

**2016 Bateman Case Study**

**Project Brief**

SVA: Helping Student Veterans Define Their Own Path to Success

**The Client**

As more than a million service men and women end their military careers and return to civilian life, education will be at the forefront of that transition. [Student Veterans of America](http://studentveterans.org/) (SVA) has seen firsthand the qualities our veterans bring to the classroom – dedication, a sense of teamwork, and a commitment to their work. SVA provides veterans with the resources, support, and advocacy needed to succeed in the classroom so they can go on to find good jobs to support their families following graduation.

SVAis a 501(c)(3) non-profit coalition of 1200+ student veteran organizations representing 440,000 veterans in higher education. SVA's mission is to provide military veterans with the resources, support, and advocacy to ease veteran and active military students' transition into higher education and leverage military experience to launch successful careers in high-demand fields.

1. **Vision**: SVA envisions a nation where all student veterans succeed in postsecondary programs and contribute to civilian society in meaningful ways.
2. **Mission**: SVA provides veterans with resources, support, and advocacy needed to succeed in higher education and after graduation.
3. **Our Model**: SVA delivers programs and services to student veterans via a campus-based peer support network consisting of SVA chapters.
4. **History**
   1. SVA was founded as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit in 2008 by returning Iraq and Afghanistan veterans who had struggled with the transition from combat to college.
   2. As they discovered that institutions of higher education were ill-prepared to support these new, nontraditional students, the grassroots coalition was born from the military ethos of “leave no one behind.”
5. **Reach**
   1. Over 1 million users of VA educational benefits are supported through SVA’s advocacy work
   2. 400,000+ vets have access to an SVA chapter on their campus
   3. 1,200+ chapters in all 50 states and four countries

**Audiences**

The primary audience is Post 9/11 GI Bill recipients, including but not limited to:

* Veterans, Servicemembers, and family members who have benefited from the Post-9/11 GI Bill since the program’s inception in August 2009.

Secondary audiences include individuals and organizations with a vested interest in military veterans’ success in higher education and post-graduation:

* **Employers** – Industries with high-demand employment opportunities for military veterans.
* **Higher Ed** – Institutions of higher learning, including universities, colleges, trade schools, graduate, undergraduate, 2 & 4 year, vocational, community college. Educational institutions at both the undergraduate and graduate levels would need to consider, among others, their campus groups, staff, administration, students, alumni, families, the community where institutions are located, and the entities--both public and private--that will be employing their graduating students.
* **Veterans Service Organizations**– Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), American Legion, Disabled American Veterans (DAV)
* **Veterans Service Agencies**- Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Department of Defense (DOD), Department of Education (DOE), Department of Labor (DOL)**,** National Association of State Approving Agencies (NASAA)
* **Legislative** – U.S. House of Representatives, U.S. Senate, White House



**Campaign Design**

A successful and thorough campaign should be factual and relevant. Teams must:

* Develop and execute a public relations campaign inclusive of research, planning, execution and evaluation.
* Use a variety of communications channels and formats and think beyond traditional public relations tactics.
* Create a campaign complete with communications strategies and tactics – to increase public awareness and understanding of military veterans in higher education, provide information about SVA’s mission, events and services for student veterans and impact of student veterans' success on the broader audience.
* Evaluate the impact of the campaign against its objectives.

**Overall Campaign Goals**

1. Make student veterans and their families informed consumers of their GI Bill benefits.
2. Provide useful information about SVA for student veterans and their families.
3. Raise campus and community awareness about SVA and its programs.
4. Enlist the support of all stakeholders: faculty, community veterans, employers and government leaders.
5. Recognize military training and experience: Ensuring service members and veterans have access to higher education and meaningful employment opportunities.
6. Shift the narrative: Eliminating the perception of the "Broken Veteran.” Tell the varied paths and success stories of student veterans.

**Background**

**Post 9/11 GI Bill: Military Education Benefits**

The Post-9/11 GI Bill is a comprehensive education benefit created by Congress in 2008. In general, veterans and service members who have served on active duty for 90 or more days after Sept. 10, 2001 are eligible. On average, VA processes the initial claims for Post-9/11 GI Bill educational benefits in 23 days.

Although the new GI Bill offers an appealing set of educational benefits to the over 2.6 million individuals who have served in the U.S. armed forces since the attacks of September 11, 2001, its early implementation faced several challenges.

According to a 2011 Rand Corporation [study](http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2011/RAND_MG1083.pdf), the most frequently discussed challenges were meeting academic expectations, balancing academic and other responsibilities, relating to nonveteran students, and coping with service-related disabilities and post-traumatic stress disorder. Participants described fellow veterans as the most helpful source of support in overcoming their transition challenges. Veteran’s program administrators were also described as an important source of support for helping students use their GI Bill benefits and find the resources they needed on campus.

**Post 9/11 GI Bill: Servicemembers' and veterans' dependents**

One group of new GI Bill users has received little attention in media, research, and policy circles — service members' and veterans' dependents. Under the [Transfer of Education Benefits](http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2009/0409_gibill/) program, service members who are eligible for the new GI Bill can transfer some or all earned benefits to their spouses or children for future use. Because this option requires additional military service, the Department of Defense uses it primarily as a retention tool.

Although little is known about this program's effect on benefits earners or their dependents, recent [reports](http://www.stripes.com/news/veterans/more-veterans-taking-advantage-of-post-9-11-gi-bill-1.273504) suggest that more than 20 percent — or just over $8 billion — of all new GI Bill benefits are used by spouses and children. In fact, almost 450,000 service members have elected to transfer at least some portion of their benefits, predominantly to their children. These numbers suggest the extent of the GI Bill's potential effects on social mobility and post-secondary educational attainment for the next generation.

The limited research surrounding the new GI Bill has focused on its more immediate impact — the outcomes of veterans. After all, this population represents the majority of VA education beneficiaries. Much less is known about how access to these education benefits affects dependents' outcomes. For example, children with transferred benefits might be more motivated to achieve in primary/secondary school if they have what amounts to a partial or total college scholarship. It follows that their prospects of getting into college and their general well-being could be improved. After using their benefits for college, spouses' and children's employment and earning potential could be affected as well.

**Million Records Project**

Student Veterans of America entered into an agreement with the VA to create a database, which consisted of 1 million records from veteran beneficiaries who enrolled for education benefits between 2002 and 2013.

With its [Million Records Project](http://studentveterans.org/index.php/aboutus/what-we-do/million-records-project), Student Veterans of America has energized the education research community. The project offers the first empirical evidence of the near-term outcomes of veterans who attend school on the Post-9/11 GI Bill. Using data from the Department of Veterans Affairs and the National Student Clearinghouse, the research found that student veterans are earning degrees at a rate similar to that of college students in general but take slightly more time. These and other important findings could help change perceptions that military and veterans are underperforming in higher education relative to civilians.

Analysis of the records showed that the majority of student veterans over those years finished a bachelor's degree within four to six years and an associate degree within four, the SVA said. The group described the graduation rates as strong considering the extra challenges many student veterans face, such as having a service-related disability.

Vets are going for degrees that could help them get in-demand careers, the report said. The top bachelor degree fields were business, social sciences, homeland security, law enforcement and firefighting, and computer and information sciences.

About 72 percent of the student veterans who graduated did so from public universities. Another 15.5 percent attended private universities, while about 13 percent attended for-profit schools.

**Resources**

### [Student Veterans of America](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&uact=8&sqi=2&ved=0CCQQFjAAahUKEwiogtjLkJrIAhXD2R4KHfdBD2E&url=http%3A%2F%2Fstudentveterans.org%2F&usg=AFQjCNGcfbf5d706fiUS1E7cYrVDLlvPdA&bvm=bv.103388427,d.dmo)

### [SVA: Million Records Project – Student Veterans of America](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CB4QFjAAahUKEwjCi7OPg5rIAhXGPB4KHVo0AQw&url=http%3A%2F%2Fstudentveterans.org%2Findex.php%2Faboutus%2Fwhat-we-do%2Fmillion-records-project&usg=AFQjCNGNIF2YpwZr2NDTYNHHHBR8bcxaaw)

### [Rand Corporation: Higher Education Benefits for Post-9/11 Military Service](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=7&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CE4QFjAGahUKEwizhNSKg5rIAhVBHh4KHbXnC6o&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.rand.org%2Fcontent%2Fdam%2Frand%2Fpubs%2Ftestimonies%2FCT400%2FCT428%2FRAND_CT428.pdf&usg=AFQjCNH66wDMnte4WDcf-b07Fq9NoXrU7g)

### [Ipsos/ScoutComms Poll: Veterans Issues | Ipsos](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CB0QFjAAahUKEwi9zrSjg5rIAhWHqR4KHR7eACk&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.ipsos-na.com%2Fnews-polls%2Fpressrelease.aspx%3Fid%3D6951&usg=AFQjCNFRKLh-OYk61S94TNhhZiCbjjeKaA)

### [Department of Veterans Affairs: Post-9/11 GI Bill - Education and Training](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CB0QFjAAahUKEwjt7ZS6kJrIAhVH2B4KHdMPC1I&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.benefits.va.gov%2Fgibill%2Fpost911_gibill.asp&usg=AFQjCNGfxZrnQaX_IwFbOicFiQHre7Rmlw&bvm=bv.103388427,d.dmo)