VACOE Members Present:

Mona Dexter, Chair; Chief of Staff/Vice President, Operations & Communications, U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation – Hiring Our Heroes

Keith Hauk, Vice Chair; Associate Vice President, Stateside Military Operations, University of Maryland University College (UMGC)

Barry Butler, Ph.D., President, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University

Michael Haynie, Ph.D., Vice Chancellor, Syracuse University, Founder and Executive Director, Syracuse University's Institute for Veterans and Military Families

Soudarak (Sue) Luangkhot Hoppin, President and Founder, National Military Spouse Network

Jared S. Lyon, President and CEO, Student Veterans of America (SVA)

John T. Quintas, Major General, USAF, (Retired), Managing Director, Military Affairs, Amazon.com

Darrell L. Roberts, Director of Organizing, International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers (SMART)

David Salgado, Director, Veterans Education, Texas Veterans Commission

Violet Velazquez, Reservist, U.S. Navy

Cynthia A. Warrick, Ph.D., RPh, President, Stillman College

Also Present:

Joseph Maltby, Management Analyst; Designated Federal Officer

Jill Thomas; Alternate Designated Federal Officer

Nassar Paydar, Assistant Secretary; Department of Education

James Rodriguez, Assistant Secretary; Department of Labor

Carolyn Renick, Apprenticeship, Licensing and Credentialing Lead; Department of Labor

David Camporeale, Director of Office of Research and Policy; Department of Labor

Timothy Winter, Director, Transition Assistant Program; Department of Labor

Joshua Lashbrook, Digital GI Bill Program Management Officer; VBA

Michael Napper, Client Application Chief, Compensation Service

Joseph Preisser, GI Bill IT Operations, Compensation Service

Barbara Morton, Deputy Director, Veterans Experience Office

Amanda Tepfer, Senior Customer Experience Strategist, Veterans Experience Office

Tuesday, November 29, 2022

Roll Call

Jill Thomas, Assistant Designated Federal Officer for the Committee, performed the roll call.

Welcome and Rules of Engagement

Joseph Maltby, Designated Federal Officer for the Committee, welcomed the Committee and the public to the meeting. He reviewed the rules of engagement and informed the members that there would be participation from their ex officio member agencies. Mr. Maltby then turned the floor over to Chair Dexter.

Opening Remarks – Chair

Mona Dexter, Chair, called the meeting to order and introduced herself. She acknowledged that three public comments had been received, and turned the meeting over to Vice Chair Hauk for his opening remarks.

Opening Remarks – Vice Chair

Colonel Keith Hauk, Vice Chair, introduced himself and thanked the Committee for their time and participation. He acknowledged the work the Committee had done over the previous months and expressed his interest in the later discussions on the ideas and recommendations the subcommittee chairs would bring forward. He then turned the meeting back over to Chair Dexter.

Introductions

Committee members introduced themselves and summarized their experiences with the military and education. The ex officio members, Assistant Secretary Nassar Paydar from the Department of Education and Assistant Secretary James Rodriguez from the Department of Labor, then introduced themselves as well.

Subcommittee Discussion

As the meeting was ahead of schedule and the DoL members were not yet present for their briefing, Chair Dexter requested that one of the subcommittees share their progress and suggestions. Dr. Barry Butler agreed to begin the discussion, first stating that the items he would be mentioning were up for debate or changes. Dr. Butler went on to first suggest that the rate of pursuit of education should be reviewed to ensure that it is up to date with changes to how universities view full time students versus part time students. He suggested that students are adequately reimbursed in terms of the benefits they are gaining from their education.

Dr. Michael Haynie reiterated that the subcommittee believes the core issue is that the definition of a traditional semester does not align from university to university. This creates a misalignment with the benefits policy that can potentially disadvantage the student.

Vice Chair Hauk asked if they were suggesting for the recommendation to be that the benefits are calculated based on a per credit hour basis rather than the current rate of pursuit calculation that is applied against the definition from the institution of full time status for the student. Dr. Butler confirmed, and further explained that the recommendation would be to have a more thorough analysis of what happens now versus what a student would have if it were calculated per credit hour.

Chair Dexter thanked Dr. Butler for his explanation and asked if her summary of, the first recommendation is to start with information gathering in order to do the analysis, but there is also a long term goal of having a more standardized oversight so it does not deprive anybody of benefits. Dr. Butler agreed with Chair Dexter's summarization of the discussion thus far. Dr. Butler continued with the second question the subcommittee was considering, which covers degree pursuit versus students who are enrolled in institutions for specific courses, but not necessarily with a degree as their end point.

Vice Chair Hauk commented on how credentials are seen as important, not only degrees, and that they should understand how the individual student defines the credential they are working towards. He shared that the tuition assistance program and Department of Defense Voluntary Education program is moving towards being more credential focused rather than degree focused.

Dr. Butler suggested that the Committee also should consider the bigger picture of the accreditation side, including credibility of institutions. He shared that they are looking out for not only the Veterans using the benefits, but also the tax payers who pay for those benefits. Having reached the conclusion for the second question the subcommittee had suggested, he moved on to the next issue.

Dr. Butler shared that the next issue comes back to the question of housing allowance and online learning. He noted that this issue should be kept front and center, despite being reviewed for a couple of years already. He suggested the VA conduct a comparative study on actual housing costs for Veterans completing distance learning programs versus those completing on campus programs.

Dr. Haynie added that he feels part of the logic is acknowledging that the issue is not necessarily going to have a clear distinction, as the definition of a campus student versus an online student can be fluid. He shared that some students may be taking three out of five of their classes in a semester in person at the campus, and may be living on campus, but their other two classes are completely online. He questioned

whether that student would be seen as an online or campus student, and how that would be categorized within the housing allowance rules.

At that time, Chair Dexter indicated that the Department of Labor guests had joined the meeting and that they should move on to their briefing.

Department of Labor Veteran Education and Training Services Briefing

Ms. Renick reintroduced herself and introduced her colleagues from DoL, including David Camporeale, the Director of Office of Research and Policy at DoL, and Timothy Winter, Director of Transition Assistance Program. She reviewed that Mr. Camporeale would be covering their customer experience initiative that was just launched, that she would be speaking about the duplicative/complementary and gaps in services, and Mr. Winter would be talking about TAP and updates on their Employment Navigator and Partnership Pilot. She then turned the floor over to Mr. Camporeale.

Mr. Camporeale began by sharing how one of their flagship programs at DoL VETS (Veterans' Employment and Training Service) is the Jobs for Veterans States Grants (JSVG) Program which provides federal funding to state workforce agencies to hire dedicated staff to provide individualized career and training services to Veterans and other eligible individuals with significant barriers to employment, as well as assist employers for their workforce needs. Mr. Camporeale went on to explain that they have a new initiative that was recently launched to help gain an understanding of the customer experiences for JSVG participants, and that they recently awarded a contract to be going through a human-centered design process in order to fully understand how each participant experiences the program from start to finish. He shared that they hope to have something to share with the Committee about the outcome of that research by September 30, 2023. Mr. Camporeale then opened the floor for questions.

Member Hoppin shared how the Committee made a recommendation for a journey map for military spouses at Veterans Affairs and learned through the process that there are a lot of journey maps that exist at other agencies. She asked Mr. Camporeale if there would be a requirement for the vendor to take an inventory of those other journey maps and incorporate them into the process.

Mr. Camporeale confirmed they are reviewing other journey maps and other human-centered design experiences. He noted his appreciation for Member Hoppin's feedback and affirmed that he would bring it back to his group to consider. With no other questions, Ms. Renick continued with her part of the briefing.

Ms. Renick addressed the complementing and duplicative services as well as any gaps. She shared how the DoL VETS is interested in avoiding unnecessary duplication of employment services to transitioning service members, Veterans, members of the

Guard and Reserve, and military spouses. She noted there are currently about 86 MOUs (Memorandum of Understanding) with governmental and non-governmental partners so data can be shared to help avoiding duplication in their services. Ms. Renick also shared that the Bureau of Labor Statistics, an agency under DoL, reviews ongoing national sources of employment data with the Veteran Data Exchange Initiative (VDEI). She went on to note that VETS recognizes that they are all part of a larger committee that serves all Veterans, and they are invested in building partnerships and sharing information about one another's offerings. She then paused her presentation for questions.

Dr. Butler commented that over the summer, the Committee had a briefing by a business that works a lot with placing people in different jobs. He shared how they learned that with enough data, there are some amazing statistics that were shared on the likelihood of a Veteran getting a certain job based on the type of education or degree they had. That information is being used to aid Veterans to choose a course of education or action earlier in their process of transitioning. Dr. Butler asked Ms. Renick if the DoL program helps Veterans in a similar way.

Ms. Renick responded that they have been working on how to develop pathways for transitioning service members and Veterans who want to go into specific industry sectors, but that currently they have the TAP curriculum where they present the information to the Veterans through career and credentialing as well as through employment workshops. She shared that they are also trying to start this process earlier in the military lifecycle so the transitioning service members are able to consider their options and work towards a specific path earlier. Ms. Renick asked Mr. Winter if he had anything in response to Dr. Butler's question.

Mr. Winter stated they do not have a specific line which states if a Veteran has this type of degree or training then they should go to this line of work. He shared that instead, one of the core workshops for TAP is their Career and Credential Exploration Workshop, which is a two day workshop that takes the transitioning service members through three types of assessments. They then review careers that are associated with the findings of those assessments, and lead the service members through research on that particular occupation that was found to be a fit through the assessment.

Vice Chair Hauk asked if the assessments are administered while the service member is in TAP as part of the DoL portion. Mr. Winter confirmed that they do take it during that workshop. Vice Chair Hauk then asked if the transitioning service members are given assistance in obtaining any credentials needed for their future career. Mr. Winter confirmed that is the case.

Mr. Winter then began his portion of the briefing, which was a high level overview of what takes place with the Transition Assistance Program (TAP), as well as the TAP workshops that DoL conducts, and the Employment Navigator and Partnership Pilot. Mr. Winter explained the TAP timeline for pre-separating military members. The timeline is as follows:

1. The service member receives Individualized Initial Counseling (IC) beginning no later than 365 days prior to leaving military service.
2. The service member is given Pre-Separation Counseling.
3. The service member then attends the core workshops of TAP, including three one-day portions run by DoD, VA, and DoL.
4. DoD covers managing their transition, a Military Occupational Code Crosswalk, and financial planning.
5. VA Benefits and Services advisors then go through the VA benefits and services that are available to the service members.
6. DoL then gives their mandatory one-day workshop on Employment Fundamentals of Career Transition.
7. The service member chooses one of four electives (though they are allowed to take all four if desired), which will depend on the career track they're looking to take. Each elective leads to a two-day core workshop course. The DoL teaches two of the four electives, including employment and current career exploration.
8. The service member then attends a Capstone event no later than 90 days prior to separation, where they will go back to their commanding officer or designee and go through the Pre-Separation Counseling checklist to make sure the service member has gone through the entire TAP program.
9. If the service member is deemed to need additional assistance from VA or DoL, they will get a warm handover to the appropriate agency, which has its own process.

Mr. Winter reviewed the three workshops DoL provides during TAP, including one mandatory and two electives. The mandatory one-day workshop is Employment Fundamentals of Career Transition (EFCT), which is a fundamental foundational course that explains to the service member what is going to take place, as well as connecting them to the tools and resources needed to make their career transition.

He went on to explain the two elective courses, the first being the Department of Labor Employment Workshop (DOLEW). This workshop covers emerging best practices in career employment including in-department training to build effective resumes, learn about federal hiring, network with contacts using technology, develop interview skills, and learn how to evaluate a job offer. The DOLEW provides the full cycle of employment readiness, building on the same job search activities and fundamentals described in EFCT and should be completed 6-9 months prior to separation.

Mr. Winter shared that the second elective course is Career and Credential Exploration (C2E), which provides personalized career-development assessments to guide you through a variety of career considerations including labor market projections, education, apprenticeships, certifications, and licensure requirements. This elective should also be taking 6-9 months prior to separation.

Mr. Winter then explained the assessments used by DoL, including the O*Net Interest Profiler, Careers Scope Assessment, and the Work Values Indicator. These are used to find the service member's interests, aptitude, abilities, and values, and then help to find a career or number of careers that are suitable to those points. The service member then starts to work through careers within that field, looking at the types of credentials needed, and learning how to get those credentials and what training programs are available to them. Mr. Winter shared that the point of this process is for the service member to come out with an actionable plan that they can start working to follow that career plan.

Mr. Winter noted that in FY 2022, DoL delivered over 11,700 workshops in combination of the one-day EFCT and then the two two-day workshops. Those were delivered to a total of just under 250,000 participants. He also shared that in April 2021, they launched the Employment Navigator and Partnership Pilot, which started with 13 military installations and has grown to 24. At these installations, the DoL has contracted employment navigators who work one on one with service members and their spouses to identify a good fit career path they would like to take, and then get them connected with some of DoL's partners that are part of the pilot and can assist the service member to attain the goals they have set out for themselves.

Mr. Winter went on to explain how with the Partnership Pilot, they started out with nine test partners based on the PRA requirements that they couldn't go beyond nine until they completed the package. In October of 2021, they were able to open up the project so any organization could apply to be a partner through a process and application form they fill out. The partners provide primary services such as apprenticeship opportunities, digital matching, employment mentorship and networking, hiring events, placement services, referrals to employment opportunities, training services, and wrap-around services within communities.

He shared that, once the employment navigator has worked with the service member or spouse, based on the assessments or research they've done, they are able to determine the pathway the service member is looking to do. The employment navigator then connects the service member with one or more of the partner organizations that will assist them, and can be referred to any number of the partners. Mr. Winter noted that at the present time, they average a little over two referrals per service member to partner organizations at this step. The partners will connect with the service member

and work with them, then providing feedback to DoL on the outcomes of their interaction so the DoL can fully monitor feedback through the process. He shared that they have provided services to over 7,000 service members since beginning this pilot program. Mr. Winter then opened the floor for questions.

Member Quintas shared that his subcommittee is looking at how the VA is positioned out to 2030 with changes in the labor market, and asked how far out the DoL is looking when it comes to labor market projections. He also wanted to know what best practices and hiring means to DoL and if there were any sources of that information. Mr. Winter stated that for labor market research, they rely heavily on Department of Labor on ETAs on the Career One Stop Website because that's where all of their work is done on labor market information and research that ETA within DoL maintains.

Mr. Winter noted that for best practices, they develop their curriculum and update it on a regular basis. He shared that the ESCT and EW curriculum were updated and the new revised curriculum goes into effect in January 2023. DoL's curriculum developers also do research on the information provided within the workshop to make sure it is current and relevant when included in the curriculum. It is then run through a number of levels of review from the TAP interagency, curriculum working group, over to their stakeholders, and then to DoL and a number of Veteran Service Officers. He was unsure of the timeline as far as 2030, however.

Member Hoppin asked if there is a way for military spouses and caregivers to get information on VA benefits and resources if they go through TEAMS instead of the TAP site to just learn about the benefits. Mr. Winter answered that the TEAMS curriculum only includes employment information, not VA benefits. He shared that there is a self-paced version of all of the TAP curriculum available on tapevents.mil, and that it is available to anybody who wants to access it. Member Hoppin suggested there be a link to the tapevents.mil website available on the TEAMS site so that more people would know about it, and Mr. Winter said he would look into it.

Member Velazquez wanted to know if there was any follow up after the TAP process regarding the Veteran's success after going through the program. Mr. Winter answered that historically, there has not been the capability to track a service member from being on active duty to when they become a Veteran. However, they get data from DoD, from the Defense Manpower Data Center, on the transitioning service members, and have entered into an MOU with Health and Human Services to be able to match data from what they get from DMDC along with their EMPP data to be able to match that against the National Directory of New Hires, to then start looking at being able to see the employment outcomes for recently separated Veterans.

Member Velazquez shared how the State of Washington has the Washington Department of Veteran Affairs which has a Vet Corps Navigator program. This program combined with AmeriCorps to create the Veteran Corps Program, putting Veteran Corps Navigators on school campuses and other organizations that connected Veterans to different levels of services and resources. That allowed them to have an on-site warm handoff to the Veteran as well as giving the Veteran someone to go to if they have further questions after they've finished programs like TAP. Member Velazquez asked if connecting the TAP program to those different organizations across the nation could assist in gather that after action data to ensure the Veterans are most efficiently getting what they need when they separate from the military.

Mr. Winter agreed with her suggestion and said he would look into it. Having finished his briefing and with no further questions, Mr. Winter thanked the Committee for their time and told them to contact him if they had questions after the meeting.

Chair Dexter thanked Mr. Winter and Ms. Renick for their presentations on overviews of the specific topics the Committee had requested from DoL VETS. She then asked Member Quintas if he would like to provide a brief overview from the modernization subcommittee.

Modernization Subcommittee Update

Member Quintas reminded the Committee that last year, they had focused largely on inspection of the Digital GI Bill and modernization occurring in technical aspects. He shared that they are impressed by the ongoing work and will continue to monitor and follow up with the recommendations they made for the last year. He went on to explain that the subcommittee was shifting their focus to understanding how the Department of the VA is positioned to meet the educational needs of beneficiaries out to the year 2030 to see what VA is doing for the future based on current trends.

He shared how the subcommittee is seeing a shift from a focus on degree programs and more towards certifications, credentialing, and other outcomes, as well as a transition to different formats of learning such as virtual, in person, or hybrid formats. The subcommittee is exploring how the VA's Human Centered Design Team views and thinks about the changing needs of current generations beyond five years, and how to anticipate current trends that are playing out and formalizing over a longer term.

Member Quintas continued, explaining that the subcommittee is thinking about this question in two different dimensions, including the institution and the student, and are trying to understand how the educational institutions are adjusting to changing educational needs, as well as how VA is anticipating and responding to the needs of the institutions. Chair Dexter asked if the Committee had any questions before Member Quintas moved on to the second recommendation they are considering.

Dr. Butler thanked Member Quintas and asked if the subcommittee had considered how more and more individuals in service might start education earlier, before they separated, due to the additional flexibility that higher education is showing. Member Quintas commented that the topic was a significant part of their conversation, and that it is why the subcommittee wants to talk to DoD about tuition assistance, as it is the primary benefit that active duty service members are leaning on. He also shared that they are seeing the trend Dr. Butler described, and that it is linked to the trend seen with community colleges, which tend to be a primary source for tuition assistance.

Member Velazquez asked if the subcommittee had researched whether the DoD was considering spending tuition assistance to Reservists, as they mostly do not currently have access. She explained how the changing world and Reservists being called to action more and more is giving Reservists more responsibility, and that having tuition assistance available to them would be helpful. Member Quintas shared that the topic had not come up in their conversations, but that he will make sure the question is asked when the subcommittee meets with the DoD.

Member Quintas moved on to the next topic for the modernization subcommittee, which involves how the VA considers outcomes for the future workforce. He shared that based on current trends, it is anticipated that deficits in STEM and healthcare degrees will continue, which may change behaviors on the hiring side. He noted that Amazon is seeing significant adjustments already on the hiring side, and so the subcommittee wants to understand how VA thinks about that in their outcome measurement, and how that tracks back to education benefits.

Dr. Butler shared that there is data showing that, for example, someone with a degree in an area that I not very financially rewarding can add a certificate on top of that and suddenly be very in demand for jobs. Member Quintas agreed and noted a recent article about the long-term value of something like a liberal arts degree with a more technical follow on such as a certificate or master's degree. He shared how it demonstrated that liberal arts degrees as opposed to STEM degrees over the long term are producing higher average income.

Member Quintas continued with the third and final topic that the subcommittee is considering, how combat is defined. He shared that they have not yet gotten a chance to dig into researching this area, but that there is a plan to do so. They want to explore how the VA is thinking about the way combat is defined, as it affects beneficiaries, and how language in the legislation which ties to combat does not consider how combat has changed significantly over the past few decades. He used the example of service members who may be participating in combat virtually while not being anywhere near the physical combat zone, and how these service members are not currently defined as ever being in combat. Member Quintas noted that they are going to look at who at the

VA is looking at making modifications to the legislative language so it can have a more holistic view of all of the service members across all of the services, new ones in particular.

Member Hoppin concurred with Member Quintas's point and shared that she did not think there was a shared lexicon among all the agencies or partners on what combat is defined as. She considered how DoD might have a certain lexicon they use which isn't shared by the VA or industry partners. She suggested the subcommittee include something in their recommendation about shared lexicon. Member Quintas agreed and thanked Member Hoppin for her suggestion. He then shared that those were the three main topics the subcommittee was exploring, and that the subcommittee looks forward to bringing recommendations to the Committee early in the new year.

Chair Dexter thanked Member Quintas for the updates and working with the modernization subcommittee.

Chair Dexter called recess until 12:30 p.m. Eastern Time.

Continued Distance Learning Subcommittee Update

Member Sarah Roberts joined the meeting and introduced herself. Chair Dexter then requested that Dr. Butler continue his subcommittee update that he began earlier in the meeting.

Dr. Butler gave a quick recap of what he had already reviewed, which was asking for an analysis from the VA of what the true housing cost for Veterans pursuing degrees under different modalities. He noted that there were two hands raised when he finished his earlier explanation, and called on Member Hoppin for her question.

Member Hoppin shared that she wanted to reiterate what Dr. Haynie spoke about with getting a baseline on if there are more people taking online classes in some capacity, and to see what the trends are. She suggested finding the number or percentage of students participating in online classes and to what extent, and asked Dr. Butler if they had considered the question for part of their recommendations.

Dr. Butler concurred, stating they could certainly make it part of their conversation and include it as a data point to gather holistic data from all takers of programs, both traditional and not. Vice Chair Hauk expressed his interest in the demographics as well, as the majority of students in his institution are either all online or mixed modality. As no other hands were raised for questions, Dr. Butler continued with the rest of the points his subcommittee on distance learning are reviewing.

Dr. Butler stated the first issue is one related to something with respect to requesting the VA to provide additional training and guidance to those staffing some of the hotlines

and call centers. He emphasized that it would not have to be new resources, just reprioritizing the current training budgets that they might have, in order to improve the user experience.

The second issue he shared is to request the VA to review and revise as appropriate its processes for communicating education benefit policy changes in a coordinated manner to both academic institutions and students. Dr. Butler emphasized the need for better communication, as with the first point he mentioned.

Dr. Butler shared that the third issue is one that he believes was already completed, but that it talks about allowing the SCOs and schools to access student education entitlement information online, rather than through telephone. He believes it was launched in spring of 2021, so he shared that he would hold off on anything more with that point until they have further information.

Vice Chair Hauk commented that he did not believe Enrollment Manager had launched at that time due to a conflict in timing with the schools, but that they are on the trajectory to do so soon. Mr. Maltby pointed out that the Enrollment Manager rollout will be part of the DGIB briefing in the next day's meeting. Dr. Butler thanked him. With no further questions, Dr. Butler turned the floor back over to Chair Dexter.

On the Job Training and Apprenticeships Subcommittee Update

Chair Dexter requested that the members of the OJT and apprenticeships subcommittee share an update on their progress. Member Hoppin and Member Salgado felt that Member D. Roberts would be better versed at giving a more detailed overview, as he has a more unique perspective. Therefore, they would be giving a more basic overview.

Member Salgado shared that the subcommittee is looking at the synergy between different departments and getting the message out there, because they believe it's an under utilized benefit for individuals. They also are looking at institutions of higher learning in the degree programs, and how certificate type programs are becoming more popular, as well as how OJT and apprenticeships work within the different elements of Veteran's education as a whole.

Member Salgado pointed out that for an individual to find all of the information they need for finding a job or education, they would have to go through four or more websites to gather that information. He suggested the VA look at doing a one stop shop kind of website for Veterans and their beneficiaries in order to ensure they are getting the information they need and that it is all in one place.

Member Hoppin brought up how the end user is not always necessarily the beneficiary, but also the State Certifying Agents because the information needs to be easier for them to access as well so they would not have to check several websites or links for those updates. She shared how they also discussed how to give VA more autonomy over the amount of money allotted to them, so that instead of amounts being strictly for this or that program, it could be moved around to programs that may need it more.

Chair Dexter thanked Member Hoppin and Member Salgado for the overview of the current status of their subcommittee. She noted that Ms. Renick had shared in the comments that the Department of Labor references GI Bill benefits on the apprenticeship.gov website as far as eligibility.

Open Discussion

Chair Dexter thanked the subcommittees for their discussions and asked if any Committee members had anything to bring forward for further discussion. Member Hoppin commented that she thought a presentation given to a subcommittee about LinkedIn from Member S. Roberts was very informative. She asked Member S. Roberts if she would be able or willing to give the same presentation to the full Committee. Mr. Maltby noted that the next full Committee meeting was not until May or June 2023, but they can schedule her to speak to the subcommittees separately with her presentation. Member S. Roberts expressed her willingness to do so.

Member Lyon joined the meeting and introduced himself.

Adjourn

Chair Dexter concluded that they had finished the day's agenda very efficiently. She reminded the Committee of the next day's meeting starting at 10:00 a.m. Eastern Time, where there would be an update on the Digital GI Bill at 11:00 a.m. and an update on the GI Bill comparison tool at 12:00. She also noted that the rest of the meeting would be a closed session. Chair Dexter thanked the Committee for their time and adjourned the meeting at 1:03 p.m. Eastern Time.

Wednesday, November 30, 2022

Roll Call

Jill Thomas, Assistant Designated Federal Officer for the Committee, performed the roll call.

Welcome and Rules of Engagement

Joseph Maltby, Designated Federal Officer for the Committee, welcomed the Committee and the public to the meeting. He reviewed the rules of engagement. Mr. Maltby then turned the floor over to Chair Dexter.

Opening Remarks – Chair

Mona Dexter, Chair, called the meeting to order. She informed the Committee that the first hour of the meeting would be dedicated for Committee discussion, and offered the members the option to bring back any discussion from the prior day's meeting. She also noted that Member Lyon and Member Quintas had a limited amount of time they were able to attend the meeting, and so invited them to bring up any points they had wanted to cover first.

Open Discussion

Member Quintas summarized the points he had made in the previous meeting for Member Lyon and asked if he had anything to add. Member Lyon did not have further comments on the topic at this time, but requested the Committee to bring forward any thoughts on the subcommittee's points for discussion.

Vice Chair Hauk asked if there is a definition of combat in legislation, or if it is in regulatory guides from the VA in terms of how it's determined and adjudicated. Member Quintas shared that the subcommittee had not gotten far enough along to investigate that question. Vice Chair Hauk noted that if that lexicon is in legislation somewhere, it will entail the department and someone responsible in the department to have conversations about how to work changes for the lexicon into the legislation. He brought up the earlier example of the Space Force and how they are not physically in combat zones, but they do work virtually in them and that can cause the same type of mental stress. However, that is not considered as being in combat when it comes to the terminology and benefits.

Member Hoppin reiterated the lack of a shared lexicon between congressional offices or committees and DoD. Vice Chair Hauk concurred and added that the definitions are also different for different programs and universities that deal with military benefits.

Member Lyon shared that he works with people who are registered lobbyists and government affairs experts, and that the definition and language of something like combat is legislated. However, it is legislated in the sense that it has to be interpreted once it's codified into law, and the areas that interpret it are pretty broad reaching. He listed the Department of Defense, Department of Veterans Affairs, Department of Labor, Small Business Administration, and Department of Education as different areas that will interpret the meaning of the definition in their own ways. He also shared that it's also different on the state side, and the language came from the Defense Authorization Act of 2008.

Member Lyon stated that the subcommittee will continue to research for more information and give a presentation to the Committee at a later date of their findings. He emphasized the importance of knowing the interpretation of the definition on the VA's side, to start. Vice Chair Hauk concurred. Member Lyon then brought up that they are also not aware of how tuition assistance is awarded when it comes to National Guard and Reservists.

Member Velazquez concurred with Member Lyon and shared her experience of what is considered active duty and what is not when it comes to the Reserves. She pointed out the amount of time Reservists spend drilling and training, and that it is not taken into consideration when it comes to awarding them education or medical benefits.

Member Quintas shared that typically, the evidence to receive combat Veteran related benefits is through decorations that can be only received through combat or orders, which would be on the DD-214 the VA reviews to see if a person is eligible. Member Hoppin suggested that it would be helpful if VA had definitions for terminology on their website, readily accessible.

Member Lyon pointed out that there is likely an assumption that DoD and VA universally use the same terms when they don't. Member Hoppin agreed.

Member Velazquez brought up the point of future proofing which was reviewed in the last meeting. She asked if the Committee is looking at equity in education benefits regarding Reserve and active duty and suggested if they are not, that it is a point they may want to research. Chair Dexter pointed out that the modernization subcommittee is moving into modernization to improve equity and benefits across the board, which includes definitions such as they are discussing.

Member Quintas shared that he felt the subcommittees focused on distance learning and modernization had significant overlap in some of their topics. He suggested the subcommittees get together offline to delineate the two subcommittee's work so there is no overlap. Dr. Butler concurred and suggested they arrange a joint subcommittee

meeting between their two subcommittees and walk through a draft recommendation together.

Vice Chair Hauk shared his intrigue with Member Lyon's discussion around tuition assistance (TA) as the upstream feeder into the VA, and the Education Services as a downstream benefit. He agreed that both subcommittees should have a joint meeting, but he felt they would also benefit from a joint briefing between distance education and modernization directly from the DoD. Chair Dexter suggested they have that briefing at the next full meeting, but as the next meeting was six months away, Member Quintas requested they have a briefing in January or February if possible. Dr. Butler concurred.

Chair Dexter agreed that they should keep working with Mr. Maltby and the team for scheduling of the briefing suggested, as well as other briefings for other subcommittees. She also suggested the subcommittee briefings be open so other Committee members can join and attend the briefing if they wished.

Chair Dexter called recess until 11:00 a.m. EST.

Digital GI Bill Update

Chair Dexter welcomed the Committee back after their brief recess and introduced Mr. Joshua Lashbrook, Digital GI Bill Program Management Officer for Education Service, for his presentation on the Digital GI Bill update.

Mr. Lashbrook began his presentation with a graphical representation of their major milestones. He shared that their latest release provides for a streamlined Post-9/11 GI Bill application process for Veterans and service members, and further improvements for claims processing. These enhancements simplify and shorten the process of applying for Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits using self-entitlement on VA.gov. He went on to explain that in August 2022, they released enhanced original claim processing which was integration with the service history to improve claims processing for the Post-9/11 GI Bill applications. He also shared that going forward, they plan to release Enrollment Manager in early 2023, which provides an enhanced SCO (School Certifying Official) user interface including a streamlined process which allows quicker information sharing along with a chat bot named Billie.

Mr. Lashbrook continued, stating that they are continuing to drive development of DGIB priorities using agile principles, successfully completing their Program Increment (PI) 9 Planning in October 2022. He shared that the DGIB team works continuously to implement enhancements that contribute to their continued involvement of managed service and modernized GI Bill experience, and that development priorities for the upcoming months include User Acceptance Testing (UAT) for Enrollment Manager, and Online Enrollment Verification, Benefits Manager functionality, and My Education

benefits. His team are also preparing to transition payments from BDN to eMPWR by continuing requirements gathering for that.

With regards to Enrollment Manager, Mr. Lashbrook shared that this team recently kicked off their comprehensive Enrollment Manager communications by sending out announcement emails to VA staff, school leadership, and the School Certifying Officials. They will also be providing SCOs with extensive training resources and communications, and requiring SCOs to take three training courses prior to Enrollment Manager going live so they are adequately familiar with the new system. He also emphasized continued significant progress in enhancing user functionalities and improvement of claims processing capabilities within the service.

Mr. Lashbrook shared how his team had successfully achieved another modernization milestone on August 20, 2022 with adding automation to the GI Bill claim process. He noted that the improved application experience directly impacts Veterans and service members applying for that first time self-entitled benefit, and the new experience includes the pre-filled service history. All of this allows for same day eligibility decisions for the claimant, whether denied or approved, and they are then able to continue the process immediately rather than waiting the usual 10 days expected currently.

He also told the Committee about a chatbot feature named Billie which was dovetailed into Enrollment Manager to provide SCOs with another avenue of information to provide quick access for information such as certain remarks needed for processing or information about new legislation. He also shared that the Benefits Manager is in development and will improve VA staff user experience by reducing manual entry and improving the accuracy and efficiency with the ability to process all benefits chapters in one centralized claims processing system which will have a lot of the data pre-populated for them.

Mr. Lashbrook emphasized his team's human-centered design approach with Enrollment Manager, and after hosting Enrollment Manager prototype usability testing sessions with SCOs, the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. He then requested a short video be played from his presentation for the Committee. The video reemphasized what he had just shared with the Committee. He shared that the video has been posted on their Facebook and YouTube.

Mr. Lashbrook went over more communications and resources being provided to SCOs to help them feel confident with Enrollment Manager once it launches. These included e-mails which would be sent two to three times a month, in person and virtual workshops, videos that will provide informative and straight forward how-to for stakeholders, social posts on Facebook and Instagram, the VA ONCE banner update that will alert SCOs to relevant updates, and frequently asked questions his team will

address that will be updated regularly on the VA.gov Resources for Schools page. He also noted that they would have SCO monthly office hours to provide SCOs an opportunity to ask questions about Enrollment Manager and receive answers from EDU's National Training team, as well as Job Aids to serve as quick reference for the SCOs who need assistance with the VA Education Platform Portal or Enrollment Manager in general, and finally, a newsletter called "SCO in the Know" which will provide bi-monthly information and updates regarding the new system.

Vice Chair Hauk asked Mr. Lashbrook how the information on the updates would be communicated to students and beneficiaries, as he was concerned about the period in between when the old system goes offline and Enrollment Manager replaces it. Mr. Lashbrook answered that they would be using similar avenues to the SCO information being sent out, but that it is also going to be addressed on VA's Facebook and Instagram pages.

Mr. Lashbrook continued with his presentation, sharing that his team had an Enrollment Manager workshop on November 15, 2022 which allowed SCOs to learn about and experience the new system in person, while asking questions and being provided resources from his team. He noted that the workshop had two parts, the Enrollment Manager presentation which was livestreamed, and a hands-on session where the SCOs were able to test out the new system and its features. Member Salgado thanked Mr. Lashbrook and his team for their hard work and shared his excitement for the upcoming changes, noting that some hiccups are expected to occur, as new programs usually have. Mr. Lashbrook thanked him, agreeing that no major enrollment rolls out flawlessly and told the Committee that they are putting all the mechanisms in place that they can to try to minimize any impact that will occur.

He went on to explain that since the workshop was so successful, they are going to do an in person "GI Bill Roadshow" which currently has two stops scheduled. The first is with George Mason University in Virginia on December 1, 2022, followed by University of Maryland Baltimore County on December 8, 2022. He shared that the roadshow visits will each consist of two events, including a GI Bill town hall for Veterans, service members, and GI Bill students, as well as an Enrollment Manager workshop for the SCOs. He noted their intentions to plan additional stops across the country in 2023.

Mr. Lashbrook moved on to speak about automation efforts, which is one of their key program objectives. He shared that they are 6 percent more automated than two months ago with original claims, and are continuing to work on improving the system. He then asked if the Committee had any questions for him.

Member Hoppin asked the roadshow was open to people outside of the communities and universities they are being held at, and if so, how is that information being shared

so people not attending the universities would know about the event? Mr. Lashbrook shared that the universities were chosen because they are around other populace areas and schools specifically so those other people can attend. Ms. Thomas agreed and emphasized their intention to broaden the scope of future roadshows, and also shared a comment posted in the chat stating that information is sent out to students within a 60 mile radius of the events.

Member Hoppin then asked what claimants would need to do if their pre-filled in data is incorrect. Mr. Lashbrook answered that it would need to be fixed on the DoD side through the normal channels, not through the Enrollment Manager system. Member Hoppin wanted to know if claimants would have someone to speak to or work with during the blackout period before Enrollment Manager is implemented. Mr. Lashbrook stated they would not be able to apply at all, so they could not be approved or denied because no applications would be processed during that time.

With no further questions for Mr. Lashbrook, Chair Dexter thanked him for his presentation. She then called for a recess until 12:00 p.m., at which time the meeting was private. The meeting reconvened publicly at 12:45 p.m.

GI Bill Comparison Tool Update

Chair Dexter welcomed Mr. Michael Napper, Client Applications Chief in Education Service, to give a presentation on the GI Bill Comparison Tool update.

Mr. Napper thanked Chair Dexter and introduced himself. He explained that the Comparison Tool is a resource established under the Principles of Excellence to make the process of researching colleges and employers for Veterans a lot more efficient than in the past, as well as allowing beneficiaries flexibility in choosing their own situation and preferences in order to determine what institution would be best for them. He shared that his team's role for the Comparison Tool is primarily to make sure it displays and maintains accurate facility data, and that data integrity is a high priority to his team and so they work to keep data updated on a daily basis.

He also shared that they are instrumental in executing any type of corrective actions or views and validations weekly if any are received from various stakeholders, such as issues that individuals find in regards to the Comparison Tool or data within it. In addition, they complete data extracts with approximately 31 different elements within the tool in a weekly basis to make sure they are up to standard. He gave some examples of an extract to be GI Bill students, the amount of GI Bill students, housing allowances for school, and student complaints.

Mr. Napper also noted that his team participates in weekly sessions every Monday and Thursday with the Office of Information and Technology as well as Government CIO to

prioritize, scope, and develop any type of enhancements that can improve the functionality and user experience of the Comparison Tool. He shared that they have new contract support, GCIO, which is able to update data within 90 minutes of an issue being identified versus several days with their last contract support. He emphasized the importance of the faster updates with keeping the information accurate for the Comparison Tool.

He went on to explain that his team's goals for integrity and any type of data discrepancies are to identify and resolve the issues within one to two business days. The data is primarily extracted from the Department of Education and there are several elements within the data received from DoE that may need to be addressed before uploading to the Comparison Tool.

Mr. Napper shared that he was able to reestablish a connection with the Department of Education, which previously did not exist, and they now have at least three points of contact which they can speak to for help when his team identifies variances in the data files or getting more information in regards to the DoE's data processes and how it may impact the information being uploaded into the Comparison Tool. His team, Client Applications, are the ones that primarily drive the data being reflected on the Comparison Tool. He emphasized the importance of collaboration and other teams working on the Comparison Tool with them, mentioning the GI Bill Integrity and Protection Staff which review and address any trends identified within the data captured.

Mr. Napper pointed out some highlights to the complete redesign of the Comparison Tool, including users being able to use a map to search for schools in particular locations, comparing up to three facilities next to each other, and the user interface is now 508 compliant for accessibility. He then played a short video of a student talking about how the GI Bill Comparison Tool has made their education easier and how simple it is to use. Mr. Napper shared that the video had been out on social media for the past four months, along with a longer version of it, to help get the word out to those who it would benefit.

He then shared his screen so he could navigate the new layout for the Comparison Tool and give a demonstration for the Committee. He showed them what the improvements and updates he spoke about earlier look like, and how they function. With the comparison function, he explained how the user can ask for differences in the school to be highlighted to help with their comparison. He also showed how you can search by location on a map, that it shows On The Job Training and Apprenticeship programs, and that an individual could search for institutions based on a specialized mission such as a historically Black university or college, or are religious, among many other types of missions. Mr. Napper then noted the accessibility of the website, stating that it functions

on laptops, tablets, and smart phones so an individual can access it in any way they and get the same experience as on the other devices.

A question was posted in the chat asking, "How do users know what the data dates are if they download the Excel data? Should the data be considered point in time? Which fiscal year and/or school years presented?" Mr. Napper answered that the data is updated weekly, so within that week is when the data is most accurate, and typically within the current fiscal year.

Mr. Napper shared some future plans for the Comparison Tool, including implementing a rating system which would be a four star beneficiaries source system where they would be sending out surveys to beneficiaries asking them to rate institutions and services provided. This way, they would be able to not only show the main facts of institutions, but also ratings and true experiences. He also noted that they are going to be including a list of programs for each approved institution, pending the completion of the Digital GI Bill Institution Manager, which is an application part of a managed self-service.

The final highlight of functionality that Mr. Napper shared was the plan for adding the name of a point of contact directly associated with an institution so a beneficiary can reach out directly to that POC if they need institution specific information.

Dr. Butler asked if online programs are included in the overall institution list as well as on the map when a beneficiary searches by location. Mr. Napper answered that they have the online institutions and programs in the system, but they would not appear in geological searches on maps.

Vice Chair Hauk asked if the mission filter data is drawn from DoE and their list of minority serving institutions. Mr. Napper confirmed that it is so. Vice Chair Hauk suggested that for institutions with multiple campuses, the information would need to be propagated to all locations and not just the main campus. Mr. Napper said he understood.

Member Lyon thanked Mr. Napper and his team for their work, and asked if there is any reporting ability on how the end user is using the GI Bill Comparison Tool. Mr. Napper pointed out they did not at this time have that ability, but one of the enhancements that they have prioritized and scoped with their new contract support team with GCIO is a report generation for specific examples such as with Member Lyon's query, so it is something they are working on for the future. Member Lyon thanked him and pointed out how the data and information of how beneficiaries are using the tool for their GI Bill would be helpful information with thinking through future proofing concepts for the Committee. Mr. Napper concurred. Mr. Napper then invited the Committee members to communicate with him in the future if they had any ideas or recommendations for him.

Mr. Joe Preisser, GI Bill IT Operations, stepped in to introduce himself as he wanted to speak to the point of usage data for the tool. He shared that they have a lot of the information accessible through Google Analytics, such as page visits, schools visited most often, et cetera. He stated he was not aware of the current state of the data, as he no longer works on the Google Analytics suite they have attached to the Comparison Tool, but that hey have had a lot of similar information and metrics suggested. He recommended Member Lyon or another Committee member to speak to him or Mr. Napper at a later date to review the data that is accessible. Member Lyon thanked Mr. Preisser and suggested it could also be a good briefing for a full Committee meeting in the future.

Mr. Napper thanked Mr. Preisser for adding valuable information to the presentation. He also thanked the Committee and reiterated the offer to contact him with any questions or suggestions.

Chair Dexter seconded Member Lyon's motion to have a readout of the Google Analytics in terms of users and getting more demographic data around the users of the Comparison Tool. She asked Mr. Maltby if he could make a note to request that briefing to be included in their next meeting, and suggested the Committee members think about what specific analytics they would like to see pulled from the data.

Chair Dexter then called recess until 2:00 p.m.

VA Service Member/Veteran Transition Project Briefing

Chair Dexter welcomed Ms. Barbara Morton, Deputy Chief Veterans Experience Officer, Veterans Experience Office, VA, and gave her the floor for her presentation.

Ms. Morton thanked Chair Dexter and expressed her enthusiasm for sharing the Veteran Transition Project information and updates with the Committee. She began by explaining that one of the President's Management Agenda's priority areas is customer experience and one of the features for this administration is a new concept of a life experience.

She shared that the concept of a life experience is to choose five different areas in any member of the public's life and take a holistic cross-agency approach. She listed the experiences being considered currently as navigation from military to civilian life, birth of a child, approaching retirement, facing financial shock, and recovering from a disaster. The thought process was to apply concepts and methodologies of human-centered design to each of the five experiences across agencies to see if they could collaborate and design solutions that would better serve members of the public in those five areas.

Ms. Morton noted a governing document around CX called OMB A-11 Section 280, which instructs federal agencies on how to implement a customer experience voice of the customer program and integrate it in their budget requests and budgeting models, and is a framework for agencies to follow. She also shared information about the Customer Experience Executive Order, which sets a view of how a government for the people should work using customer experience and human-centered design as its foundation, as well as setting forth specific agency commitments.

She went on to explain that only about half of service members who leave the military each year end up engaging in VA, and that they are working with the VA and DoD along with other sibling agencies to make sure transitioning service members and their families are aware of the resources available to them. She shared how they are using the framework of human-centered design to go to the Veterans, family members, and transitioning service members to understand their pain points and think about how they might design training, digital tools, communication products, and other solutions to make the transition more meaningful to those going through the process. She emphasized the importance of providing information at the right time in the process in a way that can be understood by everybody.

Ms. Morton informed the Committee of a human-design research sprint her team, VA, DoD, and DoL had been working on over the past year. She shared how they did 200 different engagements which involved speaking with over 70 service members, 50 recently transitioned Veterans, family members, and subject matter experts from sibling agencies. Through this research, they were able to produce four customer personas which creates a way to understand thematically what they learned about the different hallmarks of the individuals they spoke to. In addition, they created a journey map, seven insights, and four areas of opportunity. The four customer personas are the lifer, the goal oriented, the purpose seeker, and the true separator.

She showed the Committee the journey map through a presentation slide, where she pointed out it shows not a linear journey but some areas of opportunity that go up and down. Dr. Haynie shared his past experience doing the same work 8 years ago, and asked if the personas represented and the journey map are different now than they were in the previous journey map?

Ms. Morton shared that she felt the initial journey map was more of an end to end journey type view in a macro type lens, where the current journey map is like taking a segment of what matters most to Veterans from their initial research and diving deeper into that. She noted that the pain points and themes from both journey maps and research projects were very similar, however. She felt that the difference is in VA's level of maturity in absorbing and understanding insights and knowing how to operationalize change, and that the current journey map has deeper insights that are more actionable.

Ms. Morton moved on to speak about the seven key insights they found through their research. These include lack of a standard transition process, shaken confidence in civilian services, replacing a lifestyle is easier said than done, walking off the resource cliff, show don't tell, the unseen variable necessary support network, and family member sacrifices. She reviewed the areas of opportunity, which included transition process, life planning, education & training, and programs & services. Within the chart of the areas of opportunity, Ms. Morton showed where each of the seven insights overlap and align, with insights one and two cutting across all four areas of opportunity with the other insights in only one or two areas.

She further explained each of the areas of opportunity, sharing that the current transition process lacks standardization and clarity around what's important, what needs to happen to achieve personal goals and when, and accessing VA services can be confusing and difficult for service members. With life planning, service members often do not develop comprehensive plans for life after the military beyond meeting their most immediate and priority needs. For education & timing, service members are provided with "too much information" over a compressed timeframe that often prevents understanding and actionability. Finally, for programs & services, service members often struggle to navigate and become aware of the hundreds to thousands of resources that may be available to them, and lack protected time to engage with them.

Ms. Morton went on to explain that they gathered all nine agencies together in D.C. in September 2022 and had a week long workshop led by human-centered designers from VA. The cross-agency team came up with an understanding that there is probably a digital solution or opportunity that either exists or could be crafted which would be able to push information to different Veterans based on what their needs are, and depending on where they are in their lives. She noted that this process is in the early, low fidelity prototype stage, where they are bringing in Veterans and service members to test the concept.

She shared that any recommendation made would be run through the existing VA, DoD, and other agency governance structure while also making sure that the PMA, the Deputy Secretary, and the President's Management Council, which oversees all activities for the PMA, would be briefed to gain approval to move to the next stage. She also noted that workshops for each of the areas of opportunity are planned with the same type of cross-agency deep research and prototyping. She then opened the floor for questions.

Member Hoppin shared the Committee's earlier discussions about the need for a shared lexicon and asked if there is an agreed upon glossary of terms for the governance structures that are working together, including definitions of beneficiary groups such as Veteran, caregiver, et cetera. Ms. Morton answered that she was not

aware of any sort of lexicon, but that it was a good point to bring up. She asked Mandy Tepfer, Senior Customer Experience Strategist, if she was aware of a shared lexicon across agencies.

Ms. Tepfer answered that the governance structure they fall under for the project per DoD's recommendation is the TAP EC and the JEC, so they would also fall under whatever guidelines they have in place as far as structure and partnership between agencies. Member Hoppin asked if those definitions were set in stone, or if they were open to interpretation. Ms. Tepfer noted that it is something to look at for the PMA work in order to ensure they are all on the same pave.

Dr. Haynie pointed out a line in the earlier presentation listing the importance of giving service members the time needed for transition, and asked if DoD and the services are giving service members the time and space they need to absorb the information, navigate the resources, and do the work required to successfully transition. Ms. Morton shared her optimism on giving DoD evidence based data to show that then new plan is a better way for helping service members transition, and that by giving a good experience in transition, it has to be able to tie back to some level of the services being attractive for recruiting. Dr. Haynie shared recent experience of speaking with a group of 40 Marines, asking if they had been given time and space to prepare for transition, and none of them raising their hands, as an example of why he was asking the question.

Ms. Tepfer shared that she was confident with the solution they had thus far created which should eventually give the transitioning service members the time and space that Dr. Haynie was asking about. Ms. Morton emphasized their intent to continue including customer experience performance elements in all senior executive performance plans to help them moving forward.

Member Hoppin suggested that Ms. Tepfer and Ms. Morton and their teams are working against a stigma attached to transition, as DoD might look at transitioning as a soldier who is not 100 percent committed to service. She shared that when it was instead made a financial readiness issue, DoD was more on board, and that it took a decade to get to that point. She suggested that, if they moved away from TAP benefits and instead looked at VA benefits, it would give them the opening to talk about how they are not talking about transitioning, but the VA benefits available to the service members at different points of their career.

Member Lyon agreed with Member Hoppin's perspective that DoD sees transitioning as quitting, and that it is a good idea to rebrand that aspect of things. He asked how the conversation about preparing the force to transition works in the current environment of declining military recruiting numbers. Ms. Morton agreed with his point and noted that

rebranding is an important aspect to the project as well as language with turning transitioning into a positive aspect for DoD to help with recruitment. Ms. Tepfer concurred and added that an incentive for recruiting new military service members could be what's in it for them in the long term. She suggested that showing all of the potential benefits gained in a holistic approach could help convince not only young potential service members, but their family or parents as well.

Member Lyon also brought up that the TAP process has a conversation of in between getting off active duty and becoming a full civilian, but that the process could also have an opportunity to reverse the process before finalizing the transition and staying in the military instead if they change their mind.

Vice Chair Hauk shared his experience of 33 years in the Army and how, during that time, the Army made programmatic investments for which commanders were held responsible to ensure that service members were properly trained and had appropriate things to show to an employer showing they have applicable skills. He suggested that at some point, they are going to have to have a cultural discussion with DoD about how to show the opportunity cost if they aren't properly helping members transition. Ms. Morton concurred.

Chair Dexter thanked Ms. Morton and Ms. Tepfer for the detailed presentation and conversation.

Committee Open Discussion

Chair Dexter asked if any Committee members had further thoughts or suggestions on the last presentation. With none, she then asked if there is any other discussion they would like to continue or any topics they wished to bring forward at that time.

Member Hoppin asked if she and her fellow subcommittee members should compile a report to e-mail to Chair Dexter, as Member D. Roberts had been unable to attend the meeting and share his insights. Chair Dexter confirmed that an e-mail would be appreciated.

Dr. Haynie brought forward that he would like to speak about risk based surveys (RBS) as a future topic. He shared how his institute, as well as many others in the state of New York, was going through a risk based survey that was causing weeks of work. For his institute, the survey was triggered by a Veteran who disagreed with the university's definition of a full time online student. When the VA denied the claim, as universities have the right to create that definition on their own, the Veteran filed the same claim again. He shared that this scenario should not have triggered a weeks-long intensive survey and asked about how the VA is going to learn from the early implementation of

the risk based survey program and how they will reduce the burden that institutions are seeing currently as a function of the program.

Member Salgado shared that the issue falls within the SAA (State Approving Agency) and that they understand that the current process is "ridiculous".   He assured Dr. Haynie that they fully understand the issue and are actively working with VA to fix it.

Vice Chair Hauk asked how much discretion the SAA has in terms of selecting the institution that is going to receive the survey. Member Salgado said they had quite a bit, unless they had been directed the VA to conduct it, in which case it becomes a targeted risk based review. He explained the types of surveys that can be given to an institution, including a compliant survey, a risk based survey, and a targeted risk based review, the latter being conducted when the VA directs them to do so.

Vice Chair Hauk brought up Chair Dexter's question about future meetings, suggesting that they be given an update from the VA on where they stand with the RBS model. Chair Dexter shared that they had requested that update for the current meeting but the Office of Oversight and Accountability did not feel that they had enough information to give an update, but they would give one at the next full Committee meeting.

Final Thoughts and Adjournment

With no further comments from the Committee, Chair Dexter thanked the Committee for being flexible with their time and their continued dedication to the critical work they were all doing. Vice Chair Hauk also thanked the Committee and subcommittees for coming in prepared and ready to talk about the work of their subcommittees and what they had been able to formulate so far as far as recommendations. There being no further business, Chair Dexter adjourned the meeting at 3:20 p.m. EST.

December 14, 2022