



## Veterans Benefits Administration



**Veteran's Advisory Committee on Education (VACOE)**  
**June 23-26, 2020**  
1PM-4PM Eastern Time

**Executive Summary**

## Meeting Minutes

**Purpose:** The purpose of the Veterans' Advisory Committee on Education (VACOE) is to provide advice and recommendations to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs on the administration of education benefits programs and services for Veterans, Service members, Reservists, National Guard personnel and eligible dependents under Chapters 30, 32, 33, 35 and 36 of title 38, and Chapters 1606 of title 10, United States Code.

Section 306 of Public Law 115-48, the Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2017, extended VACOE through December 31, 2022.

**Roll Call:** Janet Elder, Alternate Designated Official (ADFO) conducted daily roll call. Indicated that this week's meetings will be virtually utilizing VANTS, Skype Meeting for Business, and CISCO Webex meeting platform.

**Rules of Engagement:** Debra Morgan, Designated Federal Officer (DFO) conducted daily rules of engagement. Also indicated that the meeting is open to the public and is recorded daily.

**Transcription Services:** Provided by Kress Court Reporting, Inc.

### Education Service Staff Present (Facilitating call):

- Debra Morgan, Sr. Management Analyst, Designated Federal Officer (DFO) for Veteran's Advisory Committee on Education (VACOE), Veterans Benefits Administration
- Janet Elder, Management Analyst, Alternate Designated Federal Official (ADFO) for Veteran's Advisory Committee on Education (VACOE), Veterans Benefits Administration
- Terry Warren, Sr. Management Analyst, Chief, Stakeholder Engagement, Veterans Benefits Administration

### VACOE Members Present:

1. \* **Sarah Roberts - Chair**, Head of Military and Veterans Program, LinkedIn
2. \* **Mona Dexter - Vice Chair**, Senior Director, Operations & Communications, U.S., Chamber of Commerce Foundation "Hiring Our Heroes"
3. **P. Barry Butler, Ph.D.**, President Embry Riddle Aeronautical University
4. **Ashlynn Haycock**, Deputy Director, Policy, Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS)

5. **Soudark (SUE) Luangkhon Hoppin**, President & Founder, National Military Spouse Network
  6. **Jared Lyon**, President & CEO of Student Veterans of America (SVA)
  7. **Javier Miyares**, President, University of Maryland Global Campus
  8. **Beth E. Morgan**, Director, Higher Education Transition and Partnerships, Center for Veteran Transition and Integration at Columbia University
  9. **John T. Quintas**, Brigadier General, USAF, (retired), Managing Director, Military Affairs, Amazon.com
  10. **Darrell L. Roberts**, SMART Union Director of Organizing
  11. **Cynthia A. Warrick, Ph.D.**, President, Stillman College
  12. **Joseph W. Wescott II, EdD.**, National Higher Education Consultant, America Legion; and National Legislative Liaison NASAA
- \* Sarah Roberts not present on Thursday, June 25. Vice Chair, Mona Dexter chaired the meeting for the day.**

#### **Education Service Presenters, VBA Presenters and VBA Guests:**

- Charmain Bogue, Executive Director, Education Service
- Paul R. Lawrence, Ph.D., Under Secretary for Benefits
- Pedro Rivera-Batista, Executive Management Officer (EMO), Education Service
- Matthew Ziolkowski, Senior Management Analyst, Education Service
- Terry Warren, Chief Stakeholder Engagement, Education Service
- James Ruhlman, Deputy Director for Program Management, Education Service
- Stephanie Price, Deputy Director for Operations, Education Service
- Donald Ortega, Assistant Director, Operations
- Thomas Alphonso, Assistant Director for Policy and Procedures, Education Service
- Patrick Dworakowski, Assistant Director for Oversight and Accountability, Education
- Ricardo Da Silva, Assistant Director, Program Integration, Education Service
- Cheryl Samples, Chief, Transition and Economic Development (TED)
- Dr. Kimberly Castillo, Assistant Director, Program Management, Policy, and Procedures, Transition and Economic Development (TED)
- William Streitberger, Executive Director, Veterans Readiness and Employment Service (VR&E)
- Janice Stewart, Management Analyst, Disability Compensation Service
- Claire Starks, Management Analyst, Disability Compensation Service
- Christine Hamilton, Management Analyst, National Cemetery Administration (NCA)
- Kimberly Chisley, VBA, Budget Formulation
- Angell Bolden-Green, VBA, Sr Budget Analyst
- Daniel Kuester, VBA OSE

- Mike Stoddard, VSO Liaison
- Cassandra Dortch, Specialist in Education Congressional Research Service

**Public Guests:**

- Aniela Szymanski, Veterans' Education Success (VES)
- Keith Hauk, University of Maryland Global Campus
- Lovely Houston, Hampton VA Medical Center

## **Tuesday, June 23, 2020**

### **Presenters:**

- Charmain Bogue, Executive Director Education Service
- Paul R. Lawrence, Ph.D., Under Secretary for Benefits
- Pedro Rivera-Batista, Executive Management Officer (EMO), Education Service
- Matthew Ziolkowski, Senior Management Analyst, Education Service
- Terry Warren, Chief Stakeholder Engagement, Education Service
- James Ruhlman, Deputy Director for Program Management, Education Service

### **Opening Remarks**

VACOE Chairperson- Ms. Sarah Roberts called the committee to order at 1:07PM EST. She expressed her appreciation to the committee members and presenters for joining the meeting and the important work ahead. Ms. Roberts introduced presenters for the day.

### **Introduction and Acknowledgement - Executive Director, Education Service**

Ms. Roberts introduced Charmain Bogue, Executive Director, Education Service. Ms. Bogue opened the floor with recognizing the 76<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the GI Bill. She continued by expressing her sincere gratitude to committee members for taking time out of their busy lives to support the VACOE and the GI Bill program. Lastly, Ms. Bogue spoke of their unique perspective and the insight they possess to assist in enhancing VA's Education Benefit Programs.

Before introducing Dr. Paul Lawrence, Under Secretary for Benefits, Ms. Roberts requested committee members introduce themselves to presenters and stakeholders in attendance.

### **Introduction and Welcome Remarks – Under Secretary for Benefits**

Ms. Roberts introduced Dr. Lawrence as he prepared to give the welcome remarks.

Dr. Lawrence opened the floor with welcoming members new and old to the Veterans Advisory Committee on Education meeting. He acknowledged committee member's vast experiences, talent, and commitment to the committee's work. Dr. Lawrence shared some of the initiatives Education Service is undertaking during the COVID-19 pandemic. He discussed Congressional mandates, which allows VA to continue to serve those who served. Dr. Lawrence charged committee members with assisting Education Service to find the areas where they can improve educational opportunities for those who have worn the uniform.

## **Questions**

Dr. Lawrence answered questions for the following individuals: General John Quintas, and Dr. Joseph Wescott.

The questions were centered around:

1. What are the long-term implications of COVID-19 and the priorities in moving forward?
2. Given the education system broadly, university systems in particular, do you think there's going to be a significant move to more virtual courses? If so how does that impact the GI Bill benefits?
3. How do you potentially see the GI Bill expanding in the future?

## **Executive Management Office**

Mr. Pedro Rivera-Batista provided an overview of the Executive Management Office (EMO) regarding critical operational areas: Human Resources & Labor; Administrative Support; Budget; Field Oversight; and Stakeholder Engagement. He was supported by Mr. Matthew Ziolkowski-Senior Management Analyst and Terry Warren, Chief, Stakeholder Engagement. Mr. Ziolkowski provided an overview of the Regional Processing Offices' (RPOs) national workload; claims targets and quality performance; statistics for education call center performance and current workload strategies for fiscal 2019 and 2020. Mr. Warren provided an overview of outreach and communication engagements, media and congressional matters, social media, and congressional testimonies.

## **Questions**

The EMO team answered questions for the following individuals: Sue Hoppin, Dr. Barry Butler, and Jared Lyon.

The questions were centered around:

1. For situational awareness, can you tell me what percentage of calls are coming in from the educational institutions versus the students and beneficiaries themselves?
2. Does VA break out call data for OJT or Apprenticeship? In other words, are the higher number of Veterans calling on issues with a payment for OJT or issues with university payments? Is there a difference in how this information is collected?
3. Quality Metrics – How has quality for claims been measured and what does it mean?
4. And as a follow-up, how do you get feedback from customers on either their concerns or the quality of service?

5. Regarding restrictions due to COVID-19 and an obvious increase in activity, do you get many of the same questions regarding payment changes, etc.? Do you have a FAQ automated way to manage those repeat questions?
6. Mr. Rivera-Batista mentioned \$3 million for State Approving Agencies (SAAs). Could you tell us a little bit more about that particular contract and what's involved?
7. Regarding the outcome measures project for FY 21, will we be getting guidance on that? How and what should schools report?
8. What is the scope the Outcome Measures' initiative for FY 21?
9. Would it only measure the efficiency of the GI Bill initiatives or would it also measure the Transition Assistance Program (TAP)? Speaking in terms of how many people start businesses coming out of TAP versus those that don't come out of TAP?
10. Regarding the GovDelivery e-mail of nearly one million recipients. Is that specific for stakeholder engagement events likely different than, a listserv that VBA maybe using to contact GI Bill recipients for updates and the like, or is it specific to other types of stakeholder engagement?
  - a. Follow up question, is that listserv utilized for stakeholder engagement events only or is that the same listserv that is also used for standard updates from VBA on any updates or changes to the GI Bill?
  - b. Is this the listserv that VA uses for stakeholder engagement updates or of VBA in general? Are there two different listservs in this case?
  - c. Does VBA propose a listserv for any GI Bill recipient to receive updates to new programs or changes? Are there separate listservs that are utilized for those purposes?
11. Regarding Social Media, I noticed on the Facebook followers page, is that a VBA specific page or is it a GI Bill specific page?
  - a. Do you happen to have the age demographic for those 108,000 followers?

### **Education 101 Brief and the COVID-19**

Mr. James Ruhlman, Deputy Director for Program Management provided information on Education Service Program Management, Education Benefits Programs, to include three supplemental programs (Marine Gunnery Sergeant John David Fry Scholarship, Yellow Ribbon, and Transfer of Entitlement), VET TEC, STEM Scholarship, GI Bill Comparison Tool, and COVID-19 Legislative updates (Public Law 116-128: protected resident monthly housing allowance (MHA) converted to online, and Public Law 116-140: continuation of most benefits during covered period March 1, 2020 - December 2021).

### **Questions:**

Mr. Ruhlman answered questions for the following individuals: Sue Hoppin, Dr. Joseph Wescott, and John Quintas.

The questions were centered around:

1. Regarding beneficiaries that transferred their benefits or retired before 2013. For dependents who received the benefits, do they still fall under the 15-year rule for use within 15 years even if it's a child who might not have aged into it yet?
2. Yellow Ribbon. Do you know whether we saw any fall in the amount of payout under that program when we went to state residency a couple years ago for out of state veterans?
3. About private pilot license. I was told that it doesn't qualify and Certified Information System Security Professional Certificate (CISSP) doesn't qualify. Maybe provisional ones qualify, is it true that those both don't qualify and then how is that determined?
  - a. What's the philosophy behind what does and doesn't qualify?
4. Regarding feedback about the transfer of entitlement. A lot of people that don't understand maybe the retention aspect of the transferability. What do we say about folks who served 20 plus years and they found themselves due to ominous circumstance where they could not or did not have any transferability?
5. Has there been talk about institutionalizing or grandfathering for those who have already transferred the benefits and then if it for some reason ceases in the future they would be grandfathered and their children or their dependents would still have access to the benefit?
6. Regarding "Blended Military Retirement System". Has VA thought about how the new retirement system affects all retirement benefits and the GI Bill in particular?
7. Regarding Housing Allowance. Why is it paid for residential students, those who are sitting in a classroom, but not paid for those who are taking online?

**Committee recessed from 3:00 - 3:15PM EST**

### **Committee Discussion and Collaboration**

Ms. Roberts thanked all presenters for sharing their time and expertise. She stated the information presented for the day will certainly help inform committee's efforts in future discussions as they think of improvements and recommendations for the GI Bill programs. Committee members stated presentations were helpful as they shaped their understanding of EDU executive and program management responsibilities and COVID-19 updates.

Further discussions centered around transferability. Committee members suggested the benefit be re-evaluated and not used as a retention tool, but rather perhaps to add more years onto the service. EDU stated that was a DoD program which requires collaboration between the two agencies to re-evaluate the program. The final decision lies with DoD.

Next, Ms. Roberts stated for the record that there were no other public comments for today. Public Comments were received on Monday, June 22, and were emailed to committee members on Tuesday, June 23, for review and reference. Ms. Roberts encouraged members to follow up with her, Janet Elder, or Debra Morgan for questions.

Lastly, Ms. Roberts provided an update on the LinkedIn inquiry from the April 23, Administrative Call. She confirmed that committee members may connect on LinkedIn, however, cannot discuss topics related to committee work.

As no other questions were asked, Ms. Roberts called the meeting adjourned.

**Committee meeting adjourned at 3:50PM EST**

## **Wednesday, June 24, 2020**

### **Opening Remarks**

Ms. Sarah Roberts – Chair reconvened the committee at 1:07PM. Ms. Roberts recapped Tuesday's events where members and guests had the opportunity to hear acknowledgements from Ms. Charmain Bogue, as well as welcome remarks from Dr. Paul Lawrence, Under Secretary for Benefits, and Education Service Leaders, Mr. Pedro Rivera Batista, Mr. Matthew Ziolkowski, Mr. Terry Warren, and James Ruhlman. Ms. Roberts stated the presentations led to rich questions and promoted early dialogue for committee work ahead. She opened the floor to Committee members for any reflections or takeaways. A committee member thanked all presenters and stated that it was very useful background information to support the commission.

Ms. Roberts briefly requested participants and guests to review the brief biography slide of committee members to reintroduce them for the benefit of listeners and presenters who had not been present the day before.

### **Presenters:**

- Stephanie Price, Deputy Director, Operations, Education Service
- Donald Ortega, Assistant Director, Operation, Education Service

### **Operations Management**

Ms. Stephanie Price, Deputy Director, Operations provided information on Education Service Operations, regarding IT Operations and Integration for Colmery (development, implementation and, modernization); Systems Management (sustainment and COVID-19 implementation); and Client Applications update (GI Bill Comparison Tool, Feedback System and Website updates). Ms. Price was supported by Mr. Donald Ortega, Assistant Director, for Operations.

### **Questions:**

Ms. Price answered questions for the following individuals: Javier Miyares, Darrell Roberts, and Sarah Roberts.

The questions were as follows:

1. How much does VA estimate the cost to be for building the modernization system?
2. Once there is funding, is there a timeline for system enhancements and modernization or proposed timeline on how long it would take to transition?
3. Is the goal of this effort to completely cut out physical efforts, for instance, mailing in forms, or any sort of physical efforts where it's mailed?

- a. Will Veterans still have the option to mail forms or other documents to VA?

**Committee recessed from 1:20PM - 1:35PM EST**

Mr. Donald Ortega, Assistant Director, Operations provided an update on for following teams: Business Analytics, National Training teams - Processing and Compliance, Quality Assurance. He covered analytics relevant to student's academic progress, Return on Investment (ROI), and enhancements to existing outcome measures data. He also discussed national training curriculum that supports internal employee, and external School Certifying Official (SCO) training requirements. Mr. Ortega touched on quality assurance for the Regional Processing Offices (RPOs), approvals and compliance, and the education call center performance analysis and corrective action plans.

**Questions:**

Mr. Ortega answered questions for the following individuals: Javier Miyares, Dr. Barry Butler, Dr. Joseph Wescott, Sue Hoppin, Jared Lyon, Darrell Roberts, Sarah Roberts, John Quintas, and Dr. Cynthia Warrick.

The questions were as follows:

1. Regarding outcome measures as we think of how the labor market has shifted and the demand for certain industries has pivoted as a result of the pandemic. Are there any talks or thoughts around how to communicate what employers and industry leaders are seeing across the job market as students think about transition and academic majors in which to choose?
2. What is the status of civilian workforce success and income for OJT and Apprenticeship programs?
  - a. Are there reports available or this is ongoing work?
  - b. **(Comment)** Those are some of the areas I think VA could start looking at regarding ROI for apprenticeship.
3. Quality Assurance Program.
  - a. Is VA able to determine where there is a high turnover rate of people who require constant retraining?
  - b. Are there critical areas that have high turnover, particularly those that are forward facing and in direct contact with beneficiaries?
4. Regarding training curriculum for school certifying official training, is there an opportunity for crosstalk among the schools to share challenges and best practices?
5. What is the primary method of communication utilized outside of training for School Certifying Officials (SCOs)?

- a. What updates are provided? When and how is training scheduled? How are SCOs updated pertaining to changes regarding their roles and responsibilities?
6. Regarding ROI given the OJT and Apprenticeship model. What methods does VA use to grade or gauge the return upon investment for these areas? Can we get access to that information?
7. Stillman College manages the Troops to Teachers program for the state of Alabama. Is VA promoting teacher education? Are teachers enrolled in underserved communities for veteran?

### **2019 VACOE Recommendations Overview and Discussion**

Education Leadership, Stephanie Price, James Ruhlman, Ricardo Da Silva, and Pedro Rivera-Batista discussed the FY19 VACOE Recommendations and VA Responses. EDU leaders and re-appointed committee members provided insight on recommendations and the value each will have for improving VA's Education Benefit programs. As recommendations were discussed, conversations centered around enhancement and re-evaluation of those not concurred upon as well as those concurred upon in principle. The ask was to revisit, revise, and resubmit non-concurred recommendations for consideration.

EDU leaders informed committee members that the onus for implementation rests with VA, and the lines of communication will be open to committee members as implementation strategies are identified and in progress.

**Committee adjourned at 3:49PM EST**

## **Thursday, June 25, 2020**

### **Opening Remarks**

Ms. Mona Dexter – Vice Chair called the committee to order at 1:08PM. Ms. Dexter recapped Wednesday's events where members and guests had the opportunity to hear from Stephanie Price and Donald Ortega regarding the Student Veteran Coronavirus Response Act of 2020, and the operations aspect of EDU Service. Ms. Dexter also reiterated the work ahead regarding enhancements to FY19 Recommendations and follow up with implementation.

Ms. Dexter also briefly introduced each committee member and thanked them for their participation on the committee. Before continuing, Ms. Dexter asked the attendees to pause for a moment of silence to recognize Service Members, Veterans, and those who have passed on and paid the ultimate sacrifice for our nation's safety.

### **Presenters:**

- Thomas Alphonso, Assistant Director, Policy and Procedures, Education Service
- Patrick Dworakowski, Assistant Director, Oversight and Accountability, Education Service

### **Program Management- Legislation, Policy, and Regulations**

Mr. Thomas Alphonso, Assistant Director, Policy and Procedures provided information on Legislation, Policy and Procedures. He began by covering Strategy, Legislative Development and Implementation, underlining the importance legislative formalized documents and summarizes. Mr. Alphonso discussed policy interpretation to adequately formulate policy and procedural advisories for the Regional Processing Offices (RPOs). He further discussed the School Certifying Officials (SCOs) Handbook and the Adjudications Manual used to provide instructions specific job tasks. Lastly, Mr. Alphonso provided an overview of current and future activities around FY2021 Legislative budget, fraud, improper payments and debt repayment, as well as pending Legislation to improve GI Bill programs and services to safeguard VA student's education benefits.

### **Questions:**

Mr. Alphonso answered questions for the following individuals: Darrell Roberts, Dr. Joseph Wescott, Jared Lyon, and Sue Hoppin

The questions were as follows:

1. Where can we read about the last stages and status for streamlining the OJT/Apprenticeship certification process you spoke about?
2. Regulations update. To reflect many laws that have been passed, how are updates to the regulations coming along? How many of your staff are working on them?

3. You mentioned this possibility of giving statutory authority to the Secretary to stop payment to enrollees. How does this pending legislation differ from the existing authority he has to stop payment to students?
4. Can you clarify the difference between how the Department of Education makes work-study payments to students vs. how VA makes those types of payments?
5. Regarding reimbursement rates for pilot certification. Are you tying that to a desired in-state rate? For example, are you tying it to what it would cost to attain an ATP certification (Airline pilot certification)? How are rates set?
  - a. Has this been something VA would potentially measure in the outcome measures initiative for FY21?

### **Program Management – Oversight and Accountability**

Dr. Patrick Dworakowski, Assistant Director, Oversight and Accountability provided information pertaining to school oversight and accountability, (“Safeguarding the Integrity of the GI Bill”), access to quality programming, as well as current and future initiatives. He emphasized the importance of integrity and protection, risk analysis, and mitigation and enforcement of VA’s policies and regulations; program approvals applicable to VA approved programs for student use; agreements and federal programs and oversight to properly pay students and training institutions. He followed on with the Principles of Excellence and the Comparison Tool; Federal and State approvals required for program certification; and lastly, updates for current and future initiatives.

### **Questions:**

Dr. Dworakowski answered questions for the following individuals: Dr. Barry Butler, Dr. Joseph Wescott, and Mona Dexter

The questions were as follows:

1. Regarding student complaints. When a student complains you mentioned trolling social media for other complaints or other concerns. Is that how EDU retrieves complaints? My concern is the credibility of the complaints found on social media.
2. Can you tell us roughly what the percentage of the GI Bill payout is going to the OJT and Apprenticeship programs?
3. Regarding outsourcing compliance survey work. From your own perspective, how do you see that impacting compliance and what challenges do you see involving outsourcing?
4. Questions centered around vocational flight, culinary schools, etc., where there is a desired in-state rate. Why is VA not using that desired in-state rate to set the rate of the CAPs?
5. Would it be possible to get the legislative bill number that are associated with pending legislation for flight? (Tom Alphonso)

### **Committee Discussion and Collaboration**

Ms. Dexter thanked all presenters for sharing their time and expertise and thanked committee members for their engagement throughout each presentation. Ms. Dexter stated the information presented for the day is vital to identifying further recommendations to the Secretary of Veterans' Affairs and opened the floor for questions. As no other questions were asked, Ms. Dexter called the meeting adjourned.

**Committee adjourned at 3:33PM EST**

## **Friday, June 26, 2020**

### **Opening Remarks**

Chair Roberts called the committee to order at 1:07PM. She welcomed committee members and guests to the final day of the week's presentations. She recapped by reminding committee and guests of the presentations from Thomas Alphonso, Assistant Director of Policy and Procedures and Dr. Patrick Dworakowski, Assistant Director of Oversight and Accountability. She emphasized the presentations have led to rich questions and early dialogue that will assist in discussing next steps and the work ahead for collaborating and identifying new recommendations to improve education benefits programs. Chair Roberts stated the next meeting date has not been established, however, is projected to take place in fall of 2020.

### **Presenters:**

- Ricardo Da Silva, Assistant Director, Program Integration, Education Service
- Cheryl Samples, Chief Transition and Economic Development
- Dr. Kimberly Castillo, Assistant Director, Program Management, Policy, and Procedures, Transition and Economic Development
- William Streitberger, Executive Director, Veterans Readiness and Employment

### **Program Integration Office**

Mr. Ricardo Da Silva, Assistant Director, Program Integration provided information on the Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2017, where he discussed the Colmery Act highlights and enhancements, such as the new Monthly Housing Allowance (MHA), VET TEC, Rogers STEM Scholarship program, Communication and Outreach involving e-mail distributions, internal and external (school tours) events, and social media interactions. Mr. Da Silva provided details on the monthly housing allowance (MHA) rules, i.e., usage periods, campus locations, vs. online changes and payments, as well as rates for study abroad payment.

### **Questions:**

Mr. Da Silva answered questions for the following individuals: John Quintas, Dr. Cynthia Warrick, Jared Lyon, Sue Hoppin, Dr. Joseph Wescott, and Sarah Roberts.

The questions were as follows:

1. Regarding VET TEC. What would be expected or what target is VA expecting for the number of participants as VA launches the program?
2. I'm interested in how you measure success with the STEM program as well. Are you tracking how many students were selecting STEM as a degree program?
3. What certifications do training/work sites need to have or offer to eligible students?

4. Approximately how much is paid out for GI Bill benefits annually? Also, how much is VA spending on academic advisement/counseling for how students should choose an IHL and a major?
5. What listserv does VA use to collect internal and external stakeholder participation; media inquiries, and e-mail distribution and responses?
  - a. Follow on to e-mail distribution and open rate. Is it for example, 10,000 bouncing or 10,000 opening e-mails?
6. Is VA looking at forming some type of consortium to explore employers for VET TEC programs as it relates to hiring Veterans?
7. It seems Congress tweaked the STEM Program. Did the Bill not pass?
8. Regarding the breakdown of GI Bill users for various programs, i.e., degree seeking students, certificate-based, and vocational training based. Does VA have a breakdown in numbers?
9. What labor trends is VA seeing with the GI Bill?
  - a. Is that something VA evaluates?
  - b. Do you use data from the Department of Labor?
  - c. Do you see how the workforce is shifting by what industries are hiring, like employability?

### **Office of Transition and Economic Development (TED)**

Ms. Cheryl Samples, Chief, Transition and Economic Development provided information on key training opportunities for Service members, Veterans, and dependents, to include the VA Transition Assistance Program (TAP) training and other Military Life Cycle (MLC) module offerings, as well as VA Benefits and Services Participant Guide and website resources. Ms. Samples discussed supporting agencies and collaborative efforts to execute the TAP and MCL programs to adequately serve eligible individuals. She provided statistics on installation support CONUS and OCONUS across six regions worldwide. Ms. Samples provided information on the role of VA Benefit Advisors and the support provided to VA through assisting in the development of VA Benefits and Service Courses; One-on-One Assistance Sessions; Capstone Events and Installations Engagement Events.

### **Questions:**

Ms. Samples answered questions for the following individuals: Sue Hoppin, Sarah Roberts, John Quintas, and Beth Morgan.

The questions were as follows:

1. Would it be possible for committee members to view the courses and if so, how?
2. Do you have the participation rate, completion rate, or even click rate on the training modules?
  - a. Can the numbers be shared?

3. What type of advertising awareness campaign do promote around the TAP curriculum and the military life cycle modules, etc.?

Dr. Kimberly Castillo, Assistant Director for Program Management, Policy, and Procedures provided information on first life career planning guidance. In addition, Dr. Castillo discussed TED's Chapter 36 program (Personalized Career Planning and Guidance (PCPG)) partnership with Education Service (EDU) and Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E) as a continuum of care for education, career counselling and guidance for beneficiaries as they begin to transition out of the military.

### **Questions:**

Dr. Castillo answered questions for the following individuals: Jared Lyon, John Quintas, and Sue Hoppin,

The questions were as follows:

1. What is the usage rate for the Personalized Career Planning and Guidance (PCPG) Program?
2. What is the overall budget for the PCPG program?
3. How does TED figure out the linkage between someone who has developed exceptional skills in the military and in a certain area when there really isn't a civilian equivalent? Where do you go to find out what that bridge is between military skills and that of civilian education or job opportunities?
4. Regarding Mock Crosswalk. Is that some type of mechanic tool or software? What is it exactly?
5. What is the Economic Development part of your office title mean? What kind of work is done in this area?
6. Does TED do anything for military entrepreneurs i.e., transitioning service members that seek to go into business for themselves? Are there any guidance or support programs to help educate Veterans on owning their own business?
7. Every time you say Veterans in terms of Veteran's benefits and in comments, do you also mean Veterans and dependents; is that just to be understood?

### **Veterans Readiness and Employment (VR&E)**

Mr. William Streitberger, Executive Director, Veterans Readiness and Employment (VR&E) provided information on the customer centric delivery model geared toward achieving the highest standards of service delivery and program outcomes. He highlighted the Chapter 31 program and its modernization efforts. Mr. Streitberger discussed Veteran career goals and services to prepare Veterans for finding and maintaining suitable employment despite service-connected disabilities and other employment barriers. Lastly, Mr. Streitberger gave an overview of Chapter 36,

indicating the number of VA representatives and offices around the country, i.e.. Regional offices, schools, and military installations in which to administer vocational testing and conduct counseling services.

### **Committee Discussion and Closing Remarks**

Ms. Roberts thanked all presenters and committee member for participating on the VACOE meeting. She stressed the importance of the committee's commitment to utilize the resources and information they gained throughout the week as they meet in fall of 2020 to discuss and identify recommendations for improvement to the VA education benefits programs. She charged the committee members to spend time researching and digging a little deeper into some of the topic areas for further exploration, whether it be reexamining some of the existing recommendations or brainstorming ideas for new recommendations. The meeting transcripts will be provided to committee members for review and serve as a reference for discussion during the upcoming committee meeting to be scheduled this fall.

### **Ms. Roberts adjourned the meeting at 4:00PM EST.**

Public Comments were received on Tuesday, June 23, 2020 for the Record. Comments will be addressed with 90 days of close of this meeting.

**I hereby certify, that to the best of my knowledge, the foregoing minutes are accurate and complete.**



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Sarah Roberts  
Chair - Veterans Advisory Committee on Education



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Debra Morgan  
Designated Federal Officer (DFO)