



Analyzing How the Concept of *Nemo Resideo* in the Military Translates to Student Veteran Peer Support in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to examine how the ethos of *Nemo Resideo* or 'Leave No One Behind' in the military translates to student veterans' peer support experiences within higher education institutions. Interviews were conducted with 10 undergraduate student veterans. Student veterans strongly emphasized the transferability of *Nemo Resideo* from the military to higher education environments. The research findings provided insight into how the ethos is operationalized within the collegiate environment, including student veterans making learning and resolving problems a team sport, motivating and competing with each other, and fostering a sense of belonging among student veterans. The study also highlighted student veterans' recommendations for higher education institutions to strengthen *Nemo Resideo's* ethos within higher education environments, including veteran study groups and peer support, centralized veteran student services, and providing opportunities for continuous service.

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Student veterans have higher academic completion rates than other non-traditional-aged students, value post-secondary education, and are highly resilient and committed to their studies (Institute for Veterans and Military Families, 2019). Over 92% of veterans view higher education as central to their successful transition from military service (Buryk et al., 2015; Molina, 2015; Zoli et al., 2015). Student veterans report that peer support from other student veterans is instrumental in their success in higher education environments (Hornor & Brooks, 2023). Examining student veterans' peer support of one another and how the concept of *Nemo Resideo* or 'Leave No One Behind' translates from the military to higher education can provide valuable insights for enhancing the experiences of student veterans within higher education.

The concept of *Nemo Resideo* in the military emphasizes a commitment to ensuring the safety and well-being of military personnel, especially during combat operations or dangerous situations (Wong, 2005). It is a guiding principle, underscoring the importance of protecting and supporting every individual military service member, without regard to their rank or role, ensuring they are not abandoned or left behind during challenging circumstances. *Nemo Resideo* is grounded in the fundamental belief that every military member is valuable and plays a crucial role in the overall team mission. The concept is linked closely to the principles of teamwork, camaraderie, and mutual support within the military. It also emphasizes the responsibility of military personnel to look out for each other on and off the battlefield and ensure no one is left behind in any circumstance.

Nemo Resideo is a principle that started in elite military forces (Wong, 2005) and has trickled through to all military branches. The U.S. military has often included the ethos of *Nemo Resideo* in each branch's specific creed or ethos (Galdorisi, 2014). This principle led to the development of formal Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR) capabilities during World War II (Wong, 2005) and engrained into all service members during their respective boot camp or basic training. Bringing all our military personnel home and caring about their well-being serves a purpose for national security and troop morale. CSAR operations face regular budget cuts at the end of large U.S. military involvement. However, the duty and obligation to look out for and support one another remain a guiding principle for service members in combat and peacetime missions (Kreisher, 2009).

Military commanders often need to 'walk the line' of determining how many lives they are willing to risk rescuing one individual. Rescue operations from recent times show service members' commitment to rescuing their own from hostile situations, even if it places them in danger. Three examples include The Battle of Mogadishu, the rescue of Petty Officer Roberts, and the rescue of Private First Class

(PFC) Jessica Lynch. The Battle of Mogadishu in 1993 turned from a humanitarian mission to a rescue operation after two Blackhawk helicopters were shot down. Once everyone was withdrawn, 17 United States soldiers had died (South, 2018). In March 2002, Navy SEAL Petty Officer First Class Neil Roberts fell from the ramp of a Chinook helicopter and onto a mountain in Afghanistan. In an attempt to rescue him, six others were killed over 17 hours (The Battle of Takur Ghar, n.d.). Lastly, U.S. Special Forces rescued Jessica Lynch 9 days after being captured by Iraqi forces in March 2003 (Ihejirika, 2021). From a troop motivation standpoint, soldier morale is tied to the knowledge that there will be attempts to rescue or save them if they are captured or killed (Tilford, 1992, as cited in Wong, 2005). Loyalty within a unit comes with the obligation to protect and support each other, which is a necessity among those in the military. As Leonard Wong (2005, p.600) points out, the ethos "lets [soldiers] know that they are viewed as more than just a fighter but as an individual."

In military service, this concept manifests in many ways. In addition to combat and military operations, the concept also extends to daily support of the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of military personnel throughout their service. Furthermore, the concept of *Nemo Resideo* also recognizes the importance of post-service care for veterans, ensuring that they receive the support they need when transitioning from the military, including providing funding for post-secondary opportunities. The purpose of this study was to examine the nature of student peer support and how the concept of *Nemo Resideo* translates from the military to student veteran peer support in higher education environments. This research study aims to answer the following three overarching research questions: 1) How do student veterans describe the transferability of the military ethos of *Nemo Resideo* to higher education environments? 2) How is the ethos of *Nemo Resideo* operationalized within colleges and universities?, and 3) What do student veterans recommend to colleges and universities for strengthening the ethos of *Nemo Resideo* to enhance student veteran success? By investigating these questions, this research will contribute to the field of higher education, enrollment management, and student affairs by providing valuable insight regarding how student veterans' peer support of one another can be reinforced and strengthened by colleges and universities.

STUDENT VETERAN PEER MENTORING AND SUPPORT

A student veteran is someone in post-secondary education who has served on active duty, in the reserve or National Guard, or is retired from the military (Brown

& Gross, 2011). It is often believed that student veterans do not need additional support provided to traditional students, but this is not the case. The transition from service member to college student can force the student veteran to redefine their identity, shift the vocabulary they use, and adapt to a less structured setting from what they are used to (Camacho et al., 2021). Upon entering the military, service members often have someone serve in a mentor role to assist in their adjustment to military life. In most higher education settings, these mentors are not assigned, and if they want one, the responsibility to seek a mentor falls on each individual student veteran (Camacho et al., 2021).

STUDENT VETERAN CHALLENGES

Service members are engrained with following orders from their superiors since their entry into basic training or boot camp and live with a regimented daily life while serving (Zoli et al., 2015). The campus culture does not support the idea of having a mission or receiving orders; students must adapt to this shift. Student veterans are often the first in their family to attend college, older than those they are enrolled with, and may have additional responsibilities of supporting a family (Cole & Kim, 2013). They must navigate the process of utilizing benefits provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and manage disabilities, if any, that may impact their ability to study.

Student veterans may be more likely to experience mental health challenges due to their military service. Student veterans are seven times more likely to have attempted suicide than nonveteran students (Ulrich & Freer, 2020). The culture within the military encourages individuals to think of the team or mission first instead of the individual, which leads to service members believing that seeking help is a weakness (Ulrich & Freer, 2020). Peer mentoring on campus can often aid in managing and navigating these life transition challenges.

TRANSITIONING TO HIGHER EDUCATION ENVIRONMENTS

A national survey of student veterans revealed that 84% of those surveyed do not believe the public understands the problems they and their families encounter (Ulrich & Freer, 2020). Student veterans may face challenges with their identity, which was previously attached to a uniform they no longer wear every day, a regimented structure that is not found on a college campus, or the absence of

a community that once existed in their unit (Kirchner & Jane, 2015).

The transition to civilian life for a member of the armed forces can be challenging if not done correctly or is done without bringing an adjustment to their cultural aspect into the process (Minnis, 2020). Upon entry, the military strips civilians of their identity and trains them on strict discipline (Cooper et al., 2018). The transition from the military to civilian life has been called 'Reverse Culture Shock' (Bergman et al., 2014) because the civilian life they once lived was removed, and the identity as a service member became the normal. It is necessary to understand this transition to provide the needed support to veterans when transitioning from the military back to civilian life.

Minnis (2020) found in a study of transitioning veterans that Agency, Resilience, Socialization, Adaption, and Emotion Management were the five main constructs taking place among the participants. In Minnis' study, adaption relates to veteran releasing their military identity during their transition into civilian life, a step she says is necessary. Failure to go through this process may have a negative impact on their academic and civilian career success (Minnis, 2020). Participants in Minnis' study expressed interest in volunteering for a second deployment to a combat zone because they wanted to continue their service, they had a need to hold onto military culture, or they found civilian life too difficult to adapt to while holding onto their veteran identity. It is one of the most difficult phases, but leaving behind at least a portion of their military identity and culture is critical for veterans seeking a civilian career (Minnis, 2020). Colleges and universities can assist with the transition by identifying skills veterans can bring to the campus community and utilize those strengths. They can create and develop affinity groups within the organization to generate a sense of community and task them with opportunities to be challenged because they will not likely seek it out initially on their own (Davis & Minnis, 2016).

A study that documented this shift from the military to college used a framework that aligns with a rite of passage, specifically, a liminal state, "the ambiguous time of transition between the time when one severs a connection with a previous social status and the time when one reenters into a new social position" (Camacho et al., 2021, p. 4). In the case of student veterans, the liminal phase is the time between the student separating from the military and graduating from school with their degree. Student veterans must be supported during this time with top-down support from higher administration, dedicated space for them to feel a sense of connection with other veterans, and faculty education to build awareness of the challenges student veterans face (Camacho et al., 2021).

PEER MENTORING

In an environment of budget cutting, peer mentors can serve as a great resource for department staff to expand their engagement and outreach with students to serve as a supplementary resource (Purdy, 2013). From an impact and relationship standard, however, a peer mentoring program benefits both students in the relationship. Peer mentors note the benefits of serving in the role allows them to help or support another person and reapply concepts in their own lives (Colvin & Ashman, 2010). Mentees found the relationship helpful in adjusting to campus life, academics, managing financial aid, and residency (Colvin & Ashman, 2010).

Utilizing a peer mentor program for student veterans can provide peer-to-peer help in navigating VA benefits, transitioning from the military to a campus lifestyle, advocating for counseling sessions if needed, and directing the students to services offered by the campus that they may have received while in the service. The American Council on Education (2018) encourages campuses to develop veteran-specific spaces so that natural peer mentorship can develop. They found peer-to-peer mentoring is highly successful and can assist with academic preparation and tutoring. In a study of military veterans attaining a degree in Engineering, student veterans shared that they were embarrassed to ask for help because the safety of having the support structure that existed in the military was no longer present. Student veterans stated they felt comfortable reaching out to the veteran networks on campus because it resembles a 'family' type of structure (Camacho et al., 2021).

Student veterans face many challenges transitioning from the military to student life. They no longer have the structure or top-down mission-driven instructions they once had (Zoli et al., 2015). This process needs to be adapted to and causes frustration in student veterans. A mentor and support system are put in place immediately upon entry into the military to assist with the life transition. However, this is not a service immediately offered upon separation, and they may be uncomfortable reaching out and asking for help. Student veterans find a sense of community in other veterans, regardless of branch, and often seek them out on campus. They often do not feel understood by peers or their professors, which increases their struggle (Hornor & Brooks, 2023). Peer mentor programs have been found to be successful in other education programs, such as Medical School (Andre & Leykum, 2017), and implementing similar programs for student veterans may help with the challenges they face. A replication of having a peer mentor above the student veteran for help, guidance, and the transition can assist with frustrations that come from adaption and provide the support that is currently missing.

METHODOLOGY

Numerous research designs and methodologies have been employed to investigate student veterans' transition to higher education institutions. However, few research studies have focused on how *Nemo Resideo* in the military translates to student veterans' peer support experiences within colleges and universities. The complexity of transitioning from the military service to a student role within higher education necessitates a thoughtful creation of the research design (Leavy, 2017). The complexity of how *Nemo Resideo* translates from the military to higher education contexts also requires in-depth consideration in the research strategy. For these reasons, this study employs a basic qualitative research design, including qualitative structured interviews, to gain in-depth insight into student veterans' experiences. The research was approved by The Citadel's Institutional Review Board (IRB00007870).

All undergraduate student veterans enrolled in a master's granting comprehensive institution in the southeast United States were invited to share their perspectives in individual research interviews. Ten student veterans, 12% of the undergraduate student veterans enrolled within the institution, agreed to participate in the study. The research participants shared one critical characteristic that met the inclusion criteria for the research study_enrollment as an undergraduate student veteran at the time of the study. Percy et al. (2015) assert that even a small research sample may provide great insight and information on the research topic.

A basic qualitative design was utilized in this research study because the research questions focused on how *Nemo Resideo* translates from the military to higher education environments and the strategies student veterans recommend higher education institutions adopt to strengthen the *Nemo Resideo* concept. Leavy (2017) asserts that utilizing a basic qualitative research strategy with structured interviews is particularly powerful in gaining broader perspectives and a more comprehensive understanding of the research topic. This research strategy enabled individual student veterans' rich personal reflections on their own experiences to be compared with other participants in the study (Creswell, 2018; Leavy, 2017; Strauss & Corbin, 2015).

The interviews utilized six structured questions that aligned with one of the study's three overarching research questions and utilized an open-ended question structure to encourage research participants to elaborate on their perceptions of how *Nemo Resideo* translates to the higher education environment and strategies colleges and universities can utilize to strengthen this concept within the campus learning environment. The interview questions focused on three areas, including how *Nemo Resideo*

translates from the military to the higher education environment, how veterans support other veterans, and the recommendations student veterans have for how higher education institutions can help foster *Nemo Resideo* within higher education environments. By purposefully constructing the interview questions to be open-ended, informed by research literature, and aligned with one of the study's overarching research questions, the researchers ensured the interview questions were relevant and appropriate (Strauss & Corbin, 2015). Each interview was recorded and transcribed to increase data trustworthiness (Creswell, 2018). The research interviews were conducted utilizing video conferencing software spanning three weeks.

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

For this study, the researcher recruited 10 undergraduate student veterans enrolled within a master's comprehensive granting institution in the southeastern U.S. Each of the study participants recently transitioned from active-duty military service before enrolling in the institution. The participants were diverse in years of military service, branches of military service, gender, age, and day or evening program participation, increasing the likelihood of the representativeness of the sample. Interview participant pseudonyms and demographics are provided in Table 1. Pseudonyms are used throughout the article for the research participants (see Table 1).

DATA ANALYSIS

Creswell (2018) states, "The process of data analysis involves making sense out of text and image data. It involves preparing the data for analysis, conducting different analyses, moving deeper and deeper into understanding the data, representing the data, and making an interpretation of the larger meaning of the

data" (p. 183). Following the conclusion of the first research interview, the researchers utilized a thematic, constant-comparison analysis (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Using a thematic analytic strategy, the researchers engaged in multiple stages of coding, clustering, and classifying words to ensure saturation was reached and to gain insight into developing themes, categories, and patterns in how *Nemo Resideo* translates from the military to peer support in the higher education environment (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researchers frequently revisited the participants' interview data utilizing a constant comparison analysis technique. This inductive analysis led to three themes emerging from the data that answered the study's overarching research questions and provided insight into the student veteran experiences. While the thematic analysis was a critically important component, the analysis of published research literature was also a key component of the analytic process. The previous research literature on *Nemo Resideo* and the experiences of student veterans supporting one another within higher education was instrumental in assessing the data collected in this study and evaluating the research findings. Research literature assisted in better understanding emerging themes, categories, and patterns in the study's findings and helped contextualize the results.

RESULTS

Student veterans participating in this study were asked a variety of questions that directly aligned with the study's three overarching questions: 1) How do student veterans describe the transferability of the military ethos of *Nemo Resideo* to higher education environments? 2) How is the ethos of *Nemo Resideo* operationalized within colleges and universities?, and 3) What do student veterans recommend

PARTICIPANTS (n = 10)	MILITARY SERVICE	GENDER	AGE	PROGRAM DELIVERY
1. Becky	Navy Veteran	Female	40	Evening Program
2. Chad	Army Veteran	Male	32	Day Program
3. David	Navy Veteran	Male	30	Day Program
4. Michael	Air Force Veteran	Male	28	Evening Program
5. Nate	Marine Corps Veteran	Male	37	Evening Program
6. Peter	Air Force Veteran	Male	30	Day Program
7. Paul	Marine Corps Veteran	Male	24	Day Program
8. Scott	Marine Corps Veteran	Male	34	Evening Program
9. Wendy	Navy Veteran	Female	33	Day Program
10. William	Marine Corps Veteran	Male	54	Day Program

Table 1 Interview Participant Demographic Characteristics.

to colleges and universities for strengthening the ethos of *Nemo Resideo* to enhance student veteran success? The following sections present the findings associated with the ethos of *Nemo Resideo*, how the ethos is operationalized within higher education, and strategies that higher education institutions can employ to enhance student veteran success.

ETHOS OF *NEMO RESIDEO* OR LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

While all study participants were readily able to share a time when they experienced the ethos of *Nemo Resideo* during military service as well as in the higher education environment, recollection of an example when they felt this ethos within their higher education institution was more challenging and required greater reflective time. When asked to reflect on how the ethos of *Nemo Resideo* translates to the higher education environment, all the study participants shared examples associated with veterans supporting other veterans. Chad, a 32-year-old Army veteran, shared:

I think when people think about leave no man behind, they think of like someone running and gunning and not leaving them to die or something, but I mean, it can be used in anything, like making sure that new veteran students know how things work. If someone's struggling in class and you're doing better, offering to help them in any way, if they need it. Someone just moved here, they need housing, offering your place, stuff like that. So, I think it can translate into higher education pretty well.

Similarly, Peter, a 30-year-old Air Force veteran attending college classes during the day, asserted:

I felt like the support from other veterans, depending on the personality, was pretty top-notch. It goes back to that no one left behind ethos, right? We all rely on each other. And I tried my best, I tried so hard to help as many people as I could, that I knew were having issues with certain things, whether it be parking passes, whether it be family issues, whether it be personal issues. It does not matter. I try my best. I help people try and study, write papers, everything I could do to help them make it through their college career within my time of being there. But I think veterans students rely on other veterans students more than they realize, just simply being around each other and having that camaraderie and having that morale and having that social interaction with other veterans of that

like-mindedness and togetherness. And I think they really rely on that without even thinking about it.

Likewise, Nate, a Marine Corps veteran in his late thirties, commented:

I have some fellow classmates who a lot of them are veterans. We seem to have, I guess, formed a little group that we help each other out. We try to communicate and try to befriend the other students, but we experience a bond that you don't get with people who haven't had similar experiences.

Several study participants also described professor support as a key component in their description of the ethos of *Nemo Resideo*. For example, Becky, a 40-year-old Navy veteran attending evening college courses, shared:

I know most veterans always encourage and try to keep people moving and motivated. But as far as leaving no one behind ... I guess I could say that in my program specifically, the instructors offer themselves even on off times, so everybody can excel and move on in the program and give them the best experience that they can have. They offer their time not to move people through, but to give them all the help they can to get them through.

Similarly, Michael, a 28-year-old Air Force veteran, asserted:

I think that all of my professors that I've experienced so far, they want everyone to succeed. They don't want anyone to leave their room confused or having questions. I think that plays a large role in leaving no one behind. The professors truly do want all the students to succeed no matter what.

While all study participants agreed that the ethos of *Nemo Resideo* translates to higher education environments, many student veterans also shared veteran peer support was only part of the equation. Study participants emphasized the importance of personal accountability in being willing to ask for help and to utilize support resources. This is exemplified by David, a 30-year-old Navy veteran, who stated:

I feel like it's better to accurately prepare people for the workforce and for real life than to just push them through. In a sense I feel that it kind of undervalues the degree. If I was in a hiring situation, it's like you finished this program, but were you carried or were you one of the ones that charged through?

And that's not something I can tell from a resume because everybody's going to have the same thing at the end of the day. I get not giving up on people, but there's a point that they have to do something for themselves. Like you got to let people stand on their own.

Nate, a 37-year-old Marine Corps veteran, shared a similar sentiment:

Although we function as a group, higher education is intended to be a demonstration of individual capacity and effort. But things like veteran study groups are certainly things that are set up in those higher education systems to assist people to help work through their weak points and try to continue to succeed.

For example, Scott, a 34-year-old Marine Corps veteran, shared:

If someone's failing, then we're going to give you that help. But then it's more of the student's responsibility as far as education goes. If I'm failing a class, the teacher shouldn't be the one to reach out to me and say, 'Hey, do you need help?' It should be me going to my professor saying, 'Hey, I don't understand this.'"

Paul, a 24-year-old Marine Corps veteran, shared:

I've seen this not only in veterans who come and show up and they're trying to do well in the course and they're falling behind because they don't understand, they didn't take algebra calculus last semester from high school, they're coming out 4 years after having an education like that. So, there's a lot of catch-up to be had and it's just review. I would definitely say the school can only offer the resources. It's up to each individual to be the one to actually apply the things that they've learned or to ask for help if necessary.

OPERATIONALIZATION OF THE ETHOS OF *NEMO RESIDEO* IN HIGHER EDUCATION

An analysis of the data generated in the individual interviews highlights that student veterans described three prominent ways in which student veterans operationalize the ethos of *Nemo Resideo* in higher education. Participants also shared that ethos is operationalized through student veterans making learning a team sport and working together to resolve problems, veterans motivating and competing with one another, and fostering a sense of

belonging through peer support. The following sections elaborate on the data gained relating to each of the aforementioned factors to provide insight into how *Nemo Resideo* is operationalized in higher education.

MAKING LEARNING A TEAM SPORT & WORKING TOGETHER TO RESOLVE PROBLEMS

All of the study participants described *Nemo Resideo* in terms of making learning a team sport and working with other student veterans to resolve problems. Descriptions of student veterans operationalizing *Nemo Resideo* are provided in the following excerpts. Nate, a 37-year-old Marine Corps veteran, shared this sentiment:

Myself and a few of the other veterans that I'm in class with try to help each other out. If any of us has any insight, if someone's stuck on a problem or something, we all have each other's numbers, we can call each other to ask for assistance. We do try to turn the individual effort into a team sport, if you will.

Similarly, Michael, a 28-year-old Air Force veteran attending classes in the evening, asserted:

I'm actually an introvert by nature, but I've enjoyed connecting with other veterans, even active-duty members, and working together to solve a problem or have a better understanding of a concept. It's truly been nice to have that relationship that we have that common bond still.

Likewise, Paul, a 24-year-old Marine Corps veteran, shared:

I think working with other vets enhanced my experience, especially in learning difficult topics. Things that are completely new, that's not a math or English topic, like a computer science topic that's very particular in its own thing. So, having someone to go off of and provide some analogies or provide some examples and learn from each other on, 'What is going on? What is this new information that we have nothing really to go off of other than our personal experiences with it.' And so, it's really good to have people who are learning the same things that you are. I think it really helps them to study and understand each other.

VETERANS MOTIVATING AND COMPETING WITH ONE ANOTHER

Student veterans motivating each other and engaging in friendly academic competition with each other also emerged as a major way in which the ethos of *Nemo Resideo* is operationalized in higher education contexts. For

example, Paul, a 24-year-old Marine Corps veteran, stated, “I know most veterans always encourage and try to keep people moving and motivated.” Similarly, Becky, a 40-year-old Navy veteran attending evening college courses, stated, “We definitely support each other, and we tell sea stories to one another. We had a couple of instructors that were prior Navy, so it’s always good to reflect back and go on that, to motivate each other through.” David, a 30-year-old Navy veteran, shared being motivated through competing with other veteran students in the following response:

If I was the only veteran day student that I ever interacted with, I don’t know if I would be at this point. I have a 4.0 all through school and I 100% contribute that to the healthy competition with the other vets to try and do better than they are. And it’s because it’s just like, oh, you got 94, I got a 95. It’s just that kind of thing where it is a healthy competition, but it strives you to do better. And I 100% don’t think that I would have the GPA that I have now if I was only with regular students just because it wouldn’t have been the same. You’ve got to have that example of what to beat, like to be better than. So, it would have been very difficult without other veteran students around.

FOSTERING A SENSE OF BELONGING

Student veterans fostering a sense of belonging for other student veterans also emerged as a major way in which the ethos of *Nemo Resideo* is operationalized in the higher education environment. David, a 30-year-old Navy veteran, stated:

We’re here for an education. We’re here to get through this. We’re not trying to just bust out some mediocre product so that we can just go have fun. We’re trying to do this for the best to better ourselves. So, I think with the vet students, it’s been very supportive, and we help each other out all the time.

Becky, a 40-year-old Navy veteran attending evening college courses, shared, “It gives you the sense of home. Just having a belonging and a kinship. You gravitate to those in your class that have the same similarity.” Chad, a 32-year-old Army veteran, shared:

Other veterans have been a significant help to it because especially with the life that I’m living right now, if you will, if I didn’t have that support, if I didn’t have those people that I could go to when I ran into issues or that I could go to just to socialize and feel that sense of comradery, it would be a pretty lonely place.

STUDENT VETERAN RECOMMENDATIONS

When asked how their school could use the ethos of *Nemo Resideo* to enhance student veteran success, the participants shared a myriad of helpful recommendations. The recommendations centered on expanding veteran study groups, centralizing student veteran support services, and providing opportunities for veterans to continue to serve others.

STUDENT VETERAN STUDY GROUPS

Veterans participating in this study emphasized the far-reaching influence of veteran study groups, as illustrated by Nate, a 37-year-old Marine Corps veteran, sentiment:

Having veteran study groups and peer support programs, it doesn’t even necessarily have to be a structured meeting thing. It could just be something as simple as having people exchange contact information. People that are in class together, or people who have either going through the same program or have gone through the same program. Or try doing peer mentoring by having high-performing upperclassmen, being able to be matched up with new veterans, being able to offer advice and tips to try to help start that transition off to a good start.

Similarly, Chad, a 32-year-old Army veteran, shared:

Maybe if they did a day or something where people maybe went over study tips or how to take classes, I guess just getting more familiar with college again, because veteran students, some, maybe haven’t been to college, some haven’t been in years. So maybe just going over different study techniques, different resources you have, because I know, even though I went to college 10 years ago, stuff has changed a lot.

CENTRALIZED STUDENT VETERAN SUPPORT SERVICES

All of the participants for this study expressed the presence of veteran peer support and an established Veterans’ Program played a major role in their sense of belonging within their higher education institution. The existence of a student veterans’ center on campus resonated with student veterans, extending beyond the perception of the center as a helpful campus resource to instead representing a validation of student veterans’ service and recognition as a member of the campus community. Michael, a 28-year-old Air Force veteran attending classes in the evening, asserted:

Veteran student success center, when I have had questions, I know exactly where to come, and you know who to go to. I think the coaching is already pre-established and I feel as if I got into the swing of things quite quickly.

Scott, a Marine Corps veteran, shared:

I think that just having a resource like the Veterans Resource Center...being in the military, every time we go somewhere new, we have a check-in process that allows all the places that you need to go know that you're there. And it also familiarizes you with where the location of everything is.

William, a Marine Corps veteran in his 50s, expressed that, "Maybe some of these outreach programs should be mandatory. Like meeting with the Veteran Student Career Center. Yeah. Maybe that should be mandatory. Maybe that should be in a group setting."

OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONTINUED SERVICE

It is also noteworthy that several veterans in this study made connections between their sense of belonging and their enrollment in higher education as a pathway for their own continued service. For example, Paul, a 24-year-old Marine Corps veteran, shared:

For veteran retention. I'd say that making veterans feel like they're utilized here. I have heard it thrown around, but mentoring, using the veterans in the same way that you use tutors, where you have veterans that could be contacted by the students who want to know more about the military or what you're pursuing a goal in that and you're pursuing experience in that. So, veterans have their own experience and knowledge that they can share too that the students would really benefit from.

Likewise, Chad, a 32-year-old Army veteran attending day classes, expressed:

I think as a veteran student...I think you have a lot to offer to people. I know before I joined the military, I would like to have talked to maybe someone who has been there, done that. I guess using veteran students more. Cause I feel sometimes I'm just a student. I have a good relationship with my teachers, I don't know if maybe there could be something where if you were in the army or something you could go and I mean, talking to a ROTC class or something, maybe if they had one once a semester or something where they had a day

or something where Army veterans, you can come in and say like, Hey, my name is...and you know, I did this, do you have any questions?

Similarly, Scott, a 34-year-old Marine Corps veteran attending classes during the day, shared:

Having veteran get-togethers, we all share very similar experiences. It doesn't have to be limited to just veterans, you can invite [other students] because that's another way to involve them and have them pick our brains and learn from our experiences.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study suggest that *Nemo Resideo* from the military strongly translates to student veterans helping other student veterans by providing peer support, mentorship, advocacy, resource referral, and creating support networks. Through their firsthand experience and understanding, student veterans can significantly impact the lives of their fellow student veterans. Student veterans peer counseling other student veterans in higher education can have a significant positive impact on student success by providing unique support tailored to the specific needs and experiences of student veterans. Specifically, student veterans often support other veterans through leveraging shared experiences. Student veterans who have successfully navigated the transition from military service to higher education can provide valuable insights and understanding to their fellow veteran students. They can share their own experiences, challenges, and strategies for success, creating a sense of connection and relatability. This shared experience fosters trust and rapport, making it easier for student veterans to seek guidance and support from their peers. Student veteran peer counselors possess a deep understanding of the unique challenges faced by other student veterans, including adjusting to civilian life, managing academic workloads, and balancing civilian obligations or responsibilities. They can empathize with the specific stressors and provide a safe and supportive space for student veterans to express their concerns, frustrations, and anxieties. This understanding helps to create a supportive environment that enhances student well-being and success.

Student veterans can also provide valuable peer advising and guidance. Peer counselors can offer advising guidance to student veterans, helping them navigate the higher education system, understand their educational benefits, and develop effective study strategies. They can share information on resources, such as tutoring services, study groups, and academic support centers, which can contribute

to academic success. Peer counselors can also assist in time management, organization, and goal setting, which are critical skills for student achievement. Peer counseling among student veterans in higher education helps foster a sense of community and belonging. Student veterans often find solace in connecting with others who have had similar experiences. Peer counselors can organize social events, support groups, or mentorship programs that encourage veteran students to form meaningful connections and support networks. Peer counselors who have successfully navigated the challenges of higher education after military service offer unique insights and support, contributing to the overall well-being and achievement of their fellow veteran students.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS

While this study found strong consistency in how student veterans employ the concept of *Nemo Resideo* to support other student veterans, an analysis of the study's methodology indicates several potential limitations and recommendations for future research. The study was conducted at one higher education institution using a basic qualitative approach, which may limit the extent to which the results can be generalized to other institutions and student veterans. For example, the participants were enrolled in a Carnegie master's comprehensive higher education institution. Therefore, the results may not be generalizable to other types of higher education institutions. Future research studies incorporating multiple institutions, a more diverse sample of student veterans, and other methodological techniques may improve the generalizability of the findings.

IMPLICATIONS FOR STUDENT AFFAIRS PRACTICE

The findings from this study and recommendations from student veterans provide a rich opportunity for strengthening student affairs and academic affairs collaborations as well as fertile ground for innovative practices in student affairs. The findings suggest several key implications for student affairs practice, including the importance of effectively identifying members of the student veteran population, developing formal student veteran peer mentoring programs, and creating infrastructure that fosters informal student veteran peer mentoring and engagement.

Effectively identifying student veterans is essential in providing outreach and student services and assessing their educational outcomes. During the admission or acceptance process, ask students, "Have you ever served in the United States Armed Forces?". Some students do not label themselves as veterans, such as those who have not

deployed or have served in the reserves or National Guard (American Council on Education, 2018). Asking if they served in the Armed Forces is more likely to capture this population of students. Also, 72% of schools that hope to retain active duty and student veterans do not track their success from the time of admission to graduation (The NASPA Research and Policy Institute, 2013). Identifying trends for student veterans can provide information to the institute to identify what services are helpful and which are not being adequately utilized. Higher education institutions should review student veterans' sense of belonging on campus with their peers, ensure they have access to VA assistance programs and are able to balance their education and home or work life; these are the most common barriers to continuing education reported by veterans (Zoli et al., 2015).

Findings from this study about the importance of student veteran peer mentoring provide a robust opportunity for institutions to create a more inclusive environment for student veterans by building upon the naturally occurring concept of *Nemo Resideo*. For example, by investing in formal student veteran peer mentoring programs, higher education institutions can help expand and reinforce student veterans' ability to help other student veterans. Key considerations for establishing these formal peer mentoring programs should include not only identifying student veteran peer mentors but also establishing expectations and roles for peer mentors. The intention of mentors is to work with incoming student veterans to transition to college life. This includes, but is not limited to, balancing family life with academics, utilizing campus resources, introducing them to other veteran students, tutoring, and navigating the culture change of a higher education campus. Setting an expectation of the minimum number of times the mentor and mentee should meet will allow for a benchmark during the assessment of the program. An example could be to meet at least once a month during the academic year. Upon entry to their unit, servicemembers are often assigned a mentor immediately to help with the transition to military life (Ulrich & Freer, 2020). This can be replicated in higher education by automatically assigning a mentor and introducing them at their orientation program. The mentee and mentor relationship should be discussed, and students should be coached on best practices to get the most out of the relationship. These programs institutionalize support for student veterans helping other student veterans and increasing their sense of belonging on college campuses.

The study's findings on the influence of veteran peer support and the view of higher education as a pathway for continued service as major drivers of feelings of belonging also offer valuable implications for practice. Helping student

veterans identify ways in which they can continue to serve benefits both the individual student through involvement and engagement with the campus community. Moreover, it can also benefit other students through the expansion of peer support. For example, institutions might organize veteran peer groups to help student veterans engage with one another and create a stronger sense of community. Establishing a specialized student veteran orientation can be a powerful mechanism to engage veterans with each other and to have them lead one another to resources and pathways for continued service. Common first-year problems such as getting along with roommates and setting boundaries with parents are not likely necessary for student veterans. Instead, an orientation program focused on developing community, campus resources, managing education and school or family will be more relevant and needed (Zoli et al., 2015). The provision of a student veteran lounge or resource center is also a powerful way to reinforce and foster the ethos of *Nemo Resideo*. Providing a central location for student veterans to make their own on campus can provide an opportunity to host services such as a VA Representative, faculty office hours, or veteran-specific assistance. Student veterans can utilize the space to study and interact with peers, and natural peer mentorship may develop as an additional benefit (American Council on Education, 2018).

CONCLUSION

Student veterans strongly emphasized the transferability of *Nemo Resideo* from the military to peer support in higher education environments in this study. Findings from the research provided insight into how the ethos is operationalized within the college environment, including student veterans making learning and resolving problems a team sport, motivating and competing with each other, and fostering a sense of belonging among student veterans. Reflecting on both the challenges and successes student veterans experience in the transition to college, higher education institutions can foster student veteran peer support by taking several critical action steps:

1. Creating institutional mechanisms to identify students with military experience by fostering collaboration between offices of institutional research, admissions, financial aid, and veteran benefits certifying officials.
2. Conducting campus student veteran focus groups and meaningfully engaging veterans in conversations about their feelings of belonging on campus and opportunities for continued service.

3. Emphasizing the importance of collaboration with faculty and student affairs professionals to enhance student veteran success. Providing time and reflection opportunities for these collaborative experiences will reinforce their importance.
4. Investing in a specialized student veteran orientation, creating a veteran gathering place on campus, and developing formal and informal peer support programs will help create an infrastructure that fosters student engagement.

Identifying the number of student veterans served by the institution and gaining feedback about their experiences and sense of belonging will yield important data and insights for college leaders to better advocate for resources to meet the needs of veteran students. Colleges and universities can utilize these insights to strengthen and expand the ethos of *Nemo Resideo* within higher education environments through the implementation of veteran study groups and peer support programs, the provision of centralized veteran student services, and fostering opportunities for continued service.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

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