

## Improving the Transition Experience for Veterans: A Personal Perspective

Chairman Van Orden, Ranking Member Levin, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the critical issue of improving the transition experience for veterans both on and off campus. My name is Adrian Miguel Moreno, a senior at the University of Wisconsin La Crosse, double majoring in History & Philosophy with a minor in Legal Studies. I am also the President of the Pre-Law Society and the Vice President of the Philosophy Club at the university. Outside of academics, I volunteer as a youth sports coach. Before this, I served in the Mississippi National Guard and the Wisconsin National Guard and worked for the state of Wisconsin in a civilian capacity during my final years in the National Guard. I come before you today as a person of color as well as a veteran because I believe that our service members face a unique battle transitioning into life as students. It is crucial that we, as a society and through our institutions, provide comprehensive support to these veterans to ensure their successful transition.

Transitioning servicemembers, particularly those who are first-generation students, often lack proper academic guidance. While veterans undoubtedly possess valuable skills such as adaptability and resilience, these alone are not sufficient to sustain academic performance. The result can be discouragement, isolation, and abandonment of educational goals. In my own experience, transitioning from military service to civilian life and academia was a process of trial and error. I found myself job hopping, trying to find a role that suited my skills and interests. This period was challenging and at times discouraging. The need I had for structured guidance and support went consistently unmet and because of that, I struggled immensely. We need to equip veterans with the tools and resources to explore different career paths and understand how their skills translate into civilian roles. I have personally experienced these difficulties and was fortunate to meet individuals who provided crucial support. Unfortunately, many service members do not share this experience.

To address this issue, I propose that we empower our servicemembers with the same level of interest and guidance that universities offer to first-year students. Specifically, I recommend the introduction of first-year experience courses tailored for veteran students. I also advocate for institutions to provide and promote career advising and skill translation services. These measures can help veterans translate their military skills into academic and civilian contexts, fostering a smoother and more successful transition. In support of these proposed solutions, research shows that one of the most significant barriers to pursuing a college degree after service is that we are often outliers in the classroom, everything we know is from personal endeavors rather than structured guidance. A first-year experience course tailored for veterans could help them navigate their classes and college campuses, manage time effectively, and understand the resources available to them. Such a course could also provide a supportive community of fellow veterans, which could help alleviate feelings of isolation.

In conclusion, we must provide comprehensive support to veterans transitioning to civilian life and academia. I recommend the introduction of first-year experience courses tailored for veteran students and the promotion of career advising and skill translation services. These measures can help veterans translate their military skills into academic and civilian contexts, fostering a smoother and more successful transition. I am willing to answer any questions you may have about these recommendations. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify on this important issue.

## Bibliography

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