NBER WORKING PAPER SERIES

CAN INFORMATION AND ADVISING AFFECT POSTSECONDARY PARTICIPATION
AND ATTAINMENT FOR NON-TRADITIONAL STUDENTS? EVIDENCE FROM
A LARGE-SCALE EXPERIMENT WITH THE U.S. ARMY

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NBER Working Paper No. 30665
November 2022
JEL No. H5,I23,J24

ABSTRACT

Lack of information and advising prior to college matriculation may contribute to poor post-secondary outcomes among non-traditional students. We conducted a large-scale, multi-arm field experiment with the U.S. Army to investigate whether a package of research-based personalized information and access to advising affects postsecondary choices and attainment among a large non-traditional adult population. We find no impact of the intervention on whether veterans enroll in college, on the quality of their college enrollment, or on their persistence in college. Our results suggest that influencing non-traditional populations' educational decisions and outcomes will require substantially more intensive programs.

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I. Introduction

For over a decade, policy makers and veterans advocates have expressed concern about the postsecondary choices and outcomes of U.S. military veterans. While military service appears to increase rates of post-secondary participation, veterans enroll disproportionately at less selective institutions and are unlikely to attain bachelor's degrees (Loughran, Martorell, Miller, and Klerman, 2011; Greenberg, Gudgeon, Isen, Miller, and Patterson, 2021). These patterns of low-quality enrollment and low completion rates are reflective of the broader "non-traditional" student experience in higher education (National Student Clearinghouse, 2017; National Student Clearinghouse, 2019). Compounding these concerns, veterans' worse postsecondary outcomes occur despite substantial public investment and policy interest in supporting their postsecondary educational success. Recent GI Bill expenditures are over $10 billion annually or approximately $17,400 per student served, more than three times the generosity of the Federal Pell Grant (Bass, 2019; U.S. Department of Education, 2018).

Policy makers and advocates note that one reason for poor postsecondary outcomes among veterans may be high rates of enrollment at for-profit colleges and universities: 24 percent of enrolled veterans attend for-profit schools, similar to rates among other non-traditional student populations (e.g., 18 percent of independent students), but much higher than traditional students (e.g., 5 percent of dependent students).[1] For-profit institutions typically have credentials with lower labor market value and generally worse student outcomes (Emrey-Arras, 2019; Darolia, Koedel, Martorell, Wilson, Perez-Arce, 2015; Cellini and Turner, 2019; Armona, Chakrabarti, and Lovenheim, 2018). Complementing the high-rate of for-profit attendance is substantial academic undermatch among veterans: Among service members scoring in the top decile of a nationally

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[1] Authors calculations from 2015:16 NPSAS.

normed aptitude test, only one-third attend selective institutions, compared with 73 percent of their civilian counterparts (Barr, Bird, Castleman, and Skimmyhorn, 2019).

Individuals who attend less-selective and for-profit institutions are significantly more likely to regret their educational choices, suggesting frictions in the navigation of the college choice process (Strada-Gallup, 2017). Veterans in particular may struggle to make informed college choices: they may have lower familiarity with the college process (e.g., many lack parents or peers with college degrees) and have more limited access to education planning resources relative to traditional-age students in structured high school settings. College choice frictions for veterans are further exacerbated by deceptive and manipulative recruiting practices used by for-profit institutions to entice veterans to enroll at their institutions (U.S. Senate, 2012). Given these frictions and the observed undermatch of veterans, this population may serve to provide an upper bound for the potential of information and assistance strategies that have been experimentally validated among traditional-student populations to improve enrollment quality and subsequent postsecondary educational success among non-traditional populations.

To increase service members' awareness of well-matched, affordable colleges and universities and to support them to make informed decisions about whether and where to pursue postsecondary education, we designed and evaluated a large-scale randomized control trial to provide service members separating from the U.S. Army with personalized and simplified information, reminders, and advising about their college and university options. We specifically focused on encouraging service members to apply to well-matched, selective colleges and universities as a growing body of research demonstrates that improvements to the quality of institution at which students enroll lead to both higher rates of attainment and better labor market outcomes (Angrist, Autor, and Pallais, 2020; Barr and Castleman, 2021; Goodman, Hurwitz, and

Smith, 2017; Smith, Goodman, and Hurwitz, 2020; Zimmerman, 2014). The average graduation rate for the institutions we identified in the project materials is at the 60th percentile in the national distribution of graduation rates at four-year institutions; comparatively, the average graduation rate among institutions attended by service members in the absence of the intervention is at the 41st percentile.[2] This higher level of quality did not come at the expense of affordability as nearly all of the institutions that we recommended had a price net of GI Bill funding of $0.[3]

We delivered this information in multiple messages at weekly intervals over a period of approximately one month through a combination of postal mail, email, and text message, and also created a project-specific website where service members could generate an extended list of recommended colleges for any location in the country. In Figure 1 we present an overview of the intervention materials.[4] All treated service members (two-thirds of the experimental sample) received these materials. We also randomly assigned half of treated service members to receive additional proactive and personalized, text-based college advising, given evidence that intensive college advising has large positive impacts on postsecondary enrollment and attainment (Avery, 2013; Barr and Castleman, 2021; Carrell and Sacerdote, 2017; Bettinger and Baker, 2014; Oreopoulos and Petronijevic, 2018).[5]

We conducted our experiment in 2016 and 2017 with enlisted active-duty service members who were in the process of separating from six of the largest Army installations in the country

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[2] We calculate the latter based on the average graduation rate of institutions attended by control group service members in our experimental sample.

[3] Graduation rates, our proxy for quality, correlate strongly with measures of instructional expenditures, post-college earnings, loan repayment, and even estimates of value-added (Rothwell and Kulkarni, 2015).

[4] We present the full set of materials in the Appendix and a more detailed description in Section III

[5] Advising was provided by the Virginia College Advising Corps (VCAC), a chapter within the national College Advising Corps. Our intervention materials (see Figure 1) introduced advisors as general college advisors, not specifically from the VCAC, to avoid potential confusion among service members about why they were being contacted by an advisor from Virginia. The VCAC advisors completed additional training related to the military, military education benefit programs, military transitions, and the GI Bills prior to the pilot program.

(N=13,173). Because our focus was on improving the quality and selectivity of service members'

postsecondary enrollment as veterans, we began the intervention once service members had begun

the formal process of separating from the military and returning to civilian life (i.e., the initiation

of the Transition Assistance Program, or TAP), but approximately one year, on average, before

their actual separation. We designed this gap between the intervention and separation to ensure

service members had sufficient time to investigate their resources and support and to explore and

apply to well-matched colleges, which may have annual or twice-annual application schedules.

We restricted the sample to service members without a college degree and with an Armed Forces

Qualification Test (AFQT) score (a subscore of the ASVAB) at or above the 65th percentile of a

nationally normed sample.[6] The latter restriction was intended to focus on a subpopulation of

veterans who appeared academically ready for college, with a significant scope for improvements

in the quality of their college choices.

Over the last several years there have been numerous experimental studies evaluating

whether information and assistance about the college or financial aid process improve overall

enrollment rates or enrollment quality. Nearly all of this work has focused on high school or

college students in structured educational settings.[7] Our focal sample and intervention design align

closely with information and assistance interventions that have increased enrollment quality or

overall enrollment for traditional-age students: We focus on a sample with high observed rates of

mismatch and provide information on the graduation rates and net costs of well-matched

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[6] As comparison, the 65th percentile of SAT score from a nationally representative sample of high school students is approximately 1090; as a result, service members in the sample were likely admissible to at least moderately selective institutions, despite historically low rates of veteran enrollment in these schools.

[7] Several studies have found large effects of information and/or advising on the choices and outcomes of non-traditional students on margins *other than college choice*. For example, see Barr and Turner (2018) on the enrollment and Pell grant use of displaced workers, Marx and Turner (2019) and Barr, Bird, and Castleman (2021) on the borrowing of community college students, and Bettinger and Baker (2014) on the student retention of a diverse population (including many older students) attending public, private, and for-profit institutions.

institutions that is personalized based on individuals' academic ability and intended geographic residence after the Army (Hoxby and Turner, 2013). Our intervention materials conveyed to service members that they would face a net price of $0 at most colleges and universities *without* having to complete additional financial aid applications (Dynarski et al., 2021). Finally, for one experimental arm, individuals were offered the chance to receive individualized advising from a professional college advisor (Castleman and Page, 2015; Castleman and Page, 2016; Page, Castleman, and Meyer, 2020).[8]

Our intervention materials moreover drew on a variety of evidence-based, behavioral science strategies to maximize service member's engagement with and responsiveness to the materials. Specifically, drawing on recent papers which make concrete the financial returns to college (Barr and Turner, 2018; Hoxby and Turner 2013), we made salient the labor market returns to pursuing college. We leveraged the social norms literature (e.g., Alcott, 2011) by including information about student veterans' groups at each of the institutions we identified and by providing contact information for group leaders. Our materials also drew on evidence-based strategies to simplify choices for service members (e.g., Iyengar and Lepper, 2000; Beshears, Choi, Laibson, and Madrian, 2013; Bailey 2015), address anxiety about college entrance exam taking (e.g., Aronson, Fried, and Good, 2002; Jenner, 2017), and provide reminders for service members to follow through on important college application actions (e.g., Karlan, McConnell, Mullainathan, and Zinman, 2016). Each of these strategies has been individually shown to generate significant changes in behavior.

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[8] By comparison, ineffective informational and assistance interventions fall into one of two groups. Either they have limited focus on college choice (e.g. Avery, Castleman, Hurwitz, Long, and Page, 2022; Bergman, Day, and Manoli, 2019; Bird, Castleman, Denning, Goodman, Lamberton, and Rosinger, 2021; Page, Sacerdote, Goldrick-Rab, and Castleman, 2021) or they are targeted at populations without significant undermatch (e.g. Sullivan, Castleman, Lohner, and Bettinger, 2021, Gurantz, Howell, Hurwitz, Larson, Pender, and White, 2019; Gurantz, Pender, Mabel, Larson, and Bettinger, 2019).

Despite this, we find no overall impact of the intervention on whether service members enroll in college, on the quality of their college enrollment, on their persistence in college, or on their use of GI Bill education benefits. We have sufficient precision to rule out overall enrollment effects greater than 1.9 percentage points. On the quality margin (i.e., enrollment in a college with a graduation rate over 30 percent), we can rule out effects larger than 0.98 percentage points, significantly smaller than the effects estimated on similar margins in several recent studies with high-scoring traditional students.[9] Effects on college persistence and GI Bill usage are similarly small.[10] We find no added benefit of offering service members proactive and personalized college advising support.

We can rule out that the null effects are because of a lack of exposure to the intervention materials: 90 percent of both experimental groups received at least one intervention text and over three-quarters of both groups received all nine texts, indicating low opt out rates among treated service members. Among service members randomly assigned to the advising condition, two-thirds of service members responded to at least one message. Prior text-based advising interventions with engagement rates this high have generated significant improvements in

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[9] Of the aforementioned interventions focused on improving college choice among traditional student populations, only the Hoxby and Turner (2013) results were available at the time we began our intervention. They estimate a 5.3 percentage point increase in well-matched institutions. More recently, two studies have found positive effects (2.7 and 1.3 percentage points) of the offer of virtual advising for high-achieving students on enrollment in high graduation rate colleges (Gurantz, Pender, Mabel, Larson, and Bettinger, 2020; Sullivan, Castleman, Lohner, and Bettinger, 2021). Interestingly, the effects in the latter study (1.3 percentage points) are substantially larger (5.7 percentage points) during the Covid pandemic when many students lost access to their high-school counselors before deciding where to matriculate. Dynarski et al (2020) estimate very large enrollment effects (15 percentage points) of targeted encouragement to apply to Michigan alongside a promise of four years of free tuition and fees.

[10] We observe a small (~1 percentage point) increase in degree attainment but view this as likely spurious given the number of hypothesis tests we conduct and the lack of impacts we observe on preceding outcomes (enrollment, enrollment quality, persistence, GI Bill benefits use) that would conceivably result in higher rates of attainment. These effects are concentrated among service members with substantial pre-intervention college enrollment, particularly prior enrollment at for-profit institutions. This result is somewhat surprising in the context of the motivation for the experiment, and further suggests that a lack of information is not the driving force behind the continued disproportionate enrollment of veterans in institutions with poor average outcomes.

postsecondary participation (Castleman and Page, 2015; Castleman and Page, 2017). Our estimate of engagement is moreover conservative given that materials were also sent in paper and e-mail form, mediums for which we cannot track engagement given the specific delivery channels we used through the Army.

Our intervention materials identified colleges and universities with objectively higher quality and affordability indicators in the communities where service members planned to live after separating from the Army, so the choices we identified did not require a trade-off between institutional quality and affordability or living in a desired geographic location (e.g., near family). Given the low baseline institutional quality of enrollment among service members, and the fact that we leveraged (1) numerous communications channels, (2) multi-faceted evidence-based behavioral strategies that have been shown to influence enrollment and college choice among traditional students, and (3) text-based advising, there was substantial opportunity and expectation to improve the quality of veterans' college enrollments.[11] And yet, we find no impact on either overall enrollment or the quality of institutions veterans attended.

These results suggest that low-intensity informational, nudge, and advising strategies designed to improve college choice are unlikely to be effective among the broader population of non-traditional students that have similar characteristics and enrollment patterns. These lower-touch approaches may particularly be insufficient to overcome the strong default towards enrollment at for-profit institutions created by intensive recruiting (for-profits hire tens of thousands of recruiters hired for sales experience, not college advising) and the misleading and inaccurate information recruiters provide about for-profit institution quality, cost, and credit transferability (U.S. Senate, 2012). It is clear that many students regret their choices to attend for-

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[11] Indeed, the intervention was intentionally planned as a first-stage experiment to precede a second-stage in which specific mechanisms would be tested.

profit and other lower-quality institutions (Strada-Gallup, 2017), and that information and assistance is insufficient to overcome the status quo. More assertive policies, such as those that constrain postsecondary choices or that tie financial aid receipt to prior institution performance, may be necessary to improve postsecondary education and employment outcomes among veterans and other non-traditional student populations.

II.   Background

A. *Office of Economic and Manpower Analysis*

We designed and executed our randomized controlled trial in conjunction with the U.S. Army Office of Economic and Manpower Analysis (OEMA) at West Point under the program "Soldier for Life, Student for Life," which builds on the Army's existing transition program brand of "Soldier For Life." OEMA secured program approvals from the Department of the Army, coordinated implementation with the Army's education and transition offices and military installations, distributed the program materials, created and monitored the program website, administered the program surveys, and collected and stored all program related data.[12]

B. *Transition Assistance Program*

Military service members who decide to leave active-duty are required to complete the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) under the National Defense Authorization Act of 1991 and the revisions of the Veterans Opportunity to Work Hire Heroes Act of 2011. The purpose of TAP is to provide separating service members resources to successfully navigate their transition to civilian life, and offers a combination of job and career search, educational, and entrepreneurial guidance to service members. The TAP is executed by each military service, coordinated by the

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[12] OEMA merged and de-identified all program data prior to analysis. The research team accessed this data via secure methods on Army servers.

Department of Defense, and includes contributions from other agencies including the Department of Education, Department of Labor (DOL), Veterans Affairs (VA), and the Small Business Administration. The TAP includes a number of required events (e.g., creation of a transition plan, VA benefits counseling, DOL employment transition session) as well as optional events. These optional events include a two-day module in which service members can learn more about pursuing higher education options.[13] Take up this module is very low: while over half of separating service members use their GI Bill benefits after separating, only 10 percent of service members attend the optional higher education module at the time of our intervention (GAO, 2017).

Service members are encouraged to begin the TAP no later than 12 months prior to their separation, and they are required to complete the TAP prior to separation. We designed our program materials to complement and not replace existing military programs and resources, including the TAP program and the optional higher-education module, by providing contact information for the service member's local education office and the transition assistance office in our intervention materials, and by coordinating our program launch and execution with the local education and transition counselors. Specifically, aspects of the optional higher education module (including some focus on the use of graduation rates, employment information, and access to veteran supports in the college choice decision) are aligned with our intervention, so any shifts into the module among treated service members would be expected to reenforce the importance of college quality. While there is some descriptive research on the TAP (see Heflin, Hodges, and London, 2016 for a brief review), there is very little experimental or quasi-experimental evidence on the program's effectiveness.[14]

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[13] For more details on the TAP, see: https://www.dodtap.mil/

[14] One exception is Li (2018) who finds that the TAP increases Veteran labor force participation.

C. GI Bill Education Benefits

The 1944 Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1944 and the Montgomery GI Bill of 1984, commonly known as the "GI Bill," or the "Montgomery GI Bill" (MGIB), established significant education benefits for eligible veterans. Under the MGIB, military service members must pay $100 into the program each month for 12 months, with the default set as opting-in to payments, to obtain non-taxable benefit payments directly from the VA to cover their living expenses and tuition and fees while enrolled in school. Previous research on the GI Bill documents significant labor market returns to the program (Bound and Turner, 2002; Angrist, 1993).

The Post 9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008 established the "Post 9/11 GI Bill" (PGIB). The PGIB offers more generous benefits in a slightly different structure. Service members can earn eligibility and use MGIB or PGIB benefits. Under the PGIB, service members are not required to pay into the program, and they gain eligibility based on the length of their honorable service. Average benefits levels are nearly twice as high under the PGIB, largely due to a locality-adjusted housing allowance and expanded tuition benefits authorized up to the most expensive in-state tuition rate for a public institution in the state. PGIB payments are delivered separately to the veteran (i.e., book stipend and housing allowance) and the institution (i.e., tuition and fees). Many institutions supplement the PGIB tuition payments with their own contributions if their tuition exceeds the state maximum under the "Yellow Ribbon Program." Research has documented positive effects of the PGIB on enrollment and degree completion (Barr, 2015; Barr, 2019). Recent work indicates that the overall labor market effects of the benefit expansion were negative, with these effects driven by reduced work experience among veterans as well as low returns to the schools they attended (Barr, Kawano, Sacerdote, Skimmyhorn, and Stevens, 2021). Particularly relevant for this paper, additional investments at for-profit institutions induced by the

PGIB appeared to generate *negative* effects on subsequent earnings, underscoring the significant body of more descriptive evidence suggesting that these institutions generated poor outcomes.

Our program and materials were designed to support educational pathways using either version of the GI Bill, and the choice of which GI Bill Education Benefit to use was not a focus of the current study. Since the decision of which benefit to use, if eligible for both, can be complicated and unique to each person, our materials encouraged individuals to contact the education counselors at their military installation. That said, among veterans who have used GI Bill Education Benefits in recent years, over 90 percent of veterans have elected to use the PGIB. We also provided contact information for the VA and local education offices for individuals to determine their unique eligibility levels.

III.   Intervention Design

A. *Institution matching algorithm*

The primary purpose of the intervention was to provide service members with personalized information about well-matched colleges and universities in the communities they were returning to after the Army.[15] We designed our matching algorithm to prioritize institutional quality and affordability, given prior work (cited above) indicating that (1) students are more likely to graduate from college and to realize greater labor market returns when they attend higher-quality institutions and (2) students are more likely to apply to and attend higher-quality institutions when they receive explicit, clear information that they can attend college tuition-free.

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[15] When service members initiated their transition assistance program, they were asked to provide their intended location after separation by providing a zip code, city, or state; 68 percent did so. We used the most specific information the service member provided when generating the college recommendations. If a service member did not provide any location information when signing up for transition services, we used their home of record information on file. For service members with no home of record on file, we used the location of their current Army base. We find similar estimated treatment impacts for subgroups based on whether the service member provided their intended location or not (Appendix Table A1).

Specifically, we developed an algorithm to identify well-matched colleges (1) where a service member appeared likely to be admissible based on their academic performance and (2) that maximized a combination of quality (proxied for by institutional graduation rates) and affordability (i.e. price net of anticipated GI Bill funding). To generate the recommendations, our algorithm drew on service member attributes, including estimated SAT score (based on service members' General Technical [GT] score[16]) and the location where service members indicated they plan to reside after the Army, and institutional attributes, including institutional graduation rate and estimated price net of GI Bill funding. We identified service members as likely admissible at a given institution if their predicted SAT score was at or above the 25th percentile of the SAT scores of incoming freshmen.[17] We next restricted the set of potential matches to institutions with regional accreditations and with graduation rates above 30 percent.[18] We also eliminated primarily associate-granting institutions because of their generally low graduation rates and prior research demonstrating positive labor market returns to attending four-year instead of two-year institutions. We also eliminated institutions with specific focuses (e.g., theology). Within this set of institutions, we generated a list of four institutions that included the top public institution and the top private institution within 50 miles of their location (zip code or city), as well as the top public and top

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[16] While academic researchers are typically more familiar with Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) scores, we use a service member's General Technical (GT) score since they are more widely used in the military (e.g., for selection into the military, bonus eligibility, and for classification into certain military career fields) and thus more widely known by service members. In practice, the two scores are very similar and both rely on similar underlying subject area tests from the broader Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB). The GT score combines three subtests (Arithmetic Reasoning, Paragraph Comprehension, and Word Knowledge) while AFQT combines four subtests (the same three above plus Mathematics Knowledge).

[17] To generate service members' predicted SAT score, we used data from the College Board to merge in SAT scores for applicable service members in historical cohorts. We then regressed SAT scores on a quartic model of GT scores to develop a GT - SAT concordance table. For example, a GT score of 117 (roughly the median of service members eligible for our sample) corresponds to a predicted SAT score of 1000 on the 1600 scale.

[18] We intended to set a higher graduation rate threshold for recommended colleges, such as 40 or 50 percent, which would be closer to the median graduation rate at the time of our intervention. However, these higher thresholds were not inclusive of several state flagship universities and resulted in fewer than four recommended colleges for a large portion of the sample.

private institutions in their intended state. The "top" option for public institutions was determined by sorting on graduation rate (the higher, the better); the top private institution was determined by giving equal weight to graduation rate and veteran net price (the lower, the better).[19] We limited the number of recommended institutions to four to mitigate against choice overload. We also included a link to a dedicated project website where service members could find a longer list of matched institutions generated by the algorithm, which also allowed service members to generate a list of matched institutions for a different location.

B. Outreach materials

We sent each treated service member a combination of postal mail, emails, and text messages. All treated individuals received weekly postal mailers and emails for one month (totaling four letters and four emails) and twice-weekly text messages (totaling nine messages, which included one introductory text). Each week's postal and email content were identical, just delivered through different channels. The twice-weekly texts for the information-only treatment arm prompted service members to give a closed-ended response (e.g., "Yes" or "No") to receive information about matched institutions. The twice-weekly texts for the information and advising treatment arm were conversational and framed as coming from a particular advisor. They prompted service members with open-ended questions to engage directly with an advisor to explore the matched institutions we identified. We include a full set of intervention materials in the Appendix.

As we reference in the introduction, we designed the materials to leverage a combination of evidence-based, behavioral science strategies to strengthen service member's engagement with and responsiveness to the materials. The first week's letter, email, and texts had four main objectives. First, they reinforced the financial benefits of obtaining a college degree with a

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[19] Private veteran net price was scaled relative to the maximum veteran net price in the sample before weighting.

concrete estimate of the lifetime earnings premium service members could expect from earning a degree. Second, they attempted to create an endowment effect by defining the amount of GI Bill service members had earned through their military service. Third, they delivered the list of matched institutions. We included the institution name, graduation rate, sticker price (i.e., tuition and fees), and price net of GI Bill funding. We included graduation rates to provide an easily understood measure of college quality.[20] The price net of GI Bill funding was often $0, providing a clear indication that the investment in education would not incur a direct financial investment by service members. We included the sticker price to provide a concrete reference point for the magnitude of the price reduction service members could realize by using their GI Bill funding. Finally, the first set of communications provided concrete next steps, including encouragement to search for additional well-matched schools on the dedicated project website and to attend the higher education transition module at their installation as part of their transition process.

The second week's materials aimed to create a positive social norm of veterans attending college by providing specific veterans' group contacts at each of the four institutions we identified in the first week's materials. We also normed that the broad set of skills service members developed through the Army could support their success in college, and encouraged service members to contact student veterans' groups as a next step.

The third week's materials repeated the set of matched institutions with graduation rate and net price from the first week and addressed common questions service members often have about postsecondary educational options, specifically whether they should prioritize in their search flexible online options and institutions that are more flexible in their acceptance of transfer credits.

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[20] Graduation rates correlate strongly with measures of instructional expenditures, post-college earnings and loan repayment, and even estimates of value-added (Rothwell and Kulkarni, 2015)

The fourth and final week's materials aimed to address potential anxiety among service members about whether they would score sufficiently high on college entrance exams by providing each service member an estimate of their SAT score range based on a concordance we calculated between service members' GT scores and SAT scores, and how these ranges map to the interquartile range of SAT scores at the matched list of institutions. We also informed service members that they may be able to take the SAT for free at their installation's education office. [21]

The postal letters and emails were identical in content for both treatment groups except that the information and advising letters and emails included encouragement to contact an advisor as a next step, along with the relevant phone and email contact information.

IV.   Experimental Design

Our experimental sample is comprised of service members who entered the Transition Assistance Program to begin their separation from the Army and prepare for their transition back to civilian life. We defined service members as eligible for the intervention if they had not already earned a college degree and had an Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) score (a subscore of the ASVAB) at or above the 65th percentile. The latter restriction was intended to focus the sample on a subpopulation of veterans who had significant scope for improvements in the quality of their college choices. The SAT 65th percentile score for a nationally normed sample is approximately 1090; as a result, service members in the sample were likely admissible at moderately or more selective institutions with high graduation rates and instructional spending per student, despite their tendency to enroll at these institutions at very low rates.

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[21] Our data (described in more detail below) included baseline SAT scores for service members who took the exam prior to joining the Army. As we show in Table 1, mean SAT scores are statistically equivalent between groups. Our data did not include SAT or ACT college entrance exam scores taken during or after service members' enlistment, so we are not able to estimate impacts of the intervention on college entrance exam taking or performance.

We conducted the intervention at six of the largest Army installations across the United States: Forts Bragg (near Fayetteville, North Carolina), Campbell (near Clarksville, Tennessee), Carson (near Colorado Springs, Colorado), Hood (near Killeen, Texas), Stewart, and Hunter Army Airfield (both near Savannah, Georgia). Because Army personnel enter the Transition Assistance Program on a rolling basis over the calendar year, we conducted our randomization on roughly a monthly basis from March 2016 to November 2017, for a total of 17 waves. In each wave, we randomly assigned service members to one of three experimental groups (control, information-only, information+advising) in equal proportion. We performed our randomization within wave by installation by GT score quartile blocks.[22] We chose to randomize within GT score quartiles because we expected the counterfactual enrollment and graduation outcomes to differ meaningfully by service member aptitude, with higher aptitude individuals achieving better outcomes. Indeed, among our control group, service members in the highest GT bin are 21 percent more likely to enroll and 29 percent more likely to earn a degree after the intervention, compared with service members in the lowest GT bin.[23]

Our resulting experimental sample size is n = 13,173. The control group consists of 4,381 service members; the information-only treatment group consists of 4,389 service members; and the information+advising treatment group consists of 4,403 service members.

V.   Data

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[22] We used four GT bins that correspond to the quartiles of GT scores within AFQT CAT I and II (based on a national sample from active service members in September 2015): (1) less than 113; (2) 113-116; (3) 117-122; and (4) 123 or higher. Interacted with site by wave, there are 408 randomization blocks.

[23] We test whether our experimental impacts differ across the four GT quartiles by estimating separate regression models for each of the four bins. We find no consistent patterns indicating that the intervention had differential impacts by service member aptitude.

Our data come from four primary sources. Service member-level administrative data from the U.S. Army provided baseline data for the experimental sample including service members' race/ethnicity, gender, number of dependents, GT score, monthly pay, years of service, rank, and the number of months service members spent in hostile environments. Text interaction data from the Signal Vine platform provided information on the share of service members that received and responded to text messages we sent. The National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) provided student by term-level college enrollment data, with coverage of institutions that account for 96 percent of college enrollments in the country. Finally, we incorporate administrative data from the Department of Veteran's Affairs on monthly payments made as part of the Post 9/11 GI Bill.[24]

VI. Sample and Baseline Equivalence

In Table 1, we present descriptive statistics on our sample and report results from models in which we regress student-level baseline characteristics on the treatment indicator and wave by installation by GT bin fixed effects. The sample is primarily male (92 percent) and majority White (74 percent). Just over half of the sample (54 percent) had ever been married and 56 percent reported dependents. The mean service member in the sample had served for just over five years and received just over $2,500 in base monthly pay from the Army. Across 19 baseline measures we only find two significant differences at the 0.05 level between the treatment and control group. Treated service members are slightly less likely to be Hispanic and slightly more likely to have lower rank within the Army. We include covariates in our models both to account for this slight imbalance and to improve our precision.[25]

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[24] Payment data (as opposed to months of benefits used) for the Montgomery GI Bill was not available for analysis. As mentioned above, the vast majority of recently separated veterans use PGIB benefits instead of MGIB.
[25] We also test baseline equivalence for assignment to any treatment versus control and see similar patterns.

Both through postsecondary education individuals pursued before joining the Army and through the Army's Tuition Assistance program (TA), a meaningful share of service members participate in postsecondary education and training prior to separating from the Army. On average, service members in our sample spent just over a year (377 days) enrolled at a higher education institution prior to the start of the intervention, though none had completed a bachelor's degree prior to the intervention. While this enrollment could have occurred prior to the service member's enlistment, we do observe meaningful engagement in higher education while in TA: on average, service members in our sample accumulated an average of 8.3 credits of education and training through TA. Prior and concurrent postsecondary education and training are balanced across our experimental conditions.

VII. Empirical Strategy

We estimate the impact of providing service members personalized information and advising about college options on a variety of college enrollment, enrollment quality, persistence, and completion measures.

Our primary specification is:

$$Outcome_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Treatment_i + \beta_2 X_i + RandomizationBlockFE_i + \epsilon_i$$

where $Outcome_i$ is generally a college enrollment outcome for individual i and X_i includes the baseline characteristics from Table 1.[26] We include randomization blocks fixed effects to account for the level at which we randomized service members to the intervention. We estimate two versions of this model, one which pools both treatment arms into an "any treatment" indicator and

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[26] For the three baseline characteristics with missingness – Base Monthly Pay, Hostile fire pay, and SAT score – we set the values of these characteristics to zero and include missing indicators. We have SAT scores (measured prior to the intervention) for 16 percent of the experimental sample. Base monthly pay and hostile fire pay are missing for fewer than 1 percent of observations.

another which includes separate indicators for each of the two treatment arm (information-only, information+advising). These coefficients represent the intention to treat (ITT) estimate of being assigned to a treatment condition.[27]

Our key outcomes of interest are measures of college enrollment and enrollment quality, specifically indicators for whether service members attended one of the four colleges from their personalized recommendation list; any four-year institutions with graduation rates above 30 percent; or for-profit four-year institutions.[28] We also present estimated effects on weighted days of enrollment, GI Bill usage, and degree attainment. We measure and report our outcomes separately based on whether they occurred after the intervention, after the intervention and before service members separated from the Army, or after service members separated.[29]

VIII.   Results

A. Intervention engagement

In Table 2 we present text message engagement statistics separately for the information-only and information+advising treatment arms. Approximately 90 percent of both groups received at least one intervention text. The substantial majority of both groups (80 percent for the information-only treatment; 75 percent for the information+advising treatment) received all nine campaign texts, indicating that opt-out rates were relatively low among treated service members. Response rates were much higher in the information+advising group (as intended). Two-thirds of service members in the information+advising group responded to at least one text, compared with only 17

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[27] We also estimated logistic regression models and found very similar results.

[28] Specifically, we use the graduation rate in 150 percent of formal time at four-year institutions, retrieved from the College Scorecard.

[29] One concern may be that the intervention affected the service member's choice to stay in the Army by re-enlisting or attempting to separate sooner. We test whether the intervention impacted separation timing and find no evidence to support this hypothesis. We show these results in Appendix Table A2.

percent of service members in the information-only group. Conditional on ever responding, service members in both treatment arms sent relatively few responses (three on average for information-only service members; four for information+advising service members), with responses tending to be quite short. The mean total number of characters in service members' responses in the information-only treatment was 24, which largely consisted of service members replying to the keyword prompts contained in the information-only messages. In the information+advising treatment the mean total number of characters was 158; across an average of four responses these were relatively short responses from service members either to the scheduled messages or advisors' queries. These statistics provide conservative estimates of engagement given that we also sent all intervention materials in paper and e-mail form, mediums for which we cannot track engagement at the individual level, but which only would have expanded engagement.[30]

An open question is whether the personalized college recommendations were relevant to a veteran's decisions. In particular, it is possible that service members moved somewhere else geographically than where they indicated they planned to move when they began the Transition Assistance Program (TAP). While we are unable to assess this directly[31], a closer investigation of the text engagement data suggests that the recommendations were relevant. In both groups the highest response rates were to the second text message, which included the personalized college recommendations.[32] Furthermore, a qualitative review of these messages provides little support for the notion that the recommended colleges were irrelevant to a veteran's decision or that the

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[30] We used home addresses from personnel data, and we used official Army email addresses, which service members are required to maintain, or civilian email addresses, if provided by the service member when they enrolled in the TAP.

[31] We do not know of research investigating the consistency of service members' intended geographic residence as of the start of TAP and when they ultimately transfer—on average a year later—so it is difficult to assess this possibility directly.

[32] In the information+advising group response rates were also relatively high for the third message, which inquired as to whether the service member attended the higher education transition module. We are unable to observe attendance at this higher education module.

assigned location was incorrect. While it is possible that some veterans received information inconsistent with their preferred location after separation, the project website made it easy for service members to identify well-matched institutions in other geographic areas.

B. Impacts on college enrollment and enrollment quality

In Table 3 we present impact estimates of the intervention on whether service members enrolled in college and on the quality of their college enrollment. We do not observe any impact of the intervention on overall enrollment: fifty-six percent of both treated and control service members enrolled in college at some point following the intervention. Based on our confidence intervals we can rule out treatment impacts larger than 1.9 percentage points, which would reflect a three percent effect size when compared to the mean outcome. Despite the relatively low baseline enrollment quality of service members, we also observe no impacts of the intervention on whether service members attended an institution with a graduation rate greater than 30 percent (the threshold we used to include colleges on the recommended list; column 2) or on whether service members enrolled at for-profit institutions (column 3). Finally, in column 4, we show that treated service members were no more likely to attend one of the four recommended colleges listed in the intervention materials. As we show in the bottom panel of Table 3, we do not observe differential effects of the intervention based on whether service members were assigned to the information-only or information+advising treatment arms.

We can rule out effects larger than a percentage point on these quality margins, significantly smaller than the magnitude of effects estimated in a number of similar studies among high-scoring traditional students. For example, Hoxby and Turner (2013) estimate a 5.3 percentage point increase in enrollment at well-matched institutions and two studies that evaluate the effect of an offer of virtual advising, one component of our multi-faceted intervention, found positive

effects of 2.7 and 1.3 percentage points on enrollment in high graduation rate colleges (Gurantz, Pender, Mabel, Larson, and Bettinger, 2020; Sullivan, Castleman, Lohner, and Bettinger, 2021). Concrete indications of tuition-free enrollment (also a component of our intervention), generated very large enrollment effects (15 percentage points) at the University of Michigan, in a study that provided targeted encouragement and a more explicit commitment from a single institution if admitted (Dynarski et al., 2020).

The intervention was primarily intended to influence the post-separation behavior of service members. In Appendix Table A2, we demonstrate that assignment to treatment had no effect on a service members timing of separation. In Appendix Table A3, we decompose the same enrollment outcomes from Table 3 by whether they occurred after the intervention and *before* service members separate from the Army or after the intervention and *after* service members separate from the Army. We see no significant impacts on enrollment either before or after the point of separation.

In Table 4 we show impacts of the intervention on a variety of measures of college persistence, pooling across treatment arms. In column 1 we present impacts on the total number of days following the intervention that a service member was enrolled at any higher education institution, weighted by enrollment intensity. [33] Mirroring Table 3, columns 2 and 3 of Table 4 present impacts on days enrolled at institutions with at least a 30 percent graduation rate and days enrolled at for-profit four-year institutions, respectively. In columns 4 and 5 we estimate impacts of the intervention on military-specific measures of college participation: whether service members used any post-9/11 GI Bill benefits towards a college education (column 4) and the

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[33] The "Days enrolled" outcome is the number of days from the start to the end of an enrollment period (not the number of instructional days), and is weighted by enrollment status (e.g., 0.5*days enrolled for half-time enrollment).

number of GI Bill benefit months used by service members (column 5). Across measures we find no impact of the intervention. Nearly half (48.9 percent) of the control group had used GI Bill benefits and we can rule out treatment impacts on GI Bill use greater than 2.6 percentage points, a five percent increase when compared to the mean. As we show in Appendix Table A3, we also do not observe significant impacts of the intervention on the number of days enrolled when we decompose this outcome as occurring before or after service members separated from the Army, and in Appendix Table A4 we show that the impacts of the intervention on our college persistence measures do not vary by treatment arm.

In Table 5 we present impacts of the intervention on three measures of degree attainment, pooling across treatment arms: whether service members earned any degree within our observation window (columns 1-3); whether service members graduated from an institution with a graduation rate of at least 30 percent (columns 4-6); and whether service members graduated from a for-profit institution (columns 7-9). Within each outcome the first column presents estimates of impacts occurring after the intervention, while the second two columns decompose each outcome into whether it occurred before or after the service member separated from the Army. As we show in column 1, we estimate a significant 0.96 percentage point increase in the probability of service members earning any degree, which represents an eight percent increase relative to the control group. This slight increase in degree attainment is entirely driven by service members who earned a degree after the intervention but before their separation from the Army. We find no impact of the intervention on whether service members graduated from an institution with a graduation rate

of 30 percent or higher, but do estimate a significant 0.6 percentage point increase in degree attainment from a for-profit institution.[34][35]

We view these impacts on degree attainment as likely spurious given the number of hypothesis tests we conduct and the lack of impacts we observe on preceding outcomes (enrollment, enrollment quality, persistence, GI Bill benefits use) that would conceivably result in higher rates of degree attainment. One possibility is that the intervention motivated service members to complete a credential or degree towards which they had already made substantial progress. We do find that degree impacts are concentrated among service members with substantial pre-intervention enrollment histories, and in particular for those with pre-intervention enrollment at for-profit institutions (Appendix Table A7). It therefore seems likely that the modest overall degree attainment impacts we observe, if real, are a function of the intervention nudging service members who were already close to a credential to either take the additional courses they needed through Tuition Assistance or gain credit for additional military experience they had accumulated – behavior we are unable to observe in our data. The fact that these additional investments appear to be coming through for-profit institutions is somewhat surprising in the context of the motivation for the experiment, and further suggests that a lack of information is not the driving force behind the continued disproportionate enrollment of veterans in institutions with poor average outcomes.

IX. Discussion

We implemented a multi-faceted randomized control trial to evaluate the effects of information and advising services on the postsecondary choices and attainment outcomes of transitioning Army

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[34] As we show in Appendix Table A5, the impacts of the intervention on attainment are very similar across the information-only and information+advising treatments.

[35] As we show in Appendix Table A6, these increase in degree attainment show up 18 months after the intervention.

service members. To our knowledge, the intervention is the first large field experiment to study the impact of information and assistance intended to alter the quality of college choices of and improve enrollment quality among an older non-traditional student population. Our sample of transitioning service members had high observed rates of mismatch, suggesting significant scope for improvements in enrollment quality. Further, our intervention conveyed to service members that they would face a net price of $0 at most colleges and universities *without* having to complete additional financial aid applications; leveraged multiple communications strategies (i.e., postal mail, email, and text messages); evidence-based behavioral approaches (i.e., personalized information, social norming, simplification, and specific action steps); and professional advising resources to increase service members' pursuit of college admission, attendance, and completion at higher quality institutions. Our randomized design and large samples allow us to rule out any economically meaningful effects of the intervention on overall enrollment, institutional quality, or persistence (days enrolled or benefits used). Program engagement data enable us to rule out a lack of material receipt or engagement as an explanation.

Our results provide new evidence on the challenges associated with affecting the postsecondary education decisions of non-traditional students, and the first such evidence for military service members. While our experiment was not designed to explain the absence of effects, we can provide some conjecture as to why this is the case. One possibility is that veterans feel out of place at the institutions we recommended. The provision of explicit connections to student veteran groups at the recommended institutions was intended to address this concern, but perhaps it was not enough to overcome separating service members' sense that few of their peers were attending these types of schools. Another possibility is that veterans are prioritizing some other institutional attribute. Older and younger students both rank academic reputation as the most

important factor in their college choice, but older students are significantly more likely to rank convenience (e.g. availability of evening and weekend courses) as important in their college choice (Bryant, 2012). While veterans and other non-traditional students may place a higher value on social fit and flexibility in their college choice decisions, this may reflect an overweighting of immediate concerns versus a more comprehensive assessment of which institutions offer the highest probability of longer-term succerss. Indeed, for-profits heavily market flexibility as one of the reasons people should attend these intitutions, yet students who attend for-profits and more flexible open access institutions still report regretting their institutional choices at high rates.

In contrast, we view geographic mismatch as a relatively unlikely explanation given up to date information on intended geographic residence post-separation and a qualitative review of service members' text responses to outgoing messages containing personalized college recommendations.[36] We also view as less plausible the possibility that veterans applied to and were not admitted to the institutions we identified or to similar (in terms of quality) institutions. By design veterans should have been at least above the 25th percentile of the SAT score distribution at the institutions we featured, and many institutions give preference to military experience in their admissions decisions.

From a policy perspective, the results suggest the provision of personalized information, nudges, and assistance, which has previously been shown to be effective among traditional student populations, is insufficient to alter the educational choices and outcomes of military service members and veterans, and likely has limited efficacy among the broader population of non-traditional students that have similar characteristics and enrollment patterns. These lower-touch efforts may simply be insufficient to overcome the much more intensive and deceptive recruiting

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[36] The project website also made it easy for service members to identify well-matched institutions in other geographic areas.

practices of for-profit institutions. For-profit institutions invest heavily in recruiters; hire recruiters with sales backgrounds rather than experience with college counseling; create a "boiler-room atmosphere" in which recruiters face strong pressure and disciplinary consequences if they do not hit enrollment quotas; and train recruiters to provide misleading information about for-profit institution quality, cost, and credit transferability (U.S. Senate, 2012). The recruiting practices of these institutions are not confined to veterans, but also apply to other vulnerable, non-traditional student populations.

It is clear that many students regret their choices to attend for-profit and other lower-quality institutions, and that information and assistance is insufficient to overcome the status quo. More assertive policies, such as those that constrain postsecondary choices or that tie financial aid receipt to prior institution performance, may be necessary to improve postsecondary education and employment outcomes among veterans and other non-traditional student populations.

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Table 1: Baseline equivalence and summary statistics for the control group

	Info only		Plus Advising		Control mean	Coef Test P-value
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
White	0.0038	(0.0092)	0.0076	(0.0092)	0.743	0.678
Black	0.0021	(0.0066)	0.0056	(0.0066)	0.105	0.599
Hispanic	-0.0068	(0.0062)	-0.0189***	(0.0062)	0.102	0.0517
Other Race	0.0009	(0.0047)	0.0057	(0.0047)	0.0493	0.305
Female	0.0085	(0.0059)	0.0097	(0.0059)	0.0797	0.852
Ever Married	0.0069	(0.0106)	0.0103	(0.0106)	0.541	0.743
Has dependents	0.0187*	(0.0105)	0.0179*	(0.0105)	0.569	0.941
GT score	-0.1089*	(0.0583)	0.0058	(0.0582)	117.5	0.0487
Base monthly pay	4.4284	(15.5270)	-9.5507	(15.5208)	2580	0.368
Years of service	0.0041	(0.1081)	-0.0744	(0.1080)	5.436	0.467
Hostile fire pay (months)	0.1030	(0.2519)	-0.2909	(0.2518)	7.700	0.118
TA credits	0.2528	(0.4179)	-0.1365	(0.4174)	8.312	0.351
SAT score	-3.6064	(5.9362)	-3.4164	(6.0010)	1027	0.975
E01 to E04	0.0057	(0.0101)	0.0210**	(0.0101)	0.645	0.131
E05 to E06	-0.0014	(0.0096)	-0.0148	(0.0096)	0.292	0.165
E07 to E09	-0.0043	(0.0051)	-0.0062	(0.0051)	0.0635	0.706
Prior days enr, grad rate < 30%	-2.3082	(5.5228)	-4.4267	(5.5170)	165.4	0.701
Prior days enr, grad rate 30-50%	-3.4813	(2.8551)	-1.0793	(2.8521)	42.70	0.400
Prior days enr, grad rate > 50%	-2.7776	(3.6617)	-6.5761*	(3.6579)	56.27	0.299
N	4,389		4,403		4,381	

Notes: each row corresponds to a separate regression of the baseline variable on the two indicators for treatment assignment (info only, plus advising) and randomization block fixed effects (base x GT bin x intervention wave). Columns (1) and (3) display the coefficient estimates for the treatment assignment indicators, and columns (2) and (4) display the standard errors. Column (6) displays the "Coef Test P-value" is the p-value from the test that the coefficients for the Info only and Plus advising indicators are equal. All baseline variables are measured immediately prior to the relevant intervention wave launch. TA credits refer to college credits the soldier earned through the Army's Tuition Assistance program. SAT scores are linked using data from the College Board. E01 through E09 categories refer to rank, with E01 being the lowest. The "prior days enrolled" measures are constructed using National Student Clearinghouse matches in the same manner as the weighted days enrolled outcome measures. The sample size for each regression is n = 13,173 with the exception of Base monthly pay (n = 13,067), Hostile fire pay (n = 13,067); and SAT score (n = 2,134).

Table 2: Text message interaction statistics

	Info only (1)	Plus advising (2)
Received any texts	89.4%	90.0%
Received all 9 texts	80.3%	74.6%
Any response (conditional on receipt)	17.2%	65.7%
Conditional on any response		
Total number of text responses	3.1	4.2
Total length of text responses (characters)	23.5	157.8
Responded to specific intervention text (conditional on receipt)		
1	1.1%	13.1%
2	18.4%	44.3%
3	1.1%	36.2%
4	3.3%	20.7%
5	3.0%	13.5%
6	0.3%	18.0%
7	0.3%	13.3%
8	0.3%	15.3%
9	0.2%	17.0%
N	4,389	4,403

Notes: calculated using text interaction data. The ~10% of soldiers who did not receive any texts were due to invalid cell phone numbers. Soldiers who received all 9 texts are those who had a valid cell phone number and did not opt-out of the text messages at some point during the intervention. Response to a particular intervention text is measured by whether the soldier texted back before the subsequent program message was sent.

Table 3: Impact on enrollment and enrollment quality

Panel A: Overall treatment impacts

	Any enrollment (1)	Enrolled at inst with grad rate > 30% (2)	Enrolled at For-profit 4-year (3)	Enrolled at recommended college (4)
Any treatment	0.0018	-0.0055	-0.0007	0.0011
	(0.0088)	(0.0078)	(0.0054)	(0.0035)
N	13,173	13,173	13,173	13,173
R-squared	0.1171	0.1191	0.0887	0.0485
Control mean	0.559	0.273	0.0988	0.0372

Panel B: Impacts by experimental variation

	Any enrollment (1)	Enrolled at inst with grad rate > 30% (2)	Enrolled at For-profit 4-year (3)	Enrolled at recommended college (4)
Info only	0.0032	-0.0061	-0.0031	0.0017
	(0.0101)	(0.0091)	(0.0062)	(0.0040)
Plus advising	0.0004	-0.0049	0.0016	0.0005
	(0.0101)	(0.0090)	(0.0062)	(0.0040)
N	13,173	13,173	13,173	13,173
R-squared	0.1171	0.1191	0.0887	0.0485
Control mean	0.559	0.273	0.0988	0.0372
Coef Test P-value	0.783	0.902	0.449	0.767

Notes: within each panel, each column corresponds to a separate regression of the outcome variable indicated in the column header on indicator(s) for treatment assignment, baseline variables shown in Table 1, and randomization block fixed effects (base x GT bin x intervention wave). In Panel B, the "Coef Test P-value" is the p-value from the test that the coefficients for the Info only and Plus advising indicators are equal.

Table 4: Impacts on college persistence

	Days enrolled (1)	Days enrolled at inst > 30% grad rate (2)	Days enrolled at For-profit 4-year (3)	Any 9/11 GIBill benefits used (4)	Months of 9/11 GI Bill benefits used (5)
Any treatment	-1.8366	-3.2301	0.6821	0.0083	0.1154
	(4.5805)	(3.6186)	(1.4191)	(0.0091)	(0.1540)
N	13,173	13,173	13,173	13,173	13,173
R-squared	0.1223	0.1115	0.0628	0.0727	0.0981
Control mean	185.2	95.57	15.58	0.488	6.472

Notes: each column corresponds to a separate regression of the outcome variable indicated in the column header on indicator for treatment assignment, baseline variables shown in Table 1, and randomization block fixed effects (base x GT bin x intervention wave). The "Days enrolled" outcome is the number of days from the start to the end of an enrollment period (not the number of instructional days), and is weighted by enrollment status (e.g. 0.5*days enrolled for half-time enrollment).

Table 5: Impacts on degree attainment

	Earned degree			Degree from inst with grad rate > 30%			Degree from For-profit 4-year		
	After intervention	Before separation	After separation	After intervention	After int, before sep	After separation	After intervention	Before separation	After separation
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Any treatment	0.0096*	0.0081**	0.0035	0.0059	0.0021	0.0046	0.0064**	0.0045**	0.0012
	(0.0058)	(0.0037)	(0.0051)	(0.0039)	(0.0023)	(0.0034)	(0.0028)	(0.0022)	(0.0019)
N	13173	13173	13173	13173	13173	13173	13173	13173	13173
R-squared	0.1441	0.1259	0.0854	0.132	0.1039	0.0819	0.0974	0.0836	0.05
Control mean	0.121	0.0415	0.084	0.0477	0.0155	0.0336	0.0203	0.0126	0.00959

Notes: each column corresponds to a separate regression of the outcome variable indicated in the column header on indicator for treatment assignment, baseline variables shown in Table 1, and randomization block fixed effects (base x GT bin x intervention wave). All outcomes are measured after the intervention. If a soldier had not yet separated as of March 2020 (the most recent NSC data to which we have access), then their "After separation" outcomes are recorded as zero.

Figure 1: Overview of intervention materials

The SFL2 intervention consisted of postal and digital messaging, sent weekly for four weeks. The full set of intervention materials are available in the Appendix and a more detailed description of the intervention is on pages 8-10.

	Week 1	Week 2
Primary content focus	• Identify matched institutions • Make salient the financial benefits of going to college • Provide next steps re: college search	• Create a positive social norm around veterans attending college • Encourage service members to contact student veterans groups
Illustrative content (for information + advising treatment)	Your service to our country has earned you **up to $200,000 - $300,000** in GI Bill education funding. We want to help you make the best use of your benefits. **High-quality, affordable colleges where YOU have a good chance of being admitted:** Your GI Bill benefits also come with a monthly housing allowance! **Your next steps:** Hi, it's [ADVISOR]. The Army sent letters and emails with colleges in [STATE] that you might be interested in. Did you get your list?	**Many colleges have student veterans groups as well as specific admissions officers dedicated to helping veterans apply.** Here are specific contacts at the colleges we shared with you last week: Hey [SOLDIER NAME]. Lots of colleges have student vet groups. Want to connect with a student vet at schools you are interested in?

Week 1 table:

College	% of students who graduate	Full price of tuition & fees per year	Price/year for vets with full GI Bill benefits
Syracuse University	81.7%	$40,458	$0
Yeshiva University	84%	$37,600	$0
SUNY New Paltz	72.7%	$7,063	$0
University at Buffalo	70.4%	$8,211	$0

Week 2 table:

College	Contact info for a veteran at this college you can talk to	Admissions office website
Syracuse University	Keith Doss, veterans@syr.edu	http://admissions.syr.edu
Yeshiva University	SVA Outreach team, contact@studentverterans.org	http://yu.edu/adisions
SUNY New Paltz	Veteran Services, np-vmw@newpaltz.edu	http://www.newpaltz.edu
University at Buffalo	SVA Outreach team, contact@studentverterans.org	http://admissions.buffalo.edu

	Week 3	Week 4
Primary content focus	• Resend set of matched institutions • Encourage service members to consider institutional quality alongside program flexibility and credit transfer	• Address anxiety about taking college entrance exams • Inform service members of opportunities to take exams for free
Illustrative content (for information + advising treatment)	**Two questions we know many soldiers have about college:** 1. **Wouldn't online programs give me more flexibility?** Online programs do offer more flexibility, but they also vary a lot in graduation rates and in how employers view the degree. 2. **Should I go somewhere I can transfer my credits?** Credit transfer is worth exploring, but make sure that colleges that accept a lot of transfer credits have the same high graduation rates and low costs as the colleges above. I know lots of soldiers have questions about transferring credits they earned in the Army. Is this something you've looked into?	Did you know that soldiers like you with a GT score between 130 - 134 tend to score between 1160 and 1220 on the SAT? As you can see in the table below, this puts you well within the SAT score range of students who attend each of these colleges. | College	SAT score range (25th -75th percentile of students)
---	---
Syracuse University	SAT: 1040 – 1270 (ACT 23 - 28)
Yeshiva University	SAT: 1100 – 1370 (ACT 23 - 29)
SUNY New Paltz	SAT: 1030 – 1220 (ACT 23 - 27)
University at Buffalo	SAT: 1050 – 1320 (ACT 23 - 28)	 [Soldier name], have you already taken the SAT or ACT? Many colleges require it. If not, can I help you with a plan to take the SAT or ACT? You might do better than you think!

APPENDIX

Appendix Table A1: Impact on enrollment and enrollment quality

Panel A: Overall treatment impacts

	Any enrollment			Enrolled at inst with grad rate > 30%			Enrolled at For-profit 4-year		
	Intended City/Zip (1)	Intended State (2)	No location (3)	Intended City/Zip (4)	Intended State (5)	No location (6)	Intended City/Zip (7)	Intended State (8)	No location (9)
Any treatment	-0.0051	-0.0482	0.0154	-0.0015	-0.0509	-0.0065	-0.0105	-0.0695	0.0085
	(0.0112)	(0.0475)	(0.0159)	(0.0099)	(0.0464)	(0.0144)	(0.0107)	(0.0496)	(0.0154)
N	8,263	738	4,172	8,263	738	4,172	8,263	738	4,172
R-squared	0.1330	0.4606	0.1681	0.1401	0.4200	0.1629	0.1676	0.4280	0.1907
Control mean	0.558	0.614	0.551	0.262	0.341	0.285	0.386	0.473	0.379

Panel B: Impacts by experimental variation

	Any enrollment			Enrolled at inst with grad rate > 30%			Enrolled at For-profit 4-year		
	Intended City/Zip (1)	Intended State (2)	No location (3)	Intended City/Zip (4)	Intended State (5)	No location (6)	Intended City/Zip (7)	Intended State (8)	No location (9)
Info only	0.0028	-0.0124	0.0011	-0.0025	-0.0205	-0.0063	-0.0139	-0.0612	0.0034
	(0.0129)	(0.0537)	(0.0186)	(0.0114)	(0.0525)	(0.0169)	(0.0124)	(0.0562)	(0.0180)
Plus advising	-0.0131	-0.0855	0.0287	-0.0005	-0.0824	-0.0067	-0.0070	-0.0781	0.0132
	(0.0130)	(0.0542)	(0.0183)	(0.0114)	(0.0530)	(0.0166)	(0.0124)	(0.0567)	(0.0177)
N	8,263	738	4,172	8,263	738	4,172	8,263	738	4,172
R-squared	0.1331	0.4631	0.1686	0.1402	0.4220	0.1629	0.1677	0.4281	0.1908
Control mean	0.558	0.614	0.551	0.262	0.341	0.285	0.386	0.473	0.379
Coef Test P-value	0.218	0.157	0.137	0.863	0.219	0.982	0.580	0.753	0.583

Notes: within each panel, each column corresponds to a separate regression of the outcome variable indicated in the column header on indicator(s) for treatment assignment, baseline variables shown in Table 1, and randomization block fixed effects (base x GT bin x intervention wave). In Panel B, the "Coef Test P-value" is the p-value from the test that the coefficients for the Info only and Plus advising indicators are equal. The sample for each regression, which is determined by what level of detail (if any) of intended location the soldier provided when signing up for the TAP, is indicated in the column headers.

Appendix Table A2: Impact of intervention on separation timing

Panel A: Overall treatment impacts

| | Separated as of… | | | | | | Days between intervention and separation | |
	31-Dec-17	30-Jun-18	31-Dec-18	30-Jun-19	31-Dec-19	30-Jun-20	Using future separation dates	Using observed separation dates
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Any treatment	-0.0016	0.0051	0.0041	0.0013	-0.0006	-0.0016	0.9986	-1.2993
	(0.0078)	(0.0085)	(0.0082)	(0.0078)	(0.0074)	(0.0071)	(14.5696)	(5.3378)
N	13,173	13,173	13,173	13,173	13,173	13,173	13,173	10,628
R-squared	0.2960	0.1454	0.0927	0.0847	0.0877	0.0884	0.1116	0.1143
Control mean	0.428	0.595	0.703	0.754	0.786	0.808	718.4	369.9

Panel B: Impacts by experimental variation

| | Separated as of… | | | | | | Days between intervention and separation | |
	31-Dec-17	30-Jun-18	31-Dec-18	30-Jun-19	31-Dec-19	30-Jun-20	Using future separation dates	Using observed separation dates
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Info only	-0.0034	0.0046	0.0064	0.0058	0.0040	-0.0004	-3.8467	-1.3706
	(0.0090)	(0.0099)	(0.0095)	(0.0090)	(0.0085)	(0.0082)	(16.8210)	(6.1666)
Plus advising	0.0001	0.0056	0.0019	-0.0032	-0.0050	-0.0027	5.8338	-1.2283
	(0.0090)	(0.0099)	(0.0095)	(0.0090)	(0.0085)	(0.0082)	(16.8121)	(6.1596)
N	13,173	13,173	13,173	13,173	13,173	13,173	13,173	10,628
R-squared	0.2960	0.1454	0.0927	0.0848	0.0877	0.0884	0.1116	0.1143
Control mean	0.428	0.595	0.703	0.754	0.786	0.808	718.4	369.9
Coef Test P-value	0.699	0.921	0.638	0.315	0.291	0.787	0.564	0.982

Notes: within each panel, each column corresponds to a separate regression of the outcome variable indicated in the column header on indicator(s) for treatment assignment, baseline variables shown in Table 1, and randomization block fixed effects (base x GT bin x intervention wave). In Panel B, the "Coef Test P-value" is the p-value from the test that the coefficients for the Info only and Plus advising indicators are equal.

Table A3: Impact on enrollment and enrollment quality, by timing relative to separation

Panel A: Overall treatment impacts

	Any Enrollment		Enrolled at inst with grad rate > 30%		Enrolled at For-profit 4-year		Enrolled at recommended college		Days Enrolled	
	Before separation (1)	After separation (2)	Before separation (3)	After separation (4)	Before separation (5)	After separation (6)	Before separation (7)	After separation (8)	Before separation (9)	After separation (10)
Any treatment	0.0020	0.0041	-0.0028	-0.0021	0.0018	-0.0019	0.0024	-0.0006	2.8372	-4.6681
	(0.0083)	(0.0088)	(0.0059)	(0.0073)	(0.0046)	(0.0038)	(0.0023)	(0.0032)	(1.8855)	(4.0834)
N	13,173	13,173	13,173	13,173	13,173	13,173	13,173	13,173	13,173	13,173
R-squared	0.1131	0.0994	0.0971	0.0987	0.0856	0.0554	0.0368	0.0499	0.0841	0.1075
Control mean	0.315	0.416	0.127	0.213	0.0694	0.0463	0.0142	0.0326	42.10	143.1

Panel B: Impacts by experimental variation

	Any Enrollment		Enrolled at inst with grad rate > 30%		Enrolled at For-profit 4-year		Enrolled at recommended college		Days Enrolled	
	Before separation (1)	After separation (2)	Before separation (3)	After separation (4)	Before separation (5)	After separation (6)	Before separation (7)	After separation (8)	Before separation (9)	After separation (10)
Info only	0.0015	0.0097	-0.0018	0.0017	-0.0012	-0.0022	0.0034	0.0009	2.8864	-3.9790
	(0.0095)	(0.0102)	(0.0068)	(0.0084)	(0.0053)	(0.0044)	(0.0026)	(0.0037)	(2.1769)	(4.7144)
Plus advising	0.0025	-0.0016	-0.0037	-0.0059	0.0048	-0.0017	0.0013	-0.0022	2.7882	-5.3557
	(0.0095)	(0.0102)	(0.0068)	(0.0084)	(0.0053)	(0.0044)	(0.0026)	(0.0037)	(2.1758)	(4.7120)
N	13,173	13,173	13,173	13,173	13,173	13,173	13,173	13,173	13,173	13,173
R-squared	0.1131	0.0995	0.0971	0.0987	0.0857	0.0554	0.0369	0.0500	0.0841	0.1075
Control mean	0.315	0.416	0.127	0.213	0.0694	0.0463	0.0142	0.0326	42.10	143.1
Coef Test P	0.914	0.268	0.788	0.365	0.261	0.894	0.441	0.400	0.964	0.770

Notes: within each panel, each column corresponds to a separate regression of the outcome variable indicated in the column header on indicator(s) for treatment assignment, baseline variables shown in Table 1, and randomization block fixed effects (base x GT bin x intervention wave). In Panel B, the "Coef Test P " is the p-value from the test that the coefficients for the Info only and Plus advising indicators are equal. All outcomes are measured after the intervention. If a soldier had not yet separated as of March 2020 (the most recent NSC data to which we have access), then their "After separation" outcomes are recorded as zero. The "Days enrolled" outcome is the number of days from the start to the end of an enrollment period (not the number of instructional days), and is weighted by enrollment status (e.g. 0.5*days enrolled for half-time enrollment).

Appendix Table A4: Impacts on college persistence, by experimental variation

	Days enrolled (1)	Days enrolled, inst > 30% grad rate (2)	Days enrolled, for-profit (3)	Any 9/11 GIBill benefits used (4)	Months of 9/11 GI Bill benefits used (5)
Info only	-1.0934	-2.9897	-0.2279	0.0162	0.2357
	(5.2884)	(4.1778)	(1.6383)	(0.0105)	(0.1778)
Plus advising	-2.5783	-3.4699	1.5902	0.0005	-0.0046
	(5.2856)	(4.1756)	(1.6375)	(0.0105)	(0.1777)
N	13,173	13,173	13,173	13,173	13,173
R-squared	0.1223	0.1115	0.0629	0.0728	0.0983
Control mean	185.2	95.57	15.58	0.488	6.472
Coef Test P-value	0.779	0.908	0.266	0.132	0.176

Notes: each column corresponds to a separate regression of the outcome variable indicated in the column header on indicators for treatment assignment, baseline variables shown in Table 1, and randomization block fixed effects (base x GT bin x intervention wave). "Coef Test P-value" is the p-value from the test that the coefficients for the Info only and Plus advising indicators are equal. The "Days enrolled" outcome is the number of days from the start to the end of an enrollment period (not the number of instructional days), and is weighted by enrollment status (e.g. 0.5*days enrolled for half-time enrollment).

Appendix Table A5: Impacts on degree attainment, by experimental variation

	Earned degree			Degree from inst with grad rate > 30%			Degree from For-profit 4-year		
	After intervention	Before separation	After separation	After intervention	After int, before sep	After separation	After intervention	Before separation	After separation
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Info only	0.0091	0.0067	0.0034	0.0078*	0.0028	0.0071	0.0062*	0.0050**	0.0005
	(0.0067)	(0.0043)	(0.0058)	(0.0045)	(0.0026)	(0.0045)	(0.0032)	(0.0026)	(0.0022)
Plus advising	0.0100	0.0094**	0.0036	0.0040	0.0014	0.0043	0.0066**	0.0040	0.0019
	(0.0067)	(0.0043)	(0.0058)	(0.0045)	(0.0026)	(0.0045)	(0.0032)	(0.0026)	(0.0022)
N	13,173	13,173	13,173	13,173	13,173	13,173	13,173	13,173	13,173
R-squared	0.1441	0.1259	0.0854	0.1321	0.1039	0.0697	0.0974	0.0836	0.0501
Control mean	0.121	0.0415	0.0840	0.0477	0.0155	0.0438	0.0203	0.0126	0.00959
Coef Test P-value	0.890	0.538	0.971	0.384	0.598	0.525	0.894	0.691	0.514

Notes: each column corresponds to a separate regression of the outcome variable indicated in the column header on indicators for treatment assignment, baseline variables shown in Table 1, and randomization block fixed effects (base x GT bin x intervention wave). All outcomes are measured after the intervention. If a soldier had not yet separated as of March 2020 (the most recent NSC data to which we have access), then their "After separation" outcomes are recorded as zero. "Coef Test P-value" is the p-value from the test that the coefficients for the Info only and Plus advising indicators are equal.

Appendix Table A6: impacts on college graduation by timing after intervention

Panel A: Overall treatment impacts

	Earned degree within … of intervention			
	6 months	12 months	18 months	24 months
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Any treatment	0.0031	0.0047	0.0086**	0.0076*
	(0.0023)	(0.0031)	(0.0037)	(0.0043)
N	13,173	13,173	13,173	13,173
R-squared	0.0902	0.1231	0.1323	0.1380
Control mean	0.0144	0.0299	0.0422	0.0600

Panel B: Impacts by experimental variation

	Earned degree within … of intervention			
	6 months	12 months	18 months	24 months
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Info only	0.0008	0.0043	0.0083*	0.0063
	(0.0026)	(0.0036)	(0.0043)	(0.0050)
Plus advising	0.0054**	0.0050	0.0089**	0.0090*
	(0.0026)	(0.0036)	(0.0043)	(0.0050)
N	13,173	13,173	13,173	13,173
R-squared	0.0904	0.1231	0.1323	0.1380
Control mean	0.0144	0.0299	0.0422	0.0600
Coef Test P-value	0.0753	0.830	0.875	0.592

Notes: each column corresponds to a separate regression of the outcome variable indicated in the column header on indicator for treatment assignment, baseline variables shown in Table 1, and randomization block fixed effects (base x GT bin x intervention wave).

Table A7: impacts on degree attainment by prior college enrollment

Panel A: Overall treatment impacts

	Days of pre-intervention college enrollment			Any pre-intervention enrollment at for-profit institution?	
	Zero	0-399	400+	No	Yes
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Any treatment	0.0016	0.0016	0.0257*	0.0035	0.0635***
	(0.0073)	(0.0091)	(0.0135)	(0.0059)	(0.0220)
N	4,024	4,750	4,399	11,275	1,898
R-squared	0.1148	0.1100	0.1774	0.1294	0.2960
Control mean	0.0431	0.0896	0.222	0.107	0.208

Panel B: Impacts by experimental variation

	Days of pre-intervention college enrollment			Any pre-intervention enrollment at for-profit institution?	
	Zero	0-399	400+	No	Yes
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Info only	0.0050	0.0049	0.0141	0.0023	0.0733***
	(0.0084)	(0.0105)	(0.0156)	(0.0069)	(0.0253)
Plus advising	-0.0018	-0.0018	0.0372**	0.0047	0.0538**
	(0.0083)	(0.0105)	(0.0156)	(0.0069)	(0.0253)
N	4,024	4,750	4,399	11,275	1,898
R-squared	0.1150	0.1100	0.1779	0.1294	0.2963
Control mean	0.0431	0.0896	0.222	0.107	0.208
Coef Test P-value	0.415	0.523	0.142	0.730	0.433

Notes: each column corresponds to a separate regression of the outcome variable "earned degree" on indicator for treatment assignment, baseline variables shown in Table 1, and randomization block fixed effects (base x GT bin x intervention wave), with the sample limited to soldiers corresponding to the column headings.

Intervention Materials
- Information only – emails and mailers
- Information only – text messages
- Information + advising – emails and mailers
- Information + advising – text messages

You served your country. Now let your GI Bill Benefits serve you.

VETERANS WITH COLLEGE DEGREES EARN **$800,000-$1,200,000** MORE IN A LIFETIME THAN THOSE WITHOUT.

Dear SSG BIRD,   [#1 of 4 weekly letters]

Your service to our country has earned you **up to $200,000 - $300,000** in GI Bill education funding. We want to help you make the best use of your benefits.

High-quality, affordable colleges where <u>YOU</u> have a good chance of being admitted:

College	% of students who graduate	Full price of tuition & fees per year	Price/year for vets with full GI Bill benefits
Syracuse University	81.7%	$40,458	$0
Yeshiva University	84%	$37,600	$0
SUNY New Paltz	72.7%	$7,063	$0
University at Buffalo	70.4%	$8,211	$0

Your GI Bill benefits also come with a monthly housing allowance!

Your next steps:

SEARCH

Find schools that are right for you. To learn about these colleges, or others near where you'll be living, visit http://college.army.mil. You can also find information about how to apply to these colleges.

SIGN UP

Sign up for the higher education module at Ft. Bragg by calling (910) 396-2227 / 7188. You can take this module even if you have already completed another module.

Sincerely,

Anthony J. Stamilio
Anthony J. Stamilio
Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army

Visit http://college.army.mil to learn more about how we identified these colleges and came up with our cost estimates. Costs may differ based on your circumstances. Contact the college's financial aid office to learn more.

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VETERANS WITH COLLEGE DEGREES EARN **$800,000-$1,200,000** MORE IN A LIFETIME THAN THOSE WITHOUT.

Dear SSG BIRD,   [#2 of 4 weekly letters]

Soldiers like you develop unique skills and experience in the Army and are more successful in college than civilian students of a similar age:

Many colleges have student veterans groups as well as specific admissions officers dedicated to helping veterans apply. Here are specific contacts at the colleges we shared with you last week:

College	Contact info for a veteran at this college you can talk to	Admissions office website
Syracuse University	Keith Doss, veterans@syr.edu	http://admissions.syr.edu
Yeshiva University	SVA Outreach team, contact@studentverterans.org	http://yu.edu/adisions
SUNY New Paltz	Veteran Services, np-vmw@newpaltz.edu	http://www.newpaltz.edu
University at Buffalo	SVA Outreach team, contact@studentverterans.org	http://admissions.buffalo.edu

Your next steps:

Contact one of the student vet groups or reach out to the admissions office to learn about how veterans are succeeding at each college.

To learn about student veterans' groups and admissions contacts at more colleges, visit http://college.army.mil.

Sincerely,

Anthony J. Stamilio
Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army

Visit http://college.army.mil to learn more about how we identified these colleges and came up with our cost estimates. Costs may differ based on your circumstances. Contact the college's financial aid office to learn more.

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VETERANS WITH COLLEGE DEGREES EARN **$800,000-$1,200,000** MORE IN A LIFETIME THAN THOSE WITHOUT.

Dear SSG BIRD,

Two weeks ago we sent you a letter or email with the following high-quality, affordable colleges where you have a good chance of being admitted:

College	% of students who graduate	Full price of tuition & fees per year	Price/year for vets with full GI Bill benefits
Syracuse University	81.7%	$40,458	$0
Yeshiva University	84%	$37,600	$0
SUNY New Paltz	72.7%	$7,063	$0
University at Buffalo	70.4%	$8,211	$0

Two questions we know many soldiers have about college:

1. **Wouldn't online programs give me more flexibility?** Online programs do offer more flexibility, but they also vary a lot in graduation rates and in how employers view the degree.

2. **Should I go somewhere I can transfer my credits?** Credit transfer is worth exploring, but make sure that colleges that accept a lot of transfer credits have the same high graduation rates and low costs as the colleges above.

Your next step:

To learn more about flexible programs and credit transfer policies at each college, visit http://college.army.mil.

Sincerely,

Anthony J. Stamilio
Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army

Visit http://college.army.mil to learn more about how we identified these colleges and came up with our cost estimates. Costs may differ based on your circumstances. Contact the college's financial aid office to learn more.

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VETERANS WITH COLLEGE DEGREES EARN **$800,000-$1,200,000** MORE IN A LIFETIME THAN THOSE WITHOUT.

Dear MSG DUKES,   [#4 of 4 weekly letters]

Did you know that soldiers like you with a GT score between 130 - 134 tend to score between 1160 and 1220 on the SAT?

As you can see in the table below, this puts you well within the SAT score range of students who attend each of these colleges.

College	SAT score range (25th -75th percentile of students)
Syracuse University	SAT: 1040 – 1270 (ACT 23 - 28)
Yeshiva University	SAT: 1100 – 1370 (ACT 23 - 29)
SUNY New Paltz	SAT: 1030 – 1220 (ACT 23 - 27)
University at Buffalo	SAT: 1050 – 1320 (ACT 23 - 28)

Your next steps:

Service members can often take the SAT for FREE! To sign up, call the **Ft. Bragg education office** at (910) 396-2537. For free SAT prep resources consider using: http://bit.ly/mysatkhan

Sign up for regular reminders about key deadlines in the college application process. We can send these to you even after you've returned to civilian life. Text 1-202-759-0249 or email advising@usma.edu to sign up.

We wish you the best of luck in your transition back to civilian life.

Sincerely,

Anthony J. Stamilio
Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army

Visit http://college.army.mil to learn more about how we identified these colleges and came up with our cost estimates. Costs may differ based on your circumstances. Contact the college's financial aid office to learn more.

Msg. #	Content
1	**Part 1:** (1/2) [first_name], the Army wants you to succeed in your transition. Stay tuned for personalized options and info. V/R Project Soldier for Life, Student for Life **Part 2:** (2/2)To confirm these messages are legit come by the TAP or Ed office or call [INST_PHONE]
2	[first_name], we found high-quality, affordable colleges in [state] that YOU have a good chance of getting into. Want to learn about these schools? Reply COLLEGE **Response to COLLEGE** **Part 1:** (1/2) Great! We'll start with four colleges. **Part 2:** (2/2) [COLLEGE1] in [C1_STATE_ABBREV] has a [C1_GRAD_RATE] graduation rate & costs vets w/ GI Bill benefits [C1_GI COST] per year. Text NEXT for #2 **Response to NEXT:** [COLLEGE2] in [C2_STATE_ABBREV] has a [C2_GRAD_RATE] graduation rate & costs vets w/ GI Bill benefits [C2_GI_COST] per year. Text NEXT for #3 **Response to NEXT:** [COLLEGE3] in [C3_STATE_ABBREV] has a [C3_GRAD_RATE] graduation rate & costs vets w/ GI Bill benefits [C3_GI_COST] per year. Text NEXT for #4 **Response to NEXT:** **Part 1:** (1/2) [COLLEGE 4] in [C4_STATE_ABBREV] has a [C4_GRAD_RATE] graduation rate & costs vets w/ GI Bill benefits [C4_GI_COST] per year. **Part 2:** (2/2) Visit https://college.army.mil to explore more colleges.
3	**Part 1:** (1/2) Hi [first_name], want to learn more about college? Sign up for the [INST_NAME] education module—even if you've already done another module

	Part 2: (2/2) At the module you can get one-on-one help with GI Bill questions and learn more about college options. Visit the TAP office to sign up.
4	**Part 1:** (1/2) Hi [first_name], soldiers like you develop unique skills and experience in the Army and are more successful in college than civilian students of a similar age. **Part 2:** (2/2) Many colleges have student veterans groups to help vets adjust to campus & build community. Want to see contact info for these vet groups? Reply VETS. **RESPONSE TO VETS:** **Part 1:** (1/2): Great! We'll start w/ vet contacts at four colleges. **Part 2:** (2/2) To contact the student vet group at [COLLEGE1], email [C1_SVA_CONTACT]. Text NEXT for #2 **RESPONSE TO NEXT:** To contact the student vet group at [COLLEGE2], email [C2_SVA_CONTACT]. Text NEXT for #3 **RESPONSE TO NEXT:** To contact the student vet group at [COLLEGE3], email [C3_SVA_CONTACT]. Text NEXT for #4 **RESPONSE TO NEXT:** **Part 1:** (1/2) To contact the student vet group at [COLLEGE4], email [C4_SVA_CONTACT]. **Part 2:** (2/2) Visit https://college.army.mil to find more vet contacts.
5	**Part 1:** (1/2) Hi [first_name], many colleges also have specific staff in the admissions office dedicated to work with and help veterans. **Part 2:** (2/2) I'd suggest contacting admissions & ask to speak to the counselor who works w/ vets. Want to see contact info for admissions offices? Reply ADMIT. **Response to ADMIT**

	Part 1: (1/2) Great! We'll start w/ contacts at four colleges.
	Part 2: (2/2) To contact the admissions office at [COLLEGE1], visit [COLLEGE1_URL] or call [COLLEGE1_PHONE]. Ask for the counselor who works w/ vets. Text NEXT for #2
	Response to NEXT: To contact the admissions office at [COLLEGE 2], visit [COLLEGE2_URL] or call [COLLEGE2_PHONE]. Ask for the counselor who works w/ vets. Text NEXT for #3
	Response to NEXT: To contact the admissions office at [COLLEGE 3], visit [COLLEGE3_URL] or call [COLLEGE3_PHONE]. Ask for the counselor who works w/ vets. Text NEXT for #4
	Response to NEXT: **Part 1:** (1/2) To contact the admissions office at [COLLEGE 4], visit [COLLEGE4_URL] or call [COLLEGE4_PHONE]. Ask for the counselor who works w/ vets.
	Part 2: (2/2) Visit https://college.army.mil to find more admissions contacts.
6	**Part 1:** (1/2) Hi [first_name], we know many soldiers like the appeal of online programs. But these vary in quality and cost. And employers may not value the degree as much. **Part 2:** (2/2) You can also find flexibility at traditional colleges. Visit https://college.army.mil to explore options.
7	**Part 1:** (1/2) Interested in transferring credits you earned? This is worth exploring, but make sure the colleges that accept lots of credits are a good investment. **Part 2:** (2/2) They may have lower grad rates or higher costs. Visit https://college.army.mil to explore options.
8	**Part 1:** (1/3) Hi [first_name], did you know that soldiers like you with a GT score between [GT_LO] – [GT_HI] tend to score between [SAT_EST_LO] and [SAT_EST_HI] on the SAT? **Part 2:** (2/3) This puts you right in the score range of students at high-quality colleges, visit https://college.army.mil to learn more.

	Part 3: (3/3) You may be able to take the SAT for free! Call the [INST_NAME] education office at [INST_PHONE] to learn more.
9.1	**Part 1:** (1/2) Hi [first_name], your GI Bill also comes with a housing allowance. To find out how much you might receive, visit *GI BENEFITS COMPARISON TOOL.* **Part 2:** (2/2) Did you know that you may qualify for additional grant aid on top of your GI benefits? Visit http://fafsa.ed.gov.

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Dear SSG BIRD,

Your service to our country has earned you **up to $200,000 - $300,000** in GI Bill education funding. We want to help you make the best use of your benefits.

High-quality, affordable colleges where <u>YOU</u> have a good chance of being admitted:

College	% of students who graduate	Full price of tuition & fees per year	Price/year for vets with full GI Bill benefits
Syracuse University	81.7%	$40,458	$0
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SUNY New Paltz	72.7%	$7,063	$0
University at Buffalo	70.4%	$8,211	$0

Your GI Bill benefits also come with a monthly housing allowance!

Your next steps:

One-on-one advising is only a text away! Text 1-202-759-0249 or email advising@usma.edu day or night with any questions about college or how to apply.

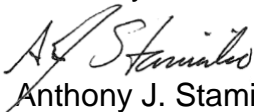**Find schools that are right for you.** To learn about these colleges, or others near where you'll be living, visit http://college.army.mil. You can also find information about how to apply to these colleges.

Sign up for the higher education module at Ft. Bragg by calling (910) 396-2227 / 7188. You can take this module even if you have already completed another module.

Sincerely,

Anthony J. Stamilio
Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army

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Dear SSG BIRD,

Soldiers like you develop unique skills and experience in the Army and are more successful in college than civilian students of a similar age:

Many colleges have student veterans groups as well as specific admissions officers dedicated to helping veterans apply. Here are specific contacts at the colleges we shared with you last week:

College	Contact info for a veteran at this college you can talk to	Admissions office website
Syracuse University	Keith Doss, veterans@syr.edu	http://admissions.syr.edu
Yeshiva University	SVA Outreach team, contact@studentverterans.org	http://yu.edu/adisions
SUNY New Paltz	Veteran Services, np-vmw@newpaltz.edu	http://www.newpaltz.edu
University at Buffalo	SVA Outreach team, contact@studentverterans.org	http://admissions.buffalo.edu

Your next steps:

Contact one of the student vet groups or reach out to the admissions office to learn about how veterans are succeeding at each college.
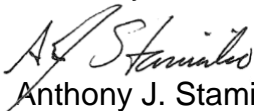
Text an advisor, who can help you learn more about veterans' programs at each college. Text 1-202-759-0249 or email advising@usma.edu day or night.

To learn about student veterans' groups and admissions contacts at more colleges, visit http://college.army.mil.

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Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army

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Dear Specialist MSG DUKES,

Two weeks ago we sent you a letter or email with the following high-quality, affordable colleges where you have a good chance of being admitted:

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Syracuse University	81.7%	$40,458	$0
Yeshiva University	84%	$37,600	$0
SUNY New Paltz	72.7%	$7,063	$0
University at Buffalo	70.4%	$8,211	$0

Two questions we know many soldiers have about college:

1. **Wouldn't online programs give me more flexibility?** Online programs do offer more flexibility, but they also vary a lot in graduation rates and in how employers view the degree.

2. **Should I go somewhere I can transfer my credits?** Credit transfer is worth exploring, but make sure that colleges that accept a lot of transfer credits have the same high graduation rates and low costs as the colleges above.

Your next steps:

Work with an advisor to find flexibility and credit transfer options at great colleges! Text 1-202-759-0249 or email advising@usma.edu day or night.

To learn more about flexible programs and credit transfer policies at each college, visit http://college.army.mil.

Sincerely,

Anthony J. Stamilio
Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army

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Dear MSG DUKES,

Did you know that soldiers like you with a GT score between 130 - 134 tend to score between 1160 and 1220 on the SAT?

As you can see in the table below, this puts you well within the SAT score range of students who attend each of these colleges.

College	SAT score range (25th -75th percentile of students)
Syracuse University	SAT: 1040 – 1270 (ACT 23 - 28)
Yeshiva University	SAT: 1100 – 1370 (ACT 23 - 29)
SUNY New Paltz	SAT: 1030 – 1220 (ACT 23 - 27)
University at Buffalo	SAT: 1050 – 1320 (ACT 23 - 28)

Your next steps:

Service members can often take the SAT for FREE! To sign up, call the **Ft. Bragg education office** at (910) 396-2537. For free SAT prep resources consider using: http://bit.ly/mysatkhan

Sign up for regular reminders about key deadlines in the college application process. We can send these to you even after you've returned to civilian life. Text 1-202-759-0249 or email advising@usma.edu to sign up.

Advisors are also available to you even after the service. Text 1-202-759-0249 or email advising@usma.edu day or night.

We wish you the best of luck in your transition back to civilian life.
Sincerely,

Anthony J. Stamilio
Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army

Visit http://college.army.mil to learn more about how we identified these colleges and came up with our cost estimates. Costs may differ based on your circumstances. Contact the college's financial aid office to learn more.

Msg. #	Content
1	**Part 1: "**(1/2) Hi [first_name], I'm [advisor_name], a college adviser working with the Army to answer questions soldiers have about college options after the Army." **Part 2:** "(2/2) I'll reach out occasionally & you can text any questions you have. To confirm these messages are legit come by the TAP or Ed office or call [INST_PHONE]"
2	**Part 1: "**(1/2) Hi, it's [advisor_name] again. The Army sent letters and emails with colleges in [STATE] that you might be interested in. Did you get your list? Reply YES or NO" **If NO:** "That's OK, it will probably come soon. You can find the same schools & more at http://college.army.mil. Can I help you explore college options?" **If YES:** *No automated response.* Adviser follows up to ask if the soldier has questions, or wants to discuss any of the options.
3	"Hi! Just checking to see if you've been able to attend the higher education transition module at [INSTALLATION]? Reply YES or NO" **If NO:** "That's OK, I know you can still sign up at the TAP office even if you've already done another module. The module will have useful info on using your GI Bill." **If YES:** *No automated response.* Adviser follows up to see how soldier thought it went and if they have any questions, or need any help, coming out of the module.
4	"Hey [SOLDIER NAME]. Lots of colleges have student vet groups. Want to connect with a student vet at schools you are interested in? Reply YES or NO"

	IF NO: "OK, no problem, let me know if I can help with anything else college-related." **If YES:** *No automated response.* Adviser uses college.army.mil or SVA site to help soldier find vet contact
5	"Hi there. Lots of college admissions offices have specific point people to help soldiers. Can I help you connect to a vet rep at any specific colleges?" **IF NO**: "OK, let me know if I can you find contacts down the road, or if there's anything else I can help with" **If YES:** *No automated response.* adviser helps soldier figure out who to connect with at a particular college
6	"Hi [SOLDIER NAME]. What kind of colleges are you looking into—traditional schools, mostly online programs, or both?" *No automated response.* If soldier responds traditional or both, advisor can ask soldier to share schools they're interested in and use that as a touching-off point to provide additional advising. If soldier responses online, advisors can use the language above and offer to help soldier look into quality of online programs and also explore other options.
7	"I know lots of soldiers have questions about transferring credits they earned in the Army. Is this something you've looked into?" *No automated response.* Regardless of response, advisor can use this as an opportunity to help soldier recognize that institutions that accept a lot of credits may not be of very high quality, and help soldiers explore transfer options at higher quality schools

8	(1/2) "[Soldier name], have you already taken the SAT or ACT? Many colleges require it." (2/2) "If not, can I help you with a plan to take the SAT or ACT? You might do better than you think!" *No automated response.* Adviser can use this as an opportunity to reinforce how GT corresponds to SAT and the types of schools this might make the soldier eligible for (by referring to letters/emails or going on college.army.mil). Advisers can also help soldier look into taking the SAT for free.
9	"Did you know the GI Bill comes with a housing allowance as well? And you might qualify for free grant aid on top of GI $$. Want more info?" *No automated response.* If soldier replies yes, advisor can direct them to GI Bill comparison tool or to fafsa site.