

**University of
Pittsburgh**

**Office of
Veterans
Services**

Overview

June 20, 2012



Introduction:

In 2009, the Post 9/11 GI Bill, which was modeled after the original WWII GI Bill, expanded the education benefits for military veterans who have served since September 11, 2001. Recognizing the unique circumstances and special needs of this population, the University of Pittsburgh founded the Office of Veterans Services.

Staff:

Director, (vacant)
Janet Owens, Outreach Coordinator
Dennis Renner, Benefits Coordinator
Arielle Juberg, Program Assistant

Mission:

The mission of the Office of Veterans Services is to facilitate the transition of veterans from military to University life, support their ongoing academic success, and assist veterans, guardsmen, reservists, and dependents in receiving their military education benefits.

Military-Friendly:

Since the creation of the Office of Veterans Services in 2009, the University of Pittsburgh has been recognized in the top 15% of Military-Friendly universities in national publications such as *Military Advanced Education*, *GI Jobs*, and various publications of the Military Times Network.

Veteran Student Profile:

Veteran students at Pitt have spent an average of 5 years as active duty service members. Approximately 68% of all veterans attending the University have been deployed to a combat zone with almost 25% having served multiple deployments. The majority of student veterans were specialists or sergeants at the conclusion of their contracts. Almost three-fourths (74%) of those were Captains upon leaving the military.

Admissions Assistance:

The Office of Veterans Services strives to be a one-stop shop for student veterans and their dependents. To help prospective students navigate through the admissions process, the Office of Veterans Services offers preadmission counseling sessions. The outreach coordinator meets with Veterans and dependents one-on-one to discuss the University application process, their educational interests, and how to obtain GI Bill benefits through the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Financial Assistance and Benefits Support:

The University of Pittsburgh is committed to removing the financial barriers between veteran students and our world-class educational opportunities. There are three full-time certifying officials employed in the Office of Veterans services who process GI Bill Education benefits and who act as liaisons with the financial offices within the University as well as the Veterans Administration on the students' behalf.

The University offers veteran and dependent students the following services:

- **Three full-time certifying officials**
- **Application fee waived**
- **Yellow Ribbon Program:** The University of Pittsburgh is a full participant in the Yellow Ribbon Program. This program is a voluntary agreement between the University and the Department of Veterans Affairs that automatically covers the out-of-state tuition and fees costs, for veterans who are 100% eligible for the Post 9/11 GI Bill.
- **Pitt Grant:** The Pitt Grant is a University grant for undergraduate out-of-state students with less than 100% eligibility for educational benefits from the Post 9/11 GI Bill. Students with 70-90% eligibility can receive a grant paying the difference between in-state and out-of-state tuition rates. Student veterans eligible for 40 to 60% of the GI Bill educational benefit would also receive the grant covering the difference in costs between in-state and out-of-state tuition. These students, however, would still be responsible for any difference between their VA payment and any remaining tuition costs at the in-state rate.
- **Late Fees Waived:** Pitt will waive the late fee that would normally accrue if educational benefits do not arrive on time.
- **Work Study Employment:** Veteran and dependent students may apply for work-study positions in the Office of Veterans Services.
- **Involuntary Resignation Process:** The University of Pittsburgh will assist students who are called- up to active duty deployments and transition them as expeditiously as possible without incurring any financial obligations to the University.
- **Financial Aid Counselor:** A Financial Aid counselor is available in the Office of Admissions and Financial Aid to assist new veteran students and their dependents.
- **Wounded Warrior Assistance Fund:** This fund was established in honor of Sergeant Jeremy W. Feldbusch, an Army Ranger, wounded warrior, and Pitt alumnus. The fund assists wounded veterans, a spouse or dependent of a fallen or wounded soldier and veterans.

Academic and Career Support Programs:

Throughout the term, the Office of Veterans Services hosts a variety of academic and career workshops for students, including:

- **Orientation:** Each term, the Office conducts a new veteran student orientation, where students learn about University resources, their GI Education Benefits, and local Veterans organizations. Representatives from the Army Strong Community and the VA Healthcare are present to answer questions.
- **Mastering the University:** This first year experience course is designed to help students build skills, habits, and strategies to meet the academic challenges they encounter as new students to the University.
- **Mid-term Strategies:** Veterans and dependents can review their progress and strategies for academic success. The Office of Veterans Services will survey new students and discuss additional ways that the Office can support their academic needs.
- **Interview Techniques and Transferable Skills:** This workshop takes participants through each step of the job interview process, including answering commonly asked questions, following up after interviews, and negotiating job offers.
- **Ten Steps to a Federal Job:** A certified federal job search trainer reviews the entire federal application process including the USA JOBS resume builder, job announcement analysis, and veterans' preferences. Veterans learn successful techniques in federal resume writing to demonstrate their experience and accomplishments.
- **Military to Civilian Resume Workshop:** Veterans learn how to best incorporate their military service on their resume by translating military experience into civilian terminology and emphasizing transferable skills.
- **Boots to Business:** Representatives from the Human Resources departments of BNY Mellon and PKMJ Engineering discuss the qualities/skills they seek in new hires and the various internship or full time positions that are available within their organizations. Since the inception of this program in 2011, six veteran students have participated in internship programs with BNY Mellon and 2 students have been hired as full-time employees with PKMJ Engineering Technologies.
- **Maximize Your Veteran's Benefits:** A representative from the Department of Veteran Affairs will advise participants about the non-education benefits available to them as veterans, including home loans, life insurance, and health care benefits.
- **Tutoring:** Veteran and dependent of veteran students are matched with graduate students or ROTC cadet volunteers for one-on-one tutorial assistance.

Student Veterans Association:

Established in 2007, the University of Pittsburgh's Student Veterans Association promotes the success of student veterans, active duty and reserve personnel and ROTC cadets through mentorship, networking, and social events. The Office of Veteran Services works in conjunction with the SVA to promote academic and social interaction amongst veterans.

Social Media:

The Office of Veterans Services maintains a Facebook page –[University of Pittsburgh, Office of Veterans Services](#) and a Twitter account--[@PittVetServices](#) to keep students informed and up-to-date on all the latest news and events.

Special Events:

Colonel Edward Shames

November 9, 2011-Colonel Shames, an original member of the Band of Brothers, as portrayed in the HBO miniseries, was invited to campus as a guest speaker for the Office of Veterans Services. This event was attended by over 400 students, faculty, and alumni.

National Roll Call

On Veterans Day, November 11, 2011, the Office of Veteran Services participated in a National Roll Call event where the names of over 6,325 service members who have lost their lives participating in combat operations since 9/11 were read aloud. This was a campus-wide event with participants from the students, faculty and staff honoring our fallen heroes.

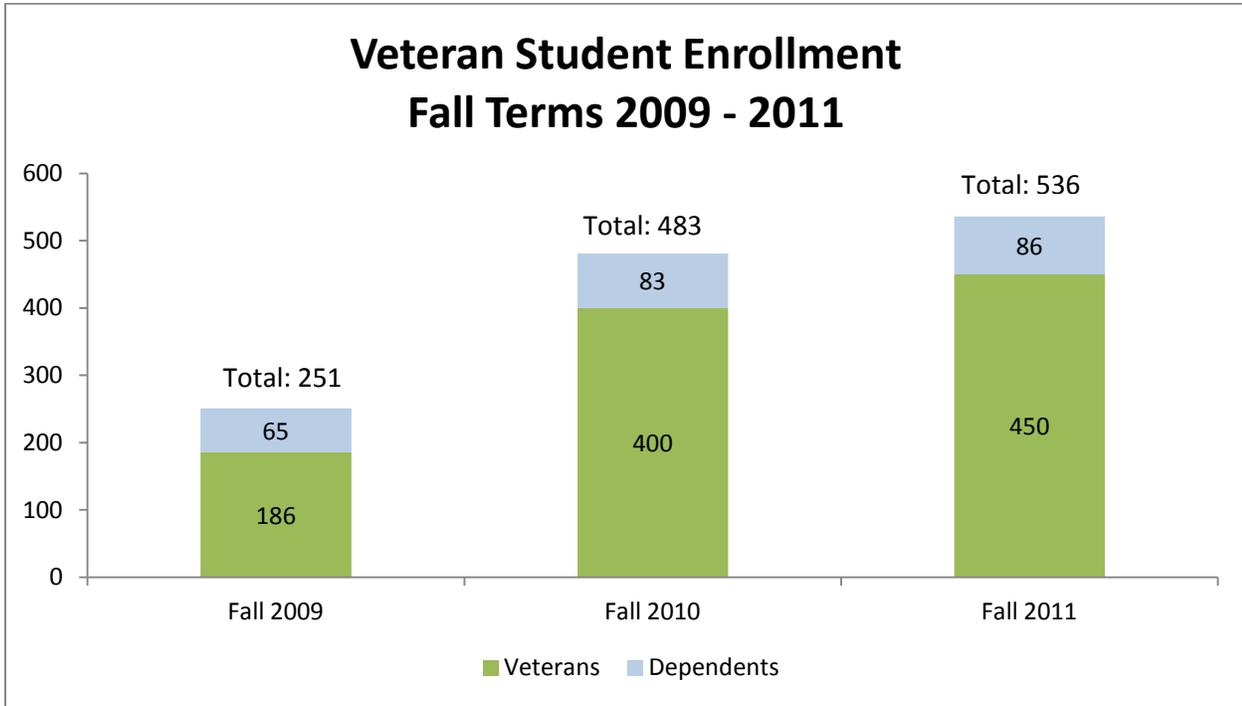
Regional Partners

The Office of Veteran Services partners with regional and national organizations to provide veterans and their families with access to services outside of the academic realm.

Army OneSource
Army Strong
Department of Veterans Affairs
Office of the Mayor
Pennsylvania Career Link
Pittsburgh Public Allies
ROTC
UPMC Emergency Medicine
VA Healthcare System
Veterans Employment Initiative
Veterans Leadership Program
Vocational Rehabilitation
Veterans Sleep Studies
Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Hall & Museum Trust
Wounded Warrior Project

Fall Term Veteran and Dependent Enrollment

Since 2009, veteran/dependent enrollment at the University of Pittsburgh has steadily increased. In the fall term of 2009, there were 250 veteran students enrolled University-wide. Since then, this population has increased to 536, generating a 114% increase.



Transfer of Eligibility to Dependents:

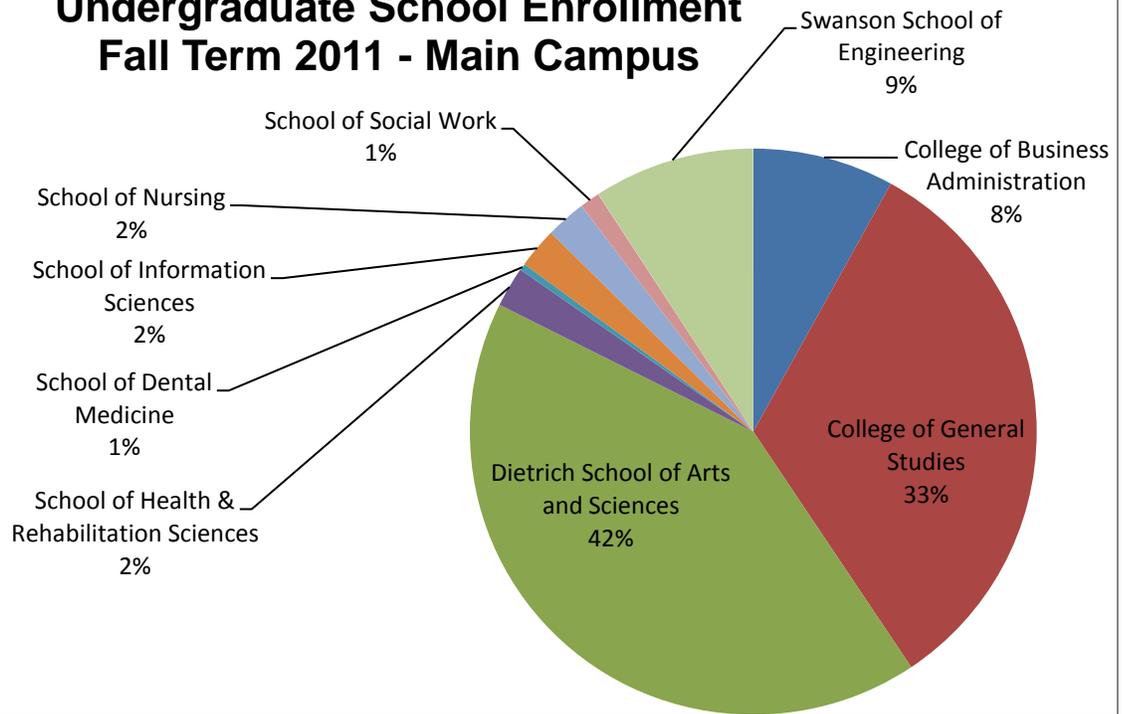
The Post 9/11 GI Bill allows uniformed service members (office or enlisted, active duty or Selected Reserve), on or after August 1, 2009, to transfer unused education benefits to immediate family members (spouse and children) according to the Department of Defense guidelines. The number of dependents has steadily grown with more children than spouses of veterans now using the Post 9/11 Education benefit at the University of Pittsburgh.

Fall Term Student Enrollment by School

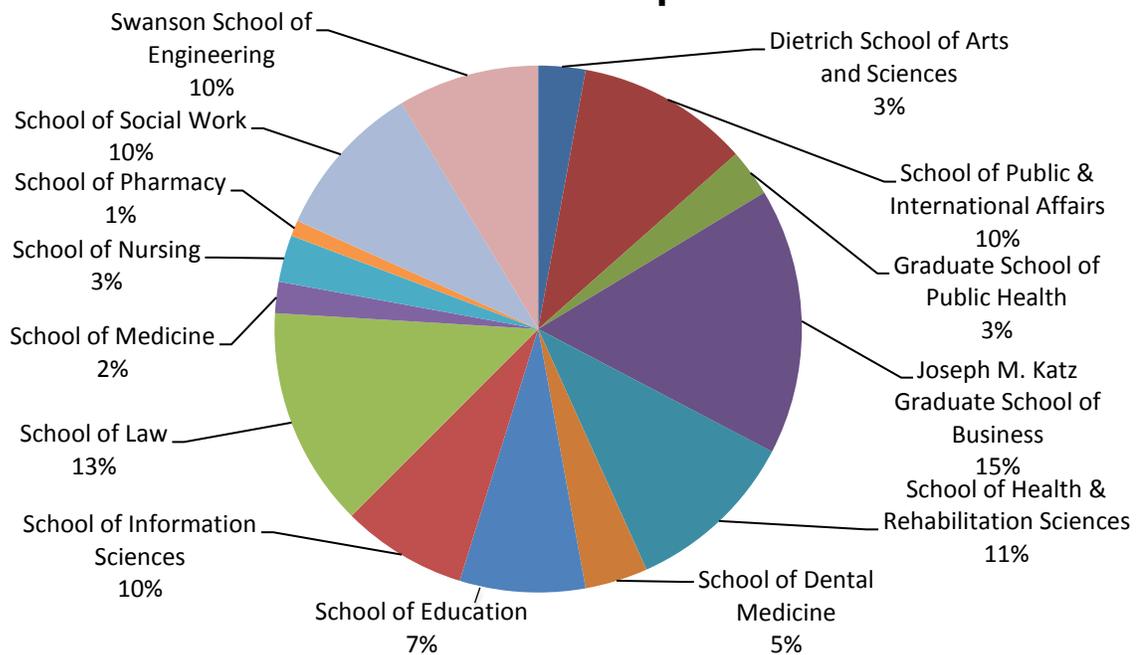
Veteran and dependent students are enrolled in every school at the University of Pittsburgh. During the fall term of 2011 approximately 80% of veteran and dependent students were pursuing undergraduate degrees, while the remaining 20% were in graduate programs. The majority of undergraduate students were enrolled in the College of General Studies, the Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences, and the Swanson School of Engineering. The majority of graduate students were enrolled in the Joseph M. Katz Graduate School of Business, the School of Law, the School of Health and Rehabilitation Science, and the Swanson School of Engineering. Approximately 30% of veteran students are pursuing degrees at a branch campus.

Fall Term 2011			
	Undergraduate	Graduate	Total
University of Pittsburgh Main Campus			
College of Business Admin	21	n/a	21
College of General Studies	85	n/a	85
Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences	109	4	113
Graduate School of Public and International Affairs	n/a	9	9
Graduate School of Public Health	n/a	3	3
Joseph M. Katz Grad School Bus	n/a	15	15
School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences	6	10	16
School of Dental Medicine	1	5	6
School of Education	0	7	7
School of Information Sciences	6	10	16
School of Law	n/a	15	15
School of Medicine	n/a	1	1
School of Nursing	6	3	9
School of Pharmacy	0	1	1
School of Social Work	3	11	14
Swanson School of Engineering	24	11	35
University of Pittsburgh Branch Campuses			
University of Pittsburgh at Bradford	56	n/a	56
University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown	59	n/a	59
University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg	41	n/a	41
University of Pittsburgh at Titusville	13	n/a	13
Totals	431	105	536

Undergraduate School Enrollment Fall Term 2011 - Main Campus

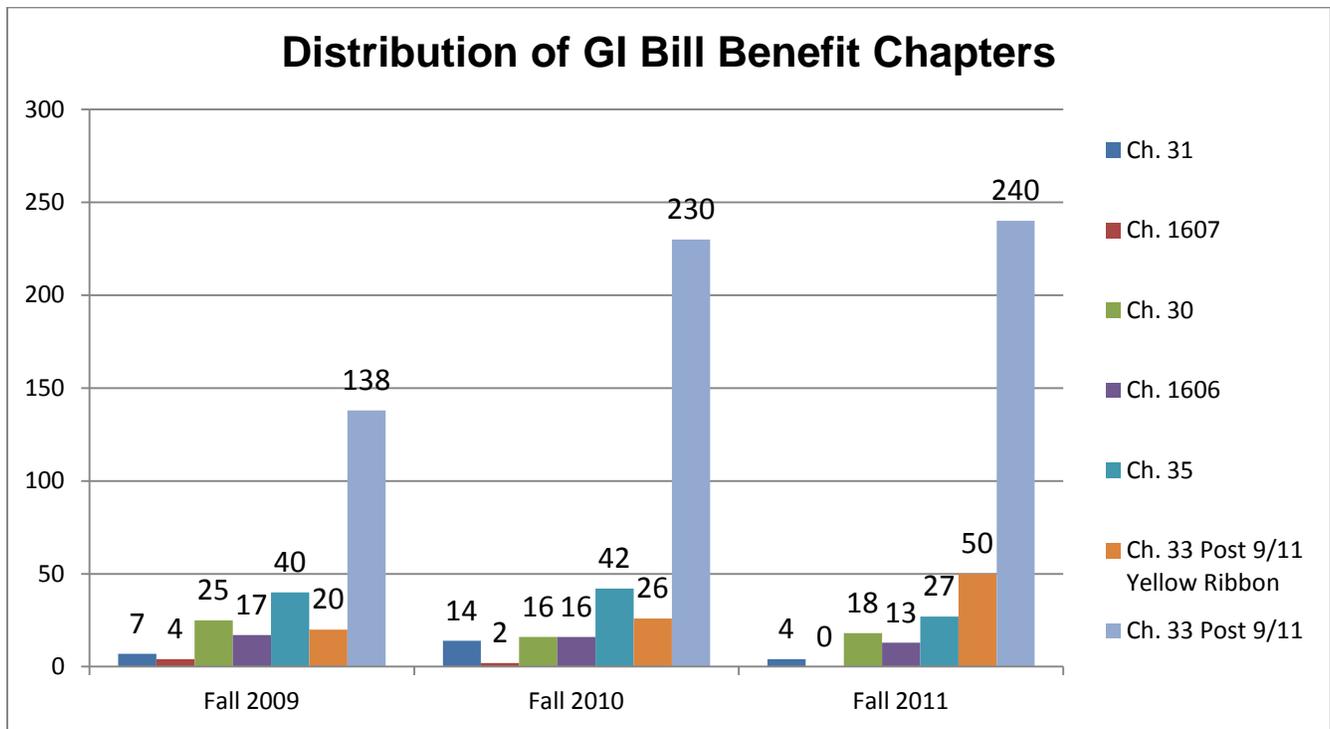


Graduate School Enrollment, Fall Term 2011 Main Campus



Veterans Education Benefits

Approximately 82% of all veterans attending the University of Pittsburgh use the Post 9/11 GI Bill (Chapter 33). Veterans are eligible for this benefit if they have served at least 90 days of active duty since September 11, 2001. The percentage of benefits received depends upon their time on active duty. Veterans who served at least 36 months of active duty will receive 36 months of the Post 9/11 GI Bill at the 100% level. Veterans who served less than 36 months may receive 36 months of the Post 9/11 GI Bill at the 40-90% level. The Post 9/11 GI Bill pays the student's tuition and fees directly to the University. In addition, the veteran receives a monthly housing allowance and a book stipend. Since 2009, the number of veterans using the Post GI Bill (Chapter 33) has grown by 84%.



Student Success Story

Peter Lahoda was born and raised in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He enlisted in the Army in 2005 as an Infantryman and began his first 15 month deployment to Iraq from 2006 to 2008. In 2008, after multiple combat post assignments, Pete returned to the Pittsburgh area and sought to use his Post 9/11 GI Bill benefits to complete his education. When Pete inquired about enrolling in the Swanson School of Engineering at the University, he learned about the work-study position in the Office of Veteran Services. Pete applied and was offered a position assisting other veterans who were applying for their education benefits. After being enrolled as a full time student for one year in the Swanson School of Engineering, Pete was mobilized for a second fifteen month deployment, and was able to withdraw expeditiously from his classes.

Returning to the University in the fall of 2010, Pete continued both his studies in Electrical Engineering and his work-study employment. Pete graduated in 2011 with a Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering and a certificate in Nuclear Engineering. By utilizing the career and military-to-civilian employment workshops offered through the Office of Veterans Services, Pete secured a position with PKMJ Technical Services. As a successful alumnus, Pete gives back to his alma mater and fellow veterans by conducting workshops through the Office of Veterans Services. Representing PKMJ, Pete teaches veterans valuable job-searching techniques, informs them about internship opportunities, and collects resumes for full time employment with PKMJ. As a direct result of these workshops, PKMJ hired Aaron Mroczkowski, another recent veteran student and graduate of Pitt.

Recommendations for Colleges and Universities

The Office of Veterans Services is committed to assisting veteran students as they transition from the military to the University. We are happy to advise other schools who are interested in establishing services for veteran students.

- Establish an Office of Veterans Services that employs and trains certifying officials to work specifically with the veteran population.
- Hire an outreach coordinator to conduct pre-admissions appointments and instruct veterans and dependents on how to apply to the University and use their GI Bill benefits.
- Provide academic support through workshops and career opportunities.
- Employ career counselors that can translate military experience to civilian terminology
- Provide disability and psychological counselors that recognize the signs and treat veterans with PTSD and traumatic brain injuries.
- Establish a veterans organization on campus.
- Offer university-wide faculty and staff sensitivity training.
- Set aside a space on campus for a veterans lounge.