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## Non-Traditional Students and Transfer: A Focus on Military and Veteran Students

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THE  
TRANSFER HANDBOOK  
PROMOTING  
STUDENT  
SUCCESS

American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers



THE  
**TRANSFER HANDBOOK**  
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STUDENT  
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## CHAPTER SIX

# Non-Traditional Students and Transfer: A Focus on Military and Veteran Students

Non-traditional students, particularly military and veteran students, pose challenges for universities to serve efficiently and well. For the purpose of this discussion, the non-traditional student is defined as one with a delayed entry to college after high school completion, who may bring time-management conflicts due to work and family commitments, and who may have a variety of transcribed and non-transcribed credits to consider for transfer or advanced standing.

While it might be assumed that the non-traditional student is easier to work with than the traditional student who is new to post-secondary education and often has little life experience, this is not always the case. Traditional students are closer to their high school education, and therefore bring a “fresher” experience with math and English skills, including composition and research paper writing, as well as test-taking skills, which may prove more valuable in the student experience than the “life skills” and workplace exposure brought by the non-traditional student to

the classroom. Traditional transfer students generally have Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), and transfer credit from two-year colleges, which is much more standardized for evaluators to equate. Non-traditional students may not remember or disclose the full extent of their education history and may need to be prompted by university admissions staff to review the institutions that they have attended over the past several years. In addition to standard college work, they may also present with possible credits from life experience, military training, certifications, workplace training, and national examinations. This variety of credit, as well as the potential age of the credit poses a challenge to academic evaluators who are more accustomed to standard transfer credit.

### **Military and Veteran Students**

Military and veteran students experience similar obstacles to other non-traditional students, and also tend to be older and facing scheduled or unscheduled military obligations, reassign-

ment, and relocation challenges. In addition, they often bring Servicemembers Opportunity College (SOC) guaranteed credits and military-based ACE credit recommendations for assessment. Non-traditional military students often possess specialized military training and education, however, they often have either never developed, or are rusty in, the skills required to successfully convey those experiences in an educational setting.

Assessing the value and academic worth of military credit brought to a postsecondary institution can prove quite complicated and frustrate institutional credit evaluators who may not possess the expertise to interpret the credit values of military experience. As with the other non-traditional students, military students have often attended a variety of educational institutions and must be prompted to review these in order to provide full disclosure. It is important to review their educational history in order to maximize the student's tuition coverage, as military funding will generally not allow duplicated classes.

Despite increased obstacles facing military and veteran students, a review of the postsecondary educational outcomes for nearly one million student veterans who utilized Montgomery and Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits between 2002 and 2010 showed "strong postsecondary outcomes for the current generation of student veterans" (Cate 2014, iv). This study concludes that a slight majority of student veterans earn postsecondary degrees or certificates despite their challenges in doing so. The majority of student veterans enroll in public institutions (79.2%), with private non-

profit (10.7%) and proprietary schools (10.1%) serving the remainder of that population. The majority of veterans who graduate do so from public schools (71.1%), while the remaining graduates emerge from private non-profit (15.5%) and proprietary (12.9%) schools. Of those who graduate, the study concludes that nearly 9 of every 10 (89.7%) student veterans initially earn degrees at the associate level or above, as opposed to a small percentage who earned vocational certificates (2014).

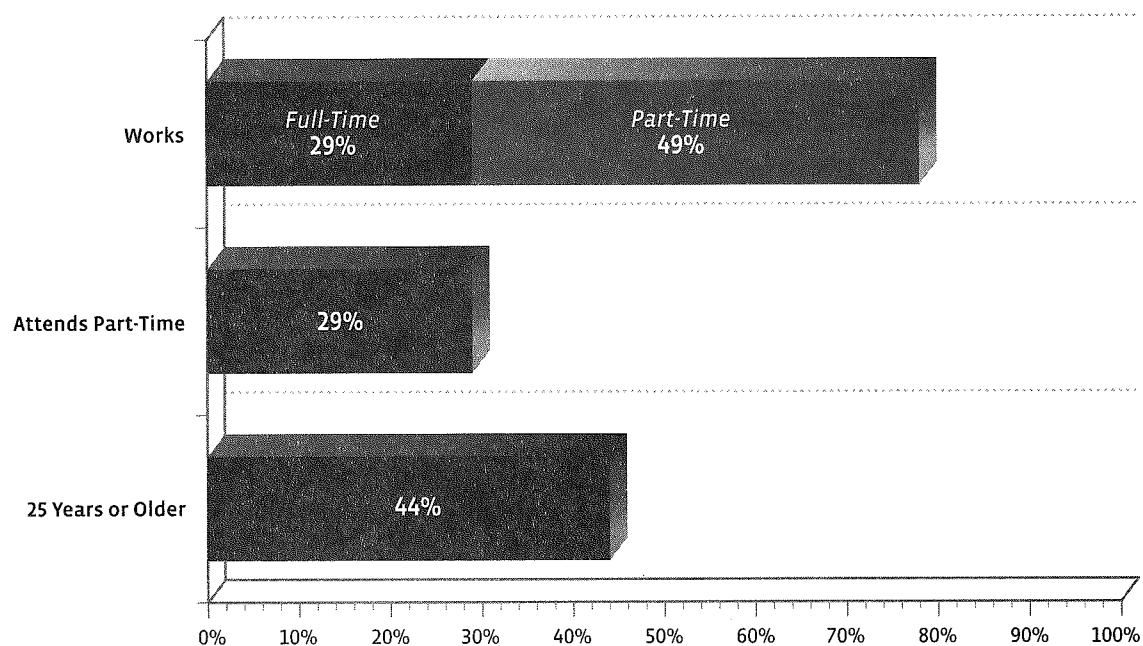
This being the case, it is in the best interests of any university to consider the role of the student-veteran population, regardless of the percentage of their population, and to formulate policy and procedure with ample flexibility to support the needs of this challenged, but dedicated, segment of the student population.

### Enrollment Trends of Non-Traditional Students

In both the public and private sectors of colleges and universities, tracking of non-traditional students, specifically in relation to persistence and graduation, has not been as consistent as tracking of traditional students. However, with the numbers of non-traditional students growing at triple the rate of traditional age students, the need for more data collection is even greater. The available data indicates that while their enrollment numbers are increasing, non-traditional students are not as successful as their traditional student counterparts in persistence and graduation (Taniguchi and Kaufman 2005).

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) 2011 six-year report,

Contrary to popular perception, a substantial proportion of independent college students are 25 or older (44%), attend part-time (29%), or work while attending college (78%).



**Figure 3.** Enrollment of Non-Traditional Students

SOURCE: NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES (2003, 10).

a large percentage of undergraduates were at least minimally non-traditional (based on a combination of factors including marital status, age, and dependency status). These students were much less likely to have earned a degree within five years of beginning their education than traditional students, and they were more than twice as likely to leave school within their first year as their traditional counterparts. According to the 2002 NCES “Findings from the Condition of Education Report,” 50 percent of non-traditional students were no longer enrolled after three years (versus 12 percent of traditional students). However, non-traditional students may also

have educational goals beyond earning a degree, such as specific job skill improvement or non-degree certification (Choy 2002).

According to the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, in 2006 the number of non-traditional students enrolled in private, not-for-profit colleges and universities was 44 percent (*see* Figure 3). The increasing enrollment numbers, differing educational goals, and tendency towards attrition of this type of student points towards the need to provide appropriate services, early interventions, and advising support beyond that which is designed for traditional students.

## Enrollment Trends of Military and Veteran Students

While members of the military currently on active or reserve duty and veterans may have some differing characteristics and needs, for analysis and statistical purposes within postsecondary education, these two categories of individuals are typically measured as one. According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, “Student Veterans’ include active-duty service members, reservists, members of the National Guard, and veterans” (2014). According to a National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) study of students in the 2007–2008 academic year, about four percent of all undergraduates and about four percent of all graduate students were veterans or military service members. About two-fifths of military undergraduates and one-fifth of military graduate students used GI Bill education benefits. Of these students, a majority of military undergraduates and military graduate students were male, and more likely to be married than nonmilitary students. These students also studied at private nonprofit four-year institutions, pursued bachelor’s degrees, took distance education courses, and studied information sciences more often than their non-military peers. Finally, there was a span of seven or more years between completing their bachelor’s degree and starting graduate school, and they were more likely to take classes on a part-time basis (Radford 2011, 3).

These key findings point to a number of issues, needs, and trends regarding student veterans. For instance, while only ten percent

of service members and veterans are female, a larger percentage of those female veterans are enrolled in postsecondary education (roughly 27%). This might indicate a need for additional recruitment emphasis for male veterans and/or specific support services for female veterans. More veterans than non-veterans are married, and nearly half of student veterans have children, perhaps requiring different housing considerations and flexible scheduling options. More military students than non-military students delay their transition from undergraduate to graduate school, possibly increasing the need for strong academic support services, and veteran students are more likely to take one or more distance education courses, highlighting the need for flexible schedule offerings and delivery modes.

While the overall number of veteran students may still be relatively small, that number is growing dramatically with no sign of lessening American military involvement in international conflict. According to the Department of Veterans Affairs, one million student veterans were enrolled in higher education and receiving benefits in 2013, as compared to 500,000 just four years earlier (VA Campus Toolkit Handout). Knowing this, institutions of higher education would be wise to explore policy and procedure reviews and service analyses to best serve this growing, dedicated, and deserving student population.

## Admissions Challenges of Non-Traditional Students

Non-traditional students are generally viewed as relatively stationary, due to their

commitments to community, job, and family, and that they typically do not transfer among schools in the way that their traditional counterparts might.

Non-traditional students are often wary of testing. Applicants who have been away from institutions of higher learning for an extended length of time, in some cases for many years, remember the stress of test taking more often than they may remember the feeling of accomplishment at having mastered a new skill or subject area. As a result many applicants balk at the idea of admissions testing to determine eligibility to attend a university. Military and veteran students, feeling that their life experience outweighs traditional classroom instruction, are sometimes reluctant to approach admissions testing positively or with an open mind.

At Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University (ERAU), this issue is approached by making the admission decision based upon static criteria from former institutional attendance (e.g., cumulative GPA, completion of master's program pre-requisites at the undergraduate level, etc.). Entry testing results are used primarily for placement, rather than for admission. Therefore, a student enters into testing assured of their admittance, while the tests determine his or her current aptitude in math and English. Placement exam results are used by academic advisors to assess the student's need to enroll in lower-level remedial classes; these classes are still 100 level or above and count as credit toward degree completion. Students who have transfer credit for basic English and math classes, but score poorly on placement exams, will be counseled by

their academic advisor to consider taking the lower-level classes in order to best assure their success, but are under no obligation to do so with transfer credit available. Giving non-traditional students options, using test scores for support, allows them to participate in their educational plan. This method can also be helpful later if the student is unsuccessful after selecting the higher-level course, as the advisor is on record having recommended participation in a "remedial" course first.

### Transferring Military Credits

Due to their military service, deployment schedule, or base assignment, military students are more likely than other non-traditional students to move about frequently, often at irregular intervals, and to collect credits from several different institutions if they continue pursuing their education as they move from one posting to the next. This can present challenges for military and veteran students who have pursued academic credits at multiple institutions, as they may not remember every institution at which they have earned credit when asked to provide a complete set of academic credentials to a university at the point of application. For this reason, it is important to make a concerted effort during the admissions process to obtain a complete list of past institutions for each applicant and to determine if all prior school transcripts have been collected, before to moving the candidate forward for acceptance to the institution. At Embry-Riddle, for example, the institution maintains the right to revoke an offer of admission or dismiss a

student for failure to disclose a prior educational experience if an omission is discovered during the admission process, particularly if the student suppresses the information regarding their attendance elsewhere due to poor performance, as this is a deliberate misrepresentation of the academic history and is a student code of conduct violation.

Military and veteran students may, in addition to prior educational experiences that have been transcribed by traditional or military institutions, be eligible for academic credit based upon military experience and/or training. These are listed on the Joint Services Transcript (JST) used by the Army, Navy Marine Corps, Navy, and Coast Guard and can also be assessed by the American Council on Education's (ACE) credit recommendations. ACE, under a contract from the Department of Defense that is administered by the Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES), conducts academic reviews of military courses and occupations, utilizing a team of teaching faculty from relevant academic disciplines, representing multiple colleges and universities. This team assesses and validates whether the courses or occupations have the appropriate content, scope, and rigor for credit recommendations. The award of transfer credit remains the discretion of the college or university (ACE 2014).

ACE recommendations can be challenging to understand for the unfamiliar evaluator. They should be reviewed thoroughly as some courses and occupations may be approved if offered at specified locations, during particular time frames, or for specified durations,

whereas other training, if not from that time, place, or of that duration, may not be approved. Perhaps ACE has not had a request to review the alternate setting for equivalency, or the time frame allowed by the initial ACE review has elapsed. It is then a challenge to explain to the military or veteran student population why one student who had a particular training may receive credit, while another with essentially the same training, but at another place or time, does not receive credit.

The Air Force provides a more traditional transcript via the Community College of the Air Force (CCAF), a federally-chartered degree-granting institution, offering an Associate in Applied Science and other academic credentials. CCAF partners with 106 affiliated Air Force Schools, 82 Education offices located worldwide, and more than 1500 civilian academic institutions, making CCAF the world's largest community college system. CCAF coursework is pass/fail: any student who successfully completes a course is given a grade of "S" on his transcript, which CCAF equates to a grade of "C" or better. Schools accepting transcripts from CCAF will not be able to use the transcribed coursework to establish an incoming GPA and will not be able to expect letter grades to assist them with admissions eligibility determination (Community College of the Air Force 2014, 7). Still, the CCAF transcript represents a facet of the applicant's prior education.

Other sources of military credit are FAA flight ratings and military occupation codes, which can be evaluated and approved by appropriate academic officials.

#### *ERAU POLICY ON ALTERNATE CREDIT/ ADVANCED PLACEMENT*

Embry-Riddle accepts the minimum scores recommended by ACE on all exams offered by the College Level Examination Program (CLEP), Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES), and Excelsior College Examinations (ECE, formerly REC or ACT-PEP) for the award of undergraduate academic credit. In addition, the amount of academic credit and the academic level (upper- or lower-level) designation recommended by ACE for a passing score on each of the exams will be accepted by the University. The number of credits accepted via exam is limited by ERAU to 15 credit hours. As per University policy, credit earned by examination must be completed prior to the time the student reaches the last 30 credits of a bachelor's degree or the last 15 credits of an associate degree, although active-duty undergraduate military students may complete national exams (CLEP, DANTES, etc.) at any time while pursuing their undergraduate degree, and are not restricted to applying exam credits within their last 15 credits for associate degrees or 30 credits for bachelor's degrees.

Advanced placement may be granted on a limited basis, based upon the existence of earned credit at a postsecondary institution determined by the University to demonstrate a higher level of competency, only in the areas of English, math, or accounting course requirements. Under the advanced placement ruling, a course may be waived and considered for the purpose of student advisement to be met; however, the student must make up

the credit deficit. The deficit may be made up in electives unless otherwise specified by the department chair.

#### **Social and Cultural Challenges for Student Veterans**

While student veterans come to higher education with greater life experience than the traditional age student, as well as the possibility of academic credits, the veteran transfer student faces a variety of challenges in adapting to not only the academic rigor of higher education, but also to the social life and culture of a residential campus. Universities and colleges have placed great emphasis in creating a full education experience that goes beyond the classroom and includes experiential learning and social education. Today's students are expected to excel in the classroom while also participating in campus activities, contributing to their community, working on academic projects in groups, and representing their campus community well.

Student veterans sit in classrooms side-by-side with traditional students who often cannot understand or appreciate the veterans' life experiences, maturity, and challenges. While traditional students concentrate on their academic studies and social engagements, veteran students often concentrate on their studies in conjunction with family obligations, work obligations, financial concerns, and sometimes service-related stress issues. While traditional students can work on projects together after classes, during campus events, or in residence halls at night, veteran students often have to immediately leave cam-

pus to fulfill other obligations. Consequently these students face difficulties integrating with a residential campus culture.

According to a focus group conducted by the non-profit RAND Corporation, with support from Lumina Foundation for Education, for ACE, only about 10 percent of student veterans surveyed felt the transition to civilian academic life had been relatively smooth. The group found that 90 percent “reported encountering substantial transition challenges. Among focus group participants, the most frequently discussed challenges were meeting academic expectations, balancing academic and other responsibilities, relating to fellow students, and coping with service-related disabilities and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)” (Steele, Salcedo, and Coley 2010, 36).

These students often feel alienated from their younger, more relaxed classmates, as well as administrators and faculty who may not have been trained to recognize or deal with issues specific to veterans and active-duty military members. These students often report a desire to—and difficulty with—integrating into the campus community, as well as a desire to retreat to a social space specifically restricted to other students with similar backgrounds. Researchers found: “Still, the most common reaction among participants was a sense of difference and frustration with what was seen as younger students’ immaturity and sense of entitlement” (Steele, Salcedo, and Coley 2010, 38). Further, the authors state: “When asked for their views on how higher education institutions might more effectively

recruit and support student veterans, participants suggested providing study skills support groups for veterans, building a veterans’ lounge on campus, and coordinating opportunities for student veterans to volunteer in their communities” (44).

Universities and colleges enrolling student veterans would do well to create programs and processes that speak to both of these somewhat conflicting needs: integration and specialization. While non-traditional students, particularly military and veteran students, may have legitimate challenges facing them in pursuit and completion of their degrees, nonetheless they must be made aware that obstacles for successful course completion in their lives are not sufficient to excuse them from the expectations of their courses or the rules of the university. Retaining these students may prove especially challenging as more varied issues compete for their time and attention and have real-world implications for them and for their families.

ACE’s Center for Policy Research and Strategy (CPRS) analyzed U.S. Department of Education (ED) data from the 2011–12 academic year to better understand the factors that place undergraduate student veterans at risk for not staying in school to complete their academic goals. ED identifies several risk factors which may impede student persistence and completion rates:

- Delayed enrollment
- No high school diploma
- Part-time enrollment
- Financial independence



- Having dependents
- Single-parent status
- Full-time employment

Among student veterans, 44 percent were found to display four or more of these risk factors (Ang and Molina 2014, 2–3).

Universities should tackle these possibilities with the students through initial counseling. Military and veteran applicants should be encouraged during the admissions process and through ongoing academic advising to anticipate potential problems during their degree work (deployment/reassignment, childcare/eldercare, family illness, etc.). Further, they should be encouraged to consider creating back-up plans for each of these circumstances, as this will prove a valuable retention tool. Failure to fully address these concerns usually manifests as an applicant who does not follow through to registration, a student who disappears mid-semester from a course, or a student who fails to re-register for subsequent terms.

The needs of non-traditional, military, and veteran applicants who complete the admissions process and become students of an institution continue to differ in many ways from the traditional student. While staff members hope that the age and experience of this population will result in a responsible, practical, and worldlier student, academic advisors, faculty members, and registrar's office personnel may also face questions and objections involving bargaining with these students for exceptions to curriculum and policy based upon their history, experience, and circumstances. Em-

bry-Riddle advising staff faces the following exceptions to policy and procedure requests: student age (“I am an adult...”); the age of the instructor (“My teacher is just a kid...”); a customer attitude (“I paid for this course...”); ignorance of the law (“Nobody told me that...”); and treatment of the university schedule as a personal calendar (“I was on vacation/traveling for work, so I should be excused from...”).

A sense of entitlement to exceptions can characterize the non-traditional student. This tendency is documented in a study of perceptions of non-traditional students, including those with military background, toward the requirement of a community college in west Texas for all students to take an effective learning/student success course (Gordan 2014). The responses to the study, though limited in number, coalesce around several key themes, including the belief that traditional students need a student success course, while non-traditional students do not. One respondent, a military veteran and a former police officer, notes that he “felt he knew exactly what it would take to be a successful student,” and states, “I felt like [this class] was a waste of my time. I could use this time more effectively for something else that [my field of study] requires. It just ticked me off that I had to take it” (Gordan 2014, 167).

The university should communicate expectations clearly and peremptorily. Objections will be best avoided via student participation in robust orientation programs, admissions counseling, and ongoing academic advisement. Efforts to alert and remind this student population to the requirements of their cur-

riculum of study, courses, and of the university in general should be ongoing. It is necessary to remind students that university policy is in place to guarantee academic outcomes and to provide educational equity, and that fair and consistent application of policy allows for the highest quality graduates. Additionally, it is generally helpful to appeal to the student's sense of fairness and equality among the entire student population: a reminder that all students, regardless of their life circumstances, are subject to the same rules.

Additional challenges facing universities working with non-traditional student populations include applicant fears and phobias surrounding a return to school, testing and failure, distance of time since last participating in educational pursuits (and the fading of knowledge that goes with it), and loss of student study skills. While military and veteran students will return to school boasting a range of new knowledge and skills from their military training and experience, they may lack the student skills required to exploit that background in an academic setting.

ERAU has been concentrating recent efforts toward creating a more robust orientation experience for military and veteran students. From the onset, universities should stress to non-traditional students the importance of following a set process and not just skipping to an end-goal. Key factors, such as writing skills, using the APA citation format, citing sources and plagiarism, and study and test-taking skills, must be addressed to help students to reach their goals. Waiting until students have been cited for plagiarism or

failed classes due to poor writing or test-taking skills is often too late to successfully address the problem. Once students confront this failure in their educational pursuit, they are more likely to become "failed to re-register" statistics.

## Tools to Serve the Non-Traditional Student

### *ERAU WORLDWIDE*

As a university that serves a diverse population including a large population of non-traditional, military, and veteran students, ERAU has developed many policies and procedures to assist this population with the challenges of returning to school and remaining in school should life circumstances change.

Embry-Riddle's Worldwide division is a network of more than 150 campuses, military bases, and learning centers throughout the United States, Europe, and Singapore, as well as an online division. Staffing for these locations varies depending upon the student population and number of classrooms; however, all Worldwide students expect upon enrollment that some of their coursework must be taken online. Offering degree programs in this manner affords flexibility for students coping with work or family conflicts, or military scheduling difficulties.

Many universities enforce a customary "active student" policy stating that if a student does not take classes in any given term, they must formally withdraw and then reapply or go through a "re-admit" process to return to the university in the future. To accommodate its non-traditional students, Embry-Riddle of-

fers a two-year continuing student status policy, allowing students to take a class any time within two years of completing their last class and maintain continuing student status with the University in their initial catalog year curriculum. Embry-Riddle's two-year continuing student status "window" permits students to move in and out of enrollment, without penalty, as their military/professional careers and personal circumstances dictate. ERAU's advisors do not encourage students to leave the University for intervals of nearly two years at a time; however, because they may do so when necessary allows them the flexibility to accommodate changes in job, work schedule, or military assignment, and often prevents the complete loss of the student.

ERAU's Worldwide division offers shorter term lengths, standardized at nine weeks, allowing students to complete classes more quickly and balance educational goals with their work and home schedules. Contact hour requirements are met through additional reading, research, and group work assignments outside of the classroom setting. Online classes have participation requirements as set by their instructors and offer discussion thread postings to facilitate group interaction for geographically dispersed students. The University offers online classes via synchronous and asynchronous platforms. The Worldwide division offers 12 terms per year at the undergraduate level and five terms per year at the graduate level, and full- and part-time status is redefined to accommodate the shorter terms. Students generally take one or two classes per term in the nine-week sessions.

Staff at the campus locations provide advising for Worldwide students, with students of the online division advised by staff centered at Worldwide headquarters in Daytona Beach. Faculty access and support is required of all teaching staff, both full-time and adjunct, and their responsibilities in these areas are presented to faculty via an academic credentialing program which all teaching staff members must successfully complete.

Embry-Riddle's academic programs are primarily non-cohort, letting students move in and out of programs beginning at varied intervals, without fear of the loss of an established peer group. The University also offers courses in multiple learning modalities, permitting students enrolled at one of the residential campuses to move, via an intra-university transfer process, to a Worldwide campus location or online, should their physical location or availability to participate in classroom classes change.

The primary Worldwide graduation ceremony is held on the Daytona Beach, Florida residential campus, the headquarters of ERAU Worldwide. This allows any Worldwide graduate that had completed a degree program during the previous year and prefers a "traditional" college graduation ceremony to share in that experience. Multiple ceremonies are also held at venues throughout the country and in Europe, as well as at military base locations, who host "recognition ceremonies." This program of multiple ceremony offerings permits as many graduates as possible to participate in a graduation ceremony in their area, while still allowing the University

to control the setting and the experience of the graduation and provide the proper support of academic presence at the ceremony, caps/gowns, and graduation programs, etc.

Processing of Worldwide graduates is centralized at the Daytona Beach headquarters, with degrees conferred monthly and diplomas printed weekly, made possible by a concentrated term structure. As non-traditional students often seek degrees to assist with new employment, promotion, or military advancement, diplomas are printed in-house to facilitate quick distribution after conferral. Worldwide students may then begin to benefit from their status as degree-holders. Embry-Riddle's residential campus locations confer degrees three times a year in May, August, and December at the conclusion of their traditional terms.

#### *ERAU DAYTONA BEACH*

ERAU Daytona Beach is a traditional residential campus designed to maintain the advantages and feel of university campus life, while offering some of the flexibility of the Worldwide campus, such as short-term offerings and all-online degree work. Campus administrators regularly meet to review policies and procedures with an eye toward removing barriers for non-traditional students, while maintaining the standards and commonalities of campus life. Examples of adjusted policies include requiring first-year students or students with minimal transfer credits to maintain residence on campus: this requirement is waived for non-traditional students who meet certain requirements, such as marital

or family status, age, or veteran status. First-year and low-credit transfer students are also required to take a "University 101" course to integrate them to campus life. Veterans can be exempted from this requirement if it causes a hardship, however, they are strongly advised to participate, and special veteran-only sections of this class are offered to encourage participation. These classes help students adjust to campus life, while also creating connections between fellow veterans and addressing military-specific student issues.

Services provided for non-traditional students include 24-hour commuter lounges and study spaces, extended hours in service departments, and opportunities to mentor traditional age students. These students often thrive on discussing their life experiences, presenting in conferences and at poster sessions, and translating classroom work to their current work experiences and career experience into their classroom work. Non-traditional students—especially military and veteran students—benefit from the ability to share their leadership skills, self-discipline, and strength of camaraderie to their younger counterparts, and traditional students, of course, benefit from this as well.

At ERAU Daytona Beach, a team of individuals known as MyVets, short for "Military and Veterans Enrollment and Transition Services," works together to meet the specialized needs of current military and veteran students. The specialized veterans program administrators who staff the MyVets office foster peer connections, coordinate university and community support, provide information

about benefits available to current and past service members and their dependents, and offer other advisory and counseling services. The MyVets office is located within a separate but centralized building, which also provides tutoring and study space, access to professional advisors, and opportunities for socializing with fellow student veterans. This space is also associated with the University's ROTC programs, allowing student veterans the opportunity to be mentors and role models for future service members.

While MyVets consists of a dedicated, specially trained group of experts, the Veterans Response Team (VRT) is made up of cross-campus representatives of administration and faculty. These individuals, under the guidance of MyVets, meet regularly to ensure the dissemination of information about student veteran needs across campus and the appropriate provision of services to these students at every level and location around campus. The VRT includes not only on-campus resources, but also representatives from community resources such as county and state Veterans Administration offices and medical centers. VRT members attend training and seminars on current military and veteran student needs and pass this information along

to their respective offices and college departments in order to adequately serve this special, deserving category of students.

### Conclusion

While non-traditional students bring life experience, work and career knowledge, self-discipline, and a strong work ethic to their academic endeavors, they also possess special needs and challenges. These non-traditional students can be a rich addition to a campus culture and come away from their educational experience with additional skills, tools, and knowledge to help them with their future goals, as long as these needs are met and challenges addressed.

As this nation's current and former military members and their dependents, as well as other non-traditional adult students, continue to enroll in institutions of higher education in ever-increasing numbers, colleges and universities will need to continue providing creative programming, career-specific education, support, transition, and integration services, and both integrated and specialized academic and support services. In doing so, they will ensure that both these students and the campuses they attend will benefit.