

United States Department of Veterans Affairs Chapter 35, Title 38 USC,
Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance Program Participants Survey

Conducted 2010-2011

November 7, 2011

Melinda Pilkinton, PHD, LCSW
Assistant Professor, Social Work Program
Department of Sociology
P.O. Box C
Mississippi State University, MS 39762
Pilkinton@soc.msstate.edu

Table of Contents

Abstract 3

Purpose of the research 4

Survey design 4

Previous research 5

Survey sample 5

Survey results. 6 - 23

Summary. 24 - 25

Recommendations 25 - 27

Acknowledgments. 27

 List of participating institutions 28 - 30

 Organizational support 30 - 31

Chapter 35 statutory purposes 32

Abstract

A survey examining the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) Chapter 35, Title 38 USC Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance Program (hereinafter "DEA" Program) was designed to determine the effectiveness of the program from the perception of current participants. Mississippi State University conducted the analysis as a public service for the Gold Star Wives, Inc. Currently, there are almost 90,000 recipients of Chapter 35 who attend a variety of technical and community colleges, universities, medical schools, technical schools, and on-job training/apprenticeship entities. Because the DVA did not release identifying information regarding program participants, an extensive effort was made to contact veterans' benefits certifying officials at schools, colleges, and universities to obtain participation in a web-based survey, administered by the Mississippi State University Social Science Research Center. As a result, 297 program beneficiaries began the survey with 222 completing the survey with a sufficient number of responses to survey questions to be considered usable for analysis. Obtained results portray the diversity of Chapter 35 program recipients in regard to regionality, academic disciplines, demographics, and perceived effectiveness of the program.

Chapter 35 DEA Study

DVA Chapter 35, Title 38 USC, Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance (DEA) Program Survey

Purpose of the Research

This project was designed to obtain current information about Chapter 35 DEA recipients. Persons receiving these benefits generally are the dependents of service members who either died or were permanently (100%) disabled while serving on active duty.

The purposes of the research were to determine the effectiveness of the DEA program in helping dependents meet their educational needs and goals, obtaining demographic information regarding DEA recipients, assessing the adequacy of the educational funding provided by the DEA program, and determining adequacy of DVA's administration of the program.

Survey Design

Survey questions were developed in consultation with Gold Star Wives, Inc., and several subject-matter experts including Dr. Art Cosby, Mr. Darryl Kehrer, Dr. John Edwards, Ms. Lorene Cox, and Mr. Mike McGrevey. Mississippi State University focus groups were conducted with DEA recipients at the university's G. V. Montgomery Center for America's Veterans in March 2009 to examine question applicability and to obtain information that would assist in further refining survey questions. Seven participants attended the focus groups. Eighteen (18) open-ended questions were posed to the participants. The participants' responses aided researchers in survey question development.

Guiding the development of the focus-group questions and the survey questions was the purpose clauses of the DEA program, as stated at 38 USC section 3500 (see page 32). Such questions were designed to comport with the statutory purposes of the Chapter 35 program. Questions obtained data as to the extent to which the program participants viewed the program as fulfilling those purposes.

Chapter 35 DEA Study

Previous Research

A previous Chapter 35 DEA survey conducted in 2000 by Dr. Rebecca Klemm, Klemm Analysis Group, Washington, DC, was obtained and reviewed. With permission from the survey developers, many of the questions on the Klemm survey were used to develop an online survey. The current online survey (herein described) was conducted by the Mississippi State University Social Science Research Center (MSU SSRC) with approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at MSU.

Survey Sample

As of August 17, 2011, official DVA records indicated that 89,871 widows, widowers and children participate in the DEA program (U.S. DVA, National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics, <http://www.va.gov/vetdata/Utilization.asp>). The method for recruitment involved the University's Montgomery Center for America's Veterans sending email messages and letters mailed through the postal service to certifying officials at universities, colleges, and training schools across the U.S. that administer the DEA program. G. V. Montgomery Center personnel also contacted national, professional groups such as the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, National Association of Veterans Programs Administrators, Association of Veterans Education Certifying Officials, National Association of State Approving Agencies, The Partnership for Veterans' Education, and others. An invitation to participate in the study was included as an email attachment, or within the body of the letter, identifying pertinent information about the survey, including the web link address to the Social Science Research Center. In order for participants to complete the survey, individuals typed in the address and answered questions contained in the survey. Privacy of the individual was protected by collecting and storing responses to the survey questions on a secure server only and not retaining information related to the web addresses of the respondents. Data were collapsed into categories for analysis; no single identifying records were stored.

The total number of respondents who replied initially to the survey numbered 297. However, 222 respondents completed the survey with sufficient information to be considered usable for purposes of

Chapter 35 DEA Study

analysis. These results indicate that 74.7% of the initial respondents completed the survey in its entirety (34 questions).

Survey Results

Responses to survey items are presented below along with totals for each category.

01 – Are you currently receiving Department of Veterans Affairs Dependents’ Educational Assistance Program (Chapter 35) benefits?

Q01 responses	n	%
yes	222	74.7
no	49	16.5
don't know/no comment	26	8.8
total	297	100

02 – What was your relationship with the veteran whose service has provided you with VA Dependents’ Benefits?

Q02 responses	n	%
spouse	49	22.1
child	155	69.8
other relationship	15	6.7
don't know/no comment	3	1.4
total	222	100

03 – Please specify your relationship to the veteran:

Note: Please note that 69.8% of respondents reported their status as “child” in Q02.

04 – In which branch of the military armed forces did the veteran serve?

Q04 responses	n	%
Army	109	49.1
Navy	43	19.4

Chapter 35 DEA Study

Marines	33	14.9
Air Force	22	9.9
Coast Guard	7	3.2
National Guard	4	1.75
Don't know/no comment	4	1.75
total	<hr/> 222	100

05 – How did you first learn about VA education benefits for survivors & dependents?

Q05 responses	n	%
teacher/administrator	10	4.5
letter from VA	33	14.9
friend/family member	129	58.1
high school counselor	5	2.3
other	36	16.2
don't know/no comment	9	4.0
total	<hr/> 222	100

06 – Did the VA contact you about your eligibility for VA educational benefits?

Q06	n	%
yes	88	39.6
no	93	41.9
don't know/no comment	41	18.5
total	<hr/> 222	100

07 – Did you contact the VA about your educational benefits?

Q07	n	%
yes	192	86.5
no	21	9.5
don't know/no comment	9	4.0
total	<hr/> 222	100

Chapter 35 DEA Study

08 – What type of information about the VA education benefits did you try to get?

Q08 responses	n	%
a. types of educational &/or training programs covered by the benefits		
yes	119	53.6
no	70	31.5
don't know/no comment	3	1.4
missing response	30	13.5
total	<hr/> 222	<hr/> 100
b. my eligibility for benefits		
yes	164	73.9
no	25	11.2
don't know/no comment	3	1.4
missing response	30	13.5
total	<hr/> 222	<hr/> 100
c. benefits application information		
yes	123	55.4
no	66	29.7
don't know/no comment	3	1.4
missing response	30	13.5
total	<hr/> 222	<hr/> 100
d. benefits status information		
yes	139	62.6
no	50	22.5
don't know/no comment	3	1.4
missing response	30	13.5
total	<hr/> 222	<hr/> 100
e. other information desired		

Chapter 35 DEA Study

yes	40	18
no	149	67.1
don't know/no comment	3	1.4
missing response	30	13.5
total	222	100

09 – In general, how accurate was the information you received?

Q09 responses	n	%
very accurate	110	49.5
somewhat accurate	60	27.0
somewhat inaccurate	7	3.2
very inaccurate	6	2.7
never received information	4	1.8
don't know	5	2.3
missing response	30	13.5
total	222	100

10 – What kind of educational or training program are you enrolled in at this time?

Q10 responses	n	%
academic 2 yr. college program	38	17.1
academic 3 yr. college program	4	1.8
academic 4 yr. college program	134	60.4
academic post-graduate degree program	34	15.3
academic post-graduate certificate program	3	1.4
teacher certification	2	0.9
non-degree 3 year or less career-oriented program	1	0.4
job training/on the job training program	1	0.4

Chapter 35 DEA Study

computer/technical program	2	0.9
don't know	3	1.4
total	<u>222</u>	<u>100</u>

11 - What is your major area of study?

Q11 responses	n	%
accounting/finance	12	5.4
agriculture/real estate	2	0.9
anthropology	3	1.35
architecture	2	0.9
art/music/theatre	13	5.9
biology/chemistry/biochemistry	14	6.4
business/management	22	9.9
marketing/communication	3	1.35
computer science	2	0.9
criminal justice	10	4.4
economics	2	0.9
education	21	9.5
engineering	8	3.6
English/foreign Language	4	1.8
geology	1	0.45
history	3	1.35
information systems	6	2.7
journalism	2	0.9
mathematics	2	0.9
physics	2	0.9
political science	8	3.6
psychology	17	7.7
sociology	8	3.6
none of the above	45	20.3

Chapter 35 DEA Study

missing responses	10	4.4
total	<hr/> 222	<hr/> 100

12 - Have you ever had to postpone (or not use) your VA education benefits?

Q12 responses	n	%
yes	<hr/> 48	21.6
no	165	74.3
don't know/no comment	9	4.1
total	<hr/> 222	<hr/> 100

12a - What was the primary reason you had to postpone (or not use) your VA education benefits?

Q12a responses	n	%
<hr/> marriage	1	0.44
take care of child/children	5	2.3
other family responsibilities	1	0.44
job responsibilities	8	3.6
personal debt	1	0.44
personal health	6	2.7
health of family member	4	1.8
other, not listed	22	9.89
missing responses	174	78.39
total	<hr/> 222	<hr/> 100

[Note: please refer to responses from Q12; 48 respondents had to postpone their education. Responses to Q12a reflect the factors involved in those 48 postponements].

Chapter 35 DEA Study

13 - To date, approximately how much has the VA Dependents benefits paid toward your education and/or training?

Q13 responses	n	%
\$0	10	4.5
\$636 - 5000	48	21.6
\$5001-15000	63	28.4
\$15001 - 25000	20	9.1
\$25001 - 37000	15	6.7
missing response	66	29.7
total	222	100

14 - Have you had to borrow additional money to pay for your education and/or training?

Q14 responses	n	%
yes	143	65
no	72	32
don't know/no comment	7	3
total	222	100

15 - Approximately how much money do you think you will owe when you finish your education and/or training?

Q15 responses	n	%
\$0	7	3.15
\$1000 - 5000	26	11.71
\$5001 - 10000	25	11.27
\$10001 - 15000	11	4.95
\$15001 - 20000	25	11.27
\$20001 - 25000	4	1.8
\$25001 - 30000	6	2.7
\$30001 - 40000	10	4.5
\$40001 - 50000	4	1.8

Chapter 35 DEA Study

\$50001 - 100000	8	3.6
\$100001 - 220000	3	1.35
missing response	93	41.9
total	<u>222</u>	<u>100</u>

16 - Were there other schools or programs that you would have wanted to attend but could not because they were not approved for VA education benefits?

Q16 responses	n	%
yes	27	12.2
no	166	74.8
don't know/no comment	29	13
total	<u>222</u>	<u>100</u>

17 - What is the name of the program, school, or training center where you are currently enrolled?

Q17 responses	n	%
Mississippi State University	22	10
University of South Florida	12	5.4
Penn State	12	5.4
East Carolina University	10	4.5
No Comment	10	4.5
NorthWest Vista College	8	3.5
San Diego State	7	3.2
Tacoma Community College	6	2.7
Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College	6	2.7
Rochester Institute of Technology	5	2.26
University of South Alabama	5	2.26
College of the Desert	4	1.79

Chapter 35 DEA Study

Appalachian State University	4	1.79
Fayetteville State University	4	1.79
George Mason University	4	1.79
James Madison University	4	1.79
Marshall University	4	1.79
Michigan State University	4	1.79
Peninsula College	4	1.79
University of Mississippi	4	1.79
University of Montana	4	1.79
University of Oregon	4	1.79
Western Michigan University	4	1.79
Pennsylvania College of Technology	3	1.38
University of Iowa	3	1.38
University of Wisconsin	3	1.38
West Virginia University	3	1.38
Whatcom Community College	3	1.38
New Hampshire Technical Institute/Concord's Community College	2	0.9
Ocean Community College	2	0.9
Ozarks Community College	2	0.9
Highline Community College	2	0.9
Brevard Community College	2	0.9
Burlington Community College	2	0.9
Kent State University	2	0.9
Ozarks Technical Community College	2	0.9
University of Missouri	2	0.9
University of North Dakota	2	0.9
Washington State University	2	0.9

Chapter 35 DEA Study

Western Illinois University	2	0.9
Argosy	1	0.45
Belhaven University	1	0.45
Bellevue University	1	0.45
California Baptist University	1	0.45
Catholic University	1	0.45
Clark College	1	0.45
Dickinson State University	1	0.45
East Central University	1	0.45
East Tennessee University	1	0.45
Emby Riddle Aeronautical University	1	0.45
Hopkinsville Community College	1	0.45
Humphrey's College	1	0.45
Indiana University	1	0.45
Jackson State University	1	0.45
Keller Graduate School of Business	1	0.45
Loma Linda University School of Medicine	1	0.45
London Business School	1	0.45
Long Beach City College	1	0.45
South University online	1	0.45
Stanly Community College	1	0.45
Ohio State University	1	0.45
Tulane University	1	0.45
University California Riverside	1	0.45
University of Central Florida	1	0.45
University of Hawaii, Hilo	1	0.45
University of Kansas	1	0.45

Chapter 35 DEA Study

University of Mary	1	0.45
University of Miami	1	0.45
University of New Mexico	1	0.45
University of Phoenix	1	0.45
Wayne State University	1	0.45
The College of William & Mary	1	0.45
total	<hr/> 222	<hr/> 100

18 - Would you have enrolled in another school or program if the level of your VA education benefits had been higher?

Q18 responses	n	%
yes	65	29.3
no	104	46.8
don't know/no comment	53	23.9
total	<hr/> 222	<hr/> 100

19 - Have you encountered any problems with the monthly payment process that led you to consider dropping out of the program?

Q19 responses	n	%
yes	47	21
no	161	73
don't know/no comment	14	6
t otal	<hr/> 222	<hr/> 100

Chapter 35 DEA Study

20.1 - What specific problems with the monthly payment process made you consider dropping out of the program: payments do not arrive when needed.

Q20.1 responses	n	%
<hr/>		
a. Specific problems: <i>payments do not arrive when needed</i>		
yes	35	16
no	11	5
no comment	1	0.5
missing	175	78.5
total	<hr/> 222	<hr/> 100

20.2 - What specific factors with the monthly payment process made you consider dropping out of the program?

Q20.2 responses	n	%
<hr/>		
b. Specific factors: <i>payments do not arrive same time each month</i>		
yes	8	4
no	38	17
no comment	1	0.5
missing	175	78.5
total	<hr/> 222	<hr/> 100

20.3 - What specific factors with the monthly payment process made you consider dropping out of the program?

Q20.3 responses	n	%
<hr/>		
c. Specific factors: <i>payment sent to wrong address</i>		
yes	5	2.5
no	41	18.5
no comment	1	0.5
missing	175	78.5
total	<hr/> 222	<hr/> 100

Chapter 35 DEA Study

20.4 - What specific factors with the monthly payment process made you consider dropping out of the program?

Q20.4 responses	n	%
<hr/>		
d. Specific factors: <i>incorrect payment</i>		
yes	15	7
no	31	14
no comment	1	0.5
missing	175	78.5
total	<hr/> 222	<hr/> 100

20.5 - What specific factors with the monthly payment process made you consider dropping out of the program?

Q20.5 responses	n	%
<hr/>		
e. Specific factors: <i>have to contact VA to get payment</i>		
yes	26	12
no	20	9
no comment	1	0.5
missing	175	78.5
total	<hr/> 222	<hr/> 100

20.6 - What specific factors with the monthly payment process made you consider dropping out of the program?

Q20.6 responses	n	%
<hr/>		
f. Specific problems: <i>other</i>	10	4.5

[one response each for the following identified factors]

certification dropped by VA

have only received payment for 50% of classes taken

it took 4 months to get benefits and I had to do all paperwork

multiple items were not processed correctly

owed money after one semester

payments take up to two (2) months initially

Chapter 35 DEA Study

still waiting for back benefits

office personnel do not return calls

certifying official is incompetent

can only certify for one degree type per semester

[Note: These comments represent only 4.5% of the total percentage of respondents].

21 - How has your eligibility for VA education benefits influenced your Career goals?

Q21 responses	n	%
I was able to set my career goals higher than I had planned	96	43.2
I lowered my career goals	10	4.5
My career goals were unaffected	103	46.5
don't know/ no comment	13	5.8
total	222	100

22 - How has your eligibility for VA education benefits influenced your Educational goals?

Q22 responses	n	%
I was able to set educational goals higher than I had planned	107	48.2
I lowered my educational goals	12	5.4
my goals were unaffected	90	40.5
don't know/no comment	13	5.9
total	222	100

23 - Do you think you would have enrolled in, or pursued the same amount of schooling or training without your VA educational benefits?

Q23 responses	n	%
yes	75	33.8
no	117	52.7
don't know/no comment	30	13.5
total	222	100

Chapter 35 DEA Study

24 - Which of the following best describes your current employment situation?

Q24 responses	n	%
full-time	28	12.6
part-time	61	27.5
self-employed	6	2.7
unemployed <1 yr	9	4.1
unemployed >1 yr	13	5.9
not working (school)	88	39.7
not working (disability)	1	0.5
not working (other)	2	0.5
retired	3	1.4
homemaker	4	1.8
no comment	7	3.3
total	222	100

25 - How many hours per week do you typically work?

Q25 responses	n	%
1-10 hrs/wk	4	4.5
11-20 hrs/wk	28	30.0
21-30 hrs/wk	29	31.5
31-40 hrs/wk	18	19.5
over 40 hrs/wk	7	8.0
no comment	6	6.5
total	92	100

Chapter 35 DEA Study

26 - Please identify your gender.

Q26 responses	n	%
male	52	23.4
female	166	74.8
no comment	4	1.8
total	222	100

27 - Are you a US citizen by birth?

Q27 responses	n	%
yes	211	95
no	8	3.6
no comment	3	1.4
total	222	100

28 - What is your age?

Q28 responses	n	%
18-21 years	90	40.5
22-25	61	27.4
26-30	19	8.65
31-40	7	3.2
41-50	16	7.2
51-60	15	6.75
61-67	7	3.15
missing	7	3.15
total	222	100

Chapter 35 DEA Study

29 - What is your marital status?

Q29 responses	n	%
married	44	20
member of unmarried couple	23	11
single	128	56
divorced	3	1.5
widowed	21	9.5
no comment	3	1.5
total	222	99.5

30 - Do you have any dependent children?

Q30 responses	n	%
yes	38	17.1
no	181	81.5
no comment	3	1.4
total	222	100

31 - Have you ever served in the armed forces of the United States?

Q31 responses	n	%
yes	8	3.6
no	208	93.6
no comment	6	2.8
total	222	100

Chapter 35 DEA Study

32 - Do you consider yourself Hispanic or Latino(a)?

Q32 responses	n	%
yes	21	9.5
no	192	86.5
no comment	9	4
total	222	100

33 - Which category most closely matches your racial identity?

Q33 responses	n	%
White	138	62
Black or African American	35	16
American Indian/Alaskan	4	1.8
Asian	9	4
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	1	0.5
Multi-racial	19	8.5
no comment	16	7.2
total	222	100

34 - Are you the primary wage earner in your household?

Q34 responses	n	%
yes	73	32.9
no	124	55.9
no comment/missing	25	11.2
total	222	100

Chapter 35 DEA Study

Summary

Females (74.8%) and Whites (62%) were the predominant responders to the survey. Participants noted attendance at approximately 70 educational institutions and ranged in age from 18 – 67 years, with the median age of 20.5 years. Business-related majors accounted for 18% of academic pursuits (accounting/finance 5.4%, business/management 9.9%, and information systems 2.7%). Education majors represented 9.5%.

Most respondents (over 90%) have never served in the U.S. Armed Forces. Almost 10% (9.5%) reported a marital status as widowed, with the majority noted to be single (56%) and 20% noted their marital status as married. Approximately one-third (32.9%) was noted to be the primary wage earner in his or her household. Only 17.1% reported that they are parents of dependent children.

In regard to employment status, 12.6% work full-time, 27.5% work part-time, 1.4% are retired, .5% are disabled, and 1.8% are full-time homemakers. Ten percent of respondents were unemployed; 4.1% unemployed for less than one year and 5.9% unemployed for more than one year. Almost 40% (39.7%) noted that they are not working because of school responsibilities. The median number of hours worked per week was noted as 30 (6.8% of respondents). The majority of survey participants (66%) worked 30 hours or less per week.

Survey results demonstrated a total benefits payment (thus far) of \$15,000 or less to 54.5% of the recipients, with 65% borrowing additional money to pay for their education/training. Of the 65% of respondents who have borrowed or expect to borrow money to complete their education, approximately 40% expect to owe up to \$20,000, with another approximate 10% expecting to owe up to \$50,000. A remaining approximate 10% expect higher levels of debt from over \$50,000 to \$220,000.

Slightly over 20% (21%) of Chapter 35 program respondents noted problems with the DVA monthly payment process severe enough to cause them to consider dropping out of the program. Specific problems noted included the following concerns: not receiving benefit payments when needed, payments not arriving at the same time each month, payments going to wrong address, receiving incorrect payment amounts, and having to contact VA to obtain payment. Other complaints included the following: it was

Chapter 35 DEA Study

difficult to connect with certifying officials, multiple terms were processed incorrectly, not getting paid for classes, delay in receiving payments at beginning of school year, owing money after one semester, not being allowed to certify more than one degree type per semester, and experiencing difficulties with paperwork.

Individuals were about evenly divided on whether the Chapter 35 program influenced their career goals by allowing them to reach higher than they had planned: 43.2% believed they had set their career goals higher, while 46.5% said their goals were unaffected. Similar results were noted in regard to educational goals; 48.2% set higher goals, while 40.5% did not alter their goals. The majority (52.7%) of respondents noted that they would not have enrolled in or pursued the same amount of schooling or training without the VA educational benefits.

Recommendations

The research is preliminary in nature. It serves as a “baseline” of data.

The survey report helps acquaint policymakers and administrators with Chapter 35 recipients’ perceptions of the extent to which the program aids in fulfilling education/training objectives toward goals of long-term, sustained employment and financial independence.

Additional analysis into the effectiveness of the Chapter 35 program for its users – based on the program’s explicit statutory purposes -- would add value to the limited body of analysis while building on data cited in this survey report. For example:

Awareness of Chapter 35 Benefits

In survey question 5, 14.9% of respondents reported they first learned of Chapter 35 benefits via letter from VA and 58.1 percent via a friend/family member.

In survey question 6, 39.6% of respondents reported that VA contacted them about eligibility for education benefits and 41.9% reported that VA did not do so.

Chapter 35 DEA Study

In survey question 7, 86.5% of respondents reported that they contacted VA about their education benefits.

Further Inquiry: What do VA performance data reveal with respect to the staffing levels and other administrative resources devoted to informing dependent widows/widowers/children of the Chapter 35 program.

How does such staffing compare by proportion with staffing/resources devoted to overall administration of the Chapter 30 Montgomery GI Bill program, Chapter 31 vocational rehabilitation and employment program, and Chapter 33 Post-9/11 GI Bill program -- and notifying beneficiaries of such benefits?

Use of Student Loans

In survey question 14, 65 percent of survey respondents reported that they borrowed money to help pay for their education and training pursuits.

In survey question 15, 39.2 percent of respondents reported that they estimate they will owe between \$1,000 and \$20,000 when they finish their education.

Further Inquiry: How do Chapter 35 students' borrowing practices/loan amounts compare with participants in other VA educational assistance programs -- and compared with students who receive no VA education benefits?

Chapter 35 Influence on Educational Goals

In survey question 22, 48.2 percent of respondents stated that their Chapter 35 eligibility influenced their educational goals.

In survey question 23, 52.7 percent of respondents said they would not have pursued the same amount of schooling or training absent the Chapter 35 program.

Chapter 35 DEA Study

Further Inquiry: How do such program career/education opportunities influence

Chapter 35 beneficiaries' decisions relative to beneficiaries of the Chapter 30, 31, and 33 programs?

Working While Enrolled

In survey question 24, 12.6 percent of respondents report they work full time and 27.5 percent report they work part-time while pursuing education/training.

In survey question 25, 30 percent of respondents reported they worked 11-20 hours per week, 31.5 percent work 21-30 hours per week, and 19.5 percent work 31-40 hours per week.

Further Inquiry: What percentage of Chapter 35 students work while in school/total hours per week compared with participants in other VA educational assistance programs -- and with students who do not receive VA education benefits?

Acknowledgments

Crucial to the research was the support and encouragement from The Gold Star Wives Inc. The initial concept for the project was borne of a January 2009 meeting held in Washington, D.C. among

Mrs. Rose Lee, Ms. Edie Smith, Dr. Art Cosby, and Mr. Darryl Kehrer. During Dr. Robert Foglesong's tenure as president of Mississippi State University, he authorized the financial and administrative support to bring this project to fruition. I appreciate the "brain trust" of Mrs. Lee, Ms. Smith, and Mrs. Margaret Peterson (Gold Star Wives), Dr. Foglesong, Dr. Arthur Cosby (MSU Social Science Research Center) and Mr. Kehrer (MSU Center for America's Veterans policy consultant) for conceiving the project, and also the grant issued from the Office of the President via Mr. Mike McGrevey, Vice President for Finance and Administration, MSU.

Many thanks are due Mr. Kehrer and Dr. Cosby for their expert advice and consultation throughout the design and structure of the survey and their associations with knowledgeable and valued constituents. Special thanks are due to the veterans' benefits certifying officials at the participating

Chapter 35 DEA Study

schools, colleges and universities who extended the invitation for the survey to eligible students. The names of the institutional participants are noted below. I appreciate the certifying officials' willingness to assume 'extra work', in addition to their existing duties to assist in the distribution of the information regarding the survey. Without the help of the certifying officials at the institutions listed below, there would have been a negligible amount of participation from recipients.

Appalachian State University, Boone, NC

Argosy University, Online

Belhaven University, Jackson, MS

Bellevue University, Bellevue, NE

Brevard Community College, Cocoa, FL

Burlington County College, Pemberton, NJ

California Baptist University, Riverside, CA

Catholic University, Washington, DC

Clark College, Vancouver, WA

College of the Desert, Palm Desert, CA

Dickinson State University, Dickinson, ND

East Carolina University, Greenville, NC

East Central University, Ada, OK

East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN

Embry Riddle Aeronautical University, Online

Fayetteville State University, Fayetteville, NC

George Mason University, Fairfax, VA

Highline Community College, Des Moines, WA

Hopkinsville Community College, Hopkinsville, KY

Humphrey's College, Stockton, CA

Indiana University, Bloomington, IN

Jackson State University, MS

James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA

Keller Graduate School of Business, online

Chapter 35 DEA Study

Kent State University, Kent, OH
Loma Linda University School of Medicine, Loma Linda, CA
London Business School, England
Long Beach City College, Long Beach CA
Marshall University, Huntington, WV
Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI
Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College, Perkinston, MS
Mississippi State University, Starkville, MS
NHTI, Concord's Community College, NH
Northwest Vista College, San Antonio, TX
Ocean County College, Toms River, NJ
Ozarks Technical Community College
Peninsula College, Port Angeles, WA
Pennsylvania State University, State College, PA
Penn College of Technology, Williamsport, PA
Rochester Institute of Technology, Rochester, NY
San Diego State University, San Diego, CA
South University Online, Decatur, GA
Stanly Community College, Albemarle, NC
Tacoma Community College, Tacoma, WA
The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH
The University of Missouri, Kansas City, MO
Tulane University, New Orleans, LA
University of California, Riverside, CA
University of Central Florida, Orlando, FL
University of Hawaii, Hilo, HI
University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA
University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS
University of Mary, Bismarck, ND
University of Miami, Miami, FL

Chapter 35 DEA Study

University of Mississippi, Oxford, MS

University of Missouri, Columbia, MO

University of Missouri, Kansas City

University of Montana, Dillon, MT

University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM

University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, ND

University of Oregon, Eugene, OR

University of Phoenix (online)

University of South Alabama, Mobile, AL

University of South Florida, Tampa, FL

University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI

Washington State University, Pullman, WA

Wayne State University, Detroit, MI

West Virginia University, Morgantown, WV

Western Illinois University, Macomb, IL

Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI

Whatcom Community College, Bellingham, WA

The College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, VA

Many organizations and individuals assisted generously with this project:

American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO)

Mr. Jerry Sullivan and Mr. Barmak Nassirian

Association of Veterans Education Certifying Officials (AVECO)

Ms. Marge Stoner, Secretary

Montgomery Center for America's Veterans, Mississippi State University

Ms. Lorene Cox, Ms. Peggy Hurst, Mr. Ken McRae, Mr. Andrew Rendon

College Educators for Veterans in Higher Education (CEVHE)

Gold Star Wives, Inc.

Mrs. Rose Lee, Ms. Edie Smith, Ms. Kay Witt, Ms. Margaret Peterson

Chapter 35 DEA Study

Klemm Analysis Group, Washington, D.C.

Dr. Rebecca Klemm

National Association of State Approving Agencies (NASAA)

Mr. Charles Rowe, Mr. Bill Stephens, Mr. Chad Schatz

National Association of Veteran's Program Administrators (NAVPA)

Mr. R. K. Williams, Ms. Dorothy Gillman

Military Officers Association of America

Colonel Bob Norton (USA, Retired)

Veterans Affairs Administrators of Mississippi (VAAMS)

Ms. Lorene Cox, Past President

Partnership for Veterans' Education

Ms. Christina Roof, AMVETS

Colonel Bob Norton (USA, Retired), MOAA

Chapter 35 DEA Study

38 USC Sec. 3500

Chapter 35 Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance

Sec. 3500. Purpose

The Congress hereby declares that the educational program established by this chapter is for the purpose of providing opportunities for education to children whose education would otherwise be impeded or interrupted by reason of the disability or death of a parent from a disease or injury incurred or aggravated in the Armed Forces after the beginning of the Spanish-American War, and for the purpose of aiding such children in attaining the educational status which they might normally have aspired to and obtained but for the disability or death of such parent. The Congress further declares that the educational program extended to the surviving spouses of veterans who died of service-connected disabilities and to spouses of veterans with a service-connected total disability permanent in nature is for the purpose of assisting them in preparing to support themselves and their families at a standard of living level which the veteran, but for the veteran's death or service disability, could have expected to provide for the veteran's family.