to the question that asked if the respondent felt rewarded by the benefits provided through the Post-9/11 GI Bill. In general, higher income respondents felt more rewarded and satisfied with the level of benefits relative to the lower income cohorts. This finding may be because the higher income groups do not need the benefits and are not as impacted by their value, rather the benefits represent a symbolic reward for their service.

Finally, t-tests were run on the mean response rate to the five federal policy goal questions grouped by gender. Based upon the result of the t-tests, there appeared to be no significant differences in the way males versus females answered the federal policy goal questions. As in the overall survey findings, both men and women felt rewarded for their service and felt the Post-9/11 Act would aid in recruitment of military personnel in the future, even though it was not a major rationale for their own recruitment. The table is shown below:
Table 4.14  Gender Correlation to Federal Policy Goals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question var</th>
<th>Male Mean</th>
<th>Female Mean</th>
<th>t-test</th>
<th>Sig</th>
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<tr>
<td>Q29-recruitment</td>
<td>1.22 (464)</td>
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<td>.827</td>
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<td>Q35-recruitment</td>
<td>3.47 (458)</td>
<td>3.46 (256)</td>
<td>.055</td>
<td>.956</td>
</tr>
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<td>Q34-retention</td>
<td>1.66 (457)</td>
<td>1.77 (256)</td>
<td>-1.207</td>
<td>.228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q36-reward</td>
<td>3.75 (456)</td>
<td>3.74 (259)</td>
<td>.052</td>
<td>.958</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>3.57 (457)</td>
<td>3.58 (256)</td>
<td>-.075</td>
<td>.940</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pilot Test Comparison to Live Survey Results

In order to determine reliability and consistency of the data, results of the live survey were compared to the TNCC pilot test. Because of the limited data, statistical tests were not able to be run for the pilot, and several of the question responses were changed to a Likert scale for the live test based upon the results of the pilot. However, certain consistencies can clearly be seen. Respondents in both tests mainly answered that the Post-9/11 GI Bill was not a primary reason for recruitment, but both groups agreed that the newest GI Bill would be a strong recruitment aid. Satisfaction with the benefits and the feeling of reward were favorable for both groups. Finally, the write-in reasons for dissatisfaction were similar in the pilot and live tests with the recent changes to “gap pay” and the problems with certification, determining eligibility, and the time lag for the receipt of payments listed high among the items that should be changed or improved.

Limitations to the Data Analysis

The response rate seemed acceptable based upon the rates of other emailed surveys (Dillman, 2008) and good usable data were gathered. However, there were unanticipated issues that provided limits to the data and the analysis of it. The target
population was sent an anonymous email link to the survey so it was impossible to tell who did not respond. The two non-response follow-up emails were sent out to the entire population with an explanation of “thank you” for responding along with a plea to those who did not respond. Over 20 irate emails were received with regards to being hounded. This may have adversely affected response rates. Additionally, because of the anonymity of the respondents, it was also impossible to divide them into the four groups of veteran Post-9/11 benefit users, veteran non-users, active duty users, and active duty non-users as originally anticipated and identified in the dissertation proposal.

The target population was all TCC student veterans, active duty, reservists, and national guardsmen regardless of eligibility for the Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits. Anecdotally, there were two students in my classes who were actual veterans using the Post-9/11 GI Bill, and claimed they did not get the emailed survey. Both students say they actively use their VCCS email accounts so it was not a matter of being put into junk email. So, the question arises of how many others were missed?

Response bias was also significant based upon branch of service, gender, and user/non-user status. Because of the high probability of response bias and the study being limited to the military-affiliated student population at only one community college, this study is not generalizable, but still provides insight into the perceptions of these students with regards to the federal policy goals, intended usage, and reasons for non-usage, especially at the nation’s community colleges.

The next chapter discusses the findings situated in the larger literature and offers data conclusions. Ideas for replication and improvement of the study are given. Implications for practice are outlined with advice for policy-makers, institutional
implementers of the policy, and individual veterans, active duty military/reserve/national
guard. Finally, further research to expand on this study will be recommended.
Chapter V

Conclusions and Recommendations

The purpose of this research was to conduct a study and evaluate the data regarding the use of the benefits of the Post-9/11 GI Bill by veterans and active duty military college students. To this end, an online survey was conducted and the results evaluated with regards to the target population's perceptions of the benefits provided by Post-9/11 GI Bill by TCC veterans, active duty military, reserve military and National Guard students. In addition to the perceptions, the study looked at the usage behavior of the benefits in order to determine if the usage aligned with the three main federal policy goals of recruitment, retention and rewarding military members for their service (Public Law 110-252). This research study also questioned why eligible non-users are not using their benefits.

This study used Fowler’s (2009) seven step policy evaluation process as the conceptual framework, with the first step stated as determining the goals of the policy. The three goals of the Post-9/11 GI Bill were identified as recruitment and retention of quality military personnel, as well as rewarding military members for their service (Keillor, 2009). The main indicators for determining whether the three goals have been met (Fowler’s (2009) second step) include if the benefits provided by the Act were a primary reason for respondents initial enlisted, in pursuit of the recruitment federal policy goal. For the retention goal, are active duty students extending their service in order to transfer benefits? Indicators pursuing the reward goals would include how the student respondents are using their Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits, as well as directly asking all of the respondents if they indeed felt rewarded by the provided benefits.
In line with the third and fourth steps in Fowler’s (2009) policy evaluation process, three research questions were used as the basis for constructing a 42-question survey, which was administered online over a one month period. Data were collected from the responses to the online survey, and analyzed using descriptive statistics in SPSS software. The results of the data analysis were displayed in descriptive, anecdotal, and table format in Chapter 4 of this research, following Fowler’s (2009) fifth step. Conclusions are offered, segmented by each of the three research questions, followed by suggested modifications to the Post-9/11 GI Bill, limitations to the study, suggestions for replication of this research, and recommendations for further research (Fowler’s (2009) sixth and seventh steps.)

**Research Question A**

Have the stated federal goals of recruitment, retention, and rewarding our military been met through the perception of the users and those eligible for Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits but not currently using those benefits at TCC? Because of the downsizing of the nation’s military that is currently underway, there is a stronger need to recruit and retain the best individuals to build this smaller military that is capable of meeting the unique needs of the 21st century (Thomas, 2009). Intrinsic rewards, such as a sense of patriotism, and extrinsic rewards, like the allure of stable work and pay, are tools that aid military recruiters, but these may not be enough when individuals are faced with putting their lives on the line. The GI Bill and other tuition assistance incentives contribute more to recruitment incentives and may be a more powerful lever for enlistment (Thomas, 2009). However, this research found that the primary reason for the majority of survey participants to join the military was not the Post-9/11 GI Bill. Instead, the response given
by most was stable work and pay, with a sense of patriotism coming in a close second. These reasons represent both extrinsic and intrinsic motivators (Clemmer, 2011), respectively, and align with historic recruitment and marketing tactics for the military. Even though the respondents indicated satisfaction with the benefits of the Post-9/11 GI Bill, the benefits of the Act were not the prime motivator for enlisting.

The finding regarding recruitment could be limited due to the newness of the Bill. When analyzing how the groups answered the recruiting question, the lowest enlisted grouping, while still in disagreement with the question of whether the Post-9/11 GI Bill was a primary reason for entering service, nevertheless had a statistically significant higher mean than all of the other pay grades. Additionally, the lowest pay grade had the strongest agreement with the statement of whether they felt the Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits would aid in current and future military recruitment. It is unclear from this survey whether the federal policy goal of recruitment has been met through the benefits provided by this newest GI Bill, but it does look as if the perceptions of the TCC military-affiliated student respondents are that the benefits will, ultimately have a positive impact on recruitment, and that lower-paid and lower ranked military participants saw the highest value in the educational benefits of the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

While the large increase in benefits provided by the newest GI Bill was endorsed by most constituents, military leaders expressed concern that the benefits would hurt retention as qualified service members leave the military in order to take full advantage of the generous benefits (Keillor, 2009). From the responses to the questions dealing specifically with retention, this was not an issue with the current group of student veterans. Most telling was the responses from those students on active duty. When
asked if they planned on leaving active military service within the next year, over half responded that it was unlikely. Thus, active duty military in this study are not leaving their military service for the main purpose of taking advantage of the GI educational benefits. As noted, several active duty military members are taking courses concurrently with their military service. Additionally, only 8 non-user respondents (4%), answered that they had or were intending to transfer their benefits to a dependent. This requirement was a key retention addition to the Post-9/11 GI Bill, but does not seem to be currently having the intended effect. Longitudinal analysis of this particular benefit would be needed to see if this is, perhaps, something that could be cut from the Bill to decrease the overall cost.

Most respondents answered negatively to the question regarding whether they had gotten out of the military in order to take full advantage of the Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits. However, the trend was much higher for the youngest age group, where they were closer to a neutral answer. Again, possibly because of the newness of the Bill, retention was not an issue for the current group of student-respondents despite the concern. However, this trend could increase with a new group of students who may have entered military service specifically because of the Post-9/11 GI Bill. The two federal policy goals of recruitment and retention are more than likely aligned with each other. As more military members are enticed to enlist in the military due to the GI Bill, so too might retention become an issue as these same members put in the minimal amount of time required in order to utilize the benefits.

The mean answer to the two Likert-scale questions with regards to whether the student felt rewarded and satisfied by the benefits provided by the Post-9/11 GI Bill
showed that this policy goal appears to have been met. There was no overwhelming feeling of satisfaction, but the answers had an overall positive trend. The strongest differences in the responses to this question with regards to demographics showed that the lowest income level had a lower sense of reward than those in all of the higher income brackets. This difference in perception of reward may have some links to how personnel in these various income brackets value higher education. Additionally, those in the higher income levels may not need to use the money, either because they can fund the education themselves or already finished their higher education. Either way, their higher feeling of reward may be linked to the fact that it will help those in the lower income brackets. The lower income levels may feel that the benefits are still not quite enough, especially given the discontinuation of gap pay and the 36-month time limit. Future study may be able to ascertain the reasons for the difference in perception of the rewards accrued from the GI bill.

Linked to income brackets are the military pay grades of the respondents. Those in the lowest enlisted pay grade (E1-E3) exhibited a lesser feeling of satisfaction with the benefits than those in the two highest pay grades (E7-E9 and officers), possibly for the same reasons the lower income brackets had a lesser feeling of reward. This group may is no doubt starting out with less educational achievement and may be in positions that are more often on the front lines. They may desire more extrinsic rewards rather than seeing the benefits as symbolically rewarding their service. Nevertheless, both groupings (income level and pay grade) felt the benefits provided by the Post-9/11 GI Bill did reward them for their service.
Research Question B

How are active duty/reservists and veteran students at TCC using their Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits in pursuit of higher education? The overwhelming response was in pursuit of a degree or credential. The goal of degree completion aligns with the national policy focus on increasing the number of college graduates (Baime, 2010). Pointedly, the Higher Education Act of Virginia (2011) established a state goal of increasing the number of college graduates by 100,000 by 2025. Ultimately, that degree would help increase the socioeconomic standing of the student, with the higher education benefits provided by the GI Bills traditionally being the vehicle for veteran achievement (Olson, 1974). Indeed the research found that along with the desire to complete a degree, respondents also indicated they were using their benefits for higher education to increase their income and job opportunities. Baum, Ma, and Payea (2010) found that the benefits of higher education include more than the individual benefits of personal and intellectual growth. With the potential for higher income, they concluded that the public also benefits through lower prison incarceration, higher tax payments, and lower public welfare rates. Thus, the Post-9/11 GI bill is not only achieving policy goals in its own right, but also helping support other national and state policy goals.

The student respondents are currently attending TCC to earn a degree or credential, but TCC was not their only, or even the first college they attended. The student demographics of the enlisted service member are different today than they were Post-World War II, with over a quarter of today’s veterans leaving the service with some college credit already (Mettler, 2005). Indeed, the survey results showed that over half of those respondents currently attending TCC had enrolled in another college in the past,
and some were even taking classes at another higher education institution in conjunction
with their TCC attendance. The notion of educational swirl (Borden, 2004) is evident
with the military population taking advantage of the GI Bill benefits at TCC.

This pattern of multiple course-taking has typically been found to challenge
students in degree completion and program learning, as their higher education degree
consists of a variety of courses from different colleges, and may ultimately lack
coherence (Borden, 2004). However, in the case of the military student, educational
swirl may be an answer to quicker degree completion, and provide a mechanism to
maximization of the Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits. The respondents seem driven to
complete the degree, with 64% stating they would complete the degree or credential even
without the benefits. Educational swirl allows them to have a wider selection of courses
per term, and, perhaps, even overlap terms, combatting both the gap pay and 36 month
time limit issues.

When asked about the other types of institutions they were attending, 197
respondents (25%) indicated they were using their GI Bill benefits at another institution.
One third of those attending another institution concurrently were enrolled at a for profit
institution. However, most of the colleges the respondents listed had a local brick and
mortar locale including Strayer University, Saint Leo University, Tidewater Tech, ECPI,
and Medical Careers Institute. In the initial formation of the Post-9/11 GI Bill, it was
feared by the public colleges that because of the expanded benefits, coupled with the 36-
month time limit, the for-profit/private colleges would benefit the most from the
implementation of the Post-9/11 GI Bill (Eckstein, 2009). In fact, University of Phoenix,
the largest for-profit higher education institution in the nation is, by far, the largest
recipient of Post-9/11 GI Bill users (Sewall, 2010a). Yet, in this research study, not a single participant mentioned the University of Phoenix, perhaps because of cost, feeling of anonymity, and the fact that there is no local face-to-face representation for the institution.

These military-affiliated students currently attending TCC had the goal of degree attainment, but indicated they were going to earn that degree or credential with or without the Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits. Most did appreciate the benefits, with ending comments mostly positive, calling the Post-9/11 GI Bill “awesome” and “a great program that was a long time coming.” Another interesting and constructive comment was that “veterans need to learn how to maximize their benefits.” This respondent felt that other federally provided benefits should be used to complete the undergraduate degree. Helping veterans and active duty military plan on how to use their benefits may leverage the policy benefits too. If students used other benefits for their undergraduate degree, the Post-9/11 GI Bill could help in paying for a graduate degree which takes potentially less time to complete, but costs more. Ultimately, these student-respondents appeared to be driven and working hard, attending classes at multiple institutions, building upon credits earned earlier in order to attain their goal, which would lead to increased income and a better quality of life, with the newest GI Bill clearly aiding in their pursuit.

**Research Question C**

Why are eligible non-users enrolled at the community college not using the benefits of the Post-9/11 GI Bill? By far, the greatest reason for non-use was the difficulties in applying and determining eligibility. The difficulties of the implementation process for the benefits have been noted since they became available.
(McBain, 2009). However, while the amount of time has decreased significantly in the receiving of the benefits, actually applying for benefits remains a large problem, with those who may be eligible getting frustrated and giving up (Sander, 2012).

Dissatisfaction from respondents was also displayed regarding the December 2011 changes to the Bill which stopped the gap pay. Sander (2012) stated that the modifications, coupled with the confusing language of the original Post-9/11 GI Bill, might cause veterans to just stay with the MGIB. Other reasons for dissatisfaction included the limit to the 36 consecutive months of benefits, and total tuition cap which creating insufficiency in allowing them to finish their degree. As noted above, however, most respondents indicated they planned to complete their degrees despite the lack of GI Bill benefits throughout their program.

The lack of comprehensive benefits for degree completion was also a common complaint with the 1966 version of VEAP, with many veterans giving up and not completing their academic goals (Spaulding, 2000). Thus, in terms of policy implementation and goal alignment, policy makers should consider restoring the gap pay and increasing the time limit before expiration of benefits. Keeping the total benefit payout cap in place while allowing them more time to complete the degree would aid in constituent satisfaction and, ultimately, the feeling of reward.

The results of the survey show that the majority (68%) of non-users were using other federally provided benefits, most notably the Pell Grant, potentially in order to maximize the use of all of their federal higher education monies. Others were waiting to use their Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits until they go on to a more expensive school, perhaps validating the concerns that the time limit and generous benefits are indeed benefitting
the more expensive private/for profit institutions with more unconventional teaching modalities centered around completing a degree in as minimal a time as possible (Eckstein, 2009). What needs to be clarified is if those respondents who were using other federally-provided benefits were also part of the group waiting to use their benefits at another institution, or possibly just waiting to use up their current other program before starting the 36-month timer on their Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits at TCC. Some may be considering transferring their benefits to a family member.

Almost half of the respondents claimed they were or had used their benefits at another institution. Possibilities for non-usage now at TCC might be because they used up their benefits at another college. However, only two non-users claimed they had used up their benefits. So, the question of why eligible non-users are not using the GI Bill benefits is inconclusive and should be delved into further.

**Implications for Practice**

The timing of this study provides evaluation on the early stages of implementation of the Post-9/11 GI Bill. Even though the respondents indicated they did not enlist solely due to the educational benefits, they felt that in the future, the Post-9/11 GI Bill would aid in recruitment and retention for others. However, improvements could be made that would enhance the perceptions of the GI Bill users, and those wanting to use it. Two suggestions for practice emerged from the research that tie to reasons for respondent dissatisfaction. Most importantly, simplifying the application and eligibility process would improve the satisfaction among potential users. From a policy standpoint, this may involve another amendment to the Post-9/11 GI Bill clearly delineating who is eligible. As the institution responsible for administering the Act, the Veterans’
Administration (VA) could step in and concentrate efforts on communicating information about the GI Bill higher education benefits, and streamline the paperwork process for accessing benefits. The military-affiliated students are finding it difficult to get the help they need in applying, and even determining their eligibility (Sander, 2012). Clear cut guidelines and procedures need to be laid out and interpreted by the VA to the administrative military personnel who are trying to help those still on active duty, as well as to the college administrators aiding veterans on campus. The processing of the paperwork at the VA offices also needs to be sped up, which would ultimately decrease the delay on payments being experienced by new benefit recipients.

Coupled with easing the process, details of eligibility, how to apply, as well as information on ALL higher education federal benefits available to veterans ought to be part of the out-processing training that is required for all who are leaving active military service. Because there may not be enough time to give detailed higher education benefit availability information at the required training, this part of the session could be an optional addition given to all who wish to attend. Detailed written guidelines would also be recommended, again, not just for the GI Bills, but all federal monies available for continuing education. Examples of how to combine the higher educational benefits available would include using other federal benefits, like the Pell Grant, for the lengthier undergraduate pursuits, followed by the Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits for the more expensive graduate degrees. Additionally, as educational swirl proved positive for participants, encouraging the notion of taking classes at multiple institutions in order to complete the degree/credential requirements in the 36-month time limit may be advisable.
A second area of practice concerns the federal policy. Congress could restore the gap pay to aid users in funding during breaks, and consider extending the 36-month time limit. Students looking to finish a four-year degree program or completing an associate's degree and then transferring to a four-year university require more time to complete their degree. The 2011 changes to the Post-9/11 GI Bill ended the ability to draw the living stipend in between class semesters. While this change may have occurred in order to prevent the potential for abuse and/or save the government some money, it is evident by the number of respondents who were dissatisfied with this change that it is hurting those who are trying to use the benefits to finish a degree or credential. Without the gap pay, many students found it impossible to go to school full-time because they needed to work in order to pay for living expenses, at least in between semesters. Gap pay should be restored to support persistence and to aid in timely graduation. Consideration should also be given to extending the 36-month expiration of benefits without increasing total benefit payout. Payment of benefits needs to be linked to academic success, and not necessarily to just time limits.

Finally, veterans using their Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits need support not only from the VA, but also the institutions they are attending. TCC has had a Veterans' Affairs office in place on each of its four campuses for several years now to support its military population. The first three stated purposes of this office are posted on the TCC website as: 1) Providing guidance for veteran students and dependents to insure that they are certified for veterans benefits. 2) Advising veterans concerning the VA's requirements for maintaining satisfactory course pursuit. 3) Counseling by discussing the curriculum with each student and approving the courses selected, if consistent with VA regulations.
and directly related to the requirement specified for a Certificate or Degree. TCC’s offices of Veteran Affairs are necessary given the large military affiliated student population, and their stated purposes are comprehensive and follow the direction of current research on aiding the veterans through curriculum and benefit guidance (Rumann & Hamrick, 2009). However, dissatisfaction by the survey participants about the delay in paperwork, application and eligibility for the Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits was aimed at TCC offices, as well as the VA. Thus, TCC Veterans’ Affairs counselors need to be better trained in the timely management of the Post-9/11 GI Bill, as well as coordination with the VA.

Areas for Future Research

This research contributes to our knowledge about community college Post-9/11 GI Bill participants by providing information about the ways in which users are accessing benefits and how the policy intentions are perceived. Future research could involve replication of the survey on a wider scale across the nation, and include more expensive private and for profit institutions like the University of Phoenix, as well as four-year universities. More valid and generalizable data could emerge. Addressing response bias in the application of the survey would also help in creating more generalizable results. As the Post-9/11 GI Bill is in use longer, the role for recruitment and retention might change. The results of this research study indicate that users perceive the bill will aid in recruitment in the future. Examination of this question over time would contribute to the knowledge base.

The ability to track survey respondents at the individual level would allow for analysis of the data based on the following groups: veteran user, veteran non-user, active
duty user, active duty non user, reserve user, reserve non user. Nuanced responses
grouped by status could help inform policymakers about implementation concerns based
on demographics and would help in evaluation of the policy. This research found no
correlation to the perceptions of the achievement of the federal policy goals based on
gender, but other site context may confirm or refute this finding. Of note, more women
used the Post-9/11 GI bill (35%) than comprise the military enlistments (around 15-
20%). Qualitative investigation around issues of gender usage would help determine if
the national patterns of more women in higher education provides a rationale for higher
participation by military women as well. Differences by gender may emerge based on the
user/non-user groups suggested above as well as by service affiliation.

Based upon the results of this survey, modifications to certain questions are also
suggested. Specifically, the reasons eligible non-users are not using their Post-9/11 GI
Bill benefits should be drilled down further to explore the use of other benefits and usage
at more expensive institutions. Including the more expensive institutions in the sample
population will also help in the determination of non-usage. Students who are using their
benefits at more expensive, non-traditional higher educational institutions should be
asked why they are attending the venue. Suggested responses include convenient locale,
speed to goal completion, distance learning platform, multiple learning platforms,
personal interaction (or no requirement for personal interaction), and veteran eligibility
support services.

A problem regarding implementation of the Post-9/11 GI Bill is determining
eligibility and the application process for the benefits. The original congressional bill is
complex and may prevent eligible users from applying for benefits. Doing more
discourse analysis on the policy process and the policy itself could shed light on the early stages of policy formation, and ultimately the influence on implementation and evaluation. Further, a qualitative study that focused on federal policy makers could help increase understanding of the intentions of the process and determine expectations for implementation and evaluation. Interviews with VA personnel and military assistance personnel on college campuses could be conducted that focus on their interpretation of eligibility from the congressional acts and their perspectives on delays in implementation at the state level.

Persistence to graduation and follow-on job opportunities for the Post-9/11 GI Bill users could be researched in a longitudinal study, perhaps in conjunction with the replication of this research on a national scale as discussed above. The results could be stand-alone and point to the success of the newest Act with regards to rewarding and improving the socioeconomic standing of the veterans. Additionally, results of a Post-9/11 GI Bill user persistence and success study could be compared to similar studies conducted with the users of the previous GI Bills, which could be more telling on whether this newest GI Bill is indeed a successful improvement based upon the stated federal policy goals.

Conclusions

This research found that the Post-9/11 GI Bill is perceived by users as a well-intentioned Act that for the most part is meeting the intended federal policy goals of recruitment, retention, and rewarding the military members for their service. Based upon the results of the online survey, the newest GI Bill is well-received by its constituents, at least at TCC. Yet concerns remain about the links between policy intentions,
implementation, and evaluation. This research highlighted some valid concerns with the implementation; in particular regarding use by eligible military personnel and delays in the payment processing that affects users, and prevents non-users from taking advantage of the benefits. Additionally, military students may be using unique avenues to compensate for the decreased living stipend payments and 36-month time limit by attending multiple institutions in order to get the courses they need when they need them, and to avoid academic breaks from their main college, ultimately avoiding the loss of gap pay. Changes to the policy, as well as better educating military members and college administrators on all of their available federal benefit options for their academic goal attainment, could improve the satisfaction level and perceptions of the military members of the Post-9/11 GI Bill, and help achieve the intended policy goals to recruit, retain, and reward military personnel.
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Appendix A: Introduction Excerpt of Senate Hearing 110 S. 22

S 22 IS1S

110th CONGRESS

1st Session

S. 22

To amend title 38, United States Code, to establish a program of educational assistance for members of the Armed Forces who serve in the Armed Forces after September 11, 2001, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

January 4, 2007

Mr. WEBB (for himself, Mr. HAGEL, Mr. WARNER, Mr. LAUTENBERG, Mr. REID, Mrs. LINCOLN, Ms. SNOWE, Ms. COLLINS, Ms. MIKULSKI, Mr. SANDERS, Mrs. BOXER, Mr. BINGAMAN, Mrs. MCCASKILL, Mr. KERRY, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. TESTER, Ms. STABENOW, Mr. BROWN, Mr. CASEY, Mrs. CLINTON, Ms. LANDRIEU, Mr. BAUCUS, Mr. HARKIN, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Mr. INOUYE, Mr. OBAMA, Mr. FEINSTEIN, Mr. BIDEN, Mr. DORGAN, Mr. BAYH, Mr. JOHNSON, Mr. PRYOR, Mr. ROCKEFELLER, Mr. KENNEDY, Mr. SALAZAR, Mr. LUGAR, and Mr. SCHUMER) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs

A BILL

To amend title 38, United States Code, to establish a program of educational assistance for members of the Armed Forces who serve in the Armed Forces after September 11, 2001, and for other purposes.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the 'Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2007'.

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SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress makes the following findings:

(1) On September 11, 2001, terrorists attacked the United States, and the brave members of the Armed Forces of the United States were called to the defense of the Nation.

(2) Service on active duty in the Armed Forces has been especially arduous for the members of the Armed Forces since September 11, 2001.

(3) The United States has a proud history of offering educational assistance to millions of veterans, as demonstrated by the many 'G.I. Bills' enacted since World War II. Educational assistance for veterans helps reduce the costs of war, assist veterans in readjusting to civilian life after wartime service, and boost the United States economy, and has a positive effect on recruitment for the Armed Forces.

(4) The current educational assistance program for veterans is outmoded and designed for peacetime service in the Armed Forces.

(5) The people of the United States greatly value military service and recognize the difficult challenges involved in readjusting to civilian life after wartime service in the Armed Forces.

(6) It is in the national interest for the United States to provide veterans who served on active duty in the Armed Forces after September 11, 2001, with enhanced educational assistance benefits that are worthy of such service and are commensurate with the educational assistance benefits provided by a grateful Nation to veterans of World War II.


(a) Educational Assistance Authorized-

(1) IN GENERAL- Part III of title 38, United States Code, is amended by inserting after chapter 32 the following new chapter:

Link to full version:

http://www.govtrack.us/congress/billtext.xpd?bill=s110-22
Appendix B: Email Cover Letter to Student Survey

Dear TCC student,

I would like your participation in a survey about the Post-9/11 GI Bill. Getting your views are important to learn how the intentions of the Bill are viewed by those eligible to use the bill – namely, you! Your participation is critical to a successful study.

This study is being conducted by a William and Mary doctoral candidate and TCC accounting professor Lydia Leporte, with the help of TCC’s Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Dr. Brunson, Executive Director for TCC’s Center for Military and Veteran Education. Completion of the survey should take about 10 minutes. All information collected will be confidential. I will maintain a database of names and email addresses of the survey population only during the data collection period to enable contact with non-respondents. After the data are collected, your name will not be linked with your survey responses. Your responses will not impact the continuance of your benefits or jeopardize your enrollment at TCC.

If you have any questions or concerns about this research or the survey process, you may contact: Dr. Kirkpatrick, chair of the Protection of Human Subjects Committee, at (757)221-3997 (lakirk@wm.edu); Dr. Ward, chair of the Educational Review Committee, at 757-221-2358 (EDIRC-L@wm.edu); or the principal researcher, Lydia Leporte at lleporte@tcc.edu. Again, thank you for your participation.
THIS PROJECT WAS FOUND TO COMPLY WITH APPROPRIATE ETHICAL STANDARDS AND WAS EXEMPTED FROM THE NEED FOR FORMAL REVIEW BY THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS COMMITTEE (Phone 757-221-3966) ON 2012-06-10 AND EXPIRES ON 2013-06-10.
Appendix C: Perceptions of the Post-9/11 GI Bill Student Survey

Q1 Dear TCC student, I understand that this survey is being administered to active duty military and veterans who are current students at Tidewater Community College. This survey should take me approximately 15 - 20 minutes to complete and I may discontinue my responses at any time. The data collected from the survey will be reported in general and my name will not be associated with the responses. If I have concerns regarding the survey, I may contact the researcher at lleporte@tcc.edu or the College of William and Mary Chair of the Protection of Human Subjects Committee, Lee Kirkpatrick, consent@wm.edu.

☐ Click here to agree to your voluntary participation (1)
☐ No, I do not give consent to participate in this study (2)

If Click here to agree to your... Is Selected, Then Skip To Are you currently using the benefits ...
If No, I do not give consent t... Is Selected, Then Skip To End of Survey

Q2 Are you currently using the benefits provided by the Post-9/11 GI Bill?

☐ Yes (1) n=498
☐ No (2) n=287

If Yes Is Selected, Then Skip To What was your primary reason for using...

Q3 Are you using any other federally provided benefits, including loans and grants?

☐ Yes, which others? (1) __________________________ n=123
☐ No (2) __________________________ n=57

Q4 Please indicate the reason(s) you are not using your Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits. You may select more than one option.

☐ not eligible (1) n=73
☐ transferred benefits to spouse and/or children (2) n=8
☐ waiting until not on active duty in order to fully utilize the benefits (3) n=42
☐ feel the other federal benefits are sufficient (4) n=7
☐ don't know how to enroll for the Post-9/11 GI Bill (5) n=13
☐ other, please write-in reason (6) __________________________ n=57

If QID4 (Count) Is Greater Than or Equal to 1, Then Skip To Have you used your Post 9/11 GI Bill...
Q5 What was your primary reason for using the higher educational benefits provided by the Post-9/11 GI Bill? Please choose one.

- increased income through better job opportunities (1) n=144
- personal growth (2) n=69
- to augment monthly living income (3) n=34
- to earn a degree (4) n=300
- skill enhancement (5) n=21
- other, please write in (6) __________________________ n=27
- to earn a credential/certification (7) n=32

Q12 Have you used your Post 9/11 GI Bill benefits at any other institution?

- Yes (1) n=97
- No (2) n=710

Answer If Have you used your Post 9/11 GI Bill benefits at any other... Yes Is Selected

Q52 At which other institutions have you used your Post 9/11 GI Bill benefits?

Q13 Were you about to leave the military service but decided to stay in in order to take advantage of the benefits of the Post-9/11 GI Bill?

- Yes (1) n=15
- No (2) n=787

Q14 Are you still actively serving in the armed forces?

- Yes (1) n=78
- No (2) n=728

If Yes Is Selected, Then Skip To Do you plan on leaving active service...
Answer If Are you still actively serving in the armed forces? No Is Selected

Q15 For veterans, why did you leave the military? You may check more than one.

- retired (1) n=270
- commitment of service time ended (2) n=210
- unhappy with military pay and benefits (3) n=24
- wanted to go to school (4) n=102
- wanted to fully utilize the benefits provided by the Post-9/11 GI Bill (5) n=32
- civilian job opportunities (6) n=47
- family responsibilities (7) n=114
- other, please write in (8) ________________ n=89
- part of the services' drawdown and released from active duty (9) n=52
- medically discharged (10) n=61

If QID15 (Count) Is Greater Than or Equal to 1, Then Skip To Is TCC the first place you have atten...

Q16 For active duty, how likely are you to leave active service within the next year?

- Very unlikely (1) n=31
- unlikely (3) n=14
- neutral (5) n=10
- likely (6) n=4
- very likely (7) n=17

onQ18 Is TCC the first place you have attended college?

- Yes (1) n=369
- No (2) n=432

Answer If Is TCC the first place you have attended college? No Is Selected

Q19 Where else have you attended? Please write in your answer.
Q20 Is TCC the only place you are using the Post-9/11 GI Bill? Non-users will check "No".

- Yes (1) n=594
- No (2) n=197

Answer If Is TCC the only place you are using the Post-9/11 GI Bill... No Is Selected

Q21 Where else are you using your GI Bill benefits?

Q10 Will the benefits provided by the Post-9/11 GI Bill allow you to finish the credential/degree you are currently pursuing?

- Yes (1) n=498
- No (2) n=287

Q25 Will you continue on to complete your credential/degree without the benefits?

- Yes (1) n=503
- No (2) n=279

Q27 Are you receiving the Monthly Housing Allowance (living stipend) benefit of the Post-9/11 GI Bill?

- Yes (1) n=547
- No (2) n=238

Answer If Are you receiving the living stipend benefit of the Post-... Yes Is Selected

Q28 Is this your only source of income for living expenses?

- Yes (1) n=179
- No (2) n=362
Q29 How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement: The education benefits provided by the Post-9/11 GI Bill were a primary reason for entering military service?

- strongly disagree (0) n=298
- disagree (1) n=191
- neutral (2) n=145
- agree (3) n=80
- strongly agree (4) n=59

Q30 If the Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits were not the primary reason for enlisting, what was? You may check more than one.

- Sense of patriotism/wishing to serve your country (1) n=389
- stable work and pay (2) n=421
- retirement benefits (3) n=229
- learning job skills/future civilian employment opportunities (4) n=303
- travel/adventure (5) n=368
- tuition assistance (6) n=131
- civilian job market (7) n=65
- family tradition (8) n=105
- other, please write in (9) n=74
- medical benefits (10) n=287

Q31 If you enlisted once the 9/11 benefits were available, would you have done so if the benefits were not available?

- strongly disagree (1) n=53
- disagree (2) n=27
- neutral (3) n=118
- agree (4) n=132
- strongly agree (5) n=185
- not applicable (6) n=185

Q32 Did you transfer your Post-9/11 benefits to a spouse or child?

- Yes (1) n=30
- No (2) n=740
Answer If Did you transfer your Post-9/11 benefits to a spouse or c... Yes Is Selected

Q33 Did you extend your time in military service in order to transfer your Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits to a spouse and/or children?
- Yes (1) n=9
- No (2) n=19

Q34 How strongly did the benefits of the Post-9/11 GI Bill influence your decision to leave the military service? Please type in a quick word or two about why or why not over your checked response.
- Not at all (1) ________________ n=497
- somewhat (2) ________________ n=32
- neutral (3) ________________ n=133
- strongly (4) ________________ n=32
- very strongly (5) ________________ n=28

Q35 How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement: I believe the benefits provided by the Post-9/11 GI Bill will increase recruitment of new enlistees.
- strongly disagree (1) ________________ n=47
- disagree (2) ________________ n=56
- neutral (3) ________________ n=246
- agree (4) ________________ n=257
- strongly agree (5) ________________ n=117

Q36 How satisfied are you satisfied with the higher educational benefits provided by the Post-9/11 GI Bill?
- very dissatisfied (1) n=30
- dissatisfied (2) n=58
- neutral (3) n=175
- satisfied (4) n=261
- very satisfied (5) n=199
Q37 Which of these benefits satisfies you the most?

- Military Housing Allowance (Living stipend) amount (1) n=337
- Max tuition payment amounts (2) n=194
- Payment even for failed class(es) (3) n=27
- Transfer of benefits to spouse and/or children (4) n=49
- Eligibility payment amount linked to time served on active duty (5) n=24
- Eligibility expansion to reservist or National Guard (6) n=11
- Eligibility expansion to active duty military personnel (7) n=6
- Other, write-in (8) __________________________ n=73

Q38 Which of these benefits dissatisfies you the most?

- Monthly Housing Allowance (Living stipend) amount (1) n=85
- Max tuition payment amounts (2) n=49
- Payment even for failed class(es) (3) n=78
- Transfer of benefits to spouse and/or children (4) n=46
- Eligibility payment amount linked to time served on active duty (5) n=72
- Eligibility expansion to reservist/National Guard (6) n=25
- Eligibility expansion to active duty military personnel (7) n=17
- Other, write-in (8) __________________________ n=312

Q39 How strongly do you feel rewarded for your military service through the benefits provided by the Post-9/11 GI Bill?

- not at all (1) n=47
- somewhat (2) n=95
- neutral (3) n=160
- strongly (4) n=233
- very strongly (5) n=185
Q40 Which of the following best describes your current status?

- Veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces (1) n=374
- National Guard member of Reservist (2) n=22
- Active duty service member in the U.S. Armed Forces (3) n=59
- Other (4) ____________________ n=22
- Retired veteran from the US Armed Forces (5) n=253

Q41 Which branch of the Armed Forces are you affiliated?

- Army (1) n=81
- Army Reserves (6) n=11
- Navy (2) n=531
- Navy Reserves (7) n=15
- Air Force (3) n=31
- Air Force Reserves (8) n=1
- Marine Corps (4) n=35
- Marine Corps Reserves (9) n=2
- National Guard (10) n=7
- Coast Guard (5) n=17
- Coast Guard Reserves (11) n=2

Q42 What was your pay grade when you left the military (or current pay grade if still in)?

- E1-E3 (1) n=87
- E4-E6 (2) n=504
- E7-E9 (3) n=118
- Officer (including warrant officer) (4) n=23

Q43 What is your gender?

- Male (1) n=467
- Female (2) n=263
Q44 What is your marital status?

- Single (1) n=184
- Married (2) n=440
- Divorced (3) n=101
- Widowed (4) n=6

Q45 What is your current age range?

- 18-26 (1) n=113
- 27-34 (2) n=204
- 35-42 (3) n=125
- 43-50 (4) n=196
- 51+ (5) n=96

Q46 What is your annual household income level, including the living stipend provided by the Post-9/11 GI Bill?

- less than $15,000 (1) n=105
- $15,001 to $30,000 (2) n=177
- $30,001 to $50,000 (3) n=209
- $50,001 to $75,000 (4) n=123
- $70,001 - $115,000 (5) n=84
- greater than $115,000 (6) n=24

Q47 How many hours per week do you actively work for pay?

- none (1) n=286
- 1-10 hours per week (2) n=30
- 11-20 hours per week (3) n=45
- 21-30 hours per week (4) n=38
- 31-40 hours per week (5) n=184
- More than 40 hours per week (6) n=150

Q48 Overall, what are your perceptions of the Post-9/11 GI Bill?

Q49 What do you think were the federal government's intentions for the Post-9/11 GI Bill legislation?

Q50 If you could change anything about the Post-9/11 GI Bill, what would it be?
Q51 Is there anything else I should consider as I seek to understand active duty or veterans' of the Armed Forces perceptions of the Post-9/11 GI Bill? Did I miss anything you consider to be important on this subject?
Appendix D: Linking Survey Questions to Research Requirements and Statistical Method Employed

The following table shows how each survey question (on the horizontal axis) correlates to the specific research question and statistical analysis techniques. Demographic and open-ended write-in questions are noted for the range of questions impacted. Recall, the three research questions (RQ) are as follows:

A. Have the stated federal goals of recruitment/retention and rewarding veterans for their service been met through the perception of the users and those eligible for Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits but not currently using themselves at Tidewater Community College (TCC)?

B. Why are active duty/reservists and veteran students at TCC using their Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits in pursuit of their higher educational goals?

C. Why are eligible non-users (both active duty/reservists and veterans attending TCC) enrolled at the community college not using the benefits of the Post-9/11 GI Bill?

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