



## PROJECT SNAPSHOT

### Understanding the transfer pathways and patterns of Canadian Armed Forces Veterans in Ontario

**Type:** Research

**Project Number:** 2019-27 or R1927

**Project Lead:** Algonquin College of Applied Arts and Technology

**Collaborators:** Loyalist College contributed to the research project by offering project support, assistance in data collection, research analysis and feedback on interim and final reports. The University of Manitoba, Military Personnel Generation, Veterans Affairs Canada, and Military Family Resource Centre(s) provided student profile information and data for the report background and Literature Review.

**Deliverables for website (if applicable):** Examining the Profiles and Pathways of Military Veterans in Ontario

### Project Rationale/Justification du projet

In April 2018, the Canadian government released the Education and Training Benefit aimed at helping veterans achieve their education and career goals after they have transitioned out of active service. This benefit means that veterans could be eligible for up to \$80,000 in funding to further their education journey or start a new educational journey. Post-secondary institutions can expect to see a significant increase in their veteran student population as a result of this funding, but to date, little is known about this population. There is very little information about the characteristics of these learners, what pathways they are currently seeking and what barriers they might be facing when accessing transfer pathways. This project intended to involve a comparative analysis to see how institutions in Ontario can better support this population who are seeking transfer pathways, either directly from their military training or between post-secondary institutions.

## **What research methods were used?**

Survey participants from Algonquin College were recruited by responding to an email that asked if they were a former or active military member. Their response included contact information, which was then used to send the survey. Participants at Loyalist College were recruited by sending out an email invitation to all registered students. Those that fit the criteria were able to move forward with the survey which was hosted on SurveyMonkey. At the time of survey distribution, participants were asked to provide their contact information if they were interested in participating in a focus group to discuss their experiences in further detail. The focus groups were scheduled for the middle of March at Algonquin College and the end of March for Loyalist College but were suspended due to COVID-19.

## **Describe any limitations**

The limitations to the study were as a direct result of the COVID-19 outbreak. Specifics have been detailed in the "Limitation" subsection of the Discussion portion of the Final Report document. A summary is provided below:

The study was not without its limitations and some were the direct result of the COVID-19 outbreak. One purpose of the focus groups was to dig deeper into the possible reasons behind why only a small percentage of respondents attempted to transfer any credits to their current program. A second goal was to get a better sense of what support services student veterans would like to see in place on their college campuses and to gain insight into what existing services are doing well. Given the timing of the pandemic response, survey responses from active military members stationed at CFB-Garrison Petawawa was not possible. This information would have provided valuable insight into the percentage of respondents who were intending to pursue postsecondary studies after they retire as a result of the release of the ETB. Additionally, the presumably low response rate at both Algonquin College and Loyalist College is a common issue with online surveys. The response rate was presumably low because there was no way to track exactly how many students at either post-secondary institution identify with the CAF in some way (e.g., veteran, reservist, active-duty). To date, there has not been an accurate way to report how many student veterans or active military members are attending either college. This low response rate can run the risk of encountering sampling bias, which means that the views reflected in the results do not accurately reflect the reality of this population.

## **Main Collaborator Contributions**

The main findings from this research project (including tables and figures) are detailed in the "Results" section of the final report document. A detailed summary is provided below:

- The figures showed a greater majority of respondents from Loyalist College indicated the Education Training Benefit (ETB) had a major influence on their decision to enrol in postsecondary compared to Algonquin College. In total, 39.3% of respondents indicated that the ETB had a major influence on their decision to pursue post-secondary. The research also showed a little over a quarter of participants were actively using the ETB to fund their education with the use of CAF-LTD/Manulife funding being the second most used way to fund education. Just over half of the respondents indicated that they used their own personal savings to fund their

education. Other sources were earnings from work and funding from federal or provincial loans.

- Almost half of the respondents from Loyalist College attempted to transfer credits to their current program and a small percentage of respondents from Algonquin College attempted to transfer credits to their current program. Out of the successful number of credits transferred, the majority fell between one to three credits with only one respondent from Loyalist College reporting success in transferring seven or more credits. There was an even distribution of 6 students being satisfied with the number of credits transferred and 6 being unsatisfied with the number of credits transferred.
- Over a quarter of respondents found that balancing coursework with other responsibilities is a major challenge. These challenges included financially supporting themselves and/or their family, finding peers or staff who understand their perspective as an active military member or veteran, and meeting their professors' academic expectations.
- Over half the respondents experienced no challenges when enrolling in the courses needed for their program plan.

## Future Research

Given the situation that happened with the COVID-19 pandemic, there were a number of steps in this project that were not able to be completed. As an immediate next phase of this project, survey responses could be collected from active military members and focus groups for student veterans could be hosted. This would provide further details as to what this student veteran population needs when it comes to support and services at a post-secondary institution. The current research study found that only about 25% of respondents even attempted to transfer any credits so getting a more detailed picture as to why this is happening would be a valuable next step.

## Student Outcomes

This project identifies existing services that are in place at post-secondary institutions to support their student veteran population. The project also identifies gaps in these support services. This information is valuable in informing how institutions offer their services to veteran transfer student populations.

## Sector or System Implications

Echoed from the "Focus Areas (Research Stream)" section of the final report submission, the lack of continuity in administrative processes as they relate to transfer needs to be addressed. Post-secondary institutions across the province are doing completely different things when it comes to how and what they accept as transfer credit. As an example, if a University-level English course can count as a Communications elective at one College, it should go without saying that it counts for the same thing at another College.

Encouraging post-secondary institutions to work together, at least when it comes to general elective courses (not necessarily program-specific as those do vary by institution) would go a long way to decreasing the administrative burden that is placed on students who might not have all of the information needed to make an informed decision. The lack of continuity in

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