Indiana Veterans' Education Pathways Taskforce Recommendations

Submitted to the Indiana Commission for Higher Education (CHE)

Veterans' Education Pathways Taskforce Participants
July 2023

Indiana Veterans' Education Pathways Taskforce
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CHE Veterans' Education Pathways Task Force

Credit for Prior Learning Workgroup

Recommendations –July 2023

Workgroup Strategy: Support expansion of academic credit for prior learning (CPL) for military training

Introduction: Each year, thousands of Hoosiers leave the military and return to Indiana to start on the next phases of their lives. For many of these veterans, the "next phase" includes pursuing higher education in order to secure a better life for themselves and their families, and to better serve their communities in meaningful careers. These Veteran learners may have accumulated a wide variety of experiences both in, and out, of a classroom setting while serving (the US military is the largest education provider in the country after all), but transitioning the value of their military learning toward higher education can be a confusing and opaque process.

Indiana currently does not have a centralized resource for veterans where a prospective student can look up the types of course credit they may receive for their military training and how their credits may be applied to a course of study at an Indiana institution of higher learning. Other states, such as Kansas, Texas, and Ohio, have implemented such a resource and we believe that it is time for Indiana to do the same. In making the process of applying military credits to a college program easier and more transparent, we believe that Veteran learners are more likely to be interested in attending one of Indiana's colleges and universities (and use their GI Bill to fund their education), remain enrolled at their school, persist to graduation, complete their degree, and help Indiana produce a trained and talented workforce.

Institutional Recommendations: The CPL Work Group believes that there are **three pillars** to the military credit for prior learning framework that must be supported at each institution across the state:

1. **ACE Recommendations:** Institutions must accept American Council on Education (ACE) recommendations for military courses and occupation experiences.
   Good: Some ACE recommendations are accepted from the JST.
   Better: All ACE recommendations are accepted from the JST.
   Best: All ACE recommendations are accepted, and credit may be available beyond the recommendations made directly on the JST

2. **Standardized and Transparent Credit:** Institutions must work to create internal processes that standardize the award of military credit and increase transparency into military credit decision-making.
   Good: Institution creates internal equivalency/crosswalk when a new military course or occupation is received on a JST and reviewed. Institution stores data in internal database.
   Better: Institution creates internal equivalency/crosswalk through proactive research of individual courses and occupation recommendations in the ACE Military Guide. Institution stores data in external (student-facing) database.
   Best: Institution conducts cumulative review of entire occupation areas to prepare collective equivalency/crosswalk data. Institution stores data in multi-institution external database (see *Statewide Military CPL Website* below).

3. **Enabling Policies:** Institutions must work to create internal policies and practices that will define, support, and enable the application of military credit.
   Good: Institution has policies in place to ensure **eligibility** of military credit; military credit is eligible to apply toward degree requirements, but may be limited in application. The institution may have some select programs or program options that are designed to allow for flexible application of military credit for prior learning.
   Better: Institution has policies in place to ensure **application** of military credit; military credit is applied to degree plan requirements but may be limited in utility. The institution has programs, electives, or requirements that are designed to enable the application of military credit.
   Best: Institution has policies in place to ensure **utility** of military credit; military credit is utilized to satisfy major required courses in addition to electives. Programs across the institution are designed with consideration of military credit for prior learning. Credit for prior learning maximum policy does not unnecessarily restrict military credit.

State Recommendations: The CPL Work Group believes that there are **two statewide foundations** to the military credit for prior learning framework at the state level:

1. **Military Credit Training:** Statewide training materials must be produced to bring information forward to address the needs of specific audiences, including:
   a. Leadership, both state and institutional: to get buy-in
   b. Institutional faculty: to create standardized guidelines for how to review military credits, how to revive ACE recommendations, how to find additional information, and who to contact with questions.
   c. Institutional staff: to create standardized guidelines for how to apply military credit and how to maintain (and update) military credit datasets.
2. **Statewide Military CPL Website:** A centralized resource of credit equivalencies must be designed, developed, and maintained. The web resource should allow institutions from across the state to standardize and share their military credit opportunities. The ideal site

would be a blend between the existing [Indiana Core Transfer Library](#) and the [Kansas Military Articulation Portal](#).
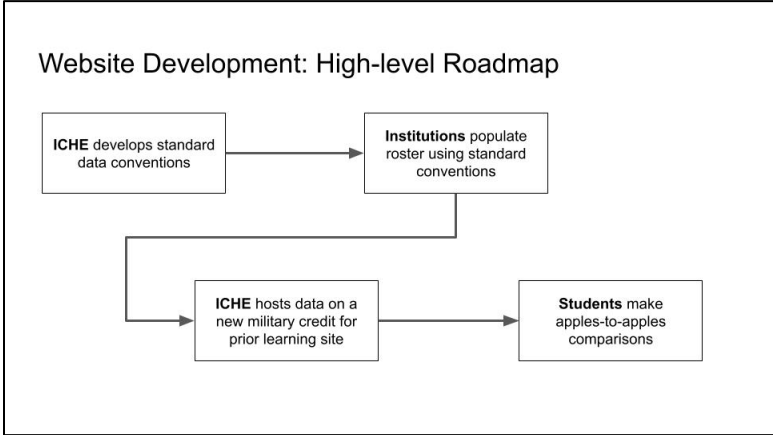
    a. **Standardization:** Each institution will maintain complete autonomy to create military credit equivalency decisions independently. The format and data of these decisions can be standardized by conventions determined by the state in order to enable a realistic comparison of equivalency decisions between/among different institutions.

    b. **Centralization:** Once data standards have been developed, institutions can provide their unique data to the state in order to support the presentation of centralized information to students.

Indiana's veterans deserve more transparency and clarity when it comes to recognizing the skills they learned while serving their country and applying them to a college education. These veterans bring professional training experiences and corresponding knowledge to the table and Indiana's colleges and universities must recognize these characteristics and attributes as part of helping veterans earn higher education credentials. By implementing the recommendations above, we believe that Indiana's veterans will have better, and clearer, opportunities to apply their skills to an education program, persist in their program to graduation/completion, and enhance their opportunities for meaningful employment in their communities.

Appendix 1: Website Solution Roadmap - ICHE Veterans Taskforce CPL

ICHE Veterans' Taskforce

Credit for Prior Learning

Website Development: High-level Roadmap

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┌─────────────────────┐        ┌─────────────────────┐
│ ICHE develops       │───────▶│ Institutions        │
│ standard data       │        │ populate roster     │
│ conventions         │        │ using standard      │
│                     │        │ conventions         │
└─────────────────────┘        └─────────────────────┘
           │                              │
           └──────────────┐   ┌───────────┘
                          ▼   ▼
              ┌─────────────────────┐        ┌─────────────────────┐
              │ ICHE hosts data on  │───────▶│ Students make       │
              │ a new military      │        │ apples-to-apples    │
              │ credit for prior    │        │ comparisons         │
              │ learning site       │        │                     │
              └─────────────────────┘        └─────────────────────┘
```

ICHE Develops Standard Data Conventions

Data Fields: General	Data Fields: Courses	Data Fields: Occupations

Institution Name
Branch of Service
Learning Type
	Course Code (ACE)
	Course Title
	(Iterate x ~40)
	  Award Course Code
	  Award Course Title
	  Award Course Credits
	(Iterate x 3)
	  Program of Interest
		Occupation Code
		Occupation Title
		Service Level
		(Iterate x ~40)
		  Award Course Code
		  Award Course Title
		  Award Course Credits
		(Iterate x 3)
		  Program of Interest

Data Validation Here	Data Validation Here	Data Validation Here

Institutions Populate Roster of Equivalencies
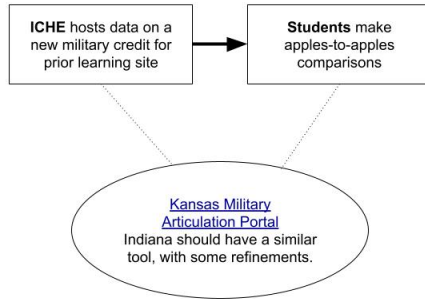
[Ex: Course Roster]

[Ex: Occupation Roster]

Institutions Populate Roster of Equivalencies

Institution	Branch of Service	Learning Type	Course Code	Course Title
Purdue University Global	Army	Course	AR-2201-0399, v1	Basic Combat Training
Purdue University Global	Army	Course	AR-2201-0399, v2	Basic Combat Training
Purdue University Global	Army	Course	AR-2201-0399, v3	Basic Combat Training
Purdue University Global	Army	Course	AR-2201-0399, v4	Basic Combat Training
Purdue University Global	Army	Course	AR-2201-0399, v5	Basic Combat Training

Institutions Populate Roster of Equivalencies

Receive Course 1			Receive Course 2			Receive Course 3			Receive Course 4			Receive Course 5			Receive Course 6		
Code	Title	Cr	Code	Title	Cr	Code	Title	Cr	Code	Title	Cr	Code	Title	Cr	Code	Title	Cr
CJ1.5L	CJ ELE	1.33	CJ1.5L	CJ ELE	1.33	TC1.5L	OPEN ELE	1	CJ1.5L	CJ ELE	1.33						
CJ1.5L	CJ ELE	1.33	CJ3L	CJ ELE	2	CJ3L	CJ ELE	2									
CJ1.5L	CJ ELE	1.33	CJ1.5L	CJ ELE	1.33	CJ3L	CJ ELE	2	TC3L	OPEN ELE	2						
CJ3L	CJ ELE	2	CJ1.5L	CJ ELE	1.33	CJ1.5L	CJ ELE	1.33	CJ1.5L	CJ ELE	1.33	CJ1.5L	CJ ELE	1.33			
CJ3L	CJ ELE	2	CJ3L	CJ ELE	2	CJ3L	CJ ELE	2	CJ1.5L	CJ ELE	1.33	TC3L	OPEN ELE	2	SGM 1.5L	SGM ELE	1.33

Host Data and Enable Comparisons

Host Data and Enable Comparisons

CHE Veterans' Education Pathways Task Force

Communication/Navigation Workgroup

Recommendations –July 2023

Workgroup strategy: Identify opportunities to improve education-related communication processes and resources (funding, pathways, etc.) for veterans/military-affiliated individuals navigating various stakeholder websites, etc.

Develop a communication toolkit for multi-agency use.

- Resources/benefits that are already available (Minuteman Scholarship, etc.)
- Transitioning, guard/reserve

We believe the easiest solution would be to work with INvets and build an interface with their existing web interface. Their website already has so much information, so all we need to do is work with their content developer. INvets has a page for all 92 counties, and they would just be adding the information on the specific schools and their veteran benefits in the county in which the school is located. Additionally, they could add an education section to their site's "Resources" page. However, that might work best if it were linked to the Indiana Department of Veterans Affairs (IDVA) page to avoid duplicating efforts.

Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG) also has a website with existing links to Veteran Readiness and Employment (Chapter 31) and Post-9/11 GI Bill (Chapter 33), IDVA. They would be willing to add another link on their page since it is promoted throughout Indiana regularly**.**

Develop toolkit/QR code/Incentives guide to link to resources/benefits
https://www.invets.org/

https://www.in.gov/dwd/veterans-services/

Employer engagement; incentivize:
- Corporate engagement
- State employee model
- Purple star

With education comes employment. Creating a Purple Star designation for Indiana Employers, much like the school designation, will ensure veterans and employers can find each other easier. Highlighting those employers on the INvets site would be an ideal solution.

JVSG posts employer information on Indiana's job bank (Indiana Career Connect), where job seekers can learn the ins and outs of every company registered throughout Indiana. Since this is the state's official site for job seekers and employers, they can push the Purple Star designation attachment once it is passed.

Providing smooth transition points for veterans and military-affiliated populations can be facilitated through effective communication, collaboration, and support from various stakeholder organizations.

The military branches can facilitate a smooth transition by providing veterans access to resources and information, including job placement services, education benefits, and healthcare. Currently, INvets has touchpoints at various transition sites.

These stakeholder organizations must communicate and collaborate effectively to ensure a smooth transition. For example, employers can work with the VA and higher education institutions to develop training and education programs tailored to veterans' needs. The VA can also partner with community organizations to provide housing assistance and other support services.

A collaborative approach involving multiple stakeholders can help ensure a smooth transition for veterans and military-affiliated populations. These organizations can provide comprehensive support that addresses our veteran population's unique needs and challenges by working together.

AI Chatbot

Recommend that the Indiana Department of Veterans Affairs consider establishing a Chatbot. An AI chatbot could be created to engage with veterans, asking them what resources they need and then pointing them toward the relevant information. The chatbot could also be programmed to respond to common queries and questions and direct veterans to organizations, resources, and benefits that might help. Overall, an AI bot could provide veterans with easy access to relevant resources and support, making it easier to navigate the complex system of benefits and services available to them.

Training Opportunities

Key to making all this work is training for the County Veteran Service Officers (CVSO).

Public Announcements and Press Releases: if CVSOs are not promoting or pushing veterans to various sites such as INvets, and JVSG, all this work will go unnoticed.

Since both INvets and JVSG cover 92 counties and regularly work with CVSOs, their staff can help promote these initiatives by directing them to the resource page for veterans.

By measuring the effectiveness of these communication efforts, adjustments can be made to ensure the plan successfully achieves its objectives.

Possible way to recognize Purple Start designation for employers:

1. **Awards and Certifications:** Establishing awards and certifications specifically designed such as Purple Star to recognize companies that excel in veteran hiring practices can be a powerful incentive. Additionally, certifications or badges and or Purple Star Designation indicating a company's commitment to hiring veterans can be displayed on their websites, marketing materials, and job postings. A good example would be along the lines of Military Friendly School Designation.

2. **Public Announcements and Press Releases:** Issuing public announcements and press releases to highlight companies that actively hire veterans can garner positive attention and recognition. This can be done through various channels, including media outlets, social media platforms, and industry-specific publications. Sharing success stories and testimonials from veterans employed by these companies can further amplify the message and inspire others to follow suit.

3. **Collaborative Campaigns and Partnerships:** Collaborating with veteran service organizations, governmental agencies, and community leaders can enhance recognition efforts. By partnering with these entities, companies can participate in joint campaigns that raise awareness about the importance of hiring veterans and celebrate organizations that have made significant strides in this area.

4. **Online Platforms and Directories:** Creating online platforms or directories dedicated to highlighting companies that prioritize veteran employment can serve as a valuable resource for job seekers and employers alike. These platforms can feature profiles of companies, showcasing their commitment to hiring veterans, sharing success stories, and providing information on available job opportunities. While at the same displaying their Purple Star Designation.

5. **Industry Recognition and Associations:** Collaborating with industry-specific associations or organizations can help raise awareness within specific sectors and highlight companies that excel in veteran hiring. Industry publications, conferences, and trade shows can feature articles, interviews, or dedicated sections to recognize these companies and inspire others within the industry to follow their lead.

6. **Government Partnerships and Contracts**: Recognizing companies that have a Purple Star Designation can be integrated into government contracts and procurement processes. Governments agencies can establish preferential treatment or additional evaluation criteria for companies that demonstrate a commitment to veteran employment. This recognition can provide a competitive advantage for these companies and foster a culture of veteran support within the business community.

Finally, by implementing Purple Star Designation initiatives for employers, we can shine a spotlight on companies that prioritize veteran employment, inspiring others to do the same. A Purple Star Designation can create a positive environment that celebrates the contributions of veterans and encourages companies to harness the immense talents and skills that veterans bring to the workforce.

CHE Veterans' Education Pathways Task Force

Student Support Workgroup

Recommendations –July 2023

Workgroup strategy: Enhance education-related awareness, outreach, and supports for veterans and military-affiliated individuals

a) Identify opportunities to support and improve veteran services on campuses

b) Develop guidelines for the new Purple Star institution designation

Below is a list that we feel is a good working list for someone to provide support for veterans and their family members at their campus.

Identify opportunities to support and improve veteran services on campuses.

Deployment policy

- Policy regarding military absence (i.e., if a military student leaves a class due to deployment, training, or other required military orders)
- The ability for students to return without penalty following deployment
  - o Reimbursement or remission of fees for courses students were not able to complete while deployed

Funding

- An operational budget that provides funding for student veteran support/initiatives
  - o Utilize annual reporting fees from the VA to fund student veteran support/initiatives

Career

- Specialized career guidance counseling or other programs to help military students identify careers to pursue.
- Use of Indiana Career Explorer, which is a free tool offering three assessments and extensive career exploration for all students and job seekers statewide. INCE offers career exploration by MOC and identifies specific training program information for careers, a resume building template, and individual and family resources. Veterans can use INCE throughout all phases of career and education planning. Veterans can go to https://indianacareerexplorer.com/ to easily set up an account.
- Industry-employer relationship programs available to active-duty military students and veterans to assist with post-graduate employment outcomes
- Career/Employment fair that is geared specifically for the military community. Access to veteran-specific employment opportunities

Admissions/Enrollment

- Waive admission application fee for military students and veterans (IF THERE IS AN

APPLICATION FEE)

- In-state tuition without residency requirements for military (IF THERE IS OUT-OF-STATE TUITION)
- Waive the minimum GPA or SAT/ACT scores for military students and veterans. (IF THERE IS MINIMUM GPA OR SAT/ACT SCORES FOR ADMISSION)
- Tuition and fee program that matches DOD Tuition Assistance, if tuition exceeds TA allowable amount
- Tuition discounts specifically for military students and veterans
- Additional scholarships specifically for military students and veterans
- Admissions counseling specifically for veterans, Reservist/National Guard, and their familiar members using VA benefits or not
- Priority enrollment for veteran and military students (IF THERE ARE TIERED ENROLLMENT PERIODS)

Payment

- University housing with veteran-specific payment plans, if applicable
- Payment grace period for students using the GI Bill or other veteran education benefits
- Participate in the Yellow Ribbon Program (IF PRIVATE INSTITUTION OR HAVE OUT OF STATE FEES FOR STATE INSTITUTION)
- Emergency relief fund for veterans going through hardship

Student engagement

- On-campus clubs or associations for military students or veterans
- Online/virtual clubs or associations for military students or veterans
- Affiliation with Student Veterans of America
    - Student travel to attend Student Veterans of America conferences or veteran organization trips.
- Off-campus community events
- Involvement with external veteran organizations (e.g., American Legion, VFW, AMVETS)
- Military-affiliated students or veterans on the Student Government Association Board
- Military dependent student groups/clubs
- On-campus American Legion Post
- Engagement with community stakeholders (through events, initiatives, etc.)
- Hosting Veterans Day program or promotion at the food venues

Credit for Prior Learning

- Award college credit for passing scores on CLEP, DSST exams – free electives/specific courses – or participate with ICHE JST recommendations
- Award college credit for military training and experience according to the ACE recommendation guidelines

Staff

- Offer training for your staff and/or faculty to support military students and veterans
    - Information incorporating military-specific disability or health issues
- Have a tracking system to indicate who is a veteran/military-affiliated staff/faculty member
- Make the information available to the campus community (faculty staff)

- Mental health counselor who is a veteran or military affiliated

Student Services

- Mental health counselor who is a veteran or military affiliated
- Virtual Veterans Center
- Opportunities for veterans to receive extended test time
- Formal mentoring or advising program (where current military or veteran faculty, staff, alumni, or community members mentor current military-affiliated students)
- Engagement with families of veterans
- Single point of contact regarding VA disability, health care, and education benefits
- Veteran advocate to assist veterans in communicating with faculty and staff
- VA work/study opportunities
- Access to a VA VITAL or Vet Success program
- Veterans Alumni Association
- Specific items for veterans that graduate (i.e., stoles, cords, T-shirts, coins)
- Campus/Social networking events planned specifically for veterans
- Activities to help military students integrate with non-veteran groups
- Hosting veteran events on campus (e.g., luncheons, veteran appreciation sporting events, veteran tickets for special events)
- Full-time veteran counselors or advisors on staff
- Dedicated veteran's engagement specialist
- Free one-on-one tutoring for veterans
- Veteran peer support counseling
- Veteran technology rentals (e.g., CAC readers, tablets, laptops)
- Veteran computer lab with education software provided (e.g., MATLAB, Multisim, AutoCAD)
- USO-style lounge (including amenities such as free snacks and beverages, television, video games)
- Veterans group study area/room
- Academic support/tutoring
- Academic advising
- Study skills workshops
- Financial aid counseling
- Career planning services
- Mental health counseling
- Assistance finding work-study opportunities
- Assistance finding non-work-study employment
- Assistance integrating with non-veteran groups and services
- Transition assistance
- Accommodations for military students with disabilities
- Veteran/Military-affiliated orientation

Below is a list of questions we feel should be looked at when awarding someone a Purple Star designation.

Deployment

1. Policy regarding military absence (i.e., if a military student leaves a class due to deployment, training, or other required military orders)
2. The ability for students to return without penalty following deployment
3. Priority enrollment for veteran and military students (IF THERE ARE TIERED ENROLLMENT PERIODS)

Career

4. Specialized career guidance counseling or other programs to help military students identify careers to pursue
5. Industry-employer relationship programs available to active-duty military students and veterans to assist with post-graduate employment outcomes

Admissions/Enrollment

6. (IF THERE IS AN APPLICATION FEE) Waive admission application fee for military students and veterans
7. (IF THERE IS OUT-OF-STATE TUITION) In-state tuition without residency requirements for military
8. (IF THERE IS MINIMUM GPA OR SAT/ACT SCORES FOR ADMISSION) Waive the minimum GPA or SAT/ACT scores for military students and veterans

Payment

9. Tuition and fee program that matches DOD tuition assistance
10. Tuition discounts specifically for military students and veterans
11. Admissions counseling specifically for veterans, Reservist/National Guard, and their familiar members
12. University housing with veteran-specific payment plans, if applicable
13. Payment grace period for students using the GI Bill or other veteran education benefits
14. Participate in the Yellow Ribbon Program

Student Engagement

15. On-campus clubs or associations for military students or veterans
16. Online/virtual clubs or associations for military students or veterans
17. Off-campus community events
18. Involvement with external veteran organizations (e.g., American Legion, VFW, AMVETS).
19. Military-affiliated students or veterans on the student government association board
20. Military dependent student groups/clubs

Credit for prior learning

21. Award college credit for passing scores on CLEP, DSST exams
22. Award college credit for military training and experience according to the ACE recommendation guidelines or participate with ICHE JST recommendations

Staff

23. Offer training for your staff and/or faculty to support military students and veterans
    - Information incorporating military-specific disability or health issues
    - Provide military cultural competency training
24. Have a tracking system to indicate who is a veteran/military-affiliated staff/faculty member
25. Make the information available to the campus community (faculty and staff)
26. Mental health counselor who is a veteran or military affiliated

Student Services

27. Virtual Veterans Center
28. Veterans Lounge – gathering space for veterans
    - To encourage peer support
29. Formal mentoring or advising program (where current military or veteran faculty, staff, alumni, or community members mentor current military-affiliated students)
30. Engagement with families of veterans
31. Single point of contact regarding VA disability, health care, and education benefits
32. Veteran advocate to assist veterans in communicating with faculty and staff
33. VA work/study opportunities
34. Access to a VA VITAL or Vet Success program
35. Veterans Alumni Association
36. Specific items for veterans that graduate (i.e., stoles, cords, T-shirts, coins)
37. Campus/Social networking events planned specifically for veterans
38. Hosting veteran events on campus (e.g., luncheons, veteran appreciation sporting events, Veteran tickets for special events)
39. Host Veterans Day program or promotion at the food venues
40. Full-time veteran counselors or advisors on staff
41. Dedicated veteran's engagement specialist
42. Free one-on-one tutoring for veterans

43. Veteran computer lab with education software provided (e.g., MATLAB, Multisim, AutoCAD)
44. Academic advising specifically for military students
45. Career planning services specifically for military students
46. Mental health counseling specifically for military students
47. Veteran/Military-affiliated orientation specifically for military students

Additional recommendations
Utilize the above list regarding Purple Star designation.

- There needs to be some kind of ranking system created that takes into account the smaller colleges may be doing great things for veterans.
  - From a customer standpoint a Gold, Silver, Bronze separation may look like other schools are inferior to another and may be applying an inadvertent "value" to a college.
    - Tiered
      - Gold – "yes" response to ¾ or more of the questions
      - Silver – "yes" response to ½ of the questions
      - Bronze – "yes" response to ¼ of the questions
    -OR-

- o Tiered with student veteran population taken into account with how many "yes" responses are recorded.
  - o Possible – small, medium, large
- When creating the Purple Star designation survey please take into account FY or calendar year, when requesting data.
- CHE may want to evaluate the original survey questions to determine if the survey needs to be sent out again with university information for tracking as well as adding any necessary questions to the survey that may have been missed.