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**PERISTENCE OF VETERAN STUDENTS AT CUMBERLAND COUNTY
COLLEGE**

by

LaToya L. Gibbons

A Thesis

Submitted to the
Department of Educational Services and Leadership
College of Education
In partial fulfillment of the requirement
For the degree of
Master of Arts in Higher Education
at
Rowan University
May 1, 2019

Thesis Chair: Andrew Tinnin, Ed.D.

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Dedications

This thesis is dedicated to the strong men and women who choose to take up arms in America's armed services. I am forever grateful for your sacrifice to ensure the freedoms we have in America are protected. To my mother Bessie, thank you for telling me to live on purpose with purpose. To my family, you all definitely did not make this easy on me, but I still love you all. To my beyond friends Mary, Shay, Gennesis and Diana all of your encouraging words have gotten me this far, let's keep going!

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To my cohort, thanks for the late nights that turned into early mornings. The laughs that turned into crying and not being sure if we were happy or sad to have made it this far. I wish you all success in the future and please do not forget the little people when you are all in the world being trailblazers.

Abstract

LaToya L. Gibbons
PERISTENCE OF VETERAN STUDENTS AT CUMBERLAND COUNTY COLLEGE
2018-2019
Andrew Tinnin, Ed.D.
Master of Arts in Higher Education

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceived persistence of Veteran students at Cumberland County College. This study implemented a quantitative approach by issuing a survey to the current cohort of Veteran students at Cumberland County College. A large number of barriers present themselves to students who study at two-year institutions of higher education, but the Veteran population is one that has not been extensively studied at this level. The experience of Veteran students presents some unique factors that may affect their education differently from other populations of students at two-year intuitions. Through content analysis of the data, findings suggest that Veteran students at Cumberland County College look to persist to degree completion. These students utilize intrinsic and extrinsic motivation towards their goal of degree completion. Veteran students at Cumberland County College do face barriers to their education, but not as significantly as research currently outlines in regard to civilian students.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Since the inception of higher education there has been a steady effort to assess the persistence of students throughout their program and to graduation. Persistence has been studied about various student groups at a plethora of institutions of higher education. There has been an influx of Veteran students incorporated into higher education since the introduction of the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, better known as the GI Bill. According to Bailey, Drury and Randall (2017), since the GI Bill was introduced, there have been different variations of benefits given to service people of all military branches to take advantage of for training and educational benefits. Most Veteran students today take advantage of the Post-9/11 Veterans Education Assistance Act of 2008, which allows Veteran students to attend their choice of an institution of higher education at no cost.

One institution where a current cohort of student Veterans are enrolled in various degree programs is Cumberland County College (CCC). CCC is a small two-year institution located in Vineland, NJ. CCC enrolls about 3,500 students across two campuses, 4 high schools and through online courses. Since allowing students to utilize their Veteran educational benefits there have been over 500 Veteran students enrolled at CCC at some point (Retrieved from *Recruit* Database). There are currently 35 Veteran students enrolled for the fall 2018 semester. Veteran students are offered a variety of services that general CCC students are not afforded, including access to the Veteran

Resource Center which houses individual computers, a lounge and access to mental health counselor four days a week.

Statement of the Problem

There is an abundance of research of the persistence of college students in terms of student grade point average, engagement and degree obtainment. Throughout this research, there is a clear gap in studying students and their persistence at two-year institutions who are also Veterans. There are studies that do examine the persistence of Veteran students who are take part in postsecondary education, but again, there is a lack of research of the students at 2-year institutions that takes into account various barriers these students may face.

Significance

The significance of this research is to ascertain whether the experiences of Veteran students affects their persistence. These experiences can include their military history, interactions on campus with advisement and in classroom interactions. The research presented here can be the basis of refining the services offered to Veteran students who are enrolled at two-year intuitions. There is limited research that explores how the experiences of Veteran students affects their persistence to graduation. Often, Veteran students are pooled into the general sample of students studied across campuses and this often blurs research that could be vital on recruiting and supporting Veteran students on college campuses. This research could lead to improving practices when advising Veteran students through their educational program. Particularly, this research could be foundational to advising Veterans at two-year institutions and providing

direction for future research when looking at Veterans who wish to transfer to four-year institutions to complete a bachelor's degree.

Purpose of Study

The current study aims to bridge this gap by gaining insight on the persistence of current Veterans at Cumberland County College who may face barriers beyond the range of students who also attend CCC. As previously stated, the persistence of college students has been measured in terms of academic success, but there is a need for the non-cognitive factors of persistence to be measured as well. The non-cognitive factors include: transportation to campus, academic motivation, sense of belonging and time management. The purpose of this quantitative study is to understand the perceived persistence of Veteran students who are enrolled at Cumberland County College using a needs assessment.

Assumptions and Limitations

This study was completed solely with current Veteran students at Cumberland County College. There is a limited number of Veteran students who participated in the study which may make it difficult for the study to be generalized to a larger population within the schema of Veteran students who attend two-year institutions. Researcher perspectives and relationships to the subjects being surveyed may also present bias in the findings. Being that the students have a personal connection with the researcher, there may be implications of truthful answers being omitted to portray a certain light for the sake of the researcher.

Operational Definitions

1. Veteran student: Current students who have or are serving in a military branch of the United States of America
2. Persistence: The act of continuing towards an educational goal

Research Questions

The study aims to address the following research questions:

1. How do current Veteran students at Cumberland County College view their persistence in college?
2. Do any barriers impact these students' persistence?

Overview of the Study

Chapter II provides a review of scholarly literature in relation to this study. It includes research in the overall barriers that Veteran students may face when taking courses at a two-year college and the persistence of students at two-year institutions.

Chapter III discusses methods and procedures used to gather information for this study. The chapter includes context of the study, a description of the population, sample selection, data collection instruments, procedures used in gathering the data and a brief description of how the data were analyzed.

Chapter IV highlights the findings and results of the study. The aim of this chapter is to answer the research questions with the use of quantitative data analysis.

Chapter V consists of a summary of the study, and discusses the major findings. To further the discussion of the findings within the study recommendations for

supporting the persistence of Veteran students at two-year institutions are given as well as recommendations for future research in persistence of Veteran students.

Chapter II

Review of Literature

Veteran students who attend college face a multitude of barriers to college that both coincide with other students who attend two-year institutions and differ from traditional students. Some of these barriers are explored through a clearer lens from previous research and gaps are explored to guide the current study. Further, specific gaps that are often experienced by Veteran students who attend two-year institutions are also explored. Specifically, the plights of Veteran students at Cumberland County College are explored through a review of literature.

Barriers to Persistence of Veteran Students

Veteran students who decide to take part in pursuing a degree whether after completing active duty or in conjunction with fulfilling reserve contracts, do so not only with the challenges of being a Veteran student, but often with the added pressures of being a non-traditional aged student. According to Capps (2012) even though adult students tend to earn higher grade point averages (GPA) than traditional aged students, these students are less likely to persist when compared traditional aged students. There are many factors that go into the barriers to persistence to adult students which Nakajima, Dembo and Mossler (2012) include demographic, financial and academic. Students may have a bevy of stressors that contribute to barriers in education that traditional-age students do not have to contend with. Veteran students could be dealing with post-traumatic stress disorder, balancing a family, or working while attending school. These all contribute to Veteran students' persistence to complete a degree at various school

models, but the focus of Veteran students at community colleges expand on these barriers. According to Miller (2015) Veteran students in community college must deal with constraints of transportation, course selection, and unreliable campus relationships that may contribute to poor retention rates. Veteran students may not be financially able to initially afford stable transportation to and from a two-year campus without the initial benefits used to pay for their education.

Nakajima et al. (2012) also attribute the general under preparedness of students at two-year institutions as a contributing factor to low retention and persistence rates. Veteran students returning or enrolling into higher education course work must meet minimal standards in English and mathematics or be placed in remedial courses. Even though Veteran benefits cover remedial coursework, the course selection without these foundational courses are extremely limiting for students. These students may not be able to enroll in college-level coursework until completion of remedial courses. Remedial course often do not count as graduation credits and are often a major factor in drop-out rates.

Another major contributing factor in persistence of Veteran students is relationships with campus personnel. Veterans, like other students, often interact with advisors and professors on campus. These relationships may be foundational in fostering a connection to the institution and contributing to the persistence of students. Parks, Walker and Smith (2015) explored the relationships of Veteran students with advisors. Through a mixed-methods approach, Veteran students contended that they would engage more with academic advisors who were also Veterans or who were knowledgeable about where to find resources for Veterans. Another barrier in engaging with staff is the lack of

knowledge of policies that grant Veteran students credits for military experiences, rules governing military experiences, and getting to know Veteran students individually. By making a conscientious effort to learn more about these students, there is a chance that these personal connections can foster relationships that can contribute to the realized persistence of Veteran students.

Bridging the Gap Between Veteran Students and Two-Year Campuses

Southwell, Whiteman, Wadwroth and Barry (2016) compared differences in the use of various university services and influence of faculty on retention-related outcomes of Veteran students to civilian students. This study was a direct comparison of how campus involvement and seeking assistance affected both groups of students. Researchers looked at the frequency of students visiting advisors, faculty, registrars' offices, financial aid offices, and student organizations. When looking at Veterans students visits to faculty and advisors it was found that these visits were positively related to Veteran students' expectations for degree completion. This look at student involvement fits with Parks, Walker and Smith's (2015) notion that Veteran students who are connected to individual staff members on campus are more likely to persist to educational goals.

According to Capps (2012), the remedy to ensuring that these students persist seems to be a part of a larger holistic plan that caters to the specific needs of Veterans. These needs may include counseling services, empathetic staff members and individualized plans to ensure Veteran students' needs are met in an effective and proactive manner. These contributing factors may directly correlate to Veteran students' perceived persistence at two-year institutions or new pieces to the proverbial puzzle may

be found. This study seeks to see what contributing factors effect Veteran students' perceived persistence and how if any barriers effect these students' persistence.

Veteran Students at Cumberland County College

Current Veteran students at Cumberland County College are assigned to an advisor based on their major. Students could be paired with an advisor who is part-time or full-time, so the range of availability of advisor is revolving. In addition to an assigned advisor, these students also have access to the certifying official who is tasked with handling all benefits relating to educational expenses to the students. The students may consult with the certifying official when inquiring about benefits, course selection and resources available to the Veteran both on and off campus.

Current Veteran students take advantage of benefits that pay part or all of tuition, fees and books at CCC and allows them to take advantage of a monthly living stipend while they are enrolled in at least 7 credits at the institution. Veteran students are currently enrolled in various majors that align with their educational or career goals. Students are a part of various military branches, from a wide range of age groups and a diverse background and demographic. These students' perceived persistence is contingent upon their own experiences on and off campus, through their own life experiences and military experiences. All these contributing factors are explored within the student to gauge the persistence and barriers these students are confronted with throughout their educational journey.

Summary of Literature

Through a review of literature, there are a number of barriers to Veteran students' persistence that align with barriers other students may face, but military experience adds a unique barrier to education when compared to other students. These experiences coupled with balancing a work and family balance may contribute to the persistence of Veteran students. When looking at supporting these students, it may be necessary to create specific support strategies to cater to the specific needs of Veteran students. These strategies could lead to filling the gap in holistically serving Veteran students. The data from this study aims to guide future research in effective way to support Veteran students to persist on two-year campuses.

Chapter III

Methodology

Context of the Study

There is a current gap in research that analyzes the persistence of Veteran students at two-year institutions. There is an abundance of research on persistence of students at two-year institutions, but the need to look at strategies to support the Veteran student population. The research presented here aims to explore how Veteran students at Cumberland County College view their persistence and to identify barriers that impact Veteran students' persistence

Cumberland County College is a small 2-year institution located in Vineland, New Jersey. Vineland is a small urban city located in Cumberland County. The community consists primarily of individuals of low socioeconomic status. According to the United States Census Bureau as of 2017, Cumberland County has an estimated population of 152,538 residents, consisting of 46.3% White persons, 22% Black persons, and about 30.8% Latino persons. Within the county the median household income is \$50,000 with 18.4% of the population living in poverty. Of the county's population, there are 7,021 Veterans (Census, 2017). These Veterans are not all enrolled at CCC, but are active citizens in the community of various ages and may connect to the county's Veteran's Affairs or other organizations in the county.

Population and Sample Selection

The study was administered to 35 current Veteran students who are enrolled at Cumberland County College. This is the entire current population of current Veteran

students enrolled at Cumberland County College. These students range in military experience, academic aptitude and socioeconomic status. All students were asked to complete a survey. Even though the students are at different stages in their academic program, they completed the same survey in order to identify any barriers regardless of academic progress.

Instrumentation

This study utilizes a quantitative approach to compile data in order to capture the largest pool of data that can be generalized across the sample. The survey includes demographic and persistence measures. The instrument used for the survey is modeled after the work of Lindheimer (2011). The modified survey (Appendix C) consists of 39 items that gathers demographic and background information. Questions are asked regarding academic advising, social integration, degree commitment, scholastic conscientiousness, academic motivation, collegiate stress, institution commitment, financial strain, and academic integration. The survey is designed so that the participants could rate each item on a Likert scale of strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree and strongly disagree.

A pilot test was conducted to determine face validity and reliability of the survey. Responses indicated that the items were clear and understood by participants. To determine reliability, the Likert scale items of the survey were analyzed using Guttman Split-Hall coefficient tool in SPSS. The survey was approved by the Institutional Review Board at Rowan University.

Data Collection

Data collection took place during February of 2019. The survey was administered via email to the Veteran cohort. Students selected were notified in advance as to when and how the survey would be administered and the expected time to complete the survey.

The distribution of surveys was conducted via email to the cohort in order to compensate the revolving schedule of the researcher and the cohort. This approach was to avoid the possibility that students would agree with each other in a small group setting. With the addition of privacy, it is thought answers would be open and honest in an isolated setting.

Data Analysis

The independent variable in this study included military experience and course rigor. Information for these variables were collected in the first part of the survey. The dependent variable were the attitudes and views that the students had about different factors relating to their persistence in their degree program. Variations in the students' attitudes were explored based on each of the independent variables using SPSS computer software. Data will be analyzed to describe the experiences of Veteran students at Cumberland County College and support some strategies to assist these students through their academic programs.

Chapter IV

Findings

Profile of the Survey Sample

The subjects for the study consisted of current students at Cumberland County College who take advantage of Veteran benefits. These students were registered full-time or part-time during the fall 2018 and/or spring 2019 semesters. A total of 35 Veteran students were sent the survey electronically with 17 responses.

Table 4.1 displays the demographic information of all Veterans who participated in the study. Of all the participants, 41% of students reported being 22-25 years of age and 24% of the respondents were 18-21 years of age. Of the respondents, 59% are males and 41% are female. Of all participants, 70% of students identified as being White, 24% identified as a mixed race or other and only 11% reported being of Latinx descent.

Table 4.1

Demographics for All Participants (N=17)

Variables		<i>f</i>	%
Age	18-21	4	24
	22-25	7	41
	26-29	3	18
	30-33	1	6
	34 or older	2	11
	Total		100
Sex	Male	10	59
	Female	7	41
	Total	17	100
Race/Ethnicity	White	12	59
	Black/African	1	6
	American	0	0
	Asian	0	0
	Pacific Islander	4	24
	Mixed/Other	0	0
	Total	17	100
	Latinx Origin	2	11

Table 4.2 displays the military background of all Veterans who participated in the study.

Of all the participants, 29% of students reported being a member of the Army and 23% of the respondents were members of the Marine Corps. Of the respondents, 65% reported being in their military branch for 4-6 years. Of all participants, 77% of students had been in active duty during their military career.

Table 4.2

Military History for All Students (N=17)

Variables		<i>f</i>	%
Military Branch	Army	5	29
	Army Reserve	2	12
	Navy	2	12
	Coast Guard	2	12
	Marines	4	23
	Marines Reserve	1	6
	National Guard - Air	1	6
	Total	17	100
Length of Service	1-3 years	4	24
	4-6 years	11	65
	7 years or more	2	11
	Total	17	100
Active Duty Status	Yes	7	41
	No	10	59
	Total	17	100

Table 4.3 displays family structure for participants. Of all the participants, 53% of students had never been married and 23% of the respondents were currently married. Of the respondents, 59% do not have any dependents and 41% care for a dependent.

Table 4.3

Family Structure (N=17)

Variables		<i>f</i>	%
Marital Status	Married	4	23
	Widowed	1	6
	Divorced	2	12
	Separated	1	5
	Never Married	9	53
	Total	17	100
Dependents	Yes	7	41
	No	10	59
	Total	17	100

Analysis of the Quantitative Data

Research question 1: How do current Veteran students at Cumberland County College view their persistence in college? In order to determine the level of persistence of Veteran students at Cumberland County College the responses to the survey were analyzed. The statements were grouped together based on four-factor grouping. Participants were asked how strongly they agreed or disagreed with each statement and indicated on the survey. These responses were aimed to offer insight on whether students

would finish their program and move on to obtain an advanced degree. Questions asked pertained to persistence, family/institutional support and motivation.

The tables in this chapter show the participants' answer to the subset of statements related to persistence, support, and motivation. Students could choose between the responses of "Strongly Agree," "Agree," "Undecided," "Disagree," or "Strongly Disagree." The table organized the statements from highest level to the lowest level of agreement in congruence with the students' responses.

Table 4.4 outlines the extent to which students agree with beliefs and behaviors that build their persistence to a degree. When responding to the statement "Earning a college degree is essential to my future" 82% of the respondents either "Strongly Agree" or "Agree" with the statement. 94% of respondents "Strongly Agree" or "Agree" to the statement, "I plan on enrolling in courses next semester."

Table 4.4

Persistence (N=17)

Item	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Earning a college degree is essential to my future. (<i>N=17, M=1.71, SD=.772</i>)	8	47	6	35	3	18	0	0	0	0
I am enthused about completing academic tasks at this institution. (<i>N=17, M=1.65, SD=.606</i>)	7	41	9	53	1	6	0	0	0	0

Table 4.4 (continued) 10 59 6 35 1 6 0 0

I plan on enrolling in courses next semester.
(*N=17, M=1.47, SD=.624*)

I am confident that I receive the grades that I want.
(*N=17, M=1.76, SD=.831*)

Table 4.5 shows the participants' responses to statements related to how much family and institutional support students received as they pushed for pursuing a college career. When answering the statement "My family is supportive of my pursuit of a college degree" 100% of the respondents either "Strongly Agree" or "Agree" with the statement. 88% of respondents "Strongly Agree" or "Agree" to the statement, "My experience at this institution has been mostly positive."

Table 4.5

Student's Family/Institutional Support (N=17)

Item	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
My family is supportive of my pursuit of a college degree. (<i>N=17, M=1.18, SD=.393</i>)	14	82	3	18	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 4.5 (continued)

People who are important to me would be disappointed in me if I quit school. (<i>N=17, M=1.94, SD=1.029</i>)	7	41	6	35	2	12	2	12		
The faculty and staff at this institution care about my success. (<i>N=17, M=2.00, SD=.866</i>)	6	35	5	29	6	36	0	0	0	0
My experience at this institution has mostly been positive. (<i>N=17, M=1.82, SD=.809</i>)	6	35	9	53	1	6	1	6	0	0

Table 4.6 student's responses to feeling levels of motivation when pursuing their degree. When responding to the statement "I plan on stopping my education because I no longer want to pursue a degree" 88% of the respondents either "Strongly Disagree" or "Disagree" with the statement. 94% of respondents "Strongly Agree" or "Agree" to the statement, "I am sure I will earn a college degree."

Table 4.6

Motivation (N=17)

Item	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
I always turn in assignments on time. (<i>N=17, M=1.71, SD=1.160</i>)	10	59	5	29	0	0	1	6	1	6
I plan on stopping my education to go to work. (<i>N=17, M=4.35, SD=.996</i>)	0	0	1	6	3	17	2	12	11	65
I plan on stopping my education because I no longer want to pursue a degree. (<i>N=17, M=4.65, SD=.702</i>)	0	0	0	0	2	12	2	12	13	76
I am sure I will earn a college degree. (<i>N=17, M=1.18, SD=.529</i>)	15	88	1	6	1	6	0	0	0	0

Research question 2: Do any barriers impact these students' persistence? When analyzing the barriers that Veterans may face questions were asked that would apply to any student who would take classes at a two-year institution as well as questions that pertain to issues that only Veteran students may encounter. The statements were grouped together based on four-factor grouping. Participants were asked how strongly they agreed or disagreed with each statement and indicated on the survey. These responses were aimed to offer insight on what barriers students may face based on their own living circumstances as well as their military training and combat history.

Table 4.7 outlines the impact of external barriers on Veteran students' education. When asked, "I often worry about having enough money to meet my needs" 41% of students "Disagree" or "Strongly Disagree" while 41% of students "Strongly Agree" or "Agree" with the statement. 41% of students responded "Strongly Agree" or "Agree," 41% responded "Disagree" or "Strongly Disagree" while 35% were "Neutral" to the statement "I plan on working more hours per week to take care of my expenses."

Table 4.7

Barriers (N=17)

Item	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
I often worry about having enough money to meet my needs. (<i>N=17, M=2.88, SD=1.269</i>)	3	18	4	23	3	18	6	35	1	6
I have reliable transportation to and from campus. (<i>N=17, M=1.59, SD=.870</i>)	10	59	5	29	1	6	1	6	0	0
I am often preoccupied with my personal troubles. (<i>N=17, M=3.29, SD=.985</i>)	1	6	2	12	6	35	7	41	1	6
I plan on working more hours per week to take care of my expenses. (<i>N=17, M=3.12, SD=1.269</i>)	2	12	3	18	6	35	3	18	3	18

Table 4.8 outlines the impact of military and combat experience on Veteran students' education. When asked, "My military experience has helped me in my college courses." 64% of students "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" while 30% of students responded "Neutral" and 6% "Disagree" with the statement. 47% of students responded "Strongly Agree" or "Agree," 24% responded "Disagree" or "Strongly Disagree" while 30% were "Neutral" to the statement "My military experience is a key factor in my decision to earn a college degree."

Table 4.8

Military/Combat History (N=17)

Item	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
My military experience has helped me in my college courses. (<i>N=17, M=1.94, SD=1.029</i>)	8	47	3	17	5	30	1	6	0	0
I feel safe in the classroom. (<i>N=17, M=1.59, SD=.618</i>)	8	47	8	47	1	6	0	0	0	0
I take online classes to avoid being in the classroom. (<i>N=17, M=4.12, SD=1.166</i>)	1	6	1	6	1	6	6	35	8	47
My military experience is a key factor in my decision to earn a college degree. (<i>N=17, M=2.71, SD=1.263</i>)	3	17	5	30	5	30	2	12	2	12

Chapter V

Summary, Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Summary of the Study

This goal of this study was to explore the perceived persistence of current Veteran students at Cumberland County College and gain insight on any barriers they may face. Students within this study are currently enrolled at Cumberland County College and utilize Veteran benefits to pay for their education.

A total of 35 target participants were recruited to the study using the internal Recruit software at Cumberland County College along with the permission of the current Veterans Certifying Official. The survey was administered via email at the students' discretion. Of the 35 students who were asked to participate in the study, 17 responded yielding a 49% response rate.

The survey consisted of two major components. The initial part of the survey consisted of demographic information about the participants' military experience, age, and ethnic background. The latter part of the survey was a perception survey based on their intrinsic experience as well as external factors that contribute to their persistence of education.

Discussion of Findings

The persistence of Veteran students is an emerging niche field of research that is growing as more researchers look to bridge the gap in research. Studies have shown for various reasons; Veteran student persist at different levels when compared to civilian students. Something that research has not found a significant answer for is the persistence

of Veteran students at two-year institutions. There is existing research on persistence of civilian students at two-year institutions that may include Veteran students as well, but the Veteran population is one that needs to be analyzed on its own. To reiterate, according to Miller (2015) Veteran students in community college must deal with constraints of transportation, course selection, and unreliable campus relationships that may contribute to poor retention rates. This may also be true of civilian students as well, but contributing factors like post-traumatic stress disorder may make degree obtainment more difficult for Veteran students.

Research question 1: How do current Veteran students at Cumberland County College view their persistence in college?

Overall, Veteran students view their persistence to degree obtainment in a positive light. To questions that regarded persistence, motivation, and support; students reported a belief that they would obtain a degree, they were motivated to do so and that they also had the support of their family and/or the institution to ensure that they would be successful. Veteran students seem to be aware of what their goals are and what is needed to pursue them relentlessly. When looking at persistence, most students do see themselves earning a degree to pursue a career or to move on and finish higher degrees at another institution. Veteran students are motivated to intrinsically and extrinsically to finish their degree. Students are sure they are going to earn a degree and do their assignments on time to ensure that they control their own destiny with obtaining passing grades. More students reported feeling the support of their family and the institution while pursuing their education. Veteran students at Cumberland County College are not

only going to class to receive a grade, they are fortifying relationships with staff, faculty and their family to maintain support throughout their educational journey.

Research question 2: Do any barriers impact these students' persistence?

From the analysis of surveys, it seems that Veteran students face barriers, but they do not significantly impact their persistence to education. Students reported having to work more hours per week to support themselves financially and attribute their military experience with assisting them in their college courses. Some students also report taking advantage of disability services on campus. This may be a deterrent for any potential barriers that may have to deal with mental and emotional well-being.

Conclusion

The results of the data collected from this study suggest that the Veteran students at Cumberland County College are motivated to persist to degree completion. The study shows that Veteran students enrolled at CCC are more likely to obtain a degree in order to go into the workforce or to transfer to another institution to pursue a higher degree. Even though students at two-year institutions experience barriers, like Miller (2015) and Nakajima et al. (2012) outline, Veteran students at CCC do not experience these barriers. Beyond intrinsic motivation to persist, students also credit family and the institution in supporting their success to degree obtainment. This may point to a more holistic approach to impacting Veteran students that may need to be carried out beyond CCC.

Capps (2012) contends that a holistic approach to assisting students may call for higher retention rates and persistence of students. This study lays the foundation to

support Capps' research. Veteran students at CCC are receiving assistance from staff and faculty that seems to play a significant role in their perceived persistence.

Recommendations for Future Practice

Based on the findings and the conclusion of this study, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. Community colleges should seek direct partnerships both on and off campus to assist Veteran students in their transition to the classroom. These partnerships could include cross-departmental collaboration between Veteran affairs, advisement and faculty as well as collaboration with county Veteran services and other stakeholders who support Veteran students.
2. A holistic intake process should be implemented to ensure that perspective Veteran students know about services available to them on campus like tutoring, clubs and advisement. In addition, linking students to other services like the local Veteran Affairs to ensure they know what benefits are available to them and how to access them.
3. Veteran students should have access to a mental health or wellness center on campus to ensure they are supported mentally and emotionally throughout the semester to balance their school and home life.

Recommendations for Further Research

Based on the findings and conclusion of this study, the follow recommendations are suggested:

1. A larger sample size of students should be obtained in the study to see if current findings are consistent.
2. A more diverse sample should be utilized that finds a more even sample when it comes to race, sex and age.
3. Adding an interview of students would seek more of the reasoning behind why students chose to respond to the survey in a certain manner.
4. Expanding research to other campuses to see if the results are consistent.
5. Further research should also compare Cumberland County College's Veteran services to those of other two-year schools in order to form best practices across institutions.

References

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Appendix A

Recruitment Email

Your participation for a research study about students who currently utilize Veteran benefits at Cumberland County College is requested.

The current research study, Persistence of Veteran Students at Cumberland County College, aims to assess perceived persistence of Veteran students who are currently or previously enrolled at Cumberland County College.

The survey may take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Your participation is voluntary. If you do not wish to participate, do not respond to this online survey.

Requirements to participate in this study include:

- Student is at least 18 years old.
- Student is currently utilizing Veteran benefits at Cumberland County College.

This study will be conducted at Rowan University via online survey. Please click [HERE](#) to start the survey.

This study has been approved by Rowan University Institutional Review Board, IRP Pro #Pro20180000282.

If you have any questions about the current survey, please contact:

Principal Investigator: Dr. Andrew Tinning

856-256-4453

tinnin@rowan.edu

Co-Investigator: LaToya Gibbons

856-691-8600 ext. 1213

Gibbonsl9@students.rowan.edu

Appendix B

Online Consent Form

ONLINE SURVEY (ALTERNATE CONSENT)

You are invited to participate in this online research survey entitled PERISTENCE OF VETERAN STUDENTS AT CUMBERLAND COUNTY COLLEGE. You are included in this survey because you currently or have used Veteran benefits to pay for your coursework at Cumberland County College. The number of subjects to be enrolled in the study will be 55.

The survey may take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Your participation is voluntary. If you do not wish to participate in this survey, do not respond to this online survey. Completing this survey indicates that you are voluntarily giving consent to participate in the survey. We expect the study to last two weeks.

The purpose of this research study is to bridge the gap in research of Veteran students by gaining insight of the persistence of Veteran students at two-year institutions.

There are no risks or discomforts associated with this survey. There may be no direct benefit to you, however, by participating in this study, you may help us understand how Veteran students find their fit at two-year institutions while persisting through any barriers they may have outside of their education.

Your response will be kept confidential. We will store the data in a secure computer file and the file will be destroyed once the data has been published. Any part of the research that is published as part of this study will not include your individual information. If you have any questions about the survey, you can contact me at the address provided below, but you do not have to give your personal identification.

To participate in this survey, you must be 18 years or older and currently or have used Veteran benefits to pay for coursework at Cumberland County College. Please complete the checkbox below.

Completing this survey indicates that you are voluntarily giving consent to participate in the survey and that you meet eligibility requirements (over 18 years old and student veteran status at CCC)

Appendix C

Instrumentation

PERISTENCE OF VETERAN STUDENTS AT CUMBERLAND COUNTY COLLEGE

Start of Block: Default Question Block

Q2 ONLINE SURVEY (ALTERNATE CONSENT)

You are invited to participate in this online research survey entitled PERISTENCE OF VETERAN STUDENTS AT CUMBERLAND COUNTY COLLEGE. You are included in this survey because you currently or have used Veteran benefits to pay for your coursework at Cumberland County College. The number of subjects to be enrolled in the study will be 55.

The survey may take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Your participation is voluntary. If you do not wish to participate in this survey, do not respond to this online survey. Completing this survey indicates that you are voluntarily giving consent to participate in the survey. We expect the study to last two weeks.

The purpose of this research study is to bridge the gap in research of Veteran students by gaining insight of the persistence of Veteran students at two-year institutions. There are no risks or discomforts associated with this survey. There may be no direct benefit to you, however, by participating in this study, you may help us understand how Veteran students find their fit at two-year institutions while persisting through any barriers they may have outside of their education.

Your response will be kept confidential. We will store the data in a secure computer file and the file will be destroyed once the data has been published. Any part of the research that is published as part of this study will not include your individual information. If you have any questions about the survey, you can contact me at the address provided below, but you do not have to give your personal identification.

To participate in this survey, you must be 18 years or older and currently or have used Veteran benefits to pay for coursework at Cumberland County College.

Q1 Please complete the checkbox below.

- Completing this survey indicates that you are voluntarily giving consent to participate in the survey and that you meet eligibility requirements (over 18 years old and student veteran status at CCC)

End of Block: Default Question Block

Start of Block: Block 1

Q3 Click to write the question textWhat is your gender?

- Male
- Female
-

Q6 What is your age?

- 18-21
- 22-25
- 26-29
- 30-33
- 34 or older
-

Q7 What is your race?

- White
 - Black or African American
 - American Indian or Alaska Native
 - Asian
 - Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
 - Mixed or Other
-

Q16 Are you of Latinx or Hispanic decent?

- Yes
 - No
-

Q8 What military branch are you/have you served?

- Army
 - Army Reserves
 - Navy
 - Navy Reserves
 - Coast Guard
 - Coast Guard Reserves
 - Marines
 - Marines Reserves
 - Air Force
 - Air Force Reserves
 - National Guard - Army
 - National Guard - Air
-

Q9 How long have you served?

- 1-3 years
- 4-6 years
- 7 years or more

Q10 Have you been in active duty?

Yes

No

Q11 What is your current marital status?

Married

Widowed

Divorced

Separated

Never married

Q12 Do you currently care for any dependents?

Yes

No

End of Block: Block 1

Start of Block: Block 2

Q5 Please read the following statements and outline how much you agree or disagree:	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
My family is supportive of my pursuit of a college degree.	<input type="radio"/>				
I experience stress with the courses I have taken at this institution.	<input type="radio"/>				
3. It is easy to receive answers about my education at this institution.	<input type="radio"/>				
4. I am enthused about completing academic tasks at this institution.	<input type="radio"/>				
5. I have responsibilities that distract me from my college courses.	<input type="radio"/>				
6. I often worry about having enough money to meet my needs.	<input type="radio"/>				
7. I am confident that I receive the grades I want.	<input type="radio"/>				
8. I prioritize my studies over other responsibilities I currently have.	<input type="radio"/>				

9. I am satisfied with the level of instruction I receive at this institution.
10. I plan on completing my degree at this institution.
11. I plan on completing a bachelor's degree.
12. I am satisfied with the academic advising I have received at this institution.
1. I always turn in assignments on time.
14. I plan on stopping my education to go to work.
15. I plan on stopping my education because I no longer want to pursue a degree.
16. I feel a sense of connectedness with others (faculty, students, staff) on this campus.

17. People who are important to me (family, friends, mentors, etc.) would be disappointed in me if I quit school.

18. When thinking of my social life here (friends, college organizations, activities) I am satisfied.

19. I am sure I will earn a college degree.

20. I often feel overwhelmed by the academic workload at this institution.

21. I am satisfied with how this institution communicates important information to students such as academic rules, degree requirements, individual course requirements, campus news and events, extracurricular activities, tuition costs, financial aid and scholarship opportunities.

22. There is a connection with what I learn in class and my future career.

23. I often miss class for reasons other than illness or participation in school related activities.

24. It is important that I earn a college degree regardless if it is at this institution or somewhere else.

25. I have reliable transportation to and from campus.

26. Other aspects of my life suffer because I am a college student.

My military experience is a key factor in my decision to earn a college degree.

28. Earning a college degree is essential to my future.

29. I plan on enrolling in courses next semester.
30. I am confident that I can complete assignments from professors.
31. I plan on working more hours per week to take care of my expenses.
32. I am often preoccupied with my personal troubles.
33. The faculty and staff at this institution care about my success.
34. My experience at this institution has been mostly positive.
37. I feel safe in the classroom.
38. I take online courses to avoid being in the classroom.
39. I take advantage of tutoring services on campus.

My military
experience has
helped me in
my college
courses.

I take
advantage of
disability
services on
campus

Appendix D

Google Apps
@Rowan

Gibbons, Latoya <gibbonsl9@students.rowan.edu>

Rowan University eIRB: Study Approved

1 message

eIRB@rowan.edu <eIRB@rowan.edu>
Reply-To: eIRB@rowan.edu
To: gibbonsl9@students.rowan.edu

Mon, Feb 18, 2019 at 1:18 PM



** This is an auto-generated email. Please do not reply to this email message.
The originating e-mail account is not monitored.
If you have questions, please contact your local IRB office **

DHHS Federal Wide Assurance Identifier:
FWA00007111

IRB Chair Person: Harriet Hartman

IRB Director: Sreekant Murthy

Effective Date:

eIRB Notice of Approval

STUDY PROFILE

Study ID: [Pro2018000282](#)

Title: PERSISTENCE OF VETERAN STUDENTS AT CUMBERLAND COUNTY COLLEGE

Principal Investigator: Andrew Tinnin

Study Coordinator:

Co-Investigator(s): LaToya Gibbons

Other Study Staff: There are no items to display

Sponsor: Department Funded

Approval Cycle: Not Applicable

Risk Determination: Minimal Risk

Device Determination: Not Applicable

Review Type: Exempt

Exempt Category: 2 i

Subjects: 55

CURRENT SUBMISSION STATUS

Submission Type:	Research Protocol/Study	Submission Status:	Approved
Approval Date:	2/17/2019	Expiration Date:	
Continuation Review Required:	Progress Report		
Pregnancy Code:	No Pregnant Women as Subjects	Pediatric Code:	No Children As Subjects
		Prisoner Code:	No Prisoners As Subjects
Protocol:	Survey Recruitment Email Qualitrics Survey Link Research Protocol	Consent:	There are no items to display
		Recruitment Materials:	Recruitment Email.docx

*** Study Performance Sites:**

Glassboro Campus	201 Mullica Hill Road Glassboro, NJ 08028
Cumberland County College	3322 College Dr. Vineland, NJ 08360

ALL APPROVED INVESTIGATOR(S) MUST COMPLY WITH THE FOLLOWING:

1. Conduct the research in accordance with the protocol, applicable laws and regulations, and the principles of research ethics as set forth in the Belmont Report.
- 2a. **Continuing Review:** Approval is valid until the protocol expiration date shown above. To avoid lapses in approval, submit a continuation application at least eight weeks before the study expiration date.
- 2b. **Progress Report:** Approval is valid until the protocol expiration date shown above. To avoid lapses, an annual progress report is required at least 21 days prior to the expiration date.
3. **Expiration of IRB Approval:** If IRB approval expires, effective the date of expiration and until the continuing review approval is issued: **All research activities must stop unless the IRB finds that it is in the best interest of individual subjects to continue. (This determination shall be based on a separate written request from the PI to the IRB.) No new subjects may be enrolled and no samples/charts/surveys may be collected, reviewed, and/or analyzed.**
4. **Amendments/Modifications/Revisions :** If you wish to change any aspect of this study after the approval date mentioned in this letter, including but not limited to, study procedures, consent form(s), investigators, advertisements, the protocol document, investigator drug brochure, or accrual goals, you are required to obtain IRB review and approval prior to implementation of these changes unless necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to subjects. This policy is also applicable to progress reports.
5. **Unanticipated Problems:** Unanticipated problems involving risk to subjects or others must be reported to the IRB Office (45 CFR 46, 21 CFR 312, 812) as required, in the appropriate time as specified in the attachment online at: <http://www.rowan.edu/som/hsp/>
6. **Protocol Deviations and Violations:** Deviations from/violations of the approved study protocol must be reported to the IRB Office (45 CFR 46, 21 CFR 312, 812) as required, in the appropriate time as specified in the attachment online at: <http://www.rowan.edu/som/hsp/>
7. **Consent/Assent:** The IRB has reviewed and approved the consent and/or assent process, waiver and/or alteration described in this protocol as required by 45 CFR 46 and 21 CFR 50, 56, (if FDA regulated research). Only the versions of the documents included in the approved process may be used to document informed consent and/or assent of study subjects; each subject must receive a copy of the approved form

(s); and a copy of each signed form must be filed in a secure place in the subject's medical/patient/research record.

8. **Completion of Study:** Notify the IRB when your study has been completed or stopped for any reason. Neither study closure by the sponsor nor the investigator removes the obligation for submission of timely continuing review application, progress report or final report.

9. The Investigator(s) did not participate in the review, discussion, or vote of this protocol.

10. **Letter Comments:** *There are no additional comments.*

CONFIDENTIALITY NOTICE: This email communication may contain private, confidential, or legally privileged information intended for the sole use of the designated and/or duly authorized recipients(s). If you are not the intended recipient or have received this email in error, please notify the sender immediately by email and permanently delete all copies of this email including all attachments without reading them. If you are the intended recipient, secure the contents in a manner that conforms to all applicable state and/or federal requirements related to privacy and confidentiality of such information.

—

Study.PI Name:

Study.Co-Investigators: