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INFORMING IMPROVED RECOGNITION OF MILITARY LEARNING

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MAKING
RESEARCH
RELEVANT



Session Agenda

Introductions

Study overview

Summary of early findings

**Note: Findings are reflective of early analyses and are not final; a final report will be published in late Spring 2021.
Please do not cite or circulate early findings.*

Discussion

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Which best describes your current position?

1. Veterans' service center or other veteran-specific position
2. Advising/student affairs
3. Faculty
4. Student
5. VA/DOD/military
6. Other

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What's your experience in working with student veterans trying to get their military learning recognized for credit?

1. I work directly with student veterans
2. I am familiar with the process, but don't work directly with student veterans
3. I don't have any experience

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This study is focused on understanding student veterans' experiences getting college credit for military learning

Our goals: To understand student veterans' experiences with getting college credit for military learning (through training or MOS)

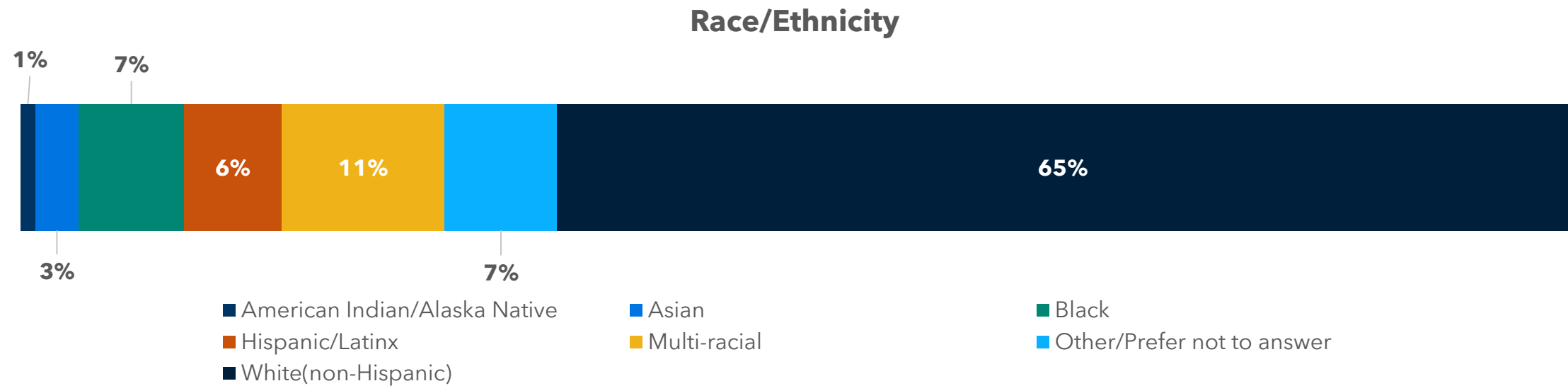
To inform and support colleges and universities in their efforts to better serve student veterans

Approach: Focus groups with 26 student veterans (in early 2020)

Survey of 486 student veterans in Fall 2020

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Who took the survey?



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Who took the survey?

Gender



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Who took the survey?

Institution Type - Control



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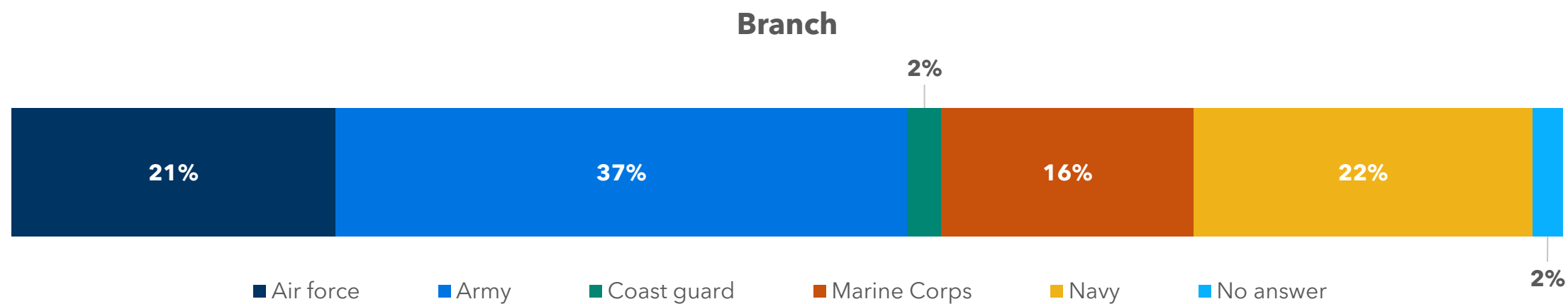
Who took the survey?

Institution Type - Level



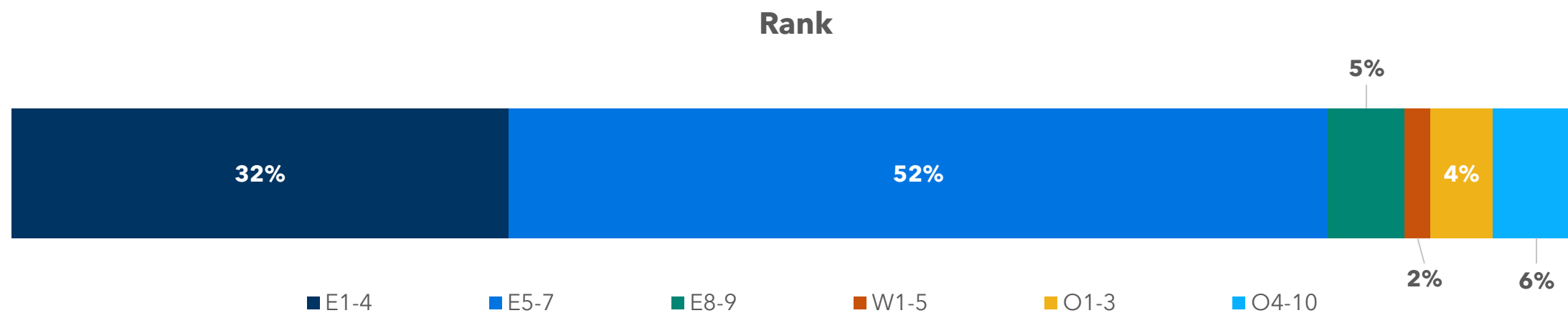
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Who took the survey?



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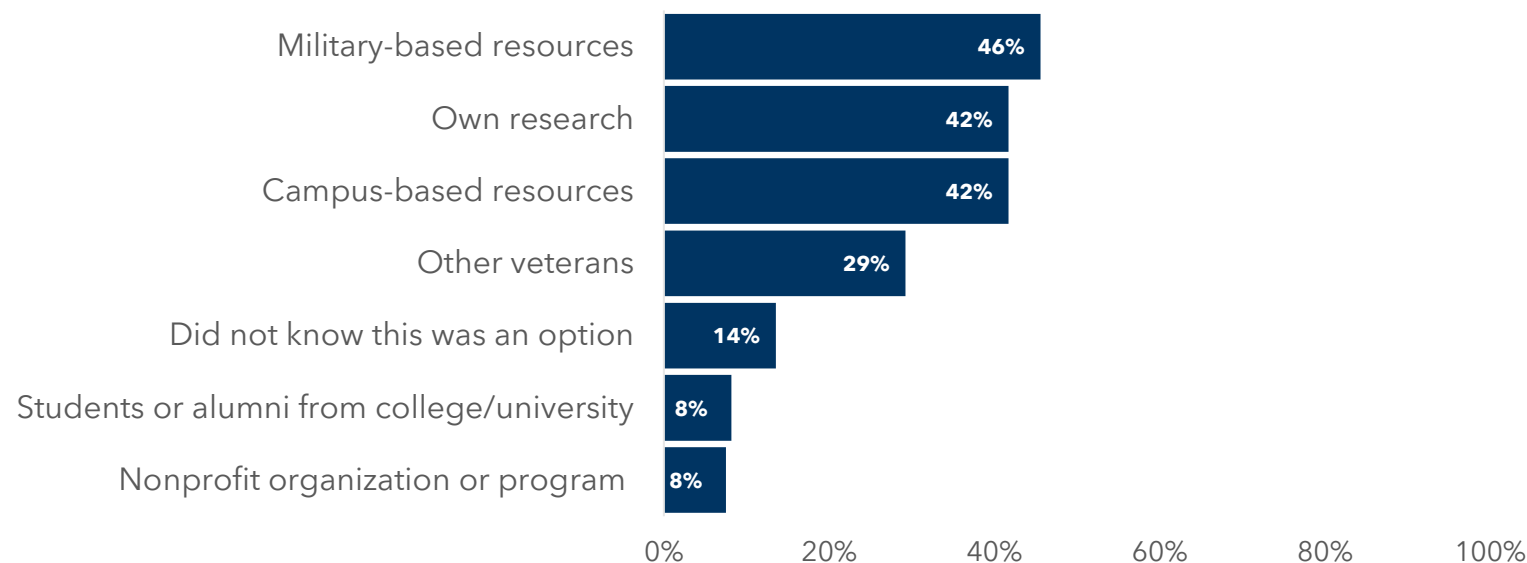


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Most respondents knew getting credit was an option, but challenges with getting accurate information exist

Respondents most often cited military-based resources, campus-based resources, and personal research as sources of information about credit recognition.

Sources of Information about Credit Recognition



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Most respondents knew getting credit was an option, but challenges with getting accurate information exist

Knowledgeable campus advisors, School Certifying Officials, campus veterans' centers, and military career counselors provided the most helpful information.

*"[My advisor] **knows the ins and outs of the veteran paperwork and what we need to go through**. She's really helpful. She knows a lot about the military. My military transcript she helped me in who to speak to and who to send them to. She was a great hub to have."*

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Most respondents knew getting credit was an option, but challenges with getting accurate information exist

But respondents' experiences with these sources suggest there is still room for improvement.

Messaging about credit recognition from the military was often incorrect, and some students don't learn about opportunities to get credit until after enrolling.

*"Everything in the military portals for trying to find any information is **buried between six different layers, and no one really knows how to do it.**"*

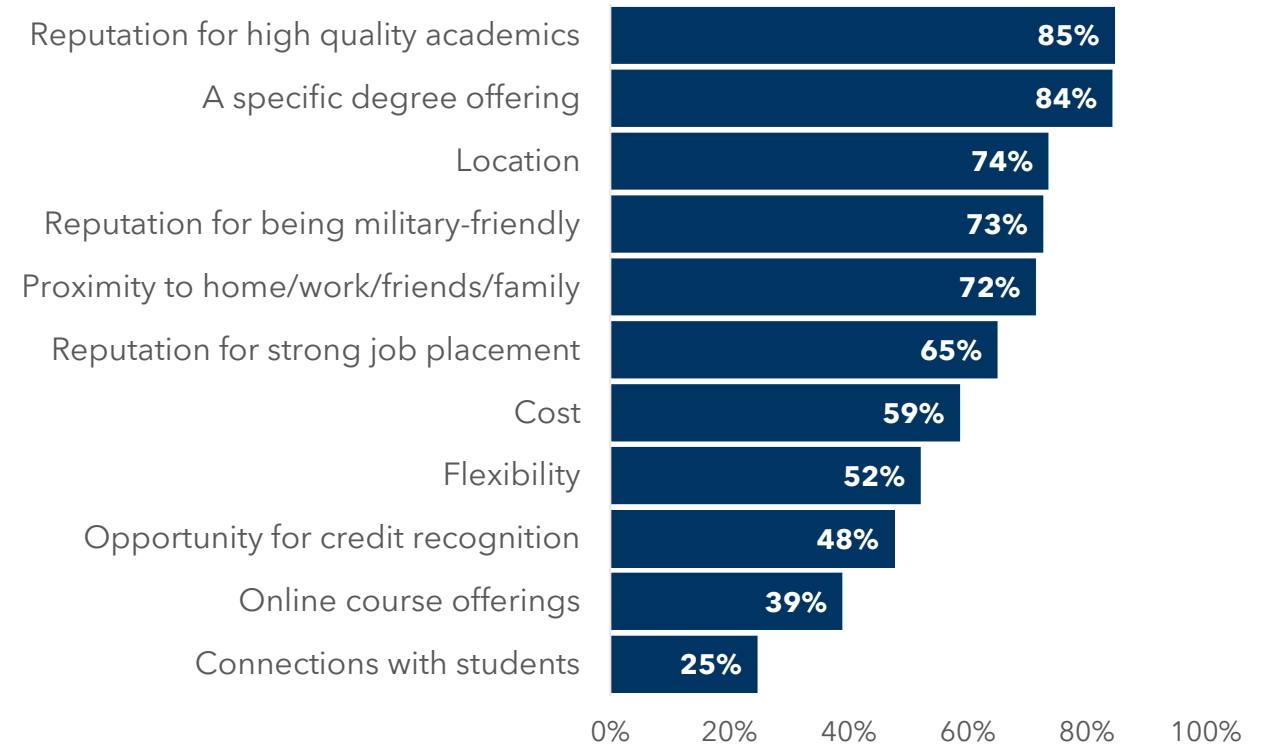
*"**They also told me that I would never find a job and that I should just stay.** That's what they actually told me."*

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Although the option to get credit for military learning factored into choosing which college to attend, other factors mattered more

Most respondents cited academic reputation, specific degree program offerings, and location as the top factors in their decision about which college to attend.

Choice factors



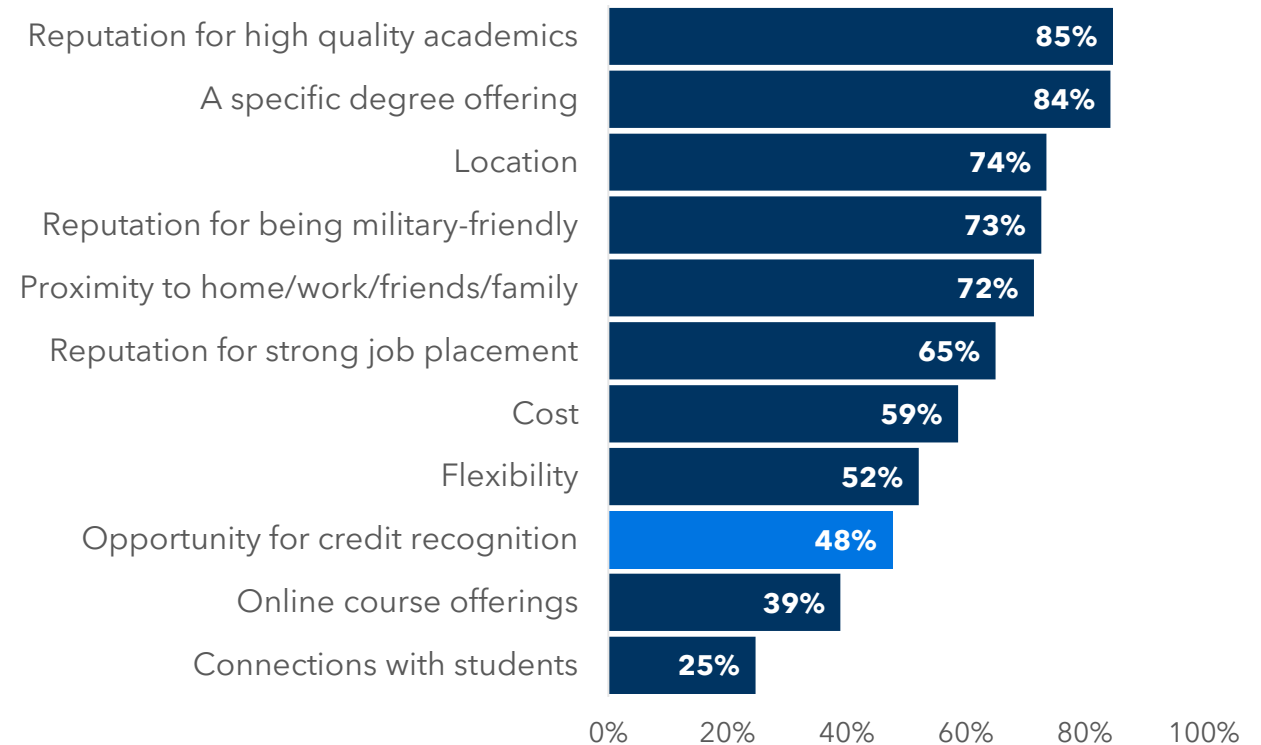
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Considering opportunities for getting credit for military learning when choosing a college may be more important

Just under half of respondents considered the opportunity to get credit for military learning in their decision.

When asked if they had any advice for veterans considering college, though, many recommended factoring credit recognition options into the equation.

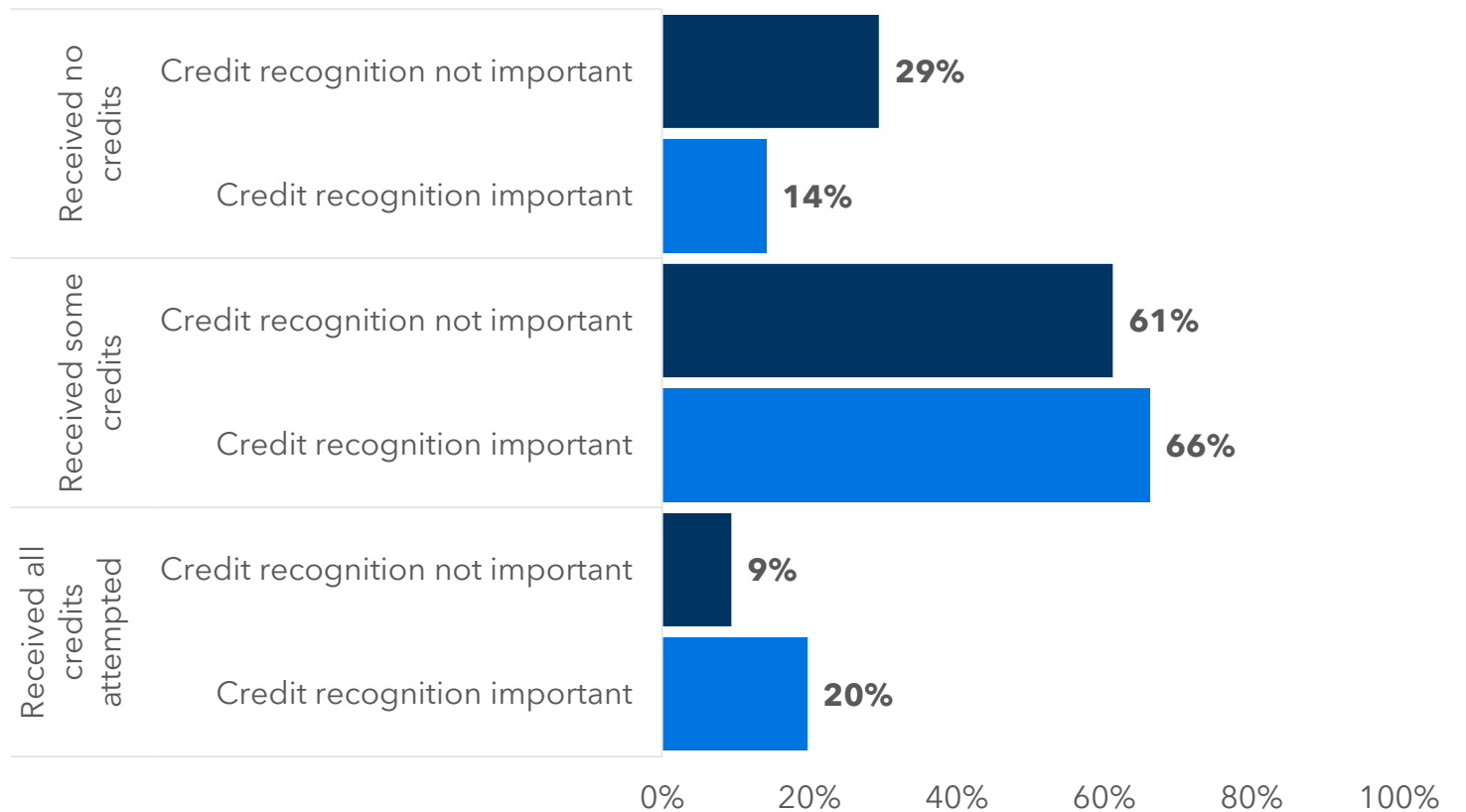
Choice factors



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Considering opportunities for getting credit for military learning when choosing a college may be more important

And those who said that opportunities for getting credit for their military training was somewhat or very important received more of the credits they attempted to get.

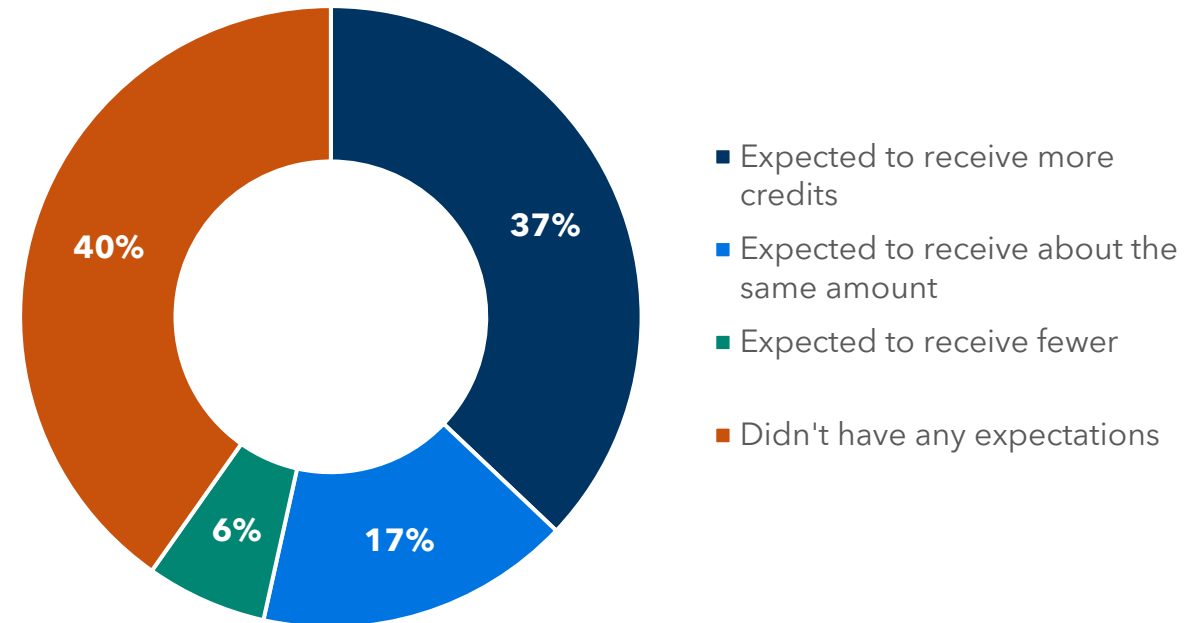


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Experiences with the process of getting credit for military learning varied widely, within and across colleges

Not everyone had strong expectations about getting credit recognized – but among those who did, their expectations were largely not met.

Expectations about Getting Credit



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Experiences with the process of getting credit for military learning varied widely, within and across colleges

Academic program or department requirements led to differences in experiences with getting credit.

“Especially for engineering schools, you have to take Calculus 1, 2, 3, Diff Eq, Linear and then you have to take material science... You try to take these because some are prerequisites for another. So, you try to take these at a certain time so everything checks out.”

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Experiences with the process of getting credit for military learning varied widely, within and across colleges

Respondents' experiences differed substantially across different institutions.

*"I'm jealous of you guys. **I couldn't [have] had any more different of an experience at community college.** I emailed my JST to them before our counseling meeting, they told me nothing transfers, then they had a meeting with me. Community college was so weird, they planned out my thing, only 12 units a semester. Understandable, but with the G.I. Bill it doesn't work. You can't take 12 units a semester. You're not even going to get your associate's [degree] by the time the G.I. Bill's over."*

*"Check the college you are looking at to see what they will accept. The first college I looked at would only accept my basic training credits and not my AIT. The college I decided to go to accepted everything. **Do comparisons. You earned those credits, make them count!**"*

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Experiences with the process of getting credit for military learning varied widely, within and across colleges

And different states have policies that can dictate how credits are recognized.

***“Texas has the Hazlewood Act.** The Hazlewood Act basically guarantees that any service you've done, and any bit of knowledge that you have from the service, they will accept your credits, essentially.”*

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And advisors who are knowledgeable about the military were strong supporters for respondents

Respondents who had access to a dedicated veteran advisor or office described a fluid, easy process, while those without access described more negative experiences.

*"I again, **feel like I got so lucky, because my school is so veteran friendly.**"*

*"I was very blessed. **I had an incredibly knowledgeable, motivated, and enthusiastic veteran's representative** at my first university."*

*"I emailed my JST to them before our counseling meeting, **they told me nothing transfers**, then they had a meeting with me. **There [were] no veteran specific people to talk to** ... The counselor just told me here's the 12 units. He also told me to take math classes I never needed to take, that I tested out of."*

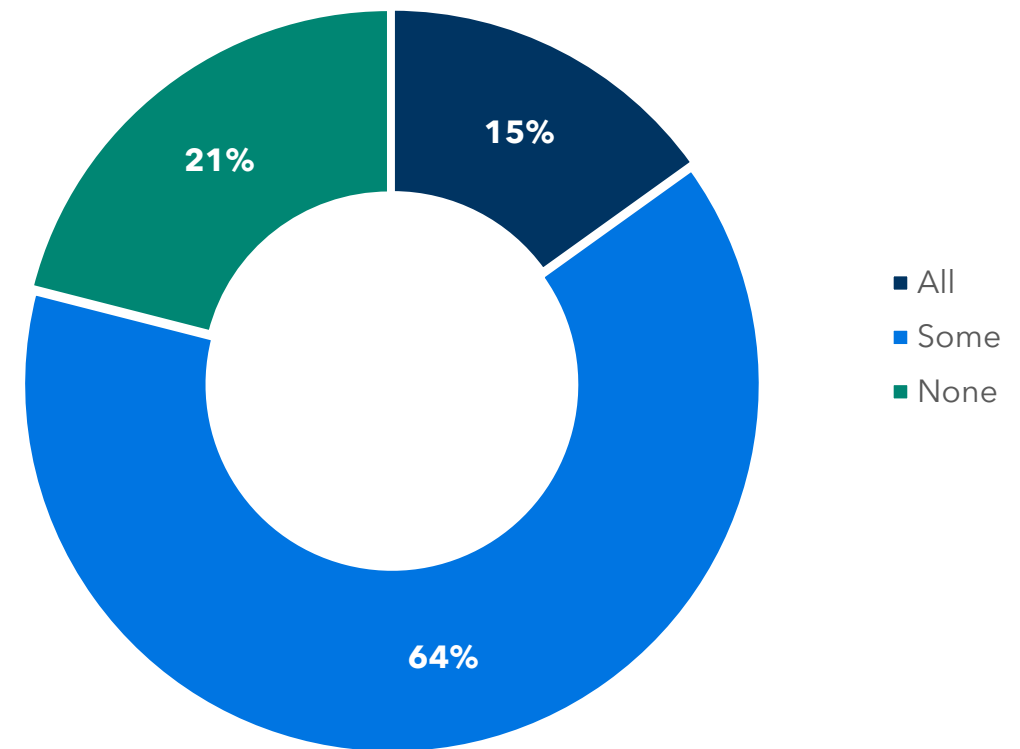
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It was common for respondents to receive at least some credit, but it wasn't always the credit that was most useful for their program or major

69% of respondents attempted to get credit for their military training.

Of those, most respondents got at least some credits recognized.

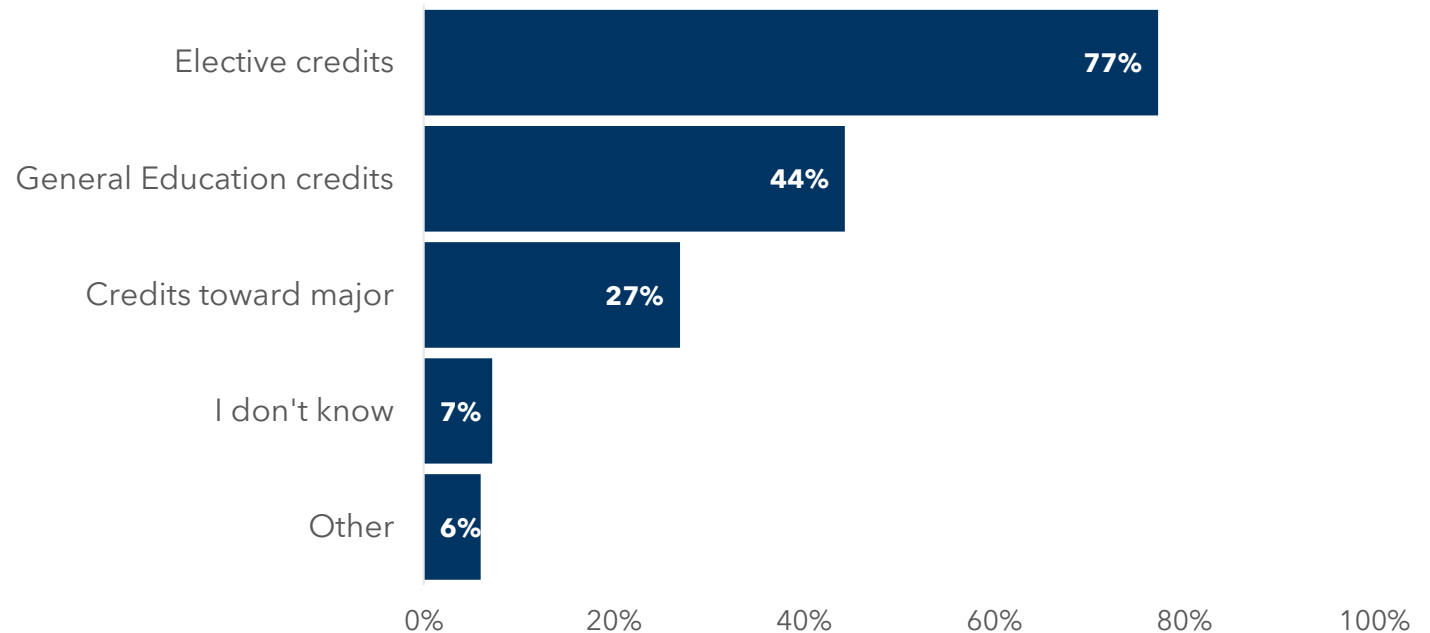
Credits received for military training



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It was common for respondents to receive at least some credit, but it wasn't always the credit that was most useful for their program or major

Type of Credits Received



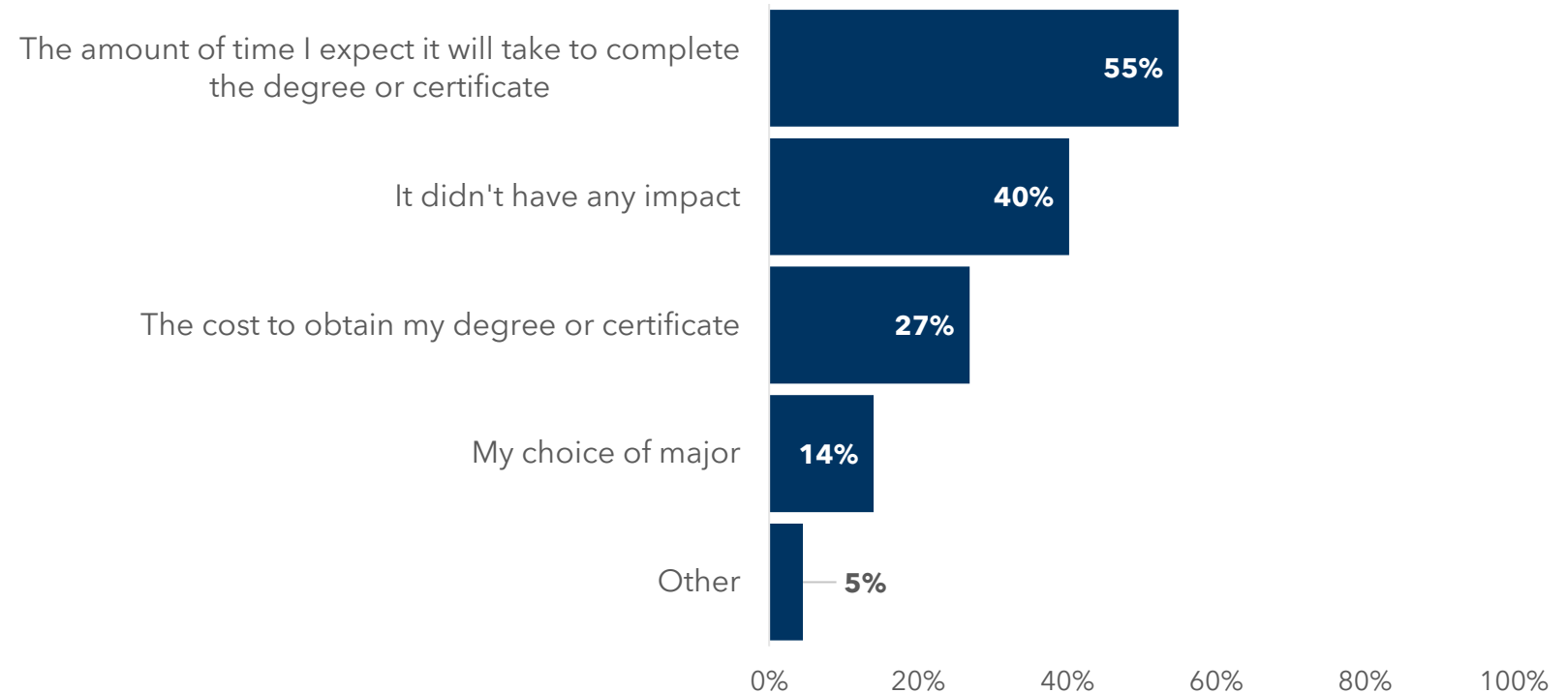
Most of these credits, though, were for general education or elective credit.

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Getting credits recognized (or not) had an impact on time required to complete a degree program

More than half of respondents said that getting credit (or not) for their military training affected the amount of time they expected it would take to complete their program.

Impact of Credit Recognition on Academics



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Getting credits recognized (or not) had an impact on time required to complete a degree program

The impact of getting credits on the amount of time needed to complete a program was both positive and negative.

*“The positive experience that I've had is that I received 50 college credits from my JST, and with my major, it requires 96 credits of my major requirements. Basically, **that cut off a whole year of time for my 124 credits to graduate.**”*

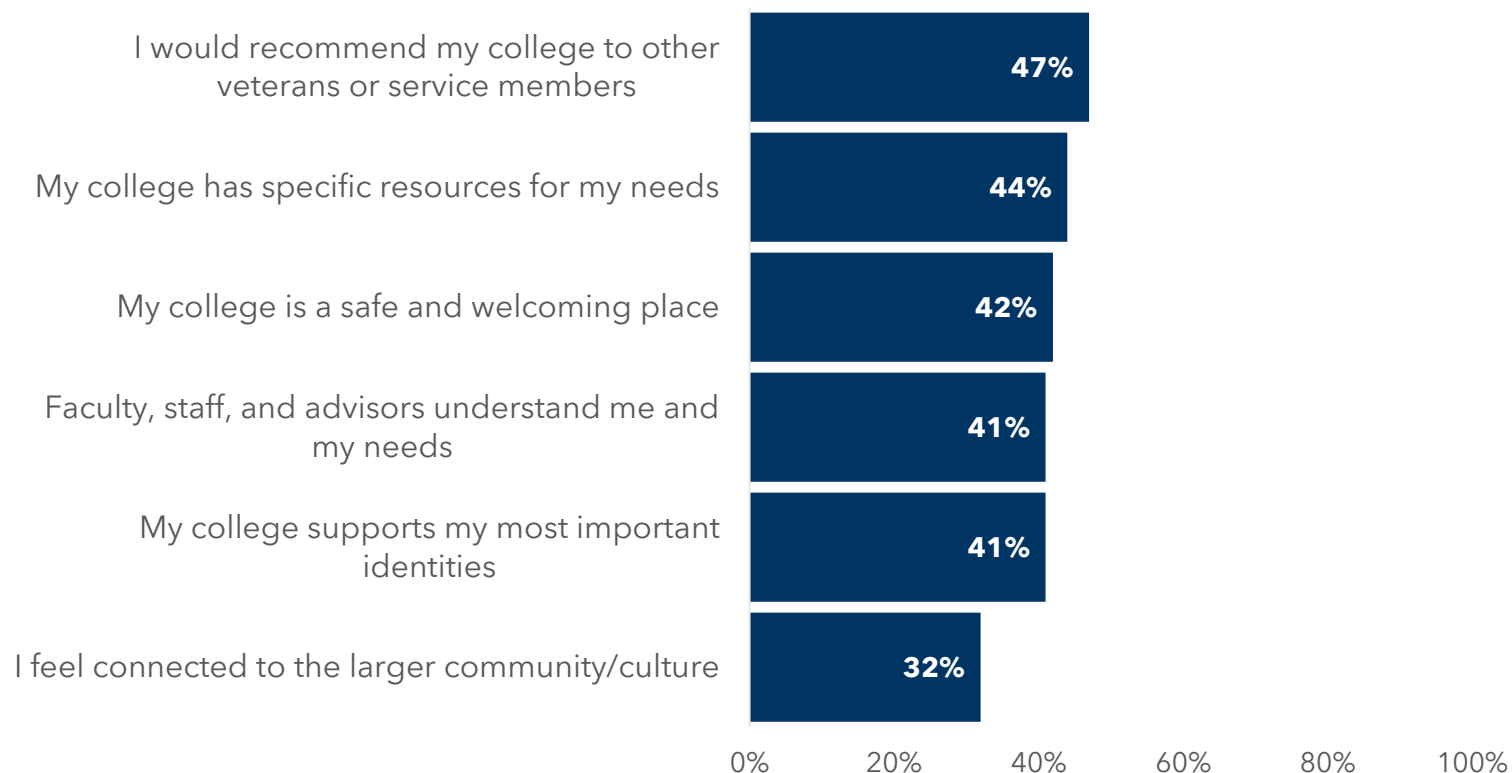
*“Now **I need to look into taking summer school classes, just to try and knock out these gen eds that weren't covered.** It really has ... I take regularly, over 18 semester hours. My regular course load is between 19 and 21 semester hours. I'm still having to take summer classes in order to get gen eds in.”*

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The experience of getting credits (or not) affected how respondents perceived their campus environment

Extent to which experience with getting credit affected perceptions of campus

When asked whether their experience getting credit for military training affected how they perceived different aspects of their campus environment, nearly half said that it affected whether they would recommend the college to other veterans or service members.



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The experience of getting credits (or not) affected how respondents perceived their campus environment

Not getting the credits they expected to receive also led to a feelings of frustration and a perception that the college did not care about students.

*"I think, mostly, just psychologically, **I was at one point ready to throw in the towel because I do feel like there was a lot of [credits] that could have been recognized,** and so I didn't have to do redundant things with 18 year olds that were going through it for the first time."*

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But when it comes to perceptions of campus environment – and belonging – other factors also were influential

Respondents who had positive perceptions of the campus environment and felt more of a “sense of belonging” shared that supportive campuses, connecting with the community (both veteran and non-veteran), and advocating for themselves were key supports.

*“So **I just started getting extra involved** (...) I started going to football games, basketball games, travel with the football and basketball team to all their games. **I had to go out of my way to find that though.**”*

*Well, I've been wanting to go back to school for such a long time that **I was very driven**. When I got here, **I got involved with research and student organizations my first semester**. I've been doing that for the last two and a half years. Now, I'm actually the President of the Student Veterans Club at [Institution] as well.*

*“When you get out of service, even if you wanted or not to be identified as a veteran, **you still have somewhere to go with people with very similar experiences**. At least they understand where you come from and what you've done. It's something that maybe is hard to find sometimes. Even with people with similar experiences as veterans do, maybe they don't want to talk about it. **Just being in the same room can be really nice.**”*

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The experiences of the veterans who participated in this study point to several things institutions can do to support student veterans

- Leverage student veterans' experiences and strengths
- Educate non-veteran students, faculty, and staff about inclusive practices related to student veterans
- Support student veterans' transition to campus by fostering connections with campus organizations, and supporting veterans' organizations on campus

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What challenges have you faced in supporting veterans getting credit recognized?

Which pieces of information do you think would be most helpful for institutions and those working directly with student veterans?

Do you have any suggestions for future research directions? What else is important to explore?

What questions do you have for us?

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WE'D LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU!

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<https://www.air.org/project/informing-improved-recognition-military-learning>

THANK YOU

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