



DirectEmployers – November 10, 2020

**Assisting student veterans with disabilities transition
into the workplace**

Kathleen Lee and Ken Cisson



Our Mission

Provide colleges and universities with new ways of enabling student veterans with disabilities to gain employment that enhances their financial and personal well-being.



- Develop and deploy effective tools utilizing new ideas for student veteran with disabilities to launch careers
- Provide career transition practitioners with tools, systems and ideas
- Provide employers with a veteran talent pipeline

Plan for this session



- **Facts about Veterans and Veterans with Disabilities**
- **Combat2Careers (C2C) Partners**
- **C2C's Tactical Approach**
- **Assessment of Veterans – Your6 CareerChoiceGPS Report**
- **Transition Challenges**
- **DirectEmployers (DE) Member Partnership Opportunities with C2C**
- **Questions and Answers**

How do we usually thank veterans?



What should authentic gratitude look like?

**Better services &
supports**

**Quality
education**

**Access to quality
healthcare**

**More sustained
and
individualized
transition services**

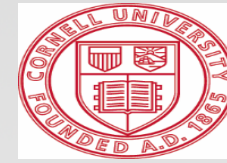
**Good sustainable
jobs**

Family services

**More
understanding
of what veterans
experienced**

**No disability job
discrimination**

**Less red tape &
more effective
bureaucracies**



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How many veterans are there?



- 18.2 million veterans in the U.S.
- About 4.3 million Gulf War Era (GWE) veterans
- GWE veterans are currently largest group of veterans in the U.S.

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2019).

Have returned between 2003 – 2019

Zogas. (2017). https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/papers/2017/Zogas_Veterans%27%20Transitions_CoW_2.1.17.pdf

How many veterans have a disability?



- **64% of all veterans have no disability**
- **36% of all veterans have any type of disability**
- **25% of all veterans have a service-connected (SC) disability**
- **41% of GWE veterans have an SC disability**

Erickson, W. (2019). Cornell University, Yang Tan Institute. Personal Communication. All statistics for working age veterans (18 – 64)

How many veterans are women?



- About 10% of all vets are women
- About 15 - 17% of GWE are women
- Rate of women in the military is increasing rapidly

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2019).

What about women veterans with disabilities?



- About 400,000 or 20% of all women veterans have a SC* disability
- 54% of women vets had a severe disability (rating > 60%)
- Top 4 SC disabilities for women vets are PTSD, major depressive disorder, migraine and back injury
- Women vets less likely to use VA services
- Their disabilities more likely to emerge over time

U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs (2015). Women Veterans Report. https://www.va.gov/vetdata/docs/specialreports/women_veterans_2015_final.pdf

How are student veterans unique?



Students Veterans are: Older

- Mean start age for veterans: 25
- Mean start age for non-veterans: 20.5

More likely to finish

- 72% of vets finish
- 54% of non-veterans finish

Better students

- Mean veterans' GPA: 3.39
- Mean non-veterans' GPA: 2.94

Fact Sheet: Veterans in Higher Education. 2019. <https://pnpi.org/veterans-in-higher-education/>

Research Brief: Profile of the Contemporary Student Veteran. 2017. <https://nvest.studentveterans.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Profiles-of-a-Contemporary-Student-Veteran.pdf>

Some challenges for student veterans

- Disconnect between classes student veterans enroll in and their marketable skills/career goals after graduation
- Often limited pre-military work experiences
- Often uncertain about transferability and relevance of military skills to job duties
- Lack of appropriate career counseling and appropriate training programs
- Lack of accommodations for disabilities (both workplace and training facilities)

U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs (2015). Women Veterans Report. https://www.va.gov/vetdata/docs/specialreports/women_veterans_2015_final.pdf

How difficult is transition?



“War is ugly, but it’s not the worst part of military service. I like to explain war as the ‘easy’ part. The ‘hard’ part is getting out”

Lee, K., Stern, L., & Young, J. (2015). *Strategies for Gaining Insight to the Employment Challenges of Veterans with Disabilities*. Bob Woodruff Foundation

A few takeaways

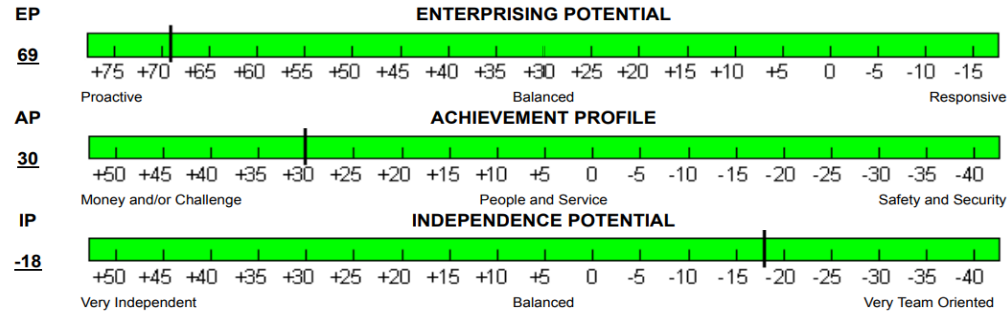
- Thank veterans for their service by providing programs and careers
- 4.3 million GWE veterans; nearly half of whom have a Service-Connected (SC) disability
- 17% of GWE veterans are women
- 30% of veterans have at least one of the signature disabilities
- Many disabilities are invisible and are still unfolding during transition
- Employers welcome veterans into the workplace, but hesitate to hire veterans with disabilities

Your6 Assessments - Your6usa.com

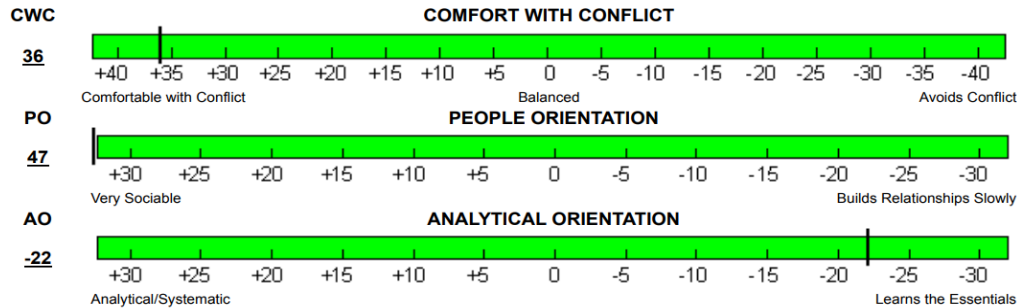


Ken's Assessment Summary

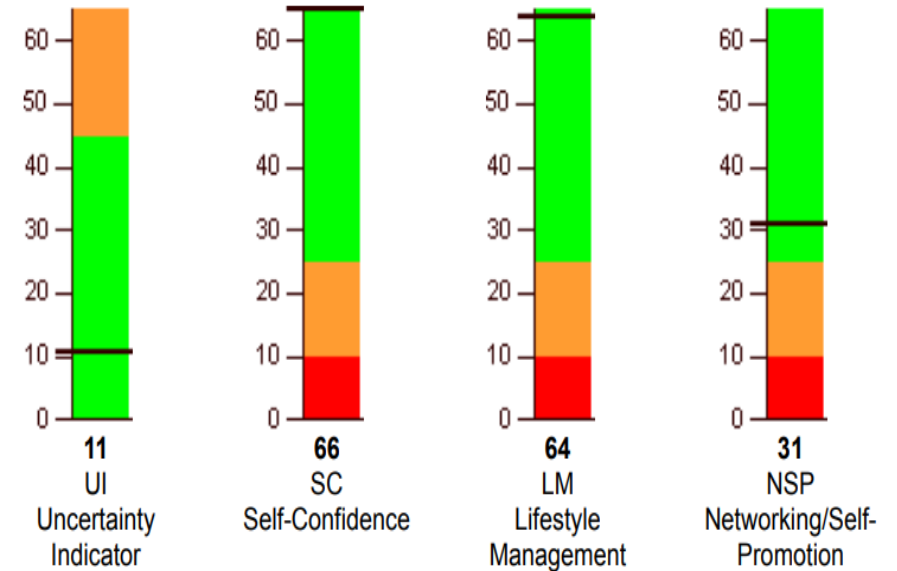
Inherent Traits



Learned Behaviors



Attitudes & Beliefs/Opinions



The Problem



68%

Veterans



48%

Translation



93%

Unsatisfied



Transition challenges and women veterans



- Women veterans are as likely as non-veteran women to have children
- Stress of transition more likely to be compounded by having greater family responsibilities
- Women veterans somewhat more likely to be dealing with PTSD
- They are less likely to use veteran benefits and services

U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs (2017).

The military's transition program (GPS) is short but the transition process is long



When student veterans arrive on campus, the transition process is not over—it has often just begun

Zogas. (2017)

Transition challenge #1 - Adjusting to a disability identity



Nearly half of all returning veterans are adjusting to civilian life at the same time they are adjusting to life as a person with a disability

Transition challenge #2 - Keeping abilities first

Too often, disability eclipses ability



- Strengths, talents and aspirations still matter!
- People with disabilities do perform as well as others on the job
- Veterans with newly acquired disabilities often only pay attention to their limitations, not to their strengths, talents and aspirations
- Feeling that they need to take “any job” instead of jobs related to their strengths

Transition challenge #3 - Disclosing/discussing disability



Rudstam & Streeter-Wilson (2012).

Research findings—survey of veterans with disabilities

- The vast majority of veterans do not intend to disclose their disability to an employer
- Those with the signature disabilities are less likely to disclose
- Veterans need a chance to work through their disclosure decision
- They can make a different disclosure decision for different employers

Transition challenge #4 - Staying connected



- Veterans generally can be isolated on a campus and workplace*
- Even more so for veterans with disabilities*
- Women veterans with disabilities very isolated
- It's often one person that makes the difference!**

*Zagas, 2017; Sayer, et al, 2010

**Lee, K., Stern, L., & Young, J. (2015). *Strategies for Gaining Insight to the Employment Challenges of Veterans with Disabilities*. Bob Woodruff Foundation

Transition challenge #5 - Key work-based learning



Need for student veterans to use non-traditional learning models:

- Experiential learning
- Apprenticeships
- Internships
- Mentoring

Veterans need a chance to process experiences in adjusting to civilian work culture and identifying job fit

Zogas, 2017; Ahern, Foster & Head. (2015).

Transition challenge #6 - Access to employers



Anheuser-Busch



How can C2C build sustainable partnerships with employers

- Become a valued business partner
- Lead with talent (not charity) mindset
- Provide evidence: Veterans with disabilities do perform as well as others on the job
- Conversations, events and partnerships
- Understanding workplace culture and job fit.
- Mentoring opportunities

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