Veterans in Higher Education Collaborative

Hosted by

Columbia University Center for Veteran Transition and Integration (CVTI)

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On January 31st, 2018, representatives from 1 9 colleges, universities, and agencies gathered together at Columbia University to explore how to promote collaboration among institutions of higher learning in supporting student veterans in their transitions, and beyond.

The arc of the full-day working session moved through surfacing challenges and opportunities, into crafting design questions around specific problem spaces, and prototyping possible solutions. The day was designed to model collaborative framing and problem solving, with each exercise surfacing key data points, now synthesized and captured in this report.

One of the most notable findings from this inaugural Collaborative was a consensus agreement around the need to transform the culture of higher education as it pertains to "non-traditional students" in general, and student veterans in particular. Over the course of the day, participants identified many specific manifestations of the need, referencing specific areas like admissions, housing, and campus life more broadly.

The purpose of this summary is to share discussions from the first Veterans in Higher Education Collaborative to further facilitate interaction between institutions in attendance and also to recruit others to work on better recruiting and supporting student veterans in their transition process, during their studies, and beyond.

We owe a debt of gratitude to the remarkable professionals who joined us in laying a strong foundation for progress yet to come. The following institutions were represented:

Borough of Manhattan Community College; New York, New York
Columbia University; New York, New York
Dartmouth College; Hanover, New Hampshire
Department of Defense, Transition to Veterans Program Office, Alexandria, Virginia
Duke University; Durham, North Carolina
Georgetown University; Washington, District of Columbia
Northeastern University; Boston, Massachusetts
Purdue University; West Lafayette, Indiana
Saddleback College; Mission Viejo, California
San Diego State University; San Diego California
Syracuse University; Syracuse, New York
Tidewater Commjnity College; South Hampton Roads, Virginia
United States Army, Soldier for Life, Arlington, Virginia
University of Georgia; Athens, Georgia
University of Houston; Houston, Texas
University of Southern California; Los Angeles, California
University of Washington Tacoma; Tacoma, Washington
Vassar College; Poughkeepsie, New York
Washington University in Saint Louis; Saint Louis, Missouri

Background

The Department of Defense Transition Assistance Program (TAP) provides transition assistance, information, training, and services to eligible transitioning service members to prepare them to be career ready when they separate, retire, or are released from active duty and return to live and serve in the civilian community, whether pursuing additional education, finding a job in the public or private sector, starting their own business or another form of self-employment, or return to school or to an existing job in the case of eligible National Guard/Reserve Component service members. Each year, over 200,000 service members transition from active duty service and return to our civilian communities. Recognizing significant gaps in their preparation for this major life event, the federal government established an interagency partnership led by the Departments of Defense, Labor, and Veterans Affairs and supported by the Departments of Education and Homeland Security, the Small Business Administration, the Office of Personnel Management, and the five military services. In 2012, the interagency partnership begin a holistic and continuing redesign of TAP. Three primary pillars of transition preparation were established: Employment (to include apprenticeships and certifications), Entrepreneurship, and Higher Education. Much of the motivation driving the redesign rested with concerns surrounding unemployment and underemployment. Correspondingly, much of the efforts during the first few years were dedicated to the same.

In 2017, federal transition assistance strategy placed greater emphasis on researching and assessing veteran access to and participation in higher education. Fully recognizing that there was much to learn and relatively little firsthand information, a national conversation began with collaborative information gathering discussions with higher education institutions around the country. The discussions surfaced active programs, initiatives, and processes to support and encourage veteran and transitioning service member enrollment along with pockets of collaboration among institutions. Associated with those positive observations, was a general consensus that increased collaboration and sharing between institutions has the potential for significant advancement of best practices on a broad scale. As such, the idea to encourage a coalition of the willing to share best practices, innovations, and ideas presented itself as a worthy endeavor.

This idea led to collaboration with Columbia University to host the first Veterans in Higher Education Collaborative where leading institutions in Veterans Programs could meet, discuss, strategize, and shape efforts supporting veterans and transitioning service members' pursuit of higher education.

Initial Pre-Collaborative Poll

The Veterans in Higher Education Collaborative design process began with an initial poll shared with representatives from each of the prospective participating institutions. Responses from the pre-event poll made it clear that while all participant institutions face unique obstacles, many challenges are shared across the ecosystem. Almost all respondents acknowledged a need to develop a process around "non-traditional" students, including student veterans; accurately described by one poll respondent as "We continue to struggle with adapting our educational model, which is designed around traditional-age students, to the veterans that matriculate."

When asked to identify just one area in which they'd like to improve veteran-focused programming, most participants noted multiple significant structural challenges across the student veteran matriculation cycle. One participant responded with: "Identification, recruitment, and a viable academic pathway for our student veterans to succeed."

Participants uniformly recognized the value and potential of increased collaboration, while acknowledging the complex interrelationships and the fragmented nature of the system of stakeholders charged with supporting student veterans from separation with the military, through matriculation and beyond. Here are some of their thoughts:

On the current state of collaboration

"Colleagues are typically more than willing to support and assist as needed, but this typically leads to a disjointed and non-comprehensive approach."

"Despite external rankings, (e.g., US News and World, Military Friendly, Best for Veterans, Top Colleges and Universities) agreed upon mechanisms within higher education to identify good practice and systematically collaborate across the nation remain weak."

"Consistent collaboration is not built into the fabric of higher education regarding our work with veterans."

On obstacles to collaboration

"Obstacles include smaller level of resources; lack of awareness of veterans' experiences, characteristics, and needs by college administrators and faculty; and lack of research available for best practice guidelines."

"The biggest obstacle is parochialism. Often, inter-institution and intra-institution partnerships and collaborative have faltered due to individual ownership of the student population or even IHL competition in the marketplace."

"Different institutions have different priorities and commitments when it comes to student veterans. Additionally, resources vary and so some institutions can provide very robust programs and services while others cannot."

Goals

Overall, polling responses reflected a strong mandate from participating institutions to use the Collaborative to move the needle on opportunities to support student veterans in an open, innovative setting. However, it was also clear that these institutions have differing, specific needs and are in different phases of development of their veteran-focused programming. Based on this understanding, coupled with the knowledge that this would be the first time the institutions were brought together, the following goals for the Collaborative were established:

- Surface shared needs, challenges and opportunities
- Share knowledge and methods with others working in higher education/transition space
- Identify opportunities to develop shared best practices, tools and resources

These goals were established with the expectation that they would surface clear insight that would inform next steps. As previously indicated, the purpose of this summary is to present and share that insight.

The Working Session
Part I: 5x Why

The Collaborative began with an exercise called 5x Why. This exercise helps participants to dig deeply into a specific question, by asking it five times in a row. This has a dual effect of both encouraging active listening, and forcing participants to move beyond superficial answers. The exercise also provides us with an initial understanding of each participant's intention for the collaboration. The question participants asked one another was "why did you come here today?"

The top reasons participants gave for attending the Collaborative were: learning from others, meeting new people, building a network, and sharing their personal perspective or experience.

27%   learn what the group has to offer

18%   network with new and like-minded people

18%   share specific point of view on education, service, or other unique perspective

10%   engaging with DoD point of view

10%   find or feel motivation from collaboration with a like-minded cohort

8%   teach others, contribute something back to the group

8%   report ideas or concepts from the session back to home organizations

PartII: WorldCafe

Next participants engaged in an activity called a World Cafe, a lightly facilitated, small group conversation in three rounds. This exercise is designed to surface and cross-pollinate ideas in an open forum, enhancing a group's capacity for creative and collaborative thinking. Each round of conversation is about 15 minutes long, driven by a prompt and takes place at a table in groups of 4-6 people. After each round, participants move to new tables, bringing the unique perspectives, ideas, and thoughts surfaced in the prior round to be folded into the next round of discussion.

> *"The key here is, how do we work together and turn this event into a catalyst?"*

World Cafe Prompts

Prompts for the world cafe follow a consistent structure across the three rounds. This structure is designed to build to conclusions to be used for further design work. The first round always asks an empathy-based question, rooted in a story derived from participants' personal experience. The second round focuses on challenges associated with aspects of the task at hand, and the third round addresses opportunities. The prompts for the world cafe during the higher education collaborative were as follows.

> Round 1. Share a story about a time when the higher education experience failed student veterans, and why.
>
> Round 2. What challenges exist that make it difficult to design an effective student veteran experience, and why?
>
> Round 3. If you could design a new student veteran experience, what would it include and why?

World Cafe Check Out: Surfacing Challenges and Opportunities

We closed the world cafe with a check out exercise asking participants to identify the most significant opportunities and challenges that arose during the course of the activity. In the process of analyzing the data, we identified six different categories that encapsulated the challenges and opportunities surfaced in conversation. The system of categories was not designed to be exclusive, as many ideas fell into multiple categories. Those categories are:

- **Transforming Culture:** shifting general social understanding of how veterans are perceived, information available about veterans (or schools), and different types of social organization
- **Building Coalitions:** references groups outside of the main collaborative organization or when an idea states the need for additional people or organizations to contribute
- **Creating Momentum:** references the work done in this initial collaboration; different from building coalitions in that does not make mention of external groups

- **Working with Students:** makes specific mention of students, which may include traditional or non-traditional
- **Working with Administrators and Staff:** makes specific mention of school officials, such as administrators, teachers, or other staff
- **Gathering Information:** statements about research, interviewing others, or asking questions; different from building coalitions as it lacks collective action

In addition we further divided the opportunities and challenges into subcategories based on whether the ideas expressed were strategic or tactical, and whether they addressed a systemic issue – requiring the participation of more than one organization – or an issue that a single party could address individually.

Opportunities to design an effective student veteran experience

Opportunities to design an effective student veteran experience are spread widely across a range of focus areas. The opportunities that participants identified in the World Cafe checkout were, in a majority of cases, related to the need to transform culture (35%). Tied for second were working with administrators and staff (26%), and building coalitions (26%), while creating momentum (21%), and working with students (21%) were a close third.

35% Transforming Culture

26% Working with Administrators, Faculty and Staff

26% Building Coalitions

21% CreatingMomentum

21% Working with Students

Opportunities to transform culture leaned heavily towards the strategic (67%) and systemic (67%), with 50% of responses marked as both. Subject matter emphasis within this focus area was three-fold: "Leverage student veterans as "high-value" assets to campus community and alumni," to recognize the entire student veteran "life cycle" of which transition is one specific part, and to "(re)connect society at large with the military affiliated populations."

Attendees identified opportunities to work with administrators and staff in 26% of their responses, split fairly evenly between the strategic and the tactical. These responses tended to focus more on areas of opportunity

> *"Veterans have built up skills that make them exceptional students – discipline, work ethic and focus on task."*

that individual parties could execute, but are universally applicable, such as delivering a "holistic orientation for students, faculty and staff on the needs of student veterans." One participant

noted the importance of "developing something that works for your campus, versus buying into what others have said are 'must haves.'"

Equally important are opportunities around building coalitions, which participants expressed across many forms. Given the consensus around the importance of collaboration in the higher education space, the high level of fragmentation and absence of coherent best practices, it's no surprise so many ideas surfaced in this area. Participants highlighted collaboration between institutions of higher learning, between the DoD and academia, and among the various military branches and academia as key areas to focus on.

Opportunities related to creating momentum took a number of different forms. Participants acknowledged opportunities like "getting vet programs on the advancement agenda" and "building partnerships between DoD, community colleges, and four year schools so veterans can transfer between each more successfully."

Opportunities: Strategic vs Tactical

68% Strategic
(national/institutional)

    65% Systemic
    35% Single Party

32% Tactical
(localized/small group)

    73% Single Party
    27% Systemic

Strategic opportunities abounded, and focused slightly more on issues around transforming culture (35%), and were overwhelmingly systemic, i.e., requiring multi-party collaboration to make change). The dominance of strategic opportunities indicates a desire to address large, complex problems, while simultaneously recognizing the urgency in doing so. Given the fragmented state of practices around veterans in higher education, it's no wonder that so many strategic opportunities referred to the entire system, as opposed to single parties.

Among strategic opportunities, following transforming culture (30%); creating momentum (26%), building coalitions (22%), working with administrators/staff (22%), and working with student veterans (22%) were mostly tied for second place. This spread of focus is also encouraging at this stage in the evolution of the collaborative, as the group has just begun to explore what's possible together. One participant crisply articulated the need to build coalitions, saying "We can't solve all the challenges without involvement from service members and service branches. We need to educate both and work collaboratively."

Tactical opportunities were fewer in number[1], focused heavily on single parties, and emphasized the need to transform culture (36%), alongside working with administrators/staff (36%) over other focus areas. This combination presents a strong and valuable argument that the most direct route to transform higher education culture may well be with administrators, faculty and staff (at least in the eyes of those administrators, faculty and staff in attendance).

[1] Important to note also that at this stage in the events of the day we had not yet started to focus on actionable ideas, which could be responsible for participants having less of a focus on tactics.

Challenges in designing an effective student veteran experience

Most notable when evaluating the list of challenges surfaced by participants is the exceptional weight of the participant's identification of a need to transform culture around student veterans. Unlike the list of opportunities that were well distributed across a range of focus areas, the need to transform culture was identified as, at 51% of responses, the most significant challenge in designing an effective student veteran experience by far and away.

Many participants made observations pointing to a "university monoculture focused relentlessly on traditional 18-22 year old students" that does not create space for diverse populations with other kinds of experience. The aforementioned "monoculture" refers not only to integration into campus life, but also to the admissions and academic support processes, where practices and timelines are designed to suit matriculating high school students to the exclusion of "non-traditional" students, including veterans. Finally, there remains a considerable need to dispel pernicious and pervasive myths around veterans being "high risk" as opposed to "high value."

> *"The "veteran" experience is unique to the veteran. Many programs describe a "one size fits all" approach to veterans, but we all have diverse needs and experiences."*

In a not-so-close second place, at 17%, most challenges in working with students involve bridging gaps between military and civilian culture, and as such still closely relate to transforming culture. Participants emphasized the idea that transitioning service members need to be "supported in the process of selecting an institute of higher learning, as well as shifting their mindsets from military to civilian culture" while being supported by the system.

Though, at first glance, the weight of transforming culture might seem a great a burden to bear, it highlights the most significant area of potential for this Collaborative. By working together to devise and launch initiatives across a wide range of institutions of higher learning, both in terms of type of organization and geography, we have the opportunity to overcome shared obstacles as a group, and vastly improve upon the design and execution of programs, policies and procedures that serve student veterans, nationwide.

Challenges: Strategic vs. Tactical

74% Strategic
(national/institutional)
54% Single Party
46% Systemic

26% Tactical
(localized/small group)
67% Systemic
33% Single Party

Of the challenges surfaced during the World Cafe, 74% were strategic as opposed to tactical and overwhelmingly focused around transforming culture. In these areas, participant ideas centered around a lack of understanding on how to create university culture that recognizes and values the experience of "non-traditional students," noting "a structural or systemic failure to fully embrace and integrate this population to our institutions – and no easy or obvious way to do so." However, participants also noted many challenges within single party areas. When taken as a mandate to develop single party solutions to these challenges, there's a clear opportunity to scale those solutions beyond the individual institution.

Tactical challenges were in the minority, at only 26%. Those that did arise were largely focused around shifting the bureaucratic process to better support the needs of non-traditional students, like student veterans. Participants noted specifics like "creating admissions metrics," streamlining the "hand-off between military and educational bureaucracies," and designing "policies and procedures that do not run counter to the demands that vets must follow" in order to use their benefits.

Part III: Crafting Design Questions

Building on the challenges and opportunities surfaced during the world cafe, participants worked together in small groups to develop design questions, based on a "how might we" structure. The idea behind this exercise, was to go through the practice of identifying and framing problem spaces as a group and use the time to flex our creative muscles around these complex topics.

Each group reviewed the challenges and opportunities they surfaced individually at the close of the World Cafe, and then worked together to draft design questions. Then participants rotated around the room for a round of non-judgmental feedback. Non-judgmental feedback is a constructive feedback practice wherein an idea is presented to a group, and the group then offers feedback on the idea in the form of questions structured to help improve upon the idea presented. The person presenting the idea is not allowed to answer the questions in the moment, but is responsible for capturing and using them to refine the idea they presented.

Overall, the design questions listed below are more strategic than tactical in scope, and they focus predominantly on the need to transform culture - unsurprising given the preponderance of this theme in previous exercises. Questions five and six do a particularly good job of illustrating how to whittle down a broad problem space into specifics – one of the best ways to identify a well-structured design question.

In the design of this exercise, it was not our expectation that the final outputs would necessarily drive next steps. However, the design questions crafted by participants were quite strong. As such, we thought it valuable to share not only the final design questions, but also the non-judgmental feedback questions that contributed to their refinement. These questions are located in Appendix A at the end of this document.

These design questions were then used to direct ideation in the Prototyping Cafe, and can be found below in the summary of that exercise.

Part IV: Prototyping Cafe

The Prototyping Cafe is a very quick ideation sprint that built on the design questions crafted in the previous exercise. It's designed to move participants quickly from the strategic into the tactical, in order to support group ideation around tangible ideas executable across a wide range of organizations. As with the design questions, the ideas presented in this exercise, though not necessarily intended to be implemented as is, are strong first steps into building on the opportunities surfaced earlier in the day. These early ideas can help the Collaborative make progress towards solving some of the larger structural challenges student veterans face in higher education.

Participants broke into seven groups, each one addressing one design question from the previous exercise. For this exercise, groups needed to identify a specific problem they were interested in solving, develop a concept and indicate the user group for each concept.

Overall, the groups focused far more on tactics than strategies, and leaned towards single party concepts. Transforming culture was still very much at the top of mind as all concepts presented contained some element intended to do just that.

GROUP 1

Question.   How might we establish progress that creates inclusive awareness about military-related persons for civilian populations as programs to interject into the civilian population that recognizes the distinction and unique characteristics of any group by eliminating preconceived stereotypes?

Problem.   Misconceptions, lack of understanding and lack of integration between student veterans and the rest of campus communities

Concept.   We want to integrate student veterans and "traditional" students by seeking natural, genuine opportunities for them to connect.

Users.   Student veterans and wider student community

Examples.   Playwriting at Syracuse. Student veterans sat down with theater students to tell their life stories, and they wrote a play. The veterans were cast as themselves in the performance, and was staged in NYC.

              At the University of Washington, Tacoma, student veterans were looking for a unique way to fundraise. They tried trapshooting, which played to the student vets strengths. The public loved it, and it brought veterans and community together. People said they were willing to pay $150 to shoot even though the cost is only $5.

GROUP 2

Question.   How might we create a framework centered on the principles of individualized advising that facilitates the transition into Higher Education?

Problem.   Lack of individualized and timely advising for life after service. Lack of portfolio that keeps track of milestones and achievements across the course of service members careers

Concept.   Create portal for ePortfolio for transitioning service members(could be a tab on the eBenefits account) that would include key milestones like goals, achievements, awards, etc.

Users.   Service members, DoD, VA

GROUP 3

Question.   With regard to admissions (enrollment services) and academic support, how might we:
a) create military cultural competence among those critical to student veteran success
b) strengthen / refine transition efforts from the service into higher education

Problem.   Lack of awareness of veteran needs among administrators, faculty and staff

Concept a.   Develop an ongoing training program using existing training modules, led by Veterans Services Director, supported by additional professional development, as appropriate

Users.   Campus community

Concept b.   Create an interest inventory for service members while they're still in the military, so that they can identify interests early on, and use their benefits on programs that are right for them.

Users.   Service members and DoD (as a potential partner)

GROUP 4

Question.   How might we change some of the negative perceptions of veterans (all vets have PTSD, all vets have been in intense combat) from "high-risk" to "high-value" (skills, leadership, comfort with failure) and the specialized skills they could bring to the university community?

Problem.   Pervasive negative stereotypes of veterans

Concept.   Three phase research-based approach that would conduct workshops and training for university faculty, staff and administrators to dispel common negative myths around veterans.

Users.   Faculty, staff and administrators

Phase 1: Initialization
- Surveys, Data Collection
- Space
- Facilitators
- Content
- Multi-modality
- Subject Matter Experts
- Mandatory vs optional

Phase 2: Implementation
- Workshops
- Multi-media exhibits
- "Stand alone" rather than part of larger inclusion workshop

Phase 3: Education
- Post-surveys
- Interviews
- Revisit Phase 1
- Surveys on individual components (workshops, videos)

GROUP 5

Question.   How might a range of stakeholders call for and participate in the redesign of the Common Application to recognize the values of non-traditional students, such as veterans--and then track outcomes?

Problem.   The Common Application sets up a barrier to admission for veteran students. How do we overcome those barriers? What are the metrics used to evaluate high school students? Service is disregarded.

Users.   Admission folks, and the VA

Concept.   Three part approach to address the problem
1. Articulate the veteran experience as a key component of institutional diversity.
2. Expand The Common Application to include room for students to describe their additional experience, or post letters from commanding officers.
3. Create other pathways for veterans to get to admission--those pathways have to be funded by VA benefits. Pathways might be agreements with community colleges, or other courses.

GROUP 6

Question. In order to influence higher education practices how might we design a shareable database to assess veteran outcomes, including: success in degree completion; transition to career path; positive psychological adjustments; stable community adjustments?

Problem. Proactive risk reduction for vulnerable veterans using GI Bill benefits as part of community integration

Concept. Consortium of institutions collaborate to conduct longitudinal study of service members as they are enter DoD's Transition Assistance Program through transition to employment (~10 year study), including access to and use of campus programs, practices, and policies.

Users. Congress, colleges, and executive administrators

Concerns. There are data emerging at population levels for outcomes on how veterans are doing. But we don't know what higher ed is producing, or what things are actually affecting that impact. We also do not know about vulnerable populations. Linking existing databases is good for knowing how much or whom, but not why. Understanding the underlying "why" requires a longitudinal approach.

GROUP 7

Question. How might we create a coherent national voice and national organizing structure focused on enabling student veterans to realize their potential? How do we empower this voice to be influential and to matter in guiding key decisions?

Problem. There is no unified structure among a diverse group of stakeholders (at the federal and local levels) that will have funding and accountability to create a process to change the dialogue.

Concept. Redefine the meaning of transition and create a structure for higher education spaces to empower veterans.

Users. Student veterans, higher education institutions, DoD, VA

Part V: Workshop Check Out

To close the day, we conducted one final exercise – the workshop check out. The check out is one of the most important parts of any working session, as it allows participants to reflect on what they have learned, share key takeaways, and contemplate next steps in an open setting. This particular check out was structured around two questions:

1. What is one thing you'll take from today and integrate into your day-to-day work?
2. What is one next step you would like to see advance out of this convening?

Integration into Day to Day

Answers to the first question were divided in very interesting ways. At fairly close splits with regard to strategic (57%) vs tactical (43%), and systemic (43%) vs single party (57%), it is clear that participants finished out their time together thinking broadly about the challenges and opportunities at hand.

Also notable is a significant focus on building coalitions (36%), far greater in proportion than any other exercise. Though transforming culture (21%) is still a prominent part of the takeaways here, it seems participants rolled their previous emphasis in this area into a more practical approach that pushes on the other focus areas to also do the job of changing culture. Creating momentum, as an idea to integrate into people's day to day, also caught a good bit of attention.

In almost equal numbers participants noted a shift in thinking about veterans and their needs, as well as a shift in thinking about their approach to their work. On the latter, one participant noted: "the value of identifying critical challenges as a group and suggesting paths to solutions," while another acknowledged "the prevailing need for continued collaboration to address the issues in this space." It also proved helpful to participants to spend time in a room with their peers, facilitating the "realization that ALL other institutions are facing the same challenges."

A number of takeaways indicated that participants had shifted their approach to supporting student veterans, based on learnings from the Collaborative. One participant said they would integrate an understanding of "the importance of recognizing the diversity within the veteran population, and adapting integrative community-building programs to enhance connection between individuals and society," while another said they would "look for ways to empower my student veterans and other military-connected students."

<u>Next Steps</u>

In responses to the question on next steps, 75% of participants referenced the need to create momentum within the group coming out of this inaugural event, with palpable enthusiasm.

"We had amazing ideas presented and we cannot let the momentum falter, so let's plan NOW for the next Veterans in Higher Education Collaborative event, and bring in additional stakeholders."

"The need to meet with this group on a more regular basis – quarterly would be perfect. We can ill afford to lose our momentum and the great work we have done today. Email and Skype are not as effective."

Participants also noted the need to move forward into a next step quickly to ensure continued engagement, suggesting "continued conversation and perhaps some movement on at least one of the challenges discussed, so that people stay motivated."

Participants surfaced specific ideas around exactly how to move forward. "Next step would be to unpack each area of support and create symposia/conferences specific to that area (i.e., admissions, community integration, student life, academic affairs, etc)." Another participant suggested we "create an online forum for participants of this collaborative to continue the dialogue online and share information, resources, and best practices."

In Conclusion

On the whole, the results of this first Collaborative represent a very strong step towards creating an engaged group of stakeholders dedicated to supporting student veterans throughout their higher education experience. It is clear that this is a complex question, with many issues at stake that will require both individual and collective efforts to address in a meaningful way.

We began the day with some consensus around the need to transform the culture of higher education as it pertains to transitioning service members and veterans. We explored that consensus together through the World Cafe, by crafting design questions together, and ultimately in prototyping. As we moved through the exercises, the data indicates that participants began at a strategic level, becoming ever more tactical as they moved through the day.

Participants perspectives around collaboration also shifted notably. The 5x Why data indicated that participants came without necessarily expecting to find a truly collaborative environment, with the bulk of reasons pertaining to curiosity around what the group had to offer, 18% of answers pertaining to networking with new and like minded people, but only 10% to feel motivation from a cohort. However, at the end of the day, 89% of next steps presented systemic ideas, requiring the commitment of multiple parties working together – a clear shift towards a strongly collaborative mindset.

APPENDIX A

1. How might we establish progress that creates inclusive awareness about military-related persons for civilian populations as programs to interject into the civilian population that recognizes the distinction and unique characteristics of any group by eliminating preconceived stereotypes?

   • Is higher education the place that needs the awareness and/or has the resources to deliver?
   • Is it from a broad level of society where civilian/military are sequestered?
   • Where is the awareness going to start? At the macro level?
   • What is "awareness"? Is it the same for all aspects of the populations identified?
   • What does success look like? How is it measured?
   • Would awareness actually change anything?
   • Does awareness change behavior?

2. How might we create a framework centered on the principles of individualized advising that facilitates the transition into Higher Education?

   • What is the key need?
   • Who owns the process?
   • Would it be automated? Face to face? Tiered?
   • Intended to educate and/or assess? Combo of both?
   • How holistic would this process be? Professional? Social?   Personal?
   • How might we protect personal information?
   • How do we measure success?
   • Who funds it?
   • How do we garner buy-in from the service member/veteran and those administering?

3. With regard to admissions (enrollment services) and academic support, how might we:
   a. Create military cultural competence among those critical to student veteran success?
   b. Strengthen and refine transition efforts coming out of services and into higher education?

   • What's important about student vets that everyone needs to know?
   • How well organized and involved is the student vet population on campus?
   • How much information is shared with senior leadership?
   • Why is it necessary?
   • How do you reasonably achieve level knowledge?
   • How do you define better? What is the education we want for them?
   • When in the student life-cycle? Prior to or once on campus?
   • What defines higher education?
   • How do we deliver the information?

4. How might we change some of the negative perceptions of veterans (all vets have PTSD, all vets have been in intense combat, etc), from "high-risk" to "high-value" (skills, leadership, comfort with failure, etc.), and the specialized skills they could bring to the university community?

   • What is the "current" perception? Public perception? University perception?
   • Define terms: high risk? high value?

- Change perception on both sides: Vets and Citizens?
- Just students? Faculty as well?
- Does it matter, for vet success, what people think of vets?
- How does this connect with current diversity models?
- Do we need to first change vet identity?
- What are best practices?
- What are universities doing about this?

5. How might a range of stakeholders call for and participate in the redesign of the Common Application to recognize the values of non-traditional students, such as veterans--and then track outcomes?

- Are there agencies that could assist potential candidates in filling out the common application?
- Could you engage colleges and universities that have non-traditional students to participate in the redesign? (including student veterans)
- Why do you think redesigning the common app will result in college/universities actually accepting non-traditional students?
- Can you better engage student veterans who work in higher education in the process?
- Who makes the decision to redesign the common app?
- Are there other things that prevent veterans from applying besides the common app?

6. In order to influence higher education practices how might we design a shareable database to assess veteran outcomes, including: success in degree completion; transition to career path; positive psychological adjustments; stable community adjustments?

- How does the data inform modifying practices? Does this depend on institute?
- What practices? Student support? Others?
- How do you id universal outcomes?
- How do you get industry to share data?
- How do you get institutions to share?
- How do you leverage data that is already there?
- How do you collect the data? Report?
- Where would it live? Who owns it?
- Who is a customer of it?

7. How might we create a coherent national voice and national organizing structure focused on enabling student veterans to realize their potential? How do we empower this voice to be influential and to matter in guiding key decisions?

- Are there other VSOs focused on achieving this (like Student Veterans of America)?
- How do we even create a baseline of information among key higher education stakeholders?
- How do you build bridges among all of the various conversations and organizations?
- It's a good question that could bring needed attention."
- How do we elevate the conversation to the same level of interest as other identity groups (e.g. LGBTQ)?
- Who starts. Who has to move the needle first?
- How can ROTC programs be a stronger and more engaged component of this effort?