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Chairman Durbin, Ranking Member Cochran, and members of the committee, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to appear before this committee and for holding this important hearing on Voluntary Military Education Programs.

I am here to represent the member institutions of The Association of Private Sector Colleges and Universities, their faculty and the millions of students who attend our institutions. Our institutions provide a full range of higher education programs to students seeking career-focused education. We provide short-term certificate and diploma programs, two- and four-year associate and baccalaureate degree programs, as well as a small number of master's and doctorate programs. We educate students for careers in over 200 occupational fields including information technology; allied health; automotive repair; business administration; commercial art; and culinary and hospitality management.

Sixty-four percent of our students are low-income. Sixty-seven percent have delayed postsecondary education making them older than the 18-22 traditional college demographic. Single parents make up 31 percent of our students and 76 percent are from a minority population. It goes without saying that our students are considered “non-traditional,” but they are more and more the face of higher education in this country, so we should think of them as the new traditional. Most of our students juggle work, family and school. Most cannot attend a traditional institution of higher education because of scheduling, location or admissions criteria. Yet, these are the students who need the opportunity to pursue higher education if we are going to succeed in filling jobs that require skilled workers. Our institutions offer that opportunity and have and will continue to play a vital role in providing skills-based education.

During the recent economic downturn when states and local communities reduced education budgets, many of our colleagues at public institutions had to endure budget cuts resulting in limited access and service for students. But our institutions continued to invest in their schools to

offer students industry-leading innovation while expanding capacity and meeting the evolving demands of employers. Because we are not dependent on brick-and-mortar facilities to expand access, we are able to meet the growing demand for postsecondary education through vastly expanding online technology offerings, and perhaps our most successful academic delivery – a blend of online and on-site programs.

Even while investing in education programs, our schools have been successful in reducing the cost of attendance for our students. Recently, the U.S. Department of Education released an analysis that compares the average costs at four year institutions between 2010-2011 and 2012-2013. Only our institutions experienced a reduction in the average costs - 2.2%; other sectors experienced an increase in costs, with public in-state cost increasing 6.7%, public out-of-state increasing 4.1% and private non-profit rising 3.1%. For two-year institutions, our schools were able to reduce costs to students by 0.2%, while public in-state cost increased 6.4%, public out-of-state increased 3.9% and private non-profit rose 1.8%.

We've expanded educational opportunities for many people, as evidenced by the increasing number of degrees our institutions have awarded. Yes, much of this is the simple result that our sector of postsecondary education is probably the newest with new campuses and new forms of academic delivery. But in an era when we expect 65% of all jobs and 85% of all new jobs to require some level of postsecondary education this growth in access is important. From 1999 to 2009, degrees awarded by our institutions have soared. Associate's degrees increased by 132% (compared with just 43% at public and 1% at private nonprofit institutions), bachelor's degrees increased by 387% (compared with just 29% at public and 24% at private nonprofit institutions), master's degrees increased by 588% (compared to 33% at public and 43% at private nonprofit institutions), and doctorate degrees increased by over 300% (compared to 30% at public and 32% at private nonprofit institutions). Looking at the recession years between 2008 and 2012, our institutions prepared 3.5 million adults with the education and skills essential for real jobs, real incomes and a real chance at America's middle class. We conferred 1.5 million degrees and 1.85 million certificates.

Finally, our institutions experienced a higher growth in degrees than all others between 2010/2011 and 2011/2012. Degrees conferred by our institutions increased 8.6% compared to 5.2% by public and 3.2% by private nonprofits. According to Bureau of Labor Statistics data, the degrees and certificates awarded by our institutions are in some of the fastest growing occupations nationwide. For example, in 2010/2011, we awarded 52% of all Dental Assistant Certificates, 50% of all Veterinary Technologists and Technicians Associate Degrees and 40% of all Diagnostic Medical Sonographers Associates Degrees. Without our students, employers in these fields would be unable to find the well-trained staff they need to deliver services to patients and customers.

We share your commitment to ensuring that every postsecondary institution provides the highest level of service to each and every student, especially active duty military, veterans and their families. We take great pride that our schools – with the support services, flexible schedules, and focused delivery of academics – are designing and delivering education in ways that meet the

needs of today's military and veteran student. We strive to ensure that all students receive the education they deserve.

APSCU and our member institutions want to ensure that our students are well-prepared to enter the workforce and that every institution of higher education lives up to the high standards expected by our students. Private sector colleges and universities have a long and important relationship with our nation's military and veteran students. We celebrate who they are and what they do. Our actions, as educators of hundreds of thousands of military and veteran students, honor this partnership by providing our military and veteran students with the best possible education experience at our institutions.

According to the latest data obtained by APSCU from the Department of Defense, 762 PSCUs are participating in the Tuition Assistance (TA) program and have been approved to offer courses to active duty military.

Earlier this year, when the various services announced that they would eliminate TA as a result of the Sequester, Senators Hagan and Inhofe noted in their letter to Secretary of Defense Hagel that tuition assistance is an important recruitment and retention tool, which significantly contributes to our military's morale. As an all-volunteer force, during a period of prolonged conflict, effective recruitment, retention and morale initiatives are essential to attracting and retaining professional personnel. Over 60 percent of our service members stated that the increased ability to pursue higher education was an important factor in deciding to join the military. More importantly, service members have taken their ambitions and turned them into reality by taking classes and earning degrees, diplomas and certificates. These are truly extraordinary accomplishments achieved in stressful situations with time and our institutions are proud to be a part of the TA program and serve these dedicated men and women of the military.

The need for TA is confirmed in the words of Sergeant First Class James Wallace who is stationed at Ft. Knox Kentucky and using TA to attend Sullivan University. In a recent letter to me, he said, "I believe that the Tuition Assistance program for soldiers is a great tool to help those people serving their country to help prepare for the future. It doesn't matter if that person is going to make a whole 20 year career or just complete one enlistment, there is life past the military." Sergeant Wallace went on to describe the value of TA for himself and his family saying, "Like many other soldiers I use the whole \$4,500 TA benefit every year. For the last 2 years, I have had to pay out of my own pocket so that I could take three classes per semester. Thanks to TA, I only have one quarter remaining before I receive my Associate's degree. My Associate's degree has helped me in applying to become a Warrant Officer. The TA program is about \$1000 short depending on the college or university that you are attending. Even though I do come up short every year, it beats having to come out of pocket for the whole amount. Soldiers and their families already sacrifice enough to serve their country. Anything that the government can do to help assist the quality of life for soldiers and families is greatly appreciated by them."

Another student, Staff Sergeant Thomas M. Windley wrote that he began attending ECPI University in the summer of 2004 as a veteran recently discharged from service in the US Navy.

“Several months after enrolling with ECPI, I enlisted in the US Army. During my attendance at ECPI, I was appointed System Administrator for my unit because of my knowledge of computer systems. I utilized my Tuition Assistance and I was able to complete my degree program and obtain an associate’s degree in Network Security within 18 months. In 2007, I earned another associate’s degree in electrical engineering; it was at this point in my military career that my civilian education assisted me in being promoted over my peers. In 2010, I worked on a network installation team and within three months I earned my CompTIA A+, Network+, and Security + certifications due largely to my education, experience, and opportunity that ECPI provided me. In 2010 my military assignment took me overseas to Afghanistan, while deployed I earned my Bachelor’s Degree in Computer Information Science with a concentration in Network Security. Earning my degree led to another promotion, which was due to the tools and benefits ECPI provided in the areas of leadership, professionalism, and core curriculum content. I have been tasked, since my promotion, with training others in my unit both below and above me in rank, to sit for certifications, thus far those I have trained have a 100% pass record. I would highly recommend this program to fellow service members, I believe ECPI to have the best customer service of any online school and I have attended several. Further the curriculum is very precise and concentrated in the areas most needed to perform the job at maximum proficiency.”

Whether we are talking about Sergeant First Class James Wallace, Staff Sergeant Thomas M. Windley or an Army Major working on her Master’s degree for career advancement, these men and women know what they want and are committed to getting it. In our active duty military this might involve taking online classes on a computer at a far away posting or on a ship at sea. Their service coupled with their commitment to getting an education is truly extraordinary.

To ensure that all institutions of higher education are appropriately recruiting, enrolling, and educating military students, only institutions of higher education that have a signed DoD Voluntary Education Partnership Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and are on the “List of Participating Institutions” are eligible to receive DoD TA from a service branch. Today, over 700 of our institutions proudly participate and have signed the MOU.

It is important to note that military installations are empowered to enforce the established rules and procedures with respect to misconduct by an institution of higher education, and the current MOU and Executive Order exist to provide the appropriate authorities with the power to take the steps and actions necessary to ensure that any school engaging in illegal or improper practices is held responsible. If problems or concerns arise, they should be addressed through the existing processes, and by engaging institutions in ways that achieve appropriate solutions as soon as possible.

Educating our active duty military, is as important as fulfilling our commitment to veterans. According to the Veterans Administration data, more than 325,000 veterans and their families have been served by our institutions or 28% of all veterans using their post 9/11-GI benefits.

Although veterans make up less than 10% of our students, we are proud to serve those who choose our institutions. More than 1,200 of our institutions participate in the Yellow Ribbon Program and a majority of those impose no limits on the number of eligible students while providing the maximum institutional contribution.

You might ask why we serve 13% of all postsecondary students but 28% of all veterans on the Post 9/11 GI Bill? Quite simply, the answer lies in our customer service to the veterans. Returning from duty in Afghanistan or Iraq, most veterans do not want to live in a dorm and take five different 3-credit courses at a time. Rather, they want a focused and accelerated academic delivery that can transition them from the front lines to full time employment as soon as possible. Because of our longer school days and year-round academic programming, our students can often complete an associate degree in 18 months or a BA degree in just over 3 years.

We know that challenges arise when our military men and women transition back to civilian life and enter into postsecondary education. Often, traditional institutions of higher education are not the best fit. Our military and veteran students are not the fresh-out-of-high school, first-time, full-time student living on campus and attending thanks to the generosity of family. Our military and veteran students are like many of our new traditional students - working, with a spouse and children and paying for education with money they have saved. Service members and veterans attend our institutions because of many of the institutional qualities that are inherently ingrained into the framework of our institutions, such as geographic proximity to home or work, institutional emphasis on the adult learner, and flexible class schedules. This is why for over 65 years our schools have been providing education and training services to members of the armed services and their families.

We know that military students want career-focused education that is delivered in a flexible academic setting, which best meets their unique needs. Our courses are designed to be relevant, concentrated, and suited to the personal goals of our students; this educational foundation particularly benefits service members who utilize TA to achieve a promotion, advance in rank, or supplement the skills attained during their service. This type of purposeful, tailored education ensures that military students nimbly move from the classroom onto their next academic or professional goal. The ability to offer courses on-base, online, and on the service member's schedule, likewise, is of tremendous value, providing a full-range of educational opportunities that enable military students to maximize their education in order to achieve his or her academic goals.

In recognition of the growing numbers of military and veteran students enrolling at our institutions, APSCU adopted Five Tenets of Veteran Education that included the creation of a Blue Ribbon Taskforce for Military and Veteran Education. The Taskforce was comprised of a broad group of individuals who share a common commitment towards the education of service members and veterans representing a diverse range of institutions, including non-APSCU members, as well as representatives of nationally-recognized leadership organizations in the area of military and veteran postsecondary education. The Taskforce was specifically charged with identifying, collecting, and documenting practices and programs that meet the unique needs of

military and veteran students, foster persistence, and enable them to meet their academic and professional goals.

I have attached a copy of the Best Practices to this testimony, so I won't discuss them in detail, but I would just highlight the four major topic areas addressed by the Taskforce. (1) Consumer information, enrollment and recruitment makes clear that information should be provided in clear and understandable language and that no student should be subjected to aggressive or misleading recruiting practices. (2) Institutional commitment to provide military and veteran student support identifies initiatives related to personnel and faculty designed to help employees understand the special needs of military and veteran students. It also identifies institutional policies aimed at assisting military and veteran students such as participating in the Yellow Ribbon program, offering a reduced military tuition rate, maximizing the use of military training credit recommended by ACE, or exceeding the standards of the Uniformed Services Employment and Re-Employment Act for deployed employees. (3) Promising practices for ensuring military and veteran student success through student services discusses the need for student centers and partnerships, such as establishing a Student Veterans of America chapter or having a military and veterans lounge where students can meet and find peer to peer support. (4) Establish institutional research guidelines for tracking military and veteran student success encourages the collection and use of data to improve programs and evaluate program effectiveness. We are encouraging all our institutions and our colleagues at other institutions of higher education to look at these Best Practices and find opportunities to implement them where appropriate in order to best serve our military and veteran students.

A 2010 study by the Rand Corporation and ACE entitled "Military Veterans' Experiences Using the Post 9/11 GI Bill and Pursuing Postsecondary Education reported findings which support the view that our institutions are working to support these students. The report noted the following:

Rate of satisfaction with the credit transfer experience was 60% among survey respondents who had attempted to transfer military credits to our institutions, versus only 27% among those from community colleges and 40% among respondents from public 4-year colleges. Only participants from private nonprofit colleges reported higher credit transfer satisfaction rates, at 82%;

Respondents from our institutions reported fewer challenges to accessing required courses than all other institutions except for 4-year publics (33% of respondents at public 2-year colleges, 26% at private nonprofits, 22% at our institutions and 18% at public colleges).

Survey respondents in private sector colleges and universities reported higher than average satisfaction rates with academic advising, at 67%, versus about 50% satisfaction among respondents at other institution types.

Reasons for choosing our institutions included: career oriented programs with flexible schedules, like-minded adult students, flexible credit transfer rules and same institution in multiple locations.

Many PSCUs offer a reduced military tuition rate for active duty, National Guard, and reserve service members and their spouses to minimize out-of-pocket student expenses beyond what TA benefits cover and offer scholarships to wounded service members and their spouses as they recover from their injuries and prepare for new career opportunities. Some also maintain a military-friendly deployment policy, which allows military students to withdraw and return to school at any time if they are deployed and provide specialized military student advisors to evaluate past military training and experience and assess eligible academic transfer of credit based on American Council of Education (ACE) recommendations. The generous awarding of credit for military skills and experience and fair transfer of credit policies exemplify how PSCUs strive to be responsible stewards of this educational benefit, as exiting service members are not forced to take duplicative or extraneous classes.

We look forward to working with the Department of Defense, as well as the Department of Education to develop relevant outcome measures. Active duty military students are often deployed or transferred, interrupting their education. As we develop outcome measures and metrics, we need to be thoughtful and make sure they accurately reflect the real world environment our service members operate.

Military students utilize TA as a means to career advancement or skills attainment, however the benefit also assists service members as they transition from soldier to civilian by providing the skills necessary for attaining employment in a tough job market. Recent Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) data suggest that the unemployment situation of our nation's veterans is improving, this population, particularly in the age 18-24 category, has historically experienced higher unemployment than civilians. The Administration, veteran advocates, and veteran service organizations (VSOs) have responded by developing and implementing initiatives to put veterans in jobs.

The American Legion has partnered with DoD to educate state legislators and governors on the actual value of military skills and experience and how they translate into a civilian employment environment. Additionally, the American Legion is serving as an advocate for changing current state laws to enable credentialing and/or licensing boards to consider military skills and experience when evaluating a candidate for a license or certification. The American Legion has also partnered with the Administration and the Departments of Defense, Energy, Labor, and Veterans Affairs to evaluate the current job-task analysis (JTA), identify any gaps in the JTA, and work with the private sector and postsecondary education to the best address how to fill the gaps through higher education, on-the-job-training, or apprenticeships. This initiative relies on the symbiotic relationship between credentialing, higher education, public and private entities to proactively work together to reduce veteran unemployment.

Tuition assistance is valuable because it not only helps maintain the readiness of our nation's military, but it provides active duty services members with career ready training for life after they leave military service. When members of the armed forces leave, they enter a pivotal transition period that is often wrought with challenges, and as a result, the potential for failure is high. As we have discussed, our institutions are fully committed to helping veterans achieve

success in higher education. This commitment and focus on educating members of the military, as well as veterans and their families is critical because according to the Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES) over 80% of members only have a high school diploma.

Our nation currently faces twin crises - stubbornly high unemployment and a skills gap where employers all across the country cannot find trained and job-ready workers. The key to narrowing the skills gap and reducing civilian and veteran unemployment is an “all-hands-on-deck” approach to postsecondary education. All sectors of higher education must be part of the solution and accountable for the educational experience and outcomes of all students, especially military and veteran-students.

We want to work with you to provide our service members and veterans, particularly young combat veterans, with the tools and resources to make an informed, thoughtful decision about which educational opportunity will best prepare them for the workforce.

The facts are simple: Career-oriented schools are educating America's next generation and helping secure our nation's economic vitality. We all agree that a higher education degree greatly improves employment opportunities and income. And at a time of extended, high unemployment and economic hardship, we should be supporting anyone seeking access to skills and training that will allow them to better their own future.

President Obama has made it his goal to have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world by 2020. To meet President Obama’s challenge we will have to ensure that people who historically have not pursued higher education or succeeded in completing their postsecondary education must attend and complete their education. From both a jobs and a global competitiveness standpoint, our institutions can help fill the existing education and skills gap and meet capacity demands that cannot be satisfied by public and private non-profit colleges alone. Increasing the number of educated people is essential. Research shows that raising the college graduate rate just a single point will unleash \$124 billion per year in economic impact on the 51 largest metropolitan areas in the U.S.

Private sector colleges and universities have demonstrated a unique capability to confront the challenges of educating America’s middle class. We have been at the forefront of the effort to close the skills gap by offering career-focused training aiding business owners seeking workers with specific training and expertise. We have made it our mission to close this gap and are working every day to achieve that end.

Private sector colleges and universities are able to accommodate the needs of non-traditional students in ways that traditional four year universities cannot. Whether its veterans’ transitioning from war zones to the workplace or single parents with family responsibilities seeking a way to earn more for the future, career-oriented schools understand the rigorous demands that these individuals face and tailor course schedules, offer focused curriculum and provide academic delivery mechanisms that fit their needs. We are also investing in our students and expanding



facilities to meet the growing demand for higher education, which includes returning veterans, their spouses and families.

We share President Obama's commitment and passion for education, and look forward to working with him and the Congress to ensure that all Americans can attain the skills they need to access meaningful opportunities.

We take seriously the charge to work with active duty and military student populations and prepare America's students to succeed in the workforce. Private sector schools look forward to helping these students achieve their dreams, maintain military readiness and prepare them for life after the military.

Thank you for your time. I look forward to answering your questions and discussing these important issues with you today.