

Veteran Student Life Needs Assessment: Demographics

Overview

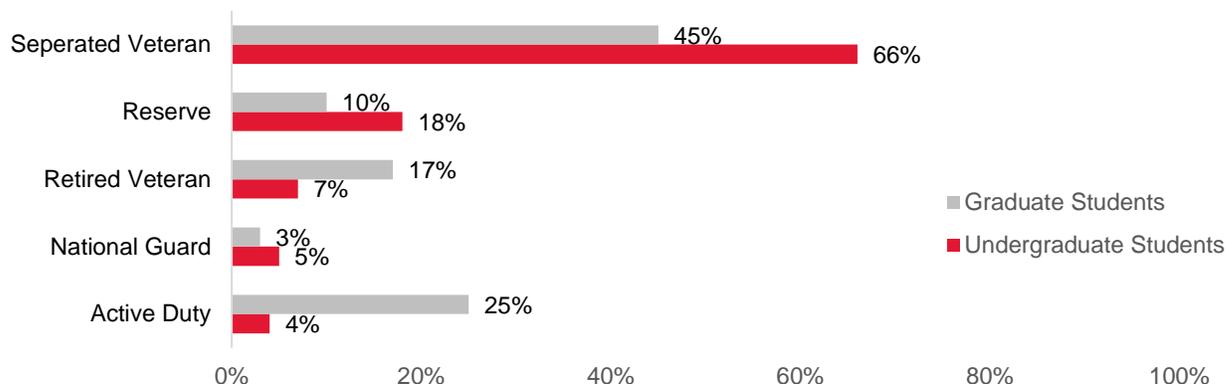
Veteran Student Life (VSL) provides opportunities for University of Maryland Veteran and military-affiliated students to connect and build community, locate needed resources, and advocates for student Veteran issues. In fall 2017, a survey was disseminated to all Veteran and military-affiliated students at the University of Maryland (n = 1,013); 206 (20%) useable responses were collected. Only degree-seeking students are included in the analysis below (n = 203).

Highlights

Examining the needs of University of Maryland student Veterans regarding financial experiences and stress produced a number of highlights further detailed in this report:

- Over three-in-ten respondents (31%) indicated they are either a Reservist, currently on Active Duty, or a member of the National Guard. These students may be called to deploy at any moment, resulting in an immediate withdrawal from their academic coursework.
- Over 75% of undergraduate respondents and 97% of graduate respondents indicated their GPA was above a 3.1.
- The majority of those who have served in the military before attending UMD report being deployed at some point during their military career (65%). Of those who indicated they had been deployed, almost three quarters (74%) reported that they had been deployed to a combat zone.
- The vast majority (90%) of undergraduate student Veterans coming to the University of Maryland indicated they are transferring from another institution.
- When asked if they are applying leadership skills learned in the military to their college experience, a majority agreed (77%).
- A small percentage of undergraduate respondents either did not identify as either male or female or chose not to disclose their gender (2%).

Military Status

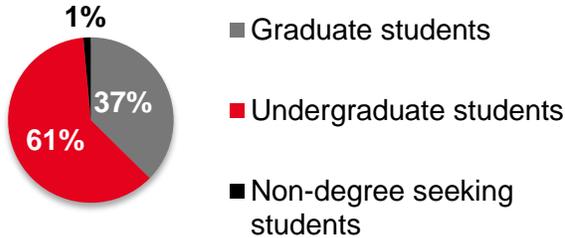


Findings

Academic Demographics

Most of the respondents to the Needs Assessment indicated they were undergraduate students, the majority of whom reported they were juniors (20%) or seniors (24%). Non-degree seeking students have been excluded from the remainder of the report.

Educational Objective



For undergraduate respondents, the most commonly reported majors were business related majors, followed by the STEM fields (Engineering, Computer Science, other Sciences). There are also a group of respondents who indicated they are currently undeclared. Of the graduate student respondents, many reported to be pursuing business degrees.

Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

In terms of their academic success, respondents indicated they had a high GPA. Over 75% of undergraduate respondents and 97% of graduate respondents indicated their GPA was above a 3.1.

Undergraduate Student GPA

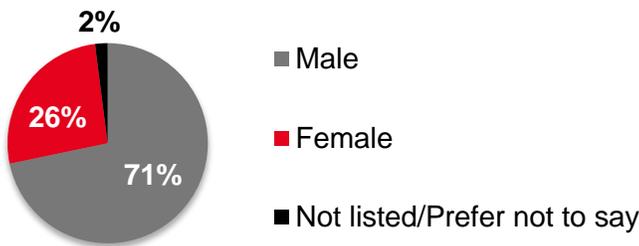


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General Demographics

The average age of undergraduates who responded to the survey was 29 years old. This is 8 years older than the average age of all undergraduates in fall 2017 (21)¹. The minimum age reported of undergraduate student Veterans who responded to the survey was 19 years old and the maximum was 69 years old.

Undergraduate Student Gender

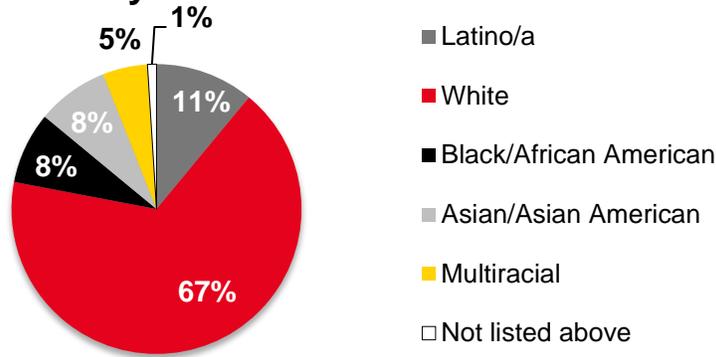


A small percentage of respondents did not identify as either male or female or chose not to disclose their gender (2%). Of the remaining respondents, three quarters of student Veterans identified as male (76%) with the remaining identifying as female (23%). For undergraduate respondents, 71% identified as male and 26% as female. This is statistically different from the general undergraduate student population which was 47% female and 53% male in fall 2017¹.

*Percentages due not add to 100 due to rounding.

¹ https://www.irpa.umd.edu/CampusCounts/Enrollments/stuprofile_allug.pdf

Race/Ethnicity



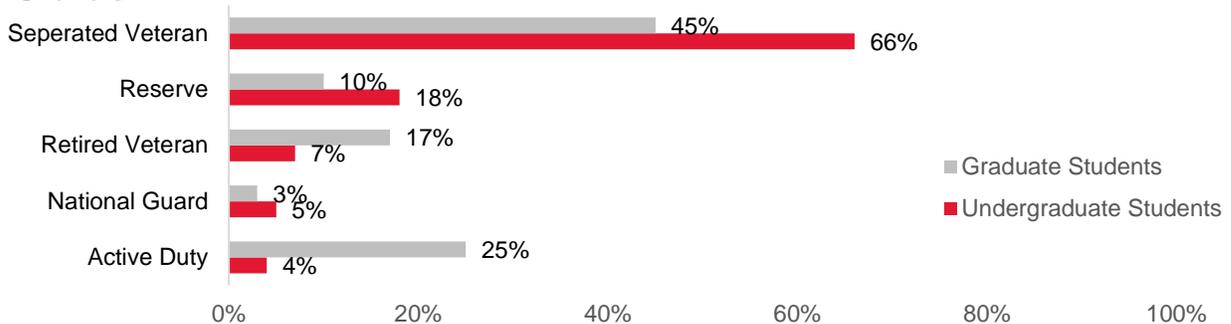
Of all respondents, a majority of students reported they were white (67%), followed by Latina/o (11%), Black or African American (8%) and Asian or Asian American (8%). About 5% of the respondents indicated they were multiracial, and 1% indicated some other race/ethnicity.

A majority of the respondents (51%) indicated they were married. Of undergraduate respondents, only 38% reported being married compared to 72% of graduate student respondents.

Military Demographics

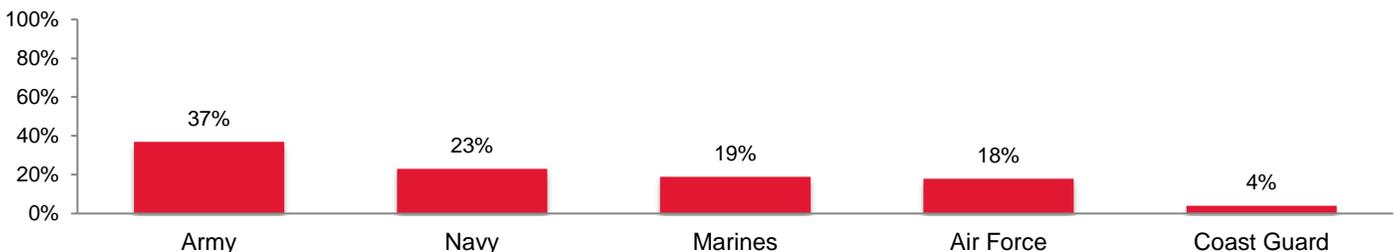
The majority of those who responded indicated they are either retired or separated Veterans (69%). Still, there was a moderately sized group of respondents (31%) who indicated they are still serving in some capacity and are therefore eligible to be deployed at any time, requiring them to immediately withdraw from courses. These respondents indicated they were largely serving in the Reserves (15%), although some identified as Active Duty (12%) or as currently serving in the National Guard (4%). More graduate student respondents indicated they are still serving (38%) as opposed to undergraduate students (27%). Of note, for some students who are considered Active Duty, they may have military orders to pursue higher education in order to advance their military professional careers.

Military Status



The student Veteran respondents appear to have diverse service backgrounds. There is representation from the four major branches, Army (37%), Navy (23%), Marines (19%), and Air Force (18%), as well as a small group from the Coast Guard (4%).

Branch of Military Service

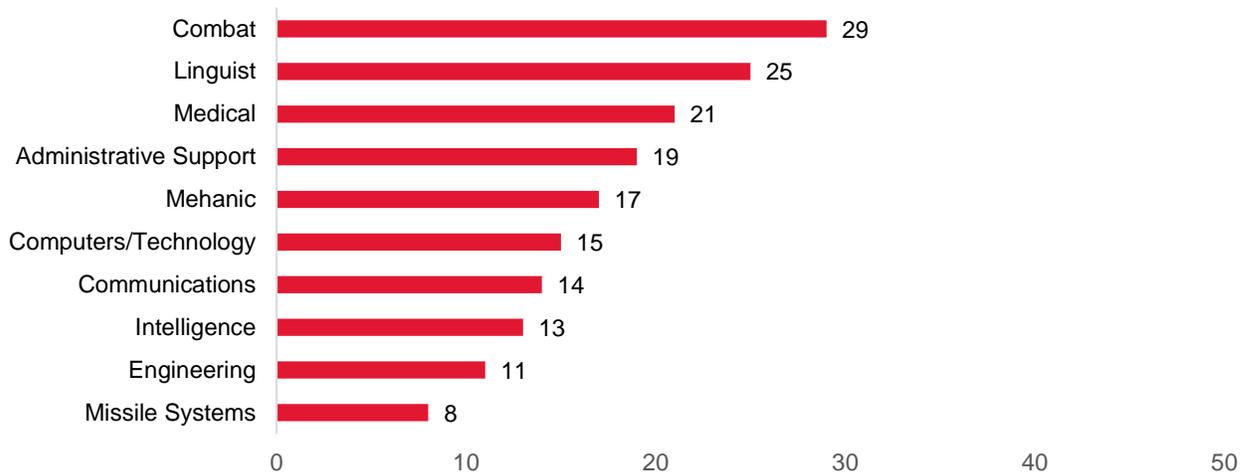


The majority of the respondents indicated they were most recently or are currently Enlisted (77%), meaning they did not have a commission (i.e., are/were not an officer). The remainder are currently or were most recently serving as an Officer (23%). Individuals can join the military as an Enlisted with a high school degree or equivalent, while a commission is typically given after earning a 4-year degree or through officer training in the military after a number of years of Enlisted service. On average, respondents indicated they had served in the military for about 8 years prior to completing the Needs Assessment.

The majority of those who have served in the military before attending UMD report being deployed at some point during their military career (65%). Of those who indicated they had been deployed, almost three quarters (74%) reported that they had been deployed to a combat zone.

Student Veterans reported joining the University of Maryland community with very different skills, experiences, and capabilities from their military service. Although many indicated they worked in occupational specialties directly related to combat (e.g. infantry), the majority indicated they worked in various roles that supported combat fighters. Below is a chart depicting the number of respondents indicating their occupational specialty for the most commonly reported specialties. It is important to note that throughout their career, respondents may have held more than one occupational specialty, therefore percentages were not generated.

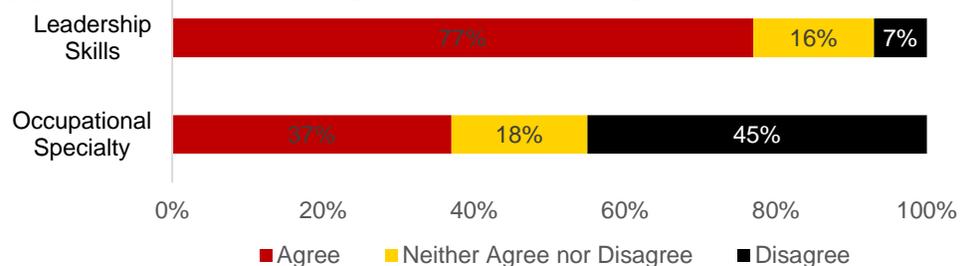
Military Occupational Specialty



When asked if they are applying their occupational specialty skills learned in the military to their college education, more respondents disagreed (45%) with this statement than agreed (37%).

However, not all military experience is going unused at the university. When asked if they are applying leadership skills learned in the military to their college experience, a majority agreed (77%).

Application of Military Skills to College



Changes and Recommendations

Based on the data presented above, there are some opportunities to improve programming and resource education efforts:

- Many undergraduate students coming to the university indicated they are transfer students.
 - As a result, it would be helpful to continue to build and support the relationship with Transfer and Off Campus Student Life in order to help transfer Veterans increase their understanding of opportunities for involvement in the campus community. Consideration should be given to advertising the Transfer2Terps class to incoming student Veterans.
 - Transfer students also need support in transferring credits from a previous institution and degree program planning to make sure that the student will be able to graduate on-time and not suffer require additional funding beyond what is covered by military benefits or scholarships awarded.
- Many students reported they are studying business related majors. It would be helpful to build the relationship between Veteran Student Life and the Robert H. Smith School of Business so that students who are involved in the business school are aware of the resources offered by VSL.
- At 29, the average age of undergraduate student Veterans is eight years older than the average traditional student. As a result, VSL should ensure that outreach and support offered through their office has been formatted for a more mature audience. Consideration should also be given to the modes of advertisement of programs and services as these may not align with the practices suggested for traditional students.
- The majority of student Veterans are male and anecdotal evidence from attending programs and use of the Veterans Center suggests that female students may believe there are barriers to engagement in VSL programs or may generally not feel welcomed. VSL should consider targeted outreach to female Veterans to make sure that they feel included and involved in the community.
- Given that many of our student Veterans are married, VSL should consider encouraging student Veterans to include their spouses/partners in programming hosted through Veteran Student Life.
- Because some student Veterans who are currently serving are eligible to deploy at any time, VSL should consider working with University administrators to establish a process for students activated during their academic tenure to ensure the least impact on their education and ability to graduate in a timely manner.
- Many student Veterans feel that they are using the leadership skills developed in the military during their college experience. This trend should be encouraged by VSL staff and the wider campus community.
 - One way to inform and encourage departments across UMD about the leader they have in their lecture hall is through continued outreach and the further development of the “Got Your 6” program for Professors and Professional staff.
 - Further, VSL could consider reaching out to staff in the Leadership and Community Service-Learning office to identify ways in which student Veterans may further advance or contribute the knowledge they gained in the military to the co-curricular and curricular leadership programs offered on campus.
 - Additionally, with the 2018 administration of the Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership along with other Big10 institutions, further investigation may be considered into the leadership skills and abilities of student Veterans across institutions.