Undergraduate Student Veterans at Ivy League and Ivy+ Colleges and Universities

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Executive Summary

Introduction & Research Question

The client, Service to School (S2S), remains interested in understanding the experiences and outcomes of undergraduate student veterans who have matriculated into Ivy League and Ivy+ colleges and universities. Consequently, the following research question was asked along with several subsidiary questions.

Research Question:

What policies should Service to School (S2S) adopt in order to provide better support to undergraduate student veterans at Ivy League and Ivy+ colleges and universities?

Subsidiary Questions:

What challenges do undergraduate student veterans experience while enrolled in Ivy League and Ivy+ institutions?

What factors are contributing to the challenges experienced by undergraduate student veterans who attend Ivy League and Ivy+ institutions?

After consultation with the client, university administrators, key leaders from other veteran services organizations, current and former undergraduate student veterans, and other stakeholders, this project was designed to capture the lived experiences of current undergraduate student veterans to present tangible policy solutions to the client and pave the way for future cohorts of student veterans.

Methodology of Analysis

This initial subsidiary research question was answered through the use of qualitative survey research. The survey asked a total of 17 questions and received 44 individual responses from undergraduate student veterans enrolled at eight different universities: Brown University, Cornell University, Dartmouth College, Harvard, Princeton University, Stanford University, the University of Pennsylvania, and the College of William & Mary. The case study methodology was utilized to answer the second subsidiary research question. The case studies were used to supplement the analysis portion of this paper, as many of the responses had thematic similarities to issues discovered in the survey findings.

Findings & Analysis

The survey was sent out during the last week of January and the responses were received over the duration of two weeks. 44 individuals responded to the survey, providing answers to questions that were broken into three distinct sections: demographics, academic preparation, and school-specific. The responses included answers to several Likert-scale questions as well as multiple short essay questions which allowed participants to elaborate on their responses with no

specified limit to the answers. The case study portion was completed by three student veteran participants from Brown University, Princeton University, and the University of Pennsylvania.

Key findings include the following:

- This population of undergraduate student veterans at these schools generally served in the military for 4-8 years and represent all five branches of service
- All had some level of college-level coursework prior to enrolling at their current schools, many with coursework at community colleges and other four-year colleges and universities
- A majority of respondents expressed that they felt prepared to succeed upon arrival to their current schools as a result of their preparatory work
- Half of respondents used an external organization such as S2S for support prior to enrolling at their current school
- The population listed that academic rigor, school reputation, and financial support were the three most significant factors behind their choice of school in the admissions process
- A majority of respondents listed academics and relating with peers as the two biggest challenges they face as student at their current schools

Conclusion & Policy Recommendations

While this project was able to successfully reveal the lived experiences and challenges of undergraduate student veterans at Ivy League and Ivy+ schools, there is still much to be learned about this population. Future research questions have been identified throughout the findings and analysis section and warrant greater discussion. What can be concluded is that undergraduate student veterans take the necessary steps to prepare for and do well at the most elite schools in the nation. Simultaneously, these veterans struggle to relate to their peers and experience institutional challenges that continue to remain unsolved and unaddressed.

Based on these findings, the following section includes policy recommendations that S2S might consider adopting in the future to better support undergraduate student veterans.

- *Service to School should either acquire or officially partner with the Warrior-Scholar Project.*

- *Service to School should seek to establish partnerships with strong community colleges as a pathway for veterans to become students at Ivy League and Ivy+ schools.*

- *Service to School should provide prospective undergraduate student veterans with school-specific "long-term" information prior to the final school choice decision.*

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I. Research Question

What policies should Service to School (S2S) adopt in order to provide better support to undergraduate student veterans at Ivy League and Ivy+ colleges and universities?

Subsidiary Questions

A. What challenges do undergraduate student veterans experience while enrolled in Ivy League and Ivy+ institutions?
B. What factors are contributing to the challenges experienced by undergraduate student veterans who attend Ivy League and Ivy+ institutions?

Introduction

A Personal Anecdote

Nearly six years ago, a young enlisted Marine returned home to Camp Lejeune, NC from a successful seven-month long combat deployment. As a part of what was supposed to be the last Marine infantry battalion in Afghanistan, he felt accomplished and proud. At only 22 years old, he had already completed two deployments, conducted hundreds of training exercises, and traveled all over the globe. He decided during the Afghanistan deployment that he wanted to transition out of the Marine Corps and scheduled his departure from active duty to occur a few weeks after arriving home. Smart, independent, and motivated, he had an array of experiences that most people only hear about in stories with a world of opportunities at his fingertips. Tragically, Adrien took his own life only a matter of weeks after we returned home. Those closest to Adrien later expressed that beyond the excitement he felt about starting his new life was a pending sense of dread that he wouldn't find a place to thrive outside of the Marine Corps. For many reasons, I think of Adrien often. This project has been one both of professional interest and deep personal conviction.

From Service, to School

Unfortunately, there are many stories like the one told above. There are even more stories of young men and women who transition out of the service without mentorship, guidance, or purposeful direction on their next steps. Some of these veterans aspire to use their education benefits to resume – or in many cases to start – their academic journeys in higher education. To a large extent, the post-9/11 generation of student veterans has successfully made the leap from uniform to the classroom. However, great disparities still exist in the quality of education pursued by student veterans. On one end of the spectrum, certain for-profit colleges prey on transitioning veterans with the promise of a providing a degree through easy, online learning. On the other end, some of the most elite schools in the country resist the notion of educating non-traditional students, such as undergraduate student veterans, as evidenced by information presented later on in this paper. This project was initiated to explore the student veterans who decided to take a path that few of their peers chose. That is those veterans who applied for admission and are currently studying at some of the most selective and premier institutions of higher education in the world.

More specifically, the intent of this project was to understand the lived experiences of these undergraduate student veterans so that others in their peer group could follow in their paths one day. As the paper will go on to discuss, this cohort of remarkable student veterans is serving as somewhat of a vanguard for their peers, as the population of undergraduate student veterans at these schools is quite limited. Further, there is little that is currently written on the population, which exaggerates the issue of visibility to other veterans.

The paper includes a background on the subject and provides a brief survey of the existing landscape surrounding the issue with a discussion of the relevant literature. Following the landscape analysis and literature review, the paper discusses the methodology behind the data collection explains the processes that were used for the subsequent analysis. The findings and analysis sections include a thorough review of the data collected and discusses the critical observations. Lastly, the paper includes several policy recommendations for the client to consider.

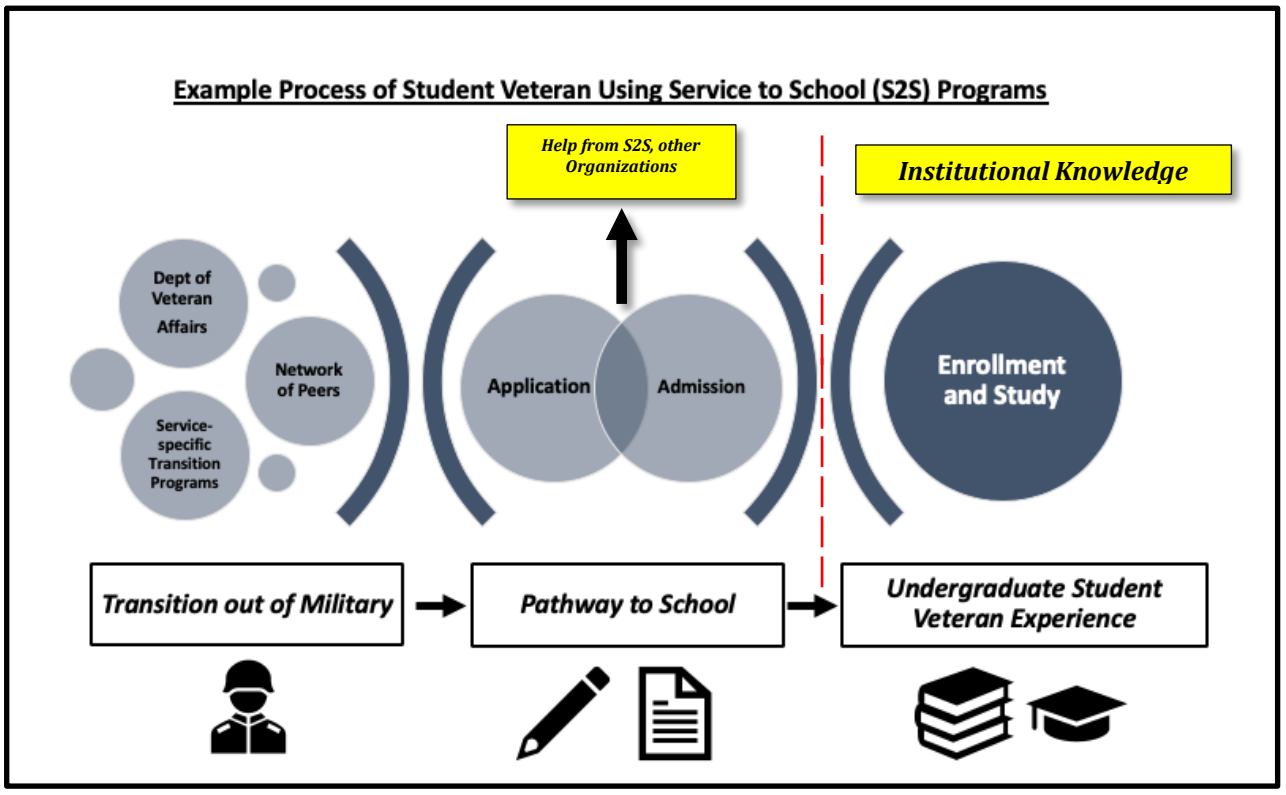
Background

The client, Service to School (S2S), is interested in understanding the experiences and outcomes of veterans who have matriculated into Ivy League and Ivy+ colleges and universities. The term Ivy League refers to eight universities: Brown, Columbia, Cornell, Dartmouth, Harvard, Pennsylvania, Princeton, and Yale.[1] Ivy+ is a less formal term that is used to refer to other universities consistently ranked as top national institutions of higher learning, such as the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Stanford, Duke, and the University of Chicago. These terms will be used in conjunction together for the remainder of this paper to represent a larger population of schools.

The client, Service to School (S2S), is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization founded by several veterans with the mission of providing free college admissions counseling to transitioning veterans seeking to earn a degree.[2] The organization uses a peer-to-peer network to match volunteer mentors with transitioning veterans, and provides assistance with test preparation, resume and essay writing, and interpersonal skills such as interviewing and networking.[3] S2S works with several other prominent veteran service organizations, and lists the total number of volunteer mentors at over 500 individuals.[4] S2S exists to help transitioning veterans gain admission into the best schools possible.

While S2S has successfully mentored thousands of transitioning veterans, the organization has not been able to formally review the experiences and outcomes of their clients upon enrollment as students at their respective universities. During conversations over the last several months, the Chief Executive and Chief Operating Officers both expressed interest in better understanding how S2S can support undergraduate student veterans who attend Ivy League and Ivy+ colleges and universities. Ivy League and Ivy+ institutions are schools that S2S often helps veterans to gain admission. The research question and associated subsidiary questions reflect changes in the scope of this project since the initial proposal.

A visible gap in the literature and work done by veteran service organizations with respect to student veterans at Ivy League and Ivy+ institutions is the student veteran perspective. This project seeks to illuminate these perspectives to improve the process of helping veterans transition from service to the best schools in the nation. The graph below is a rendition of the path veterans take during transition. Note that there are structures and organizations in place during the initial two phases. However, it is still largely unknown what the lived experiences of student veterans at these schools are like and what support structures are in place upon their arrival to campus.



Source: Author

Through the subsidiary questions, the intent of this project is to provide tangible policy recommendations for S2S to adopt in order to better support undergraduate student veterans. The final section of this paper will include both policy recommendations and future research opportunities to explore areas not addressed by this project.

II. Literature Review/Landscape Analysis

Landscape Analysis

Many veterans choose to attend some form of an institution of higher learning upon their transition from service in the military. Data from the Veterans Benefit Administration found that in 2017, over 946,000 veterans used education benefits provided by the Department of Veteran Affairs in pursuit of a degree.[5] Formerly enlisted veterans – service members who do not need a

college degree prior to serving – represent the vast majority of veterans seeking education after service.[6]

The Post-9/11 generation of student veterans perform well academically. Research from the Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF) presents the finding that student veterans earn higher a GPA than non-student veterans and go on to earn more than their non-veteran peers following graduation.[7]

While formerly enlisted student veterans can be found on many campuses across the country, there are a few select institutions where this population is nearly non-existent. 52,800 is the total number of undergraduate students currently enrolled at Dartmouth, Stanford, Brown, the University of Pennsylvania, Princeton, Yale, Harvard, and Duke.[8] Of that total, only 129 – less than a quarter of one percent – of those students are veterans.[9] The distribution of veterans between these schools is uneven, suggesting a more pronounced problem at specific universities. To illustrate this point, there is only one undergraduate student veteran amongst the 6,694 students currently enrolled at Duke University.[10]

Bunker Hill Community College professor, Wick Sloane, publishes an annual column in the periodical *Inside Higher Ed* where he displays the total numbers of undergraduate student veterans enrolled at highly selective colleges and discusses the larger landscape of veterans at elite schools.[11] In the most recent column published in November, 2019, Sloane displays information from 36 highly selective colleges throughout the nation, covering a majority of the schools targeted for this project. Sloane estimates that approximately 885 undergraduate student veterans are enrolled at these schools – it should be noted that a handful of these institutions reportedly did not return his calls and several others reported less than 10 student veterans on campus.[12]

The topic of veterans' education is not a new one, yet significant gaps remain in the research, specifically with respect to Post-9/11 veterans. The majority of the research has come from veteran service organizations, which will be discussed in the following portion of this paper.

Literature Review

The Institute for Veterans and Military Families publishes frequent information on student veterans. In a June 2017 publication titled, *Student Veterans: A Valuable Asset to Higher Education,* IVMF lists specific data which supports the notion of student veterans adding value in multiple dimensions to institutions of higher education.[13] To articulate the value of student veterans, IVMF shows veterans bring greater diversity as a population through their non-traditional backgrounds as veterans are more likely to be older, be married, have children, have a disability, work full- or part-time, and be a first-generation student. Student veterans earn higher GPAs when compared to traditional students, with student veterans averaging a GPA of 3.34 and the average non-veteran student earning a GPA of 2.94. IVMF also found Post-9/11 veterans with bachelor's degrees earn approximately $71,399 following graduation compared to the non-veteran average of $67,232. Finally, student veterans are less likely to be unemployed after earning a degree.[14]

Student Veterans of America (SVA) also conducts frequent research on student veterans. Two specific publications are useful to this project. The initial publication, known as the Million Records Project (MRP), was a public-private partnership between SVA, the VA, and the National Student Clearinghouse which examined the academic outcomes for one million student veterans.[15] The MRP used real-time data, made possible by the VA, and remains one of the largest research undertakings in the subject of student veterans. The key findings of the MRP showed veterans were most likely to attend public institutions and that nearly 90% of student veterans at the time were earning greater than as Associates degree.[16] Using information from the MRP, SVA published the National Veteran Education Success Tracker (NVEST) several years later, which details the success of Post-9/11 student veterans and makes a case for the return on investment for the Post-9/11 GI Bill. [17] The two documents confirm similar findings from IVMF's work that Post-9/11 student veterans perform on average better than traditional non-veteran students and that the federal contribution toward veteran's education shows a high return on investment to both the individual veterans and the country as a whole. [18]

Most recently, Ithaka S+R published a report which explores the underrepresentation of veterans at Ivy+ institutions and why well-qualified veterans choose to go to less-competitive schools.[19] The authors describe a current phenomenon of "under-matching", where qualified veterans are self-selecting themselves out of the application process at highly selective schools; not applying, because of barriers to entry – such as lack of recruiting, adherence to traditional admissions process, and lack of transfer policies – which discourage veteran applications.[20] While some veterans have made the successful transition to highly selective schools, the numbers remain low and relatively static.[21] Recommendations from the report include better recruiting efforts from highly selective schools, a tailored admissions process for transitioning enlisted veterans, and enhanced collaboration across highly selective schools to share best practices.[22] The report also acknowledges the potential benefit of new research which explores existing veteran outcomes at highly selective schools, which is a gap this project is seeking to cover.

III. Data and Methods

A. *What challenges do undergraduate student veterans experience while enrolled in Ivy League and Ivy+ institutions?*

(Note: Appendix A of this paper includes the complete list of survey questions that was sent to the student veterans.)

This question was answered through the use of qualitative survey research. The premise of qualitative survey research is the measurement of the diversity of experiences within a select population.[23] The logic of the survey design was that the initial subsidiary research question would only be able to answer the larger research question if the data reflected the current experiences of individual veterans across multiple institutions. Consequently, it was imperative to employ a methodology that would provide such information. Further, there is a significant gap in the Post-9/11 student veteran literature with respect to undergraduate student veterans who

currently attend Ivy League and Ivy+ institutions. As was discussed earlier, a preponderance of the literature and research conducted on the Post-9/11 generation is focused on the larger population of veterans enrolled in associates, undergraduate, and graduate degree programs. By utilizing qualitative survey research, the collected results reflect specific challenges and individual experiences not yet measured by the formal literature.

Survey Population

A key strength of the qualitative survey research method is the ability to gather data from a representative population of participants. Specific to the initial subsidiary research question, this sample population was designed to consist of members from the Ivy League Veterans Council (ILVC). These students served as the primary participants who completed the survey. The ILVC is an advocacy-based organization consisting of current undergraduate student veterans who attend Brown University, Columbia University, Cornell University, Dartmouth College, Princeton University, University of Pennsylvania, Yale University, Stanford University, and several other institutions.[24] Council members include veterans from each branch of service with representation in academic fields that include economics and business, policy and law, sciences and mathematics, and technology and engineering.[25]

After months of introductions and conversations about this project, several chapter presidents from within the organization agreed to disseminate the survey to the larger population of student veterans on their specific campuses and to act as participants for this project. The finalized survey was sent out to the chapter leaders at the various schools in the ILVC during the last week of January. Nearly 90% of the total responses were received within a week of sending the survey. The original intent of the project, which was proposed during the construction of the methodology, was to receive completed surveys from approximately 40-50 students across 8-10 different schools. The survey received 44 individual responses from students enrolled at eight different universities: Brown University, Cornell University, Dartmouth College, Harvard, Princeton University, Stanford University, the University of Pennsylvania, and the College of William & Mary.

Using the open source date provided in Wick Sloane's annual column of undergraduate student veterans at highly selective schools it is possible to roughly extrapolate to what extent the surveyed individuals for this project represent the larger population. It should be noted that Sloane does not include numbers for the College of William & Mary. Using Sloane's information, he estimates that a total of 161 undergraduate student veterans are enrolled at Brown, Cornell, Dartmouth, Harvard, Princeton, Stanford, and Penn. The 43 respondents from each of these schools represents nearly 27% of the total population of undergraduate student veterans. Princeton had the highest response rate with 50% of its undergraduate student veteran population responding to the survey. Brown had the second highest response rate with over 47%, followed by Stanford with nearly 35% of its student veteran population represented in the survey. A larger discussion on the demographics of the survey respondents is included in the *Findings and Analysis* portion of this paper.

The survey consisted of questions seeking to understand the challenges that undergraduate student veterans experience at Ivy League and Ivy+ institutions across the

country. The survey gathered demographic information such as college attended, years of military experience, and other questions to better understand the population. A series of Likert-scale questions was also included to gauge various metrics such as important factors that led to application and matriculation at their school and the faculty/staff/student perception of veterans at their school. The survey also included short answer questions that prompted the veterans to contribute their personal experiences as students at these institutions. The survey was written using a combination of both open-ended (inductive) and pre-structured (deductive) questions.[26] The survey was created through the software platform, Qualtrics, which allowed for a simple link to be sent to each of the students and prepared real-time analytics on the responses. Lastly, at the suggestion of advisor of this project, the survey was disseminated to several of my own peers who are student veterans. This perspective from other veterans who have spent their professional careers leading young enlisted servicemembers proved to be immensely helpful in the determination of which questions were included in the survey.

The survey can be thought of as having four distinct categories: demographics, academic preparation, school specific, and lived experiences. The **demographics** section asked the following questions:

1. What school do you currently attend?
2. Which branch of the military did you serve in?
3. How many total years did you serve before leaving the military?

The following section, **academic preparation**, included the following questions:

4. What was your age when you started studying at your current school?
5. What was your highest level of education prior to enrolling at your current school?
6. Did you complete college-level coursework prior to enrolling at your current school?
    a. *If students selected "Yes", then this follow-up question was presented*:
    7. Where did you complete your course work and for how long? (Example answer: *Yes, I completed two years at Piedmont Community College before transferring to my current school.*)
8. What was your academic status upon acceptance to your current school? (Example answers: *Transfer student, freshman/first-year, continuing studies, etc.*)
9. Prior to enrolling at your current school, did you receive support from any organizations such as *Service to School*, *Warrior-Scholar Project*, or the *Posse Foundation*?
    a. *If students selected "Yes", then this follow-up question was presented*:
    10. Which organization did you work with? Please briefly describe your experience.
11. What kind of academic preparation did you do prior to enrolling at your current school? Did you feel prepared to succeed in the classroom?

The intent of the academic preparation section was to better understand the various paths that each of the survey respondents took prior to enrolling at their current school. The "age" and the "highest level of education" questions were included to identify if the median age of students at the schools represented in the sample population differed from that of other students that use S2S resources. The pre-enrollment college-level coursework questions were included to understand both if these students had relatively significant academic backgrounds when

compared to other undergraduate student veterans at non-Ivy/Ivy+ schools and what types of institutions these students attended. Relevant to S2S, the question regarding support from external organizations such as S2S, WPS, and others was included to determine what proportion of students used these resources to prepare for school and if so, to elicit personal feedback from the experience. This also was included to shed light on the knowledge gap expressed by S2S leadership regarding student-based feedback on VSO support following matriculation at Ivy and Ivy+ schools. The final question regarding academic preparation and success in the classroom follows along in this logic, as little research exists regarding the student-based perspective of preparedness prior to enrolling.

The subsequent section, **school specific** questions, asked the following:

12. Please rate the importance of the following factors on your decision to attend your current school.
    a. Financial Support
    b. Strength of Academics
    c. School Reputation
    d. Post-Graduation Career Outcomes
    e. Support for Veterans
    f. Family/Personal Reasons
13. Please rate the level of support that you received (from faculty, staff, peer students) upon your arrival as a student at your current school.
14. Please describe how you feel that you are perceived as a student veteran at your school.
    a. Treated with respect by faculty/staff
    b. Treated with respect by students
    c. Military experience valued by faculty/staff
    d. Military experience valued by students
    e. Opinions in class valued by faculty/staff
    f. Opinions in class valued by students

The intent of the school specific section relates directly to the initial subsidiary research question as the individual questions reveal both "before" and "after" enrollment experiences at the respective schools. This section also serves as a helpful tool for understanding the second subsidiary research question. The question regarding the factors that influenced how students chose their school was structured so that respondents could choose between "not important, somewhat less important, neutral, somewhat more important, very important" for each of the six factors. The final survey results display both individual and population totals across the six factors. The overall question and the six factors were derived from personal notes after several months of informal phone conversations with student veterans. The question regarding support from faculty, staff, and peer students allowed respondents to choose between "no support, very little support, neutral, some support, significant support". Similar to the preceding question, this was chosen due to the importance of understanding the on-the-ground experience of student veterans upon arrival at their respective schools. The following question about student veteran perception allowed respondents to choose between "strongly disagree, somewhat disagree, neutral, somewhat agree, strongly agree". The intent of this question was to probe beyond the structural support aspects and learn about student veteran experiences inside the classroom. This

is arguably one of the most important pieces of information to provide a prospective student veteran during the school selection process.

The final section, **lived experiences**, included the following questions:

15. Please describe the biggest challenges that you have experienced as a student at your current school.
16. In your own words, please describe your *overall* experience as a student veteran at your current school.
17. How would you describe the overall student veteran experience at your school to a prospective student veteran? Would you recommend your school to other veterans?

This section applies to both subsidiary research questions and the intent of the overall project. All three questions were structured as short answers with an unlimited word count for respondents to answer. The first question encouraged respondents to tell their personal stories, whereas the following questions speak to the students' impressions of overall experience for student veterans at their respective schools.

The analysis of this information, which is included in the *Findings and Analysis* portion of this paper, follows the thematic analysis process as explained by Gibson and Brown.[27] The thematic analysis process uses the survey information to examine the commonalities, differences, and relationships that exist within the data.[28]

B. *What factors are contributing to the challenges experienced by undergraduate student veterans who attend Ivy League and Ivy+ institutions?*

Case Study Interview Questions

Question 1: Please describe **your individual path** to becoming a student at your current school. This can include why/how you left the service, your application and admissions process, and arrival at school.

Question 2: In your opinion, what are the **three biggest challenges** facing undergraduate student veterans who wish to/currently attend Ivy and Ivy+ schools?

Question 3: If resources were not an issue and you could make any improvements to how your school deals with undergraduate student veterans, what would you change?

The case study methodology was utilized to answer the second subsidiary research question. This subsidiary research question was asked to understand the contributing factors behind the various challenges that students experience and provide deeper context beyond the experiences revealed in the first subsidiary question. The intent of the second subsidiary question was to provide more a different perspective than the findings of the first question, and ultimately lead to a more complete answer of the primary research question. This step in the methodology occurred after the surveys were received.

The individual interviews came from individual members of the Ivy League Veterans Council who are current students at their respective institutions. The questions were designed to elicit answers which would illustrate their individual paths to admission and enrollment and explain the realities of being an undergraduate student veteran at Ivy and Ivy+ schools. Several individuals who are current students at Brown, Princeton, and the University of Pennsylvania agreed to participate in this portion of the study.

The case studies were used to supplement the analysis portion of this paper, as many of the responses had thematic similarities to issues discovered in the survey findings. These answers from the three students should be viewed as individual perspectives into their lived experiences as student veterans at Ivy and Ivy+ schools and seen as illustrative examples rather than authoritative perspectives. The responses from these students were thoughtful, detailed, and revealing. In the future, S2S should consider conducting these interviews with willing participants to better capture current on-the-ground conditions at specific schools. Each of the students were more than willing to participate and were eager to contribute to this study.

Synthesis of Data

Capturing the perspectives of student veterans was vital to answering the larger research question. The data collection followed a sequence: the survey responses and subsequent analysis were used to shape the case study interviews. The survey responses were later subjected to a thematic analysis to understand common trends in the information. Following this step, the case study interviews were included to provide a more detailed narrative about the specific school where the interviewees attend. Ultimately, the synthesis of data from both the surveys and interviews will point towards policy recommendations which reflect the experiences of current student veterans.

IV. Findings/Analysis

Survey Findings: Demographics Section

The survey was sent out during the last week of January and the responses were received over the duration of two weeks. A total of 44 complete responses were received from students at eight different schools. These schools include: Brown University, Cornell University, Dartmouth College, Harvard, Princeton University, Stanford University, the University of Pennsylvania, and the College of William & Mary. A breakdown of total respondents and their respective schools is included below.

Question 1

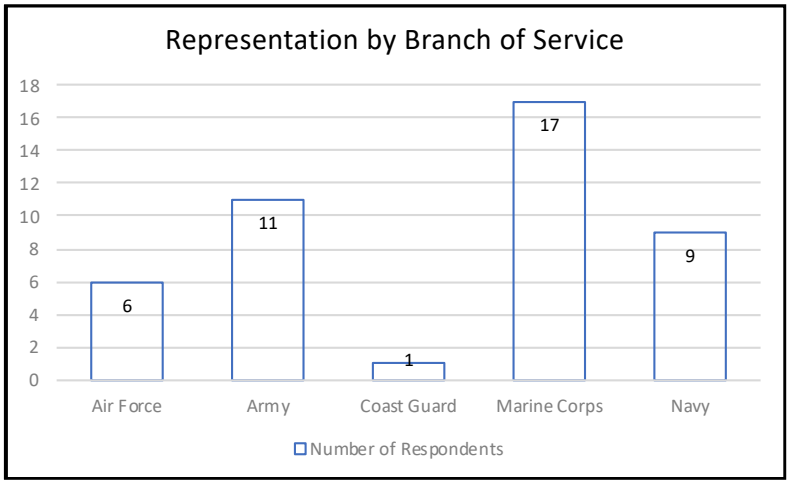
Name of School	Number of Respondents
Brown University	10
Cornell University	7
Dartmouth College	3
Harvard	1
Princeton University	9
Stanford University	9
University of Pennsylvania	4
William & Mary	1
Total	***44***

The respondents served in all five branches of the military. The most populous branch represented was the Marine Corps; the Coast Guard had lowest representation. Each of the schools with over five respondents had a relatively diverse group of representation across the services. Princeton had five responses from Marine Corps veterans with the remainder from three different branches, and Stanford had five responses from Army veterans with the rest from three other branches. The graph below depicts the total number of respondents categorized by their respective branches in the military.

Question 2

Military Branch	Number of Respondents
Air Force	6
Army	11
Coast Guard	1
Marine Corps	17
Navy	9
Total	***44***

Question 2

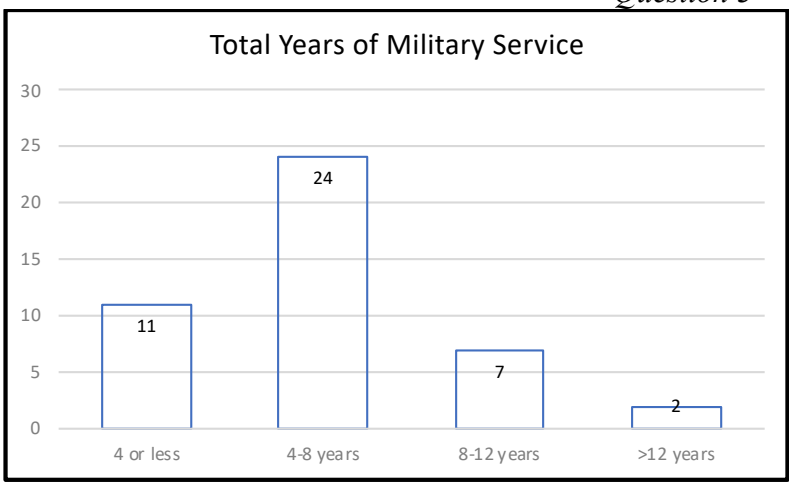


The final question in the demographics section, which asked the total number of years respondents served in the military, showed that a majority of respondents – over 50% - served between four and eight years. This distribution is more or less evenly reflected across the eight schools represented in the data set. Cornell and Stanford each had multiple respondents who served between eight and twelve years including one respondent with over twelve years of service.

Question 3

Total Years of Military Service	Number of Respondents
4 or less	11
4-8 years	24
8-12 years	7
>12 years	2
Total	***44***

Question 3



Survey Findings: Academic Preparation

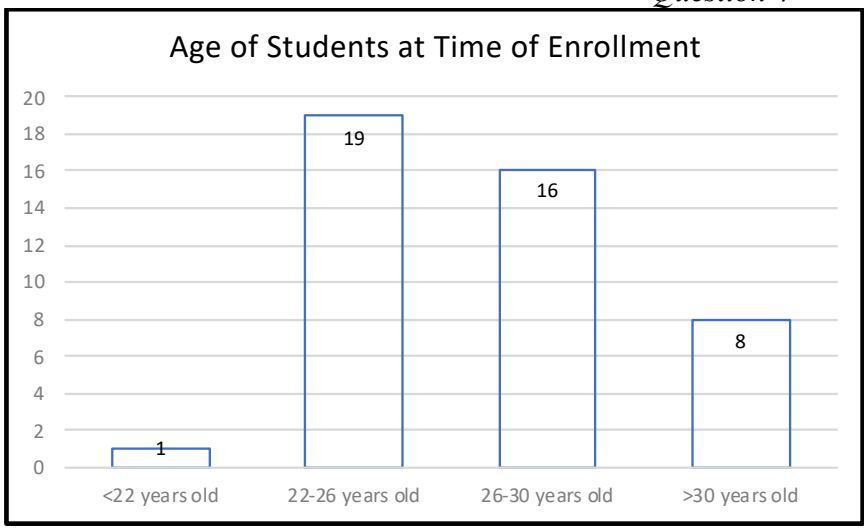
The first question in the academic preparation section follows along in the logic of the last section in the demographic section and asked survey respondents to list their age at time of enrollment at their current school. The findings, which shows a vast majority of respondents falling between 22 and 30 years old reflects the previous findings for total years of service. These data should look familiar to the information S2S has on file for the larger undergraduate student veteran population. As was seen with the total number of years served question, the distribution of data is relatively similar across each of the schools represented in the survey.

Brown, Dartmouth, Princeton, and Stanford had the highest number of older students of the group.

Question 4

Age of Respondents at Time of Enrollment	Number of Respondents
<22 years old	1
22-26 years old	19
26-30 years old	16
>30 years old	8
Total	***44***

Question 4

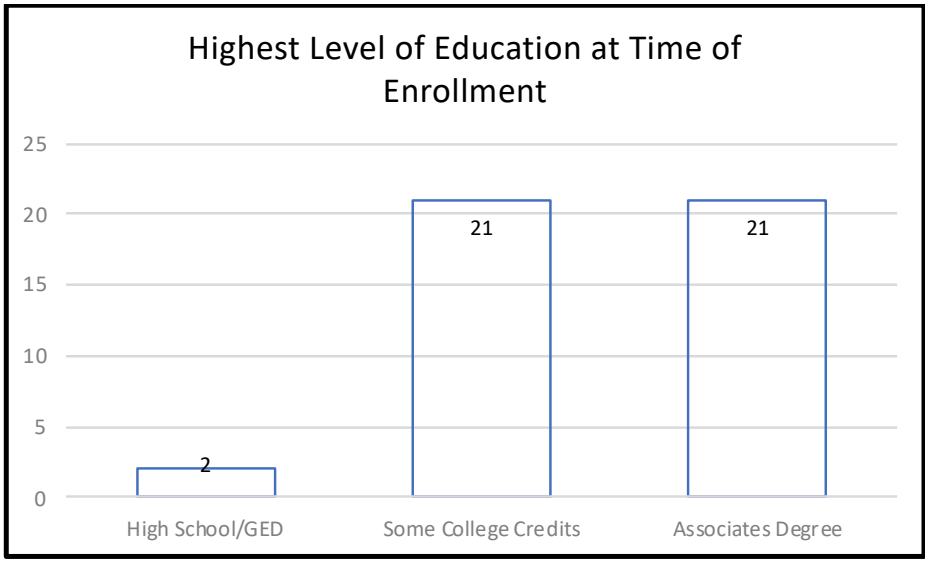


The following question in the academic preparation section inquired about the highest level of education of the respondents prior to enrolling at their current school. The answers available to select included: high school/GED, some college credits, associates degree. The results showed that two students enrolled at their current school only having a high school degree/GED, while the remaining 42 students were equally split between some college credits and having earned an associates degree. Similar to the data presented in the questions above, each of the eight schools represented display a fairly even split of students with their associates degree and students with some college credits. Cornell and Stanford were the sole institutions with students who only had earned a high school degree or GED prior to enrollment.

Question 5

Highest Level of Education at Time of Enrollment	Number of Respondents
High School/GED	2
Some College Credits	21
Associates Degree	21
Total	***44***

Question 5



100% of respondents answered "yes" to the question of having completed some amount of college-level coursework prior to enrolling at their current school. 20 of the respondents had coursework from a community college prior to enrolling at their current school, making that the most common answer within the sample population. The second largest group – 12 students – had been enrolled and completed coursework a traditional four-year college. Other answers included the following combinations: coursework at both a community college(s) and a four-year college, online coursework at a four-year college and on campus at a four-year college, college-level coursework through the military (Defense Language Institute, etc.), college-level coursework through the military and a four-year college, and college-level coursework through the military, a community college, and a four-year college.

The following question asked survey respondents what their academic status was upon enrollment at their current school. The answers that were received included the following: true first-year/freshman, first-year/freshman with "resumed undergraduate education" (RUE) status, second-year/sophomore transfer, and third-year/junior transfer. Some of the respondents

mentioned in their answers that while they were offered second-year and third-year status they elected to start as first-years at the time of enrollment.

The status of student veterans upon enrollment is an issue of major concern from the university perspective. For example, Duke University has two potential tracks for admission that undergraduate student veterans can pursue. One is to apply as a traditional first-year student and the other is to apply as transfer student. If a student veteran applies as a transfer student – approximately 50 students transfer each year – they may enroll as a second-year, but only if they have successfully completed a full year of college-level coursework.[29] If the student veteran applies as a first-year student, then that individual is subject to university-wide policies governing first-years. Specifically, the University dictates that all first-years must live on campus as a part of the "East Campus Experience" – this is described on the Student Affairs website as a part of the deliberate design to lay a foundation for all students during their time at Duke.[30] The precedent is not to deviate from this standard, however, veterans may apply for a waiver to be exempt from the policy.[31] It is unknown as to what conditions the University would consider to grant a waiver. This of course becomes an issue when the median age of undergraduate student veterans is taken into account. This will be discussed further in the *Analysis* portion of this section.

Just over half – 25 of 44 total – of the sample population responded by saying that they had received support from an external organization such as S2S, WSP, or the Posse Foundation prior to enrolling at their current school. 18 of those 25 students used programming from S2S prior to starting school, with a large majority responding favorably to their experience. For those students who had critiques, the most frequent answers mentioned the relationship with their mentor and expressed feeling that they had not been matched with an appropriate person. A vast majority of the 18 students expressed positive sentiments about using S2S, including one student who described the experience as "invaluable" and several others who mentioned that they currently serve as S2S mentors themselves. Of those 18 students, only 10 used S2S exclusively. The other eight used S2S alongside the WSP, enrolling in the multi-week seminars at schools such as Brown, Yale, and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. These eight student veterans who used both services largely had the most positive experiences using external organizations of the survey respondents and many said that they would recommend the programs to prospective student veterans. Three respondents reported having used the WSP exclusively, as well as three other respondents who enrolled in the Posse Foundation program. One student also reported having used both S2S and WSP in combination with the Leadership Scholar Program.

The final question in the academic preparation section inquired if the individual students felt adequately prepared to succeed in the classroom upon arrival and to explain what helped prepare them to begin taking classes. Only five of the 44 total respondents alluded to feeling unprepared upon enrollment at their current schools. These five cited a variety of reasons for this unpreparedness, including one WSP alum who felt that despite the helpfulness of the program that it wasn't sufficient. The others cited the lack of academic rigor at the four-year schools they had previously attended and that the military Transition Readiness Program was simply not enough. The other 39 students all answered that they felt prepared to succeed in the classroom due to their various methods of preparation.

The two most frequent themes that emerged from the responses cited previous coursework at community colleges followed by personal reading and their military experience. The 18 individuals who referenced their community college experiences expressed the strongest level of confidence in their preparation before starting school, with several students including comments about being honors students and having one-on-one help from their professors. There also were three students who cited their enrollment in the WSP as being very helpful in preparing them for the academic rigors of their school. One other theme that emerged across both groups of students was a sense of nervousness and apprehension about how challenging the academics would be at their schools.

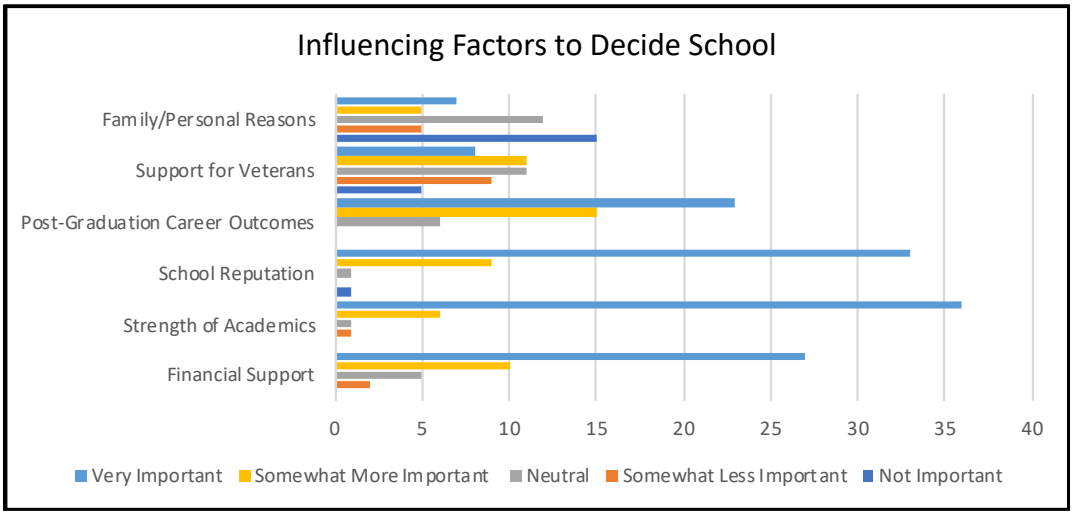
Survey Findings: School Specific

The initial question in the school specific section asked the respondents to identify the most important factors that led to the decision of what school they would attend. Answers to each of the six factors could either be "not important, somewhat less important, neutral, somewhat more important, very important". As the bar chart depicts below, school reputation, strength of academics, and financial support rank as the top three most important factors that influenced school choice for the sample population. When the responses for "somewhat more important" and "very important" are added together, 42 of 44 (>95%) total students selected both strength of academics and school reputation as the top two most important factors. While not one of the top two factors, financial support is a common theme found in responses to questions posed later on in the survey. On the other hand, post-graduation career outcomes, which also received a significant amount of responses in the "somewhat" or "very important" categories are not mentioned at all in the follow-on questions in the survey. This might be reflective of the fact that each of these students are still completing their degrees and might have generated different values had this survey been conducted 12 months upon graduation. Also, the responses for the factors of "support for veterans" and "family/personal reasons" are particularly relevant to understanding veterans' experiences. While "support to veterans" displays a relatively normal distribution across each of the five answer choices, "family/personal reasons" received the largest amount of responses in the "not important" category with a total of 15.

Question 12

Factor	Not Important	Somewhat Less Important	Neutral	Somewhat More Important	Very Important
Financial Support	0	2	5	10	27
Strength of Academics	0	1	1	6	36
School Reputation	1	0	1	9	33
Post-Graduation Career Outcomes	0	0	6	15	23
Support for Veterans	5	9	11	11	8
Family/Personal Reasons	15	5	12	5	7

Question 12

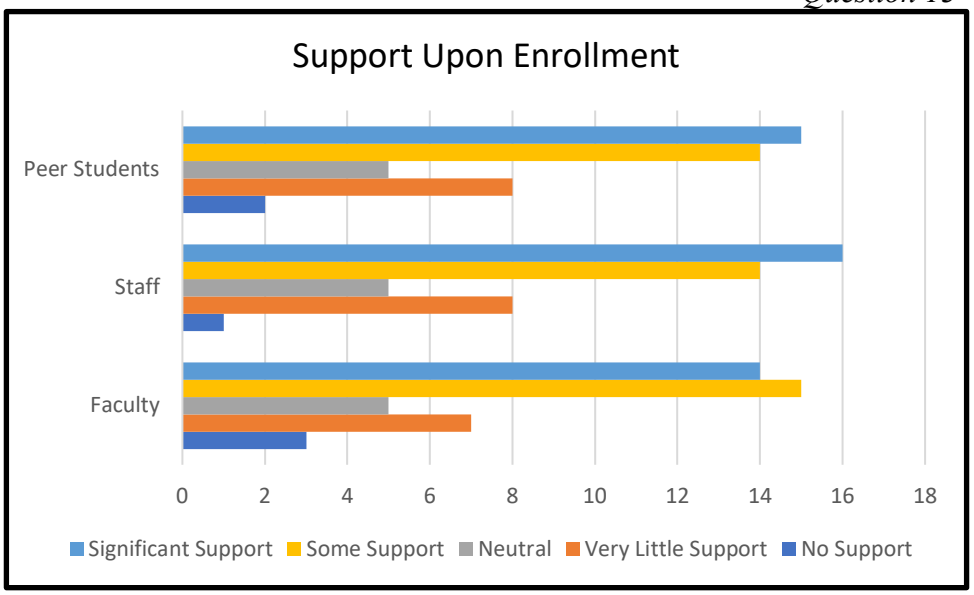


The following question in the section inquired about the perceived levels of support undergraduate veterans receive at the respective schools. The question allowed students to select answers for the perceived levels of support from faculty, staff, and peers students upon their arrival their current schools. The results show that a large majority of the sample population felt that they had received either "some support" or "significant support" from faculty, staff, and peer students upon their arrival at school. For each of the three support groups, the combination of "some support" and "significant support" represents nearly 66% of the sample population. Of the eight schools, only six had respondents who described having either "very little support" or "no support". These schools include Brown, Cornell, Dartmouth, Princeton, Stanford, and Penn. The two absent schools – Harvard and William & Mary – only had one respondent each. With this fact being included, it would be inappropriate to make statements about the larger undergraduate student veteran populations at those two schools. The table and chart below offer a visual depiction on the responses from the question.

Question 13

Support Group	No Support	Very Little Support	Neutral	Some Support	Significant Support
Faculty	3	7	5	15	14
Staff	1	8	5	14	16
Peer Students	2	8	5	14	15

Question 13

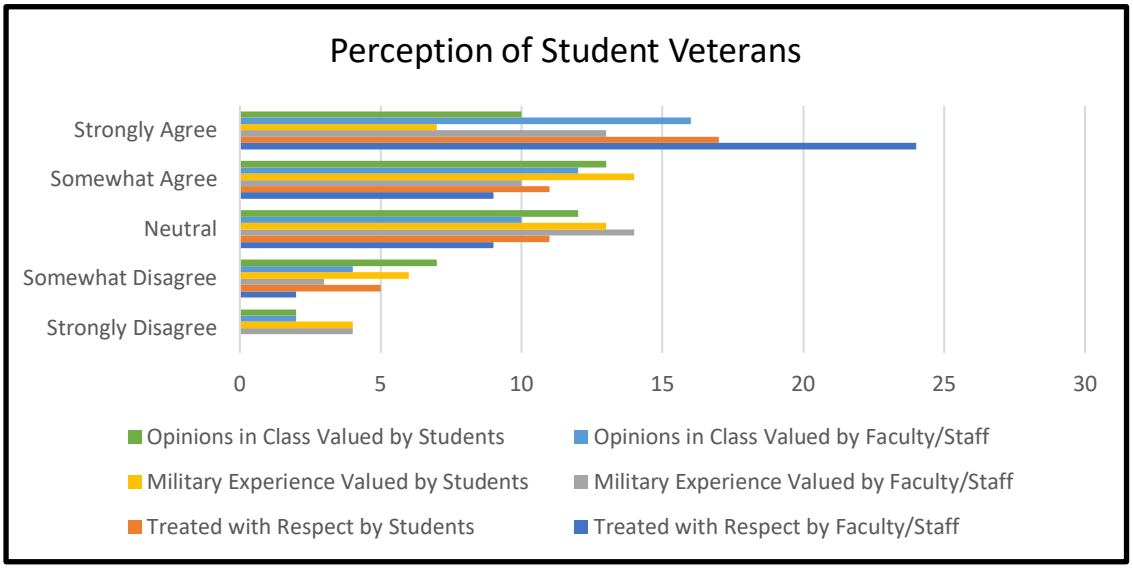


The following question in the school specific section asked respondents to describe how they feel they are perceived by faculty, staff, and peer students across several dimensions. The first dimension referred to being treated with respect, the second referred to how the sample population perceives their military experience is valued, and the third referred to having their opinions valued in the classroom. As can be observed in either the table or chart provided below, the data suggests a relatively strong level of agreeance among respondents across the first two categories – being treated with respect by faculty/staff and also by students. Nearly 75% of respondents either "somewhat agreed" or "strongly agreed" to being treated with respect by faculty and staff, and nearly 64% responded as feeling similarly regarding their peers. There were relatively high numbers of "neutral" responses across each of the six categories. Nearly 1/3 of the respondents selected this answer for each of the categories. Most of the eight schools represented in this survey display a mixed, or combination, of both positive and negative sentiments toward the perception of being a student veteran. Brown is the exception to this, as a greater number of "somewhat disagree" and "strongly disagree" answers were selected regarding their peers.

Question 14

Perception Category	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
Treated with Respect by Faculty/Staff	0	2	9	9	24
Treated with Respect by Students	0	5	11	11	17
Military Experience Valued by Faculty/Staff	4	3	14	10	13
Military Experience Valued by Students	4	6	13	14	7
Opinions in Class Valued by Faculty/Staff	2	4	10	12	16
Opinions in Class Valued by Students	2	7	12	13	10

Question 14



Survey Findings: Lived Experiences

The final three questions of the survey sought to understand the lived experiences of the sample population. Each of the three questions asked allowed for the respondents to answer in short essay form. As was briefly discussed earlier, the answers were compiled and subjected to a thematic analysis. This process involved identifying the critical themes that emerged in each of the individual answers. Each question revealed a different set of themes which are listed below in the respective tables. Included in the tables are the frequency of responses to each of the separate themes. Some of the longer answers received from the sample population applied to multiple categories and therefore were recorded in that manner. Not all of the survey respondents answered the final three questions. 41 of 44 (93%) of the sample population responded to Question 15, 40 or 44 (~91%) responded to Question 16, and 39 of 44 (~89%) responded to the final survey question.

Question 15

Common Themes	Frequency Distribution
Academic Challenges	13
Financial Issues	4
Negative Veteran Stigma	2
Older Age	3
Personal/Family Challenges	3
Personal/School Balance	5
Relating to Peers	10
Social Climate on Campus	4
Transition from Military to Civilian	2
Veteran Issues with School/Faculty/Staff	6

The table above shows the thematic responses for the question which asked about the greatest challenges the individual student veterans face as students at their current school. Again, it is worth noting that several of the answers referred to multiple thematic categories. Through simple observation, it can be seen that academic challenges and relating to peers scored the highest on the frequency distribution. There results displayed a relatively low frequency of responses which cited the transition from military to civilian, negative veteran stigma, older age, and personal/family challenges as the biggest challenges the students face at their respective schools.

Question 16

Overall Student Veteran Experience	Frequency Distribution
Positive	22
Negative	7
Mixed	11

The following question asked respondents to describe their personal experience as an undergraduate student veteran at their specific school. Similar to the question above, a thematic analysis was conducted on the answers which were received. As the table above depicts, over half of the respondents answered with "positive". Over a quarter of respondents described the experience as "mixed" with less than 20% saying the experience has been "negative".

Question 17

Recommendation to Prospective Student Veterans	Frequency Distribution
Yes	23
No	1
Maybe/Unsure	15

The final question of the survey asked respondents about the overall undergraduate student veteran experience at their school and if they would recommend their school to a

prospective student veteran. Similar to the result found in Question 16, the frequency distribution shows over half of respondents saying that they would recommend their school to a prospective student veteran. Also similar to the previous question, over a third of respondents expressed that they were unsure or had mixed feelings about recommending their school to prospective students.

Analysis of the Findings

Generally speaking, the demographics section likely did not reveal information that would be considered significantly different from data that S2S already has on undergraduate student veterans. Despite the relatively small size of the sample population, the diversity of schools represented gives strength to the project given the original target population of Ivy and Ivy+ schools. The only Ivy League schools missing are Yale University and Columbia University, and the only Ivy+ schools missing are Duke University, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and the University of Chicago. Future research on this topic should seek to expand the sample population size to increase both school and student representation.

Of potential interest to S2S is the breakdown of what branches of the military these students are coming from. For example, the relatively high number of former Marines represented in this sample population compared to Air Force veterans presents another future research question to be answered. One gap not addressed directly in this project is the strength of internal networks within the services and how they might impact a veteran's decision to apply and enroll at Ivy and Ivy+ schools. This potentially is a part of what is being displayed in the results displayed earlier.

Another data point of interest from the demographics section is the distribution of total years served in the military prior to enrolling in school. The vast majority of respondents answered between four and eight years. With a majority of first-term enlistments spanning between four and six years, this information suggests that recruiting efforts on the behalf of schools should begin prior to a servicemembers reenlistment decision. This information is also potentially useful for S2S partner schools in the VetLink program to provide a general understanding of the years of experience that undergraduate student veterans have at the time of enrollment. The first question in the following section regarding student veteran age at time of enrollment complements the total years of service data point and also should be provided to partner schools.

Almost all of the respondents in the sample population had some experience taking college-level coursework. As was mentioned earlier, many students took classes at multiple institutions prior to enrolling at the school where they currently attend. Further, the students who responded as having one to several years of college-level courses responded in other questions as feeling academically prepared for the coursework at their schools. When asked about the level of preparation and if they felt set up for success at their current school, many students specifically attributed their time in community colleges or other four-year colleges as the reason for feeling prepared. It can be generally concluded from this information that in the case of having experienced college-level coursework prior to matriculating at an Ivy League or Ivy+ school,

"more is better". A follow-on research project on this subject could explore the relationship between the GPA's of undergraduate student veterans at Ivy League and Ivy+ schools and compare that information to the total number of years of college-level coursework those individuals had prior to enrollment.

This "more is better" sentiment was reiterated in the answers to the case study interviews. All three respondents made comments that were thematically coded in the category responding to the importance of having college level courses prior to enrolling at their current school. In fact, the student from the University of Pennsylvania mentioned this on four separate occasions in his answers. The student from Princeton brought this up multiple times as well. Several key points were observable in the student answers, namely that each student emphasized the quality and rigor of preparatory college-level coursework over sheer quantity. Another key finding was that the three students interviewed had coursework at both the community college and four-year university level prior to enrolling at their current school. The responses suggested that this pathway was a significant reason behind their current academic successes. There are some student veterans will be naturally more prepared to succeed at Ivy and Ivy+ schools with just some college-level coursework. However, it is safe to say that a vast majority of undergraduate student veterans who wish to attend these schools would be wise to seek rigorous coursework prior to applying and enrollment. As one of the students remarked,

> "*I know that I was initially rejected from several schools directly out of the military because 5 A's from a community college does not equate to academic success in the eyes of the administration at prestigious universities. My method to gain acceptance was to go to the best school I was accepted into, get the best grades I possibly could, and re-apply."*

Another point for future research would be to explore the relationship between quantity and quality of previous education and acceptances at highly selective schools.

Approximately half of the sample population used an external organization to help with preparing for school. As was described earlier, those who used help from these organizations largely found the assistance to be beneficial and, in some cases, have gone on to volunteer as mentors to prospective student veterans. This finding speaks volumes about the role that veteran service organizations such as S2S can serve in during the "bridge" period between service and school. The students who applied for and took advantage of the WSP had very positive comments about their experience and specifically mentioned the advantage it gave them upon arrival at their current schools. Future efforts from S2S should shift the focus towards the other half of the sample population who did not use external organizations to prepare for school. The benefit of expanding S2S services to other prospective student veterans through focused outreach strategies would not only help better prepare these individuals for school, but also would grow the already large network of S2S student veterans.

A large majority of the sample population reported that they felt prepared to succeed in the classroom at their current school. The information discussed above regarding college-level coursework and the assistance from organizations such as S2S and WSP supports this finding. One theme that was observed in the survey responses was that despite feeling prepared for school, many students felt nervous to begin their respective programs. This presents another area

for S2S to explore in future work and supports the "veteran-mentor" model that S2S currently uses.

The school specific section of the survey revealed several data points that might be of interest to S2S. The initial question, which asked respondents to identify the most important factors that influenced their decision to attend their current school, listed the strength of academics, school reputation, and financial support as the top three factors. However, post-graduation career outcomes received only moderate responses as an influential factor for school choice. The combination of high scores for the influence of academics and school reputation combined with the relatively low to moderate scores for post-graduation career outcomes suggests a near-term focus on priorities from the students. Put another way, the students might perceive that the most important factors surrounding school choice will be ones that impact them in the near-term. Yet another research question for S2S to explore is this same type of question but given only to fourth years/seniors who might be on the job market. On multiple occasions in sections where students could respond with short answers, there were mentions about the impact that using the GI Bill has on their ability to attend graduate school programs in the future. Several students mentioned that because of the lack of financial aid at their school, that financing graduate school would have to come from personal savings or means other than the GI Bill. This comment further supports the analysis that student veterans are focusing too much on the near-term during the college selection process and might benefit from guidance which includes long-term considerations. This is an opportunity for S2S to consider as future improvements are made to programming around school choice. Further, S2S should begin to solicit post-graduation career outcomes from VetLink partner schools and provide that information to prospective students.

The first question in the lived experiences section asked respondents to identify the most significant challenges that they experience as undergraduate student veterans. As was discussed briefly, academics and relating to peers ranked as the two largest challenges. Given the schools where these students are currently enrolled, it is not surprising that school is hard. What is worth noting, however, is that the students who expressed feeling challenged by the academics at their school largely did not express this a negative or bad thing. In fact, many responded by saying that they knew school would be challenging and felt prepared for the challenge by both their military experience and previous coursework. This is a data point worth emphasizing to both prospective student veterans and the mentors who help that population. The current cohort of undergraduate student veterans at Ivy League and Ivy+ schools indeed are challenged but are still finding academic success. Further emphasizing this point is the fact that most of the sample population responded as having an overall positive experience as a student veteran. This data point suggests that despite the challenges that student veterans face on Ivy League and Ivy+ campuses, the decision to attend these schools is largely viewed as positive. This is supported in the number of responses from the sample population which said they would recommend their school to prospective student veterans.

Nearly a third of the sample population listed "relating to peers" as their largest challenge of being a student veteran. This challenge is likely supported by the older age, nontraditional background, and previous experiences. This is also likely one of the factors that contributed to the relatively high number of responses in which the sample population categorized their overall

personal experience on campus as "mixed" and were noncommittal about recommending their school to other prospective student veterans. These data suggest the need for S2S to increase communication with partner VetLink schools to better inform administrators, faculty, and staff about this population of students.

The related topics of perception from peers, faculty, and staff, and support from those groups upon arrival to campus were brought up on several occasions in the case study interviews. In this case, the students' own words provide the clearest insight into their lived experiences. The student from Brown commented on the biggest challenge they have faced at school, saying:

> "*Becoming socially integrated with the broader student body, which is mostly comprised of students from the upper tiers of income and socioeconomic status. Most students at Brown have never met anyone who has been in the military, and some find it to be a very strange career path."*

The comments from this student reinforce the earlier findings in the survey regarding peer perception on campus. The student from Princeton expanded on the topic, as illustrated by the following quotes:

> "*On campus, I definitely still believe that I barely belong here…I think Ivy caliber schools are all finely engineered to cater to the absolute perfect picture of a tradition student. As veterans, we come with foreign baggage…I firmly believe that Ivy+ schools need to do better at being flexible for our population."*
>
> *"Paradoxically, Princeton's insistence that we are just like everyone else on campus has made me feel even more like an outsider."*

Consider the following comments from a student at the University of Pennsylvania:

> "*Outside the classroom, the most considerable difficulty is the lack of a veteran-related network. It seems as though every other respective group…has a vast network on campus….this is not the case for veterans. I believe that because of this, our opinion is often not even heard, less taken into consideration."*

The comments reinforce the idea that some undergraduate student veterans feel a significant amount of disconnect from the traditional student body on campus. While this can be anticipated given the circumstances of attending school as a non-traditional student, it is important for future cohorts of undergraduate student veterans to understand which Ivy and Ivy+ schools are more accommodating than others during the application process. S2S should consider implementing future initiatives to reach out to current undergraduate student veterans at these select schools to provide up-to-date information to prospective students.

V. Policy Recommendations and Conclusion

The original hypothesis posed by this project predicted several outcomes. Based on previous conversations with student veterans, it appeared that Ivy League and Ivy+ schools do

not have a strong or formal structure in place to support undergraduate student veterans. Many student veterans take matters into their own hand upon arrival to campus, whether that means creating their own student veterans group or lobbying for veteran-specific policy change to campus administrators. This lack of support suggested that some schools express a verbal commitment to student veterans but have not acted on this commitment. While these factors were mentioned to some extent in the survey results (more so in the case study interviews), the responses revealed challenges that student veterans experience at the personal level rather than the structural or school level. Based on these findings, the following section includes policy recommendations that S2S might consider adopting in the future to better support undergraduate student veterans.

Policy Recommendation: Service to School should either acquire or officially partner with the Warrior-Scholar Project.

If implemented, this policy recommendation would streamline the pre-enrollment support programs from both organizations to one entity and potentially increase the number of prospective student veterans who receive formal support prior to enrollment. This recommendation is supported by two key findings. The first finding is that undergraduate student veterans who use either S2S or WSP (or both) express strong levels of confidence in their ability to succeed in Ivy and Ivy+ classrooms as a result of the programming. The second finding is that there remains a relatively large number of undergraduate student veterans at Ivy and Ivy+ schools who did not use S2S or WSP yet could have benefited from the respective programs. The acquisition of WSP by S2S would decrease the amount of decision points for prospective student veterans (choosing between one or the other) and expand S2S's network with both students and schools. Combining resources at the organizational level would allow senior staff from both S2S and WSP to share best-practices and find efficiencies on how to support undergraduate student veterans. Lastly, the combination of the two organizations would potentially increase the brand of S2S as the best-in-class organization for veterans who are seeking to further their education at the best school possible.

Policy Recommendation: Service to School should seek to establish partnerships with strong community colleges as a pathway for veterans to become students at Ivy League and Ivy+ schools.

This recommendation is premised on the findings which suggest that in the case of preparing for the academic rigors of the Ivy League, that "more is better". S2S should consider making formal partnerships – similar to the VetLink program – with strong community colleges. This would serve two objectives. The first objective would be to increase the overall academic preparedness of a student veteran. To again reference the findings from the survey, many of the student veterans specifically attributed their current successes at Ivy League and Ivy+ schools to their previous college-level coursework. The second objective would be to create a more formalized pathway for underprepared yet ambitious student veterans who wish to attend Ivy League and Ivy+ schools. A more highly educated and prepared cohort of student veterans might calm fears of the Ivy League and Ivy+ admissions representatives and in turn increase the total number of undergraduate student veterans on those campuses.

Policy Recommendation: Service to School should provide prospective undergraduate student veterans with school-specific "long-term" information prior to the final school choice decision.

This recommendation would involve S2S to provide undergraduate mentors and prospective student veterans with school-specific information that is oriented towards "long-term" outcomes. This recommendation is based on responses from the survey respondents who listed "near-term" factors as having the greatest influence on school choice. These school-specific profiles (Ivy League and Ivy+) would include information such as post-graduation career outcomes and specific financial aid information. S2S could instruct mentors to cover these key areas with prospective student veterans in the application/school choice phase, which inherently is more focused on "near-term" outcomes. While a prospective student veteran might not know if they will seek a graduate level degree in the future, they deserve to know exactly how much of the GI Bill will be used to finance their undergraduate degree and how much their school will pay. The inclusion of post-graduation career outcomes for student veterans would provide invaluable insight to prospective student veterans, especially to those who might be unsure of their future career paths. If S2S were able to gather this employment data from student veterans at specific schools, the organization could potentially create a career-oriented network for veterans to connect with each other.

While this project was able to successfully reveal the lived experiences and challenges of undergraduate student veterans at Ivy League and Ivy+ schools, there is still much to be learned about this population. Future research questions have been identified throughout the findings and analysis section and warrant greater discussion. What can be concluded is that undergraduate student veterans take the necessary steps to prepare for and do well at the most elite schools in the nation. Simultaneously, these veterans struggle to relate to their peers and experience institutional challenges that continue to remain unsolved and unaddressed. S2S should consider continuing research on this subject while remaining dedicated to the mission of helping veterans gain admission and succeed at the best schools in the world.

Appendix A

Master's Project: Undergraduate Student Veteran Experience at Highly Selective Universities

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Start of Block: Informed Consent

Master's Project: Undergraduate Student Veterans

My name is John Pratson and I am a MPP candidate at Duke University conducting research for my capstone project. I am interested in understanding the experiences of undergraduate student veterans at highly selective universities. You will be presented with questions relevant to your lived experiences as a student veteran and asked to elaborate about your time on campus. I encourage you to be as candid as you like. Please be assured that your responses will be kept anonymous and used exclusively for the final report that will be presented to the client, *Service to School*.

The study consists of **15-17 questions** (answer dependent) and should take you **approximately 20 minutes to complete**. Your participation in this research is voluntary and **deeply appreciated**. You have the right to withdraw at any point during the study, for any reason, and without any prejudice. If you would like to contact the Principal Investigator in the study to discuss this research, please e-mail John Pratson at john.pratson@duke.edu.

By clicking the button below, you acknowledge that your participation in the study is voluntary, you are 18 years of age, and that you are aware that you may choose to terminate your participation in the study at any time and for any reason.

Please note that this survey will be best displayed on a laptop or desktop computer. Some features may be less compatible for use on a mobile device.

A sincere thanks to all who have given their time to support this project.

- ○ I consent, begin the study (1)
- ○ I do not consent, I do not wish to participate (2)

End of Block: Informed Consent

Start of Block: Demographics

Q1 What school do you currently attend?

_____

Q2 Which branch of the military did you serve in?

- Marine Corps
- Navy
- Army
- Air Force
- Coast Guard

Q3 How many total years did you serve before leaving the military?

- 4 or less
- 4-8 years
- 8-12 years
- >12 years

End of Block: Demographics

Start of Block: Academic Preparation

Q4 What was your age when you started studying at your current school?

- ○ <22 years old
- ○ 22-26 years old
- ○ 26-30 years old
- ○ >30 years old

Q5 What was your highest level of education prior to enrolling at your current school?

- ○ High School/GED
- ○ Some College Credits
- ○ Associates Degree

Q6 Did you complete college-level coursework prior to enrolling at your current school?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Display This Question:

If Did you complete college-level coursework prior to enrolling at your current school? = Yes

Q7 Where did you complete your course work and for how long? (Example answer: *Yes, I completed two years at Piedmont Valley Community College before transferring to my current school*.)

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q8 What was your academic status upon acceptance to your current school? (Example answers: *Transfer student, freshman/first-year, continuing studies*)

_____

Q9 Prior to enrolling at your current school, did you receive support from any organizations such as *Service to School*, *Warrior-Scholar Project*, or the *Posse Foundation*?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Display This Question:

If Prior to enrolling at your current school, did you receive support from any organizations such as... = Yes

Q10 Which organization did you work with? Please briefly describe your experience.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q11 What kind of academic preparation did you do prior to enrolling at your current school? Did you feel prepared to succeed in the classroom?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

End of Block: Academic Preparation

Start of Block: School Specific

Q12 Please rate the importance of the following factors on your decision to attend your current school.

	Not Important	Somewhat Less Important	Neutral	Somewhat More Important	Very Important
Financial Support	○	○	○	○	○
Strength of Academics	○	○	○	○	○
School Reputation	○	○	○	○	○
Post-Graduation Career Outcomes	○	○	○	○	○
Support for Veterans	○	○	○	○	○
Family/Personal Reasons	○	○	○	○	○

Q13 Please rate the level of support that you received (from faculty, staff, peer students) upon your arrival as a student at your current school.

	No Support	Very Little Support	Neutral	Some Support	Significant Support
Faculty	○	○	○	○	○
Staff	○	○	○	○	○
Students	○	○	○	○	○

Q14 Please describe how you feel that you are perceived as a student veteran at your school.

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
Treated with respect by faculty/staff	○	○	○	○	○
Treated with respect by students	○	○	○	○	○
Military experience valued by faculty/staff	○	○	○	○	○
Military experience valued by students	○	○	○	○	○
Opinions in class valued by faculty/staff	○	○	○	○	○
Opinions in class valued by students	○	○	○	○	○

End of Block: School Specific

Start of Block: Lived Experience

Q15 Please describe the biggest challenges that you have experienced as a student at your current school.

_____

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_____

Q16 In your own words, please describe your *overall* personal experience as a student veteran at your current school.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Q17 How would you describe the overall undergraduate student veteran experience at your school to a prospective student veteran? Would you recommend your school to other veterans?

NOTE: This is the last question - once you click the right arrow, the survey will be submitted.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

End of Block: Lived Experience

Case Study Questions:

1. Please describe **your individual path** to becoming a student at your current school. This can include why/how you left the service, your application and admissions process, and arrival at school.

2. In your opinion, what are the **three biggest challenges** facing undergraduate student veterans who wish to/currently attend Ivy and Ivy+ schools?

3. If resources were not an issue and you could make any improvements to how your school deals with undergraduate student veterans, what would you change?

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