



# **2013 LEGISLATIVE REPORT**

## **MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT VETERANS AFFAIRS**

### **HIGHER EDUCATION VETERANS PROGRAM DIVISION**

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### Legislative Charge

Minnesota Statute 197.585, Subd. 4

*Beginning January 15, 2007, and each year thereafter, the steering committee established in subdivision 2 shall report to the chairs of the legislative committees with jurisdiction over Veterans affairs policy and finance and higher education policy and finance regarding the implementation and effectiveness of the program established in this section.*

### Estimated Cost of Preparing this Report (as required by Minn. Stat. 3.197)

Staff time:	\$291.00
Copies:	\$9.00
TOTAL:	\$300.00

## **SUMMARY**

The following progress report, submitted to the Minnesota Legislature and prepared by the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs, provides a status update on the Higher Education Veterans Assistance Program for the period of January 1 to December 31, 2012. The report reflects the program's continued success due largely to increasing complexity and expansion of federal benefits, returning Minnesota based military units, and the need for a highly trained workforce.

While education benefits are available to most Veterans, military members, and some dependents, assistance is needed to untangle the various eligibility requirements. Enrollment processes are unique to each benefits package available. Coordinators with the Higher Education Veterans Program (The Program) provide much-needed assistance as well as serve as an initial point of contact for Veterans interested in higher education. The Program is therefore in a unique position to encourage and facilitate the use of benefits and assist institutions with retention initiatives.

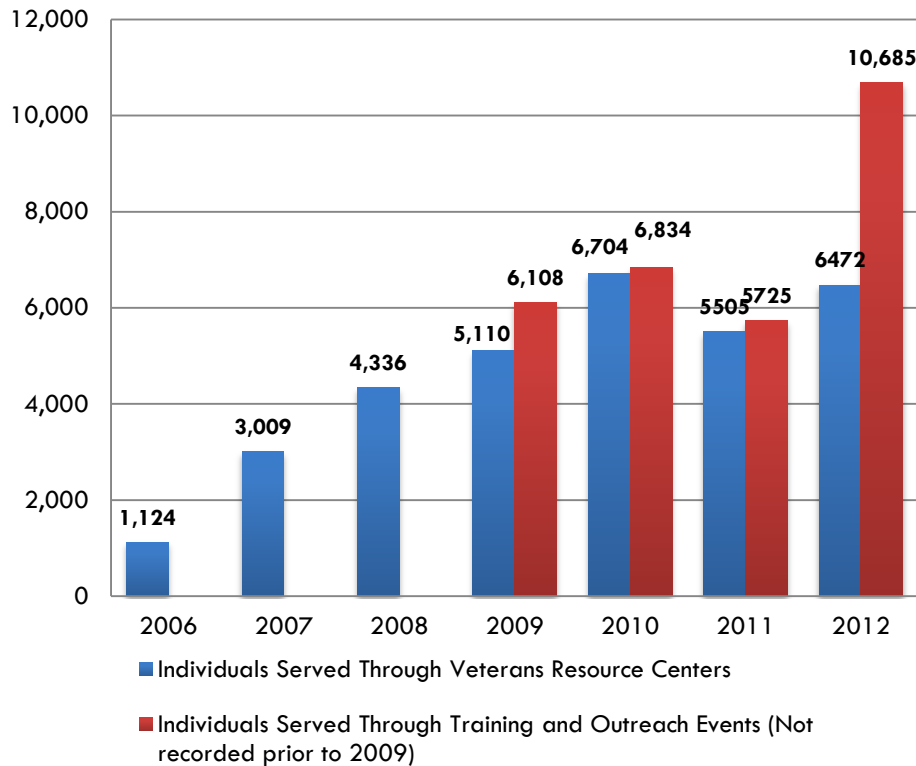
## **PROGRAM BACKGROUND**

The 2006 Minnesota Legislature allocated funding to the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs for the creation of the Higher Education Veterans Assistance Program (commonly referred to as the Higher Education Veterans Program). The Program is uniquely designed to serve the needs of Minnesota's students and prospective students who are impacted by military service, including Veterans, military members, and their dependents.

One statewide supervisor, an assistant, and twelve regional coordinators serve universities, colleges, and students throughout Minnesota. Based out of a host campus, coordinators support colleges and universities within their defined region to provide one-on-one, comprehensive education assistance to Veterans, military members, and their dependents. Coordinators collaborate with campus administration officials to create and manage Veterans Resource Centers as well as addressing campus-level needs of student Veterans.

A novel concept when launched in July 2006, the Higher Education Veterans Program remains the only program of its kind in the country and has helped thousands of returning Minnesota Veterans transition to college. The complex nature of Veteran and military education benefits demand the services of subject matter experts who can assist Minnesota's Veteran community. The Higher Education Veterans Program has proven to be effective, flexible, and efficient. Coordinators empower countless Veterans, military members, and their dependents the access to federal and state benefits as well as other local resources available.

## HIGHER EDUCATION VETERANS PROGRAM DATA



The Program saw a 17% increase over 2011 in individuals served and a significant increase (89%) in outreach and training events. Many federal, state, county and local officials are relying on the State Military Education Professionals to provide expertise and training to their staff. The continued strong partnership between the Program, MnSCU and the Minnesota National Guard has produced professional presentations geared toward the specific event. Continued increased numbers are a connection between new students and student retention.

### 2012 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

In 2012, the impact and importance of the Higher Education Veterans Program was especially evident as the Veterans Opportunity to Work (VOW) legislation was signed and became law. VOW provides seamless higher education to employment transition for Service-members, expands education and training opportunities for Veterans, and provides tax credits for employers who hire Veterans with service-connected disabilities. The expansion of education benefits included the Veterans Retraining Assistance Program (VRAP), opening higher education to unemployed veterans age 35-60. Campus Coordinators quickly became the champion for this program on their campuses and throughout the State.

Governor Dayton's initiative on veteran employment created the Inter-agency Employment Working Group (IEWG) sponsored by the Minnesota National Guard. The Higher Education Veterans Program is a strong voice on the committee providing creative and innovative solutions to veteran employment and retraining. A Higher Education Program Coordinator was part of an employment team tasked to meet soldiers face-to-face in Kuwait prior to their return to Minnesota after a year-long deployment.

Continued confusion and difficulty accessing federal benefits led thousands of Minnesotans to seek assistance through the Program. As rules change and budgets decrease for some benefits,

the rules became increasingly interconnected requiring Veterans to make choices between complex sets of benefit packages. At times, these decisions are irrevocable and mistakes could cost Veterans tens of thousands of dollars. As such, students who are entitled to the benefits and higher education institutions rely heavily upon Program Coordinators.

The following information highlights the demand as well as some of the most notable achievements in 2012.

1. **330** unemployed Veterans turned to Coordinators to assist them with the new Veterans Retraining Assistance Program (VRAP). Coordinators provided staff and faculty training on their campuses, assisted Veterans with the application process, and created a seamless transition to higher education for these non-traditional students.
2. Coordinators supported cities and counties with the Beyond the Yellow Ribbon Community initiative. Serving on campus planning committees, Coordinators assisted seven campuses with Beyond The Yellow Ribbon Company (campus) status.
3. Over **3,200** returning Minnesota National Guardsman completed demobilization training at Camp Shelby, Fort Dix, Camp Atterbury, Fort Polk, and Fort Hood. Coordinators conducted large group presentations and one-on-one sessions at each of these locations. Coordinators are a strong part of the Minnesota National Guard 30, 60, and 90 day reintegration events held throughout the State.
4. Coordinators served **6,472** *new* individuals in 2012, and thousands of other individuals who returned for continued assistance. Overall, the program had a total of **62,303** contacts in 2012, a 2.5% increase over 2011.
5. Coordinators conducted **61** training events with **10,685** individuals attending the events. This number represents an 89% increase over 2011. Coordinators provided **74** large group training sessions with **2,206** individuals in attendance.

Breakdown of events:

- a. 30/60/90 day/MIRT events: **20**
- b. Family Readiness/Family Preparedness Academy: **8**
- c. Out-of-state demobilization events: **9**
- d. Kuwait employment team: **1**
- e. Pre-deployment event: **1**
- f. Beyond the Yellow Ribbon events: **3**
- g. Other Veteran Events: **19** (CVSO training, stand-down, career fair, Military on Display, State Fair, and college fairs)

## **2012 VETERANS RESOURCE CENTER USAGE**

### **VETERANS RESOURCE CENTER GUIDELINES**

#### **Mission:**

Veterans Resource Centers provide students with an on-campus point of contact for comprehensive information about benefits and resources available to current and past military members and their families, as well as opportunities for peer support.

#### **Types of Veterans Resource Centers:**

Since the resources available and needs of each campus differ vastly, there is not a single standard for a Veterans Resource Center. However, two key goals should always be attempted: centralized information and opportunities for veterans to connect with their peers.

The following are *minimal* guidelines based on the number of VA certified students present on campus. Actual efforts are at the discretion of the individual campuses:

**Tier 1** – Minimal number (1-15) certified VA students. The following services should be developed:

- Maintain a bulletin board that the Regional Coordinator and campus staff can frequently update with timely and relevant information.
- Maintain regular contact between Certifying Official and Regional Coordinator.
- Notify veterans of coordinator's role and availability for assistance.
- Assure the Regional Coordinator has met with key campus staff (admissions, financial aid, counselors, and certifying official)
- Provide meeting space for one-on-one meetings and group events as needed.

**Tier 2** – Intermediate number (15-100) certified VA students. In addition to Tier 1 services, the following should be developed:

- Develop a Veterans Resource Center or office with consistent hours and staffed by all or some of the following: Regional Coordinator, student workers, campus staff, or other service providers (CVSOs, DEED Veteran Employment Reps, VA Outreach Services/Centers, Family Assistance Coordinators, etc.).
- The Veterans Resource Center should be a dedicated space, but if necessary it can be a shared space.
- If the space is shared, campuses should provide adequate room for peer networking and support. Campuses should develop additional meeting space options for veteran peer support, veteran's club meetings and other informal veteran meetings, in a consistent location and meeting time designated.
- Provide support for a Veterans Club.

**Tier 3** – Significant number (100+) certified VA students. In addition to Tier 1 & 2 services, the following should be developed:

- The Veterans Resource center should be a dedicated space, not shared. In addition to a gathering space, the campus should also provide office space for Regional Coordinator.
- Provide support for a Veterans Club.

**Higher Education Veterans Program - Veterans Resource Centers**

<b>6</b>	Tier 1: Previously established space (as of December 31, 2011)
<b>24</b>	Tier 2: Previously established shared resource centers/office (as of December 31, 2011)
<b>25</b>	Tier 3: Previously established Resource Centers (as of December 31, 2011)
<b>3</b>	Tier 1: Newly established space (January 1, 2012 – December 31, 2012)
<b>0</b>	Tier 2: Newly established space (January 1, 2012 – December 31, 2012)
<b>0</b>	Tier 3: Newly established space (January 1, 2012 – December 31, 2012)
<b>2</b>	Existing Resource Centers increasing space or programming

**Utilization of Veterans Resource Centers/Offices**

<b>6,472</b>	Total first time visitors
<b>63,879</b>	Total annual contacts
<b>2.5%</b>	Increase over 2011

**Military Status of Visitors**

<b>65%</b>	Veteran (180 or more days of active duty)
<b>18%</b>	Current Military Member
<b>7%</b>	Family/Dependent of Military Member/Veteran
<b>1%</b>	Former Military Member (less than 180 days of active duty)
<b>9%</b>	Did not declare or no military status

**Top Purposes for Visits**

Veterans education funding/assistance from coordinator
Peer support/connecting with other Veterans

**Referrals to Other Service Providers**

Serving as a comprehensive information hub for Veterans, military members, and their dependents on campus, coordinators have developed well-defined referral networks to link Veterans on campus with the appropriate campus staff or service providers in the community. The numbers below reflect these referrals to other service providers.

<b>3,487</b>	Internal campus resource
<b>792</b>	External community resource (CVSO, DEED, and other state agencies)

## **2012 PRESENTATION AND OUTREACH DATA**

Throughout the year Coordinators are profoundly trusted to provide training on their area of expertise: Veteran/military education benefits and creating Veterans-friendly campuses. Training is conducted in a variety of formats and locations. Coordinators presented on numerous armory drill floors throughout the state and post-deployment education briefings at Minnesota National Guard reintegration events. Higher education institutions have confidence in the Coordinators to provide faculty and staff in-service days and webex/webinar sessions on a national scale. The figures below highlight the variety and scale of the program's outreach and training efforts.

<b>Number of Events</b>	<b>Number of Individuals Trained</b>	<b>Type of Training</b>
39	6,149	Reintegration activities
7	1,131	College and university
6	926	Service providers and Veterans service organizations
9	2,479	Community events
<b>61</b>	<b>10,685</b>	<b>Total</b>

## **2012 MyMILITARYEDUCATION ONLINE SUPPORT CENTER USAGE DATA**

The website MyMilitaryEducation ([www.mymilitaryeducation.org](http://www.mymilitaryeducation.org)), an online support center based in Perham continues to be an important part of the Higher Education Veterans Program. Highlighting the program's efforts to collaborate with other agencies and service providers, the website and call center is a collaborative effort by the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs and Minnesota Online. Veterans, military members, and dependents stationed around the world count on the support team to provide an added dimension to the Program's services. An important outreach component, the online support center is a gateway to the services of the Higher Education Veterans Program. Specific details are provided in attachment #1.

### **Types of Online Support Center Contacts**

77,761	Self service
473	Advisor/counselor help
<b>78,234</b>	<b>Total contacts in 2011</b>

### **Top Purposes for Online Support Center Contacts**

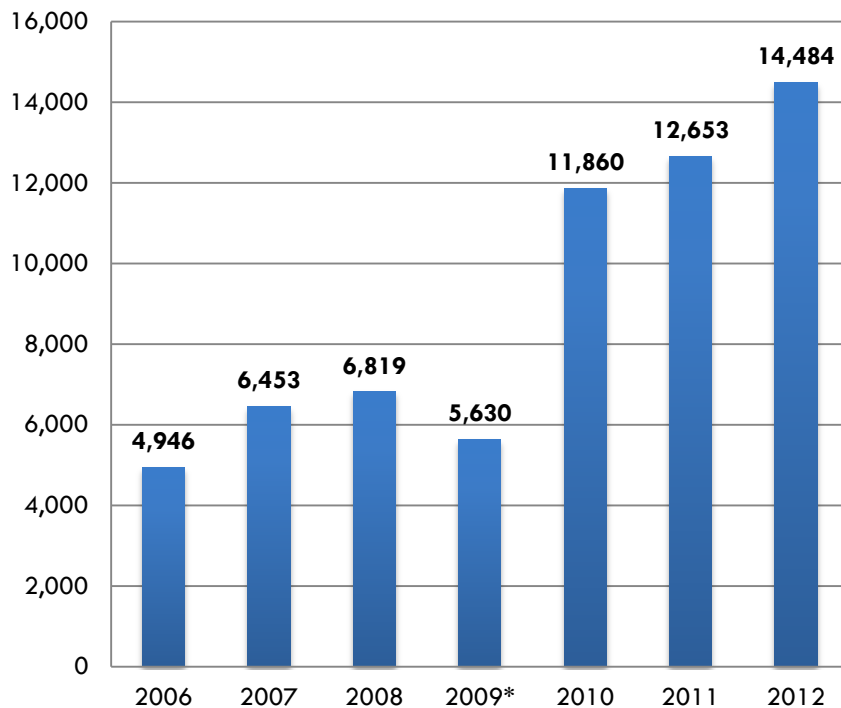
Comprehensive list of Veteran/Military Scholarships for Service Members
Obtaining military transcripts and transfer credits
Post 9-1 (Chapter 33 Application and information
Veterans Online Applications (VONAPP)



## STUDENT VETERANS IN MINNESOTA

Recent legislation and Veteran unemployment initiatives, the importance of higher education, and retention of students have dramatically increased the number of Veterans and military members attending higher education. In addition, expanded benefit eligibility has increased the number of dependents eligible for aid. The following graph shows the number of students using USVA educational benefits in Minnesota. A portion of the dramatic increase (nearly 300%) since the inception of the Program in 2006 can be attributed to Coordinators assisting with student retention. Many of the benefits are complex and confusing. Program Coordinators ease the transition to higher education while providing long-lasting service from admission through student graduation. Numerous students continue to seek Coordinator assistance in graduate programs or second undergraduate programs.

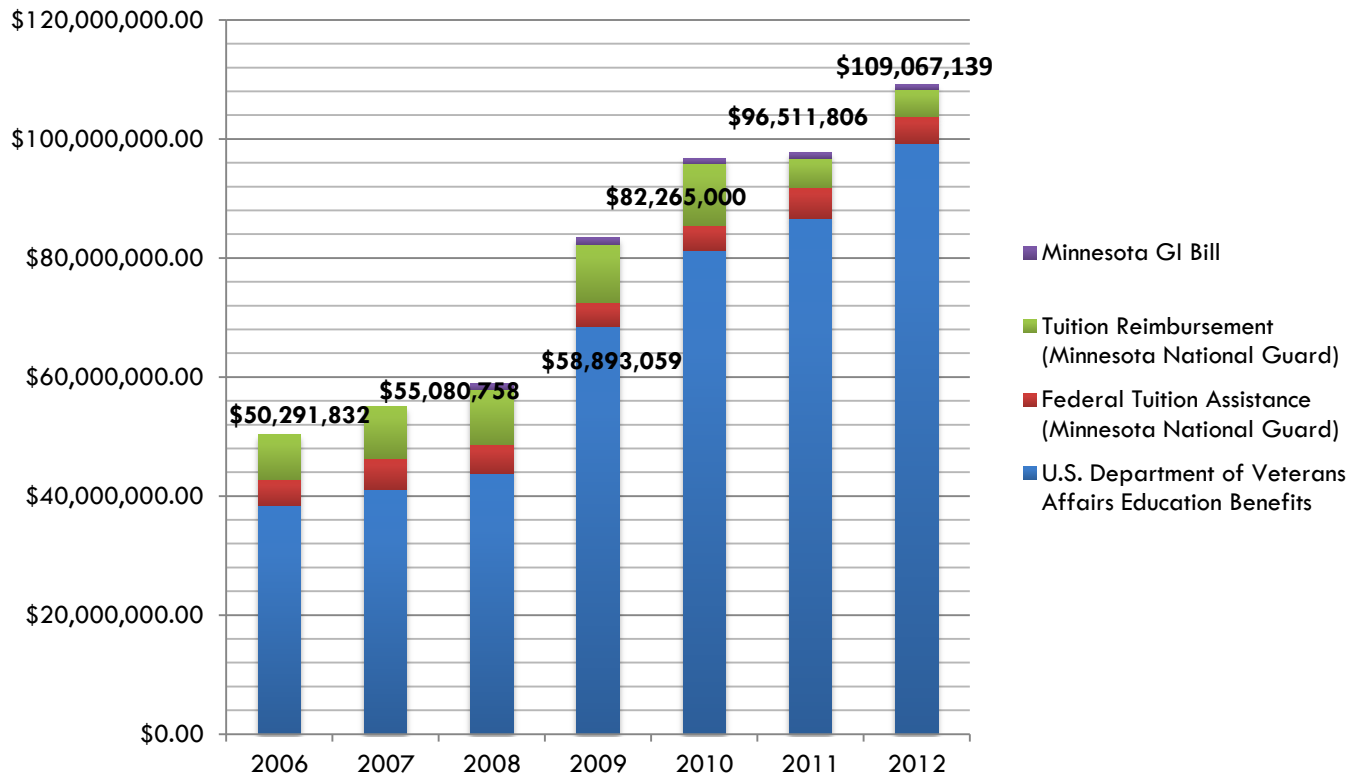
### MINNESOTA STUDENTS USING VA EDUCATION BENEFITS



\*The 2009 data from the USVA does not include individuals using Chapter 33 (also known as the Post 9/11 GI Bill), which began in August 2009. The actual number of Veterans attending college in 2009 is therefore much larger than reported.

Increasing numbers of Veterans attending college in Minnesota has led to an equally dramatic increase in federal education benefit dollars spent in Minnesota. A combination of state and federal funds make higher education possible for thousands of Minnesota Veterans, military members, and dependents each year. These benefits also make an important contribution to Minnesota's economy. The amount of federal education benefits spent in Minnesota has more than doubled during the existence of the Higher Education Veterans Program. This trend is expected to continue for the foreseeable future. The following graph illustrates the federal and state expenditures of Veterans' education benefits in Minnesota.

## COMBINED EXPENDITURES FROM STATE AND FEDERAL VETERANS EDUCATIONAL BENEFIT PROGRAMS IN MINNESOTA<sup>1</sup>



### **2012 Federal and State Benefit Highlights:**

**14,484 VA certified students in 2012 received over \$99 million in education claims.**

**Federal Tuition Assistance Program assisted 1,122 Soldiers enrolled in 10,713 courses and paid out over \$4.4 million.**

**State Tuition Reimbursement Program assisted 2,074 soldiers and paid over \$4.6 million.**

**Minnesota GI Bill received 1,265 applications and paid out 564 claims totaling \$813,105.**

<sup>1</sup> The Minnesota GI Bill began in the 2007-2008 academic year. Data reported is from Minnesota Office of Higher Education.

Federal Tuition Assistance is a program available to most reserve components in addition to the Army National Guard. The numbers reported are for the Minnesota Army National Guard, the only data available. Both Federal Tuition Assistance and State Tuition Reimbursement data reported from Minnesota National Guard J-1 Education Office.

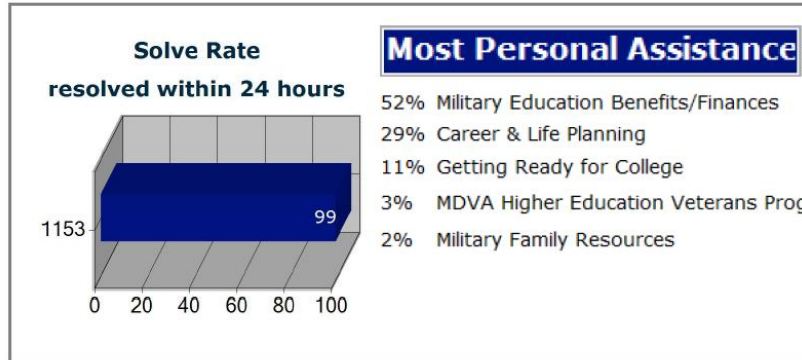
USVA education data is not available for 2012. The amount listed is an estimate based on the number of individuals using VA education Benefits in 2011 at an average rate of \$6,853/student (the average rate per person for 2007 to 2011). U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Benefits data accessed from [http://www1.va.gov/VETDATA/GDX/Geographical\\_data.asp](http://www1.va.gov/VETDATA/GDX/Geographical_data.asp).

# ATTACHMENT 1: ONLINE SUPPORT

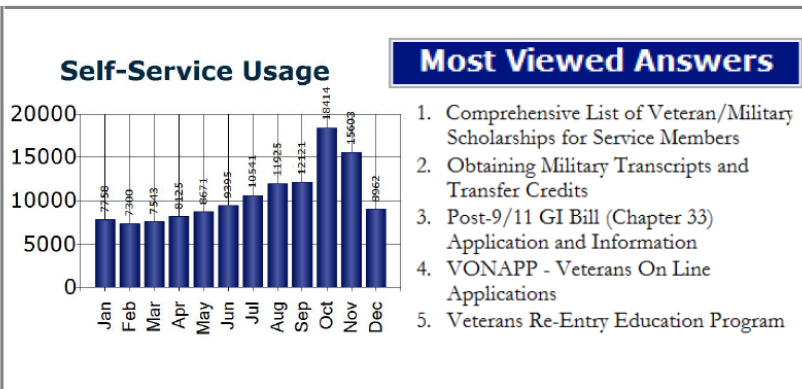
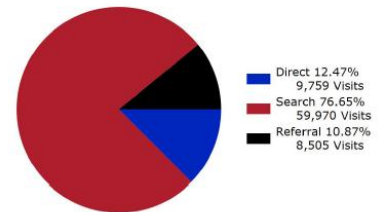


## Higher Education Veterans Programs MyMilitaryEducation.org

### Summary of Service: January 1, 2012 - December 14, 2012



**78,234 people**



#### Top Inbound Links

	2012-12	2010-11
linkvet.custhelp.com	1,425	1,544
mnsu.edu	687	258
gpslifeplan.org	625	481
getreadyforcollege.org	490	505
mnaveteranservice.org	250	60
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,477</b>	<b>2,848</b>

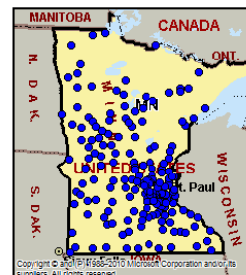


#### Top Website Pages

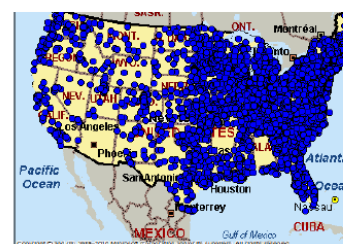
	2012	2011
Comprehensive List of Military Scholarships...	22,009	8,590
MN LinkVet Online Support	11,607	5,933
Find Answers	6,933	5,445
Obtaining Military Transcripts...	7,442	3,475
Post-9/11 GI Bill (Chapter 33) Application...	5,160	2,475
<b>Total</b>	<b>109,091</b>	<b>74,990</b>

#### Visits/Contacts

	2012-12	2010-11
mymilitaryeducation.org	67,638	39,540



Minnesota sent 4,957 visits from 187 cities.



Additional 65,827 visits from 5,000 cities outside of Minnesota. Totaling 70,784 visits from 5,187 cities in the USA

## **ATTACHMENT 2: REGIONAL OFFICES AND VETERANS RESOURCE CENTERS**

### **State Higher Education Veterans Program Office:**

Host Campus: Minnesota State University Moorhead  
1104 7<sup>th</sup> Ave S  
Moorhead, MN 56560

### **Dave Bellefeuille, State Supervisor**

[belldave@mnstate.edu](mailto:belldave@mnstate.edu)  
218-477-2080 Office

### **Jennifer Huntman, Administrative Assistant**

Minnesota State University Moorhead  
[jenn.huntman@mnstate.edu](mailto:jenn.huntman@mnstate.edu)  
218-477-2080 Office

### **Northwest Region:**

### **Anthony Schnellbach, Regional Coordinator**

[tony.schnellbach@northlandcollege.edu](mailto:tony.schnellbach@northlandcollege.edu)  
218-683-8550  
Host Campus: Northland Community and Technical College  
1101 Hwy One East  
Thief River Falls, MN 56701

### **Eric Abell, Regional Coordinator**

[Eric.abell@minnesota.edu](mailto:Eric.abell@minnesota.edu)  
218-683-8550  
Host Campus: Minnesota State Community and Technical College, Detroit Lakes  
900 Hwy 34 E  
Detroit Lakes, MN 56501

### **Northwest Region Campus Veterans Centers**

- University of Minnesota - Crookston
- Bemidji State University, Bemidji
- Minnesota State University, Moorhead
- Minnesota State Community and Technical College, Moorhead
- Minnesota State Community and Technical College, Detroit Lakes
- Minnesota State Community and Technical College, Fergus Falls
- Minnesota State Community and Technical College, Wadena
- Northland Community and Technical College, Thief River Falls
- Northland Community and Technical College, East Grand Forks
- Northwest Technical College, Bemidji

**Northeast Region:**

**Jodi Kiminski, Regional Coordinator**

[j.kiminski@lsc.edu](mailto:j.kiminski@lsc.edu)

218-733-7604 Office

Host Campus: Lake Superior College

2101 Trinity Road

Duluth, MN 55811

**Aaron Jensen**

[Aaron.jensen@hibbing.edu](mailto:Aaron.jensen@hibbing.edu)

218-262-6739

Host Campus: Hibbing Community College

1515 E. 25<sup>th</sup> Street

Hibbing, MN 55746

**Northeast Region Campus Veterans Centers**

- University of Minnesota, Duluth
- Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College, Cloquet
- Hibbing Community College, Hibbing
- Itasca Community College, Grand Rapids
- Lake Superior College, Duluth
- Mesabi Range Community and Technical College, Eveleth
- Rainy River Community College, International Falls
- Vermillion Community College, Ely
- College of St. Scholastica, Duluth and other locations

**Central Region:**

**Laura Boden, Regional Coordinator**

[mnva@stcloudstate.edu](mailto:mnva@stcloudstate.edu)

320-308-2185 Office

Host Campus: St. Cloud State University

720 4<sup>th</sup> Ave South

St. Cloud, MN 56301

**Josh Brummond, Regional Coordinator**

[mnva@alextech.edu](mailto:mnva@alextech.edu)

320-762-4467 Office

Host Campus: Alexandria Technical and Community College

1601 Jefferson St

Alexandria, MN 56308

**Central Region Campus Veterans Centers**

- University of Minnesota – Morris
- St. Cloud State University, St. Cloud
- Alexandria Technical and Community College, Alexandria
- Central Lakes College, Brainerd

- Central Lakes College, Staples
- Ridgewater College, Willmar
- Ridgewater College, Hutchinson
- St. Cloud Technical and Community College, St. Cloud

**Metro Region:**

**Katherine Bachman, Regional Coordinator**

[Katherine.Bachman@dctc.edu](mailto:Katherine.Bachman@dctc.edu)

651-423-8274 Office

Host Campus: Dakota County Technical College

1300 145<sup>th</sup> Street East

Rosemount, MN 55068

**Duane Bauer II, Regional Coordinator**

[bauer333@umn.edu](mailto:bauer333@umn.edu)

612-238-4568 Office

St Mary's University, LaSalle Hall

2500 Park Ave So

Minneapolis, MN 55404-4403

**Charles Egerstrom, Regional Coordinator**

[charles.egerstrom@anokaramsey.edu](mailto:charles.egerstrom@anokaramsey.edu)

763-433-1415 Office

Host Campus: Anoka Ramsey Community College

11200 Mississippi Blvd NW

Coon Rapids, MN 55433

**Metro Region Campus Veterans Centers**

- University of Minnesota, Veterans Transition Center, Minneapolis
- University of Minnesota, One Stop Service Center, Minneapolis
- St Paul College, St Paul
- Metropolitan State University, Minneapolis
- Dunwoody College of Technology, Minneapolis
- Anoka Technical College, Anoka
- Anoka-Ramsey Community College, Cambridge
- Anoka-Ramsey Community College, Coon Rapids
- Century Community College, White Bear Lake
- Dakota County Technical College, Rosemount
- Inver Hills Community College, Inver Hills
- Hennepin Technical College, Brooklyn Park
- Hennepin Technical College, Eden Prairie
- Minneapolis Community and Technical College
- Normandale Community College, Bloomington
- North Hennepin Community College, Brooklyn Park
- Pine Technical College, Pine City

- University of St. Thomas, Minneapolis
- University of St. Thomas, St. Paul
- Concordia University, St Paul

**Southwest Region:**

**Justin Guggisberg, Regional Coordinator**

[justin.guggisberg@smsu.edu](mailto:justin.guggisberg@smsu.edu)

507-537-7213 Office

Host Campus: SW Minnesota State University, Marshall

1501 State Street-Room SS132

Marshall, MN 56258

**Southwest Region Campus Veterans Centers**

- Southwest Minnesota State University, Marshall
- Minnesota West Community and Technical College, Canby
- Minnesota West Community and Technical College, Granite Falls
- Minnesota West Community and Technical College, Jackson
- Minnesota West Community and Technical College, Pipestone
- Minnesota West Community and Technical College, Worthington

**Southeast Region:**

**David Schrader, Regional Coordinator**

[david.schrader@mnsu.edu](mailto:david.schrader@mnsu.edu)

507-389-5726 Office

Host Campus: Minnesota State University, Mankato

168 Centennial Student Union

Mankato, MN 56001

**Tony Tengwall, Regional Coordinator**

[tony.tengwall@roch.edu](mailto:tony.tengwall@roch.edu)

507-529-6142 Office

Host Campus: Rochester Community and Technical College

851 30<sup>th</sup> Ave. SE - Box 47

Rochester, MN 55904

**Southeast Region Campus Veterans Centers**

- Minnesota State University, Mankato
- Winona State University, Winona
- South Central College, North Mankato
- South Central College, Faribault
- Southeast Technical College, Red Wing
- Southeast Technical College, Winona
- Rochester Community and Technical College, Rochester
- Riverland Community College, Austin