

Fall 2014

## Use of Strategic Intentionality in Becoming Military Friendly

Allison V. Gorman

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/etd>



Part of the [Higher Education Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Gorman, Allison V., "Use of Strategic Intentionality in Becoming Military Friendly" (2014).  
*Electronic Theses and Dissertations*. 1174.

<https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/etd/1174>

This dissertation (open access) is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate Studies, Jack N. Averitt College of at Digital Commons@Georgia Southern. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons@Georgia Southern. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@georgiasouthern.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@georgiasouthern.edu).

# USE OF STRATEGIC INTENTIONALITY IN BECOMING MILITARY FRIENDLY

by

ALLISON V. GORMAN

(Under the Direction of Teri Denlea Melton)

## ABSTRACT

As institutions begin to implement and promote military friendly initiatives in response to the introduction of the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill, it becomes highly important that there is a congruence between what institutions say they are doing and what they actually do for student veterans. The literature investigation suggested that strategic intentionality may serve as an important framework for evaluating the implementation of military friendly initiatives.

The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore the role that strategic intentionality plays in the successful implementation of military friendly initiatives at three four-year, public post-secondary institutions in the State of Georgia. This study used the three stages of theory of strategic intent, vision, commitment, and practice, as a framework for exploring the role of intentionality.

Data collected from interviews, content analysis, field observations, and a descriptive survey identified having a military friendly culture as the strongest indicator of intentional military friendliness. Nine best practices were identified and included: effective human resources practices; gaining organizational commitment; developing a military friendly culture; supportive leadership and administration; conducting outreach; focusing on continuity; integrating services; establishing a military resource center; and

promoting military friendliness through public relations and marketing. Overall, strategic intentionality was shown to be an important framework for evaluating the implementation of military friendly initiatives. The systematic integration of strategic intentionality and the implementation of military friendly initiatives allow institutions to more effectively achieve military friendliness by institutionalizing military friendliness into the organizational culture, creating a commitment from leadership to allocate resources and establish administrative structures, and providing a mechanism for assessment and evaluation.

**INDEX WORDS:** Military Friendliness in Higher Education, Strategic Intentionality, Institutional Culture, Institutional Strategy, Veterans' educational benefits

USE OF STRATEGIC INTENTIONALITY IN BECOMING MILITARY FRIENDLY

by

ALLISON V. GORMAN

B.S., University of Georgia, 2006

M.Ed., Georgia Southern University, 2008

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of Georgia Southern University in

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

STATESBORO, GEORGIA

2014

© 2014

ALLISON V. GORMAN

All Rights Reserved

USE OF STRATEGIC INTENTIONALITY IN BECOMING MILITARY FRIENDLY

by

ALLISON V. GORMAN

Major Professor: Teri Denlea Melton  
Committee: Patricia Humphrey  
Amy Ballagh

Electronic Version Approved:  
December 2014

## DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my husband, Matthew, and my sons, Wyatt and Wesley. To my husband, your unwavering love and support has motivated me from the very beginning. To my sons, you may be too young to read, but you spent many hours in my lap as I typed this dissertation. Thank you for inspiring me to see this to completion.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

During my studies, I have been fortunate to receive support and encouragement from many different individuals. I am thankful for each person who motivated me, listened to me when things didn't go as planned, and guided me with their scholarly wisdom. I want to acknowledge the following people for the important role they have played in this journey:

*My Husband.* Thank you for your "boys night" Tuesdays and unconditional love and support. I couldn't have done this without you.

*My parents.* Thank you for babysitting my boys when I had to finish papers, for letting me borrow your dining room table to work, and more than anything for instilling a love of learning in me at such a young age.

*Dr. Melton.* Your commitment to my success has been invaluable and I will be forever grateful. I could not have asked for a better mentor and role model.

*Dr. Mallory.* Your guidance and encouragement has made a lasting impact in my life. Thank you for believing in me.

*My Dissertation Committee.* Thank you, Dr. Melton, Dr. Humphrey, and Dr. Ballagh, for your support in helping me achieve this degree.

*My Cohort Members.* Thank you for being the brilliant, kind, and supportive accountability partners you have been. Special thanks to Kerry Greenstein for keeping me on track since our very first class and to Laurie Mascolo for locking yourself in the library with me and telling me "it's all going to be okay"!



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
A. Background.....	3
1. Defining Military Friendliness.....	4
2. Institutional Culture .....	7
3. Intentional Strategy .....	8
B. Statement of the Problem.....	12
C. Research Questions .....	13
D. Significance of the Study.....	13
E. Procedures.....	14
F. Limitations, Delimitations, and Assumptions .....	15
G. Key Definitions.....	16
H. Chapter Summary .....	18
CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	20
A. Focus on Intentionality.....	21
B. Military Friendliness .....	22
1. Implications of Military Friendliness.....	23
2. History of Military Friendliness.....	24
3. Role of External Associations.....	27
4. Key Components of Military Friendliness .....	30
a. Financial Aid .....	30
b. Student Affairs.....	31
c. Academic Affairs .....	34
d. Integrated Services.....	36
C. Institutional Culture.....	37

1. Collectivism vs. Individualism .....	37
2. The Culture of the Military .....	38
3. The Culture of Post-Secondary Education .....	40
4. Misalignment of Cultures .....	41
D. High Stakes of Becoming Military Friendly .....	43
E. Strategic Intentionality.....	45
1. Defining Strategic Intent .....	45
2. Strategic Intent vs. Strategic Planning .....	46
3. History of Strategic Intent .....	47
4. Strategic Intent in Higher Education.....	49
5. Role of Leadership in Strategic Intent.....	50
a. Co-invention .....	51
b. Engagement .....	52
c. Practice .....	54
6. Indicators of Military Friendliness.....	55
a. Setting up the Design .....	56
b. Activating the Design .....	57
c. Evaluating the Process .....	58
D. Chapter Summary .....	59
CHAPTER 3. METHODS .....	61
A. Research Questions .....	61
B. Researcher's Roles and Philosophical Stances .....	62
C. Research Design.....	63
1. Selection of Sites.....	66
2. Sample and Sampling.....	68

3. Instrumentation .....	68
C. Data Collection .....	71
D. Data Analysis .....	72
E. Presentation of Findings .....	75
F. Standards of Quality and Verification .....	76
G. Ethical Considerations.....	78
H. Limitations, Delimitations, and Assumptions .....	79
I. Chapter Summary .....	80
CHAPTER 4. REPORT OF DATA AND DATA ANALYSIS .....	82
A. Research Questions .....	83
B. Research Design.....	83
C. Description of Sample and Participants .....	87
1. Description of the Cases .....	89
a. Military Friendly Institution 1 .....	89
b. Military Friendly Institution 2 .....	91
c. Military Friendly Institution 3 .....	94
D. Findings .....	96
1. Degree of Contribution of Intentionality .....	96
2. Indicators of Intentional Military Friendliness .....	98
3. Best Practices for Intentional Military Friendliness.....	105
4. The Role of Intentionality.....	112
E. Response to the Research Questions .....	120
1. Indicators of Intentional Military Friendliness .....	120
2. Best Practices for Intentional Military Friendliness.....	124
3. The Role of Intentionality.....	127

F. Chapter Summary .....	137
CHAPTER 5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS.....	139
A. Summary.....	139
B. Analysis of the Research Findings .....	140
C. Discussion of the Research Findings.....	148
1. Best Practices and Indicators of Intentional Military Friendliness .....	148
2. The Role of Intentionality.....	152
D. Conclusions .....	162
E. Recommendations .....	164
F. Dissemination.....	167
References.....	169
Appendixes	
A. Survey Instrument.....	174
B. Interview Questionnaire .....	183
C. Informed Consent.....	188
D. Document and Audio-Visual Form.....	191
E. Observation Form.....	193
F. Most Common Themes from Findings.....	195

## LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

FIGURE 3.1: Model of Data Collection and Analysis .....	64
TABLE 4.1: Survey Results for All Cases.....	97
FIGURE 4.1: Indicators of Intentionality from Participant Interviews .....	100
FIGURE 4.2: Indicators of Intentionality from Content Analysis .....	101
FIGURE 4.3: Indicators of Intentional Military Friendliness for MF1 .....	102
FIGURE 4.4: Indicators of Intentional Military Friendliness for MF2 .....	103
FIGURE 4.5: Indicators of Intentional Military Friendliness for MF3 .....	104
FIGURE 4.6: Best Practices for Intentionality from Participant Interviews .....	107
FIGURE 4.7: Best Practices for Intentionality from Content Analysis.....	108
FIGURE 4.8: Best Practices for Intentionality for MF1 .....	109
FIGURE 4.9: Best Practices for Intentionality for MF2.....	110
FIGURE 4.10: Best Practices for Intentionality for MF3.....	111

## ABSTRACT

Allison V. Gorman, Ed.D., College of Education, Georgia Southern University, 2014

### Use of Strategic Intentionality in Becoming Military Friendly

Dissertation directed by Dr. Teri Denlea Melton

As institutions begin to implement and promote military friendly initiatives in response to the introduction of the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill, it becomes highly important that there is a congruence between what institutions say they are doing and what they actually do for student veterans. The literature investigation suggested that strategic intentionality may serve as important framework for evaluating the implementation of military friendly initiatives.

The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore the role that strategic intentionality plays in the successful implementation of military friendly initiatives at three, four-year, public post-secondary institutions in the State of Georgia. This study used the three stages of theory of strategic intent, vision, commitment, and practice, as a framework for exploring the role of intentionality.

Data collected from interviews, content analysis, field observations, and a descriptive survey identified having a military friendly culture as the strongest indicator of intentional military friendliness. Nine best practices were identified and included: effective human resources practices; gaining organizational commitment; developing a military friendly culture; supportive leadership and administration; conducting outreach; focusing on continuity; integrating services; establishing a military resource center; and promoting military friendliness through public relations and marketing. Overall, strategic intentionality was shown to be an important framework for evaluating the

implementation of military friendly initiatives. The systematic integration of strategic intentionality and the implementation of military friendly initiatives allow institutions to more effectively achieve military friendliness by institutionalizing military friendliness into the organizational culture, creating a commitment from leadership to allocate resources and establish administrative structures, and providing a mechanism for assessment and evaluation.

This abstract of approximately 300 words is approved as to form and content. I recommend its publication.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Professor in Charge

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

In post-secondary education, there has been long history of institutions seeking to attract and retain student veterans. The implementation of the Post-9/11 G. I. Bill in August of 2009 motivated post-secondary institutions to once again evaluate the unique needs of student veterans (Shankar, 2009). Historically, the introduction of any new legislation for veterans' educational benefits has stimulated the creation of new programs and policies on campus to increase the appeal of the institution to student veterans (Thelin, 2004). Armed with guaranteed tuition money, student veterans not only provide a financial resource for institutions, but also provide an opportunity for institutions to satisfy their altruistic needs. Institutions have the opportunity to “serve those who have served” and help ease the transition from military to civilian life for student veterans. Currently, the introduction of the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill has created an impetus for post-secondary institutions to market themselves as *military friendly*.

Although there are many institutions marketing themselves as military friendly, there is no central organization formally charged with giving this designation. The choice of pursuing a military friendly designation is up to the individual institution and is not mandated by accrediting bodies in post-secondary education. Brown and Gross (2011) defined military friendliness as a designation given by external associations to institutions that meet the needs of student veterans through targeted services, programs, and initiatives. In their *2013 Guide to Military-Friendly Colleges and Universities*, Military Advanced Education has denoted a military friendly institution as one in which military culture, financial assistance, flexibility, and support services are represented in



targeted programs and services for student veterans. Other authors have more broadly identified targeted financial aid, student affairs, and academic affairs programs as essential to becoming military friendly (Steele, Salcedo, & Coley, 2010; Lipka, 2011; O'Herrin, 2011; Shankar, 2009).

The broad definition of what constitutes military friendliness allows any post-secondary institution to define what military friendly represents for their institutions and, as such, designate themselves as military friendly as long as their programs and services are targeted and address the student veterans' needs in the areas of financial aid, student affairs, and academic affairs. The ambiguity of this term makes it difficult for not only student veterans to determine which post-secondary institutions best meet their needs, but also makes it difficult for post-secondary institutions to evaluate their own effectiveness. Since a singular conceptualization of military friendliness is not only difficult to develop, but also likely to be inadequate in describing the goals of every institution, the concept of intentionality in the form of strategic intent may serve as an important framework for evaluating the military friendliness of an institution. Strategic intent is a concept in which the systematic integration of strategy and implementation is integral to effectively meeting institutional objectives and obtaining a strategic advantage (Bellamy, Becker, & Kuwik, 2003). Previous literature has identified the general components that are considered important in becoming military friendly, but the role of intentionality has not been evaluated. Institutions must be intentional both in their efforts in obtaining a military friendly designation and maintaining that designation when the initial energy has waned. A high degree of agreement between what institutions are marketing as their intent and what is actually being done at the institutional level must be ensured.

Therefore, in this study, the role of intentionality by institutions in becoming military friendly was examined using the theory of strategic intent as a lens.

### **Background**

The concept of military friendliness in higher education can be traced back to the introduction of the Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1944, also known as the G.I. Bill of Rights. Thelin (2004) noted that the introduction of the G.I. Bill stimulated a "qualitative change in the structure and culture of the American campus," as post-secondary institutions sought to restructure their own policies and programs to meet the needs of student veterans (p. 265). With the implementation of the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill, the qualitative transformation of post-secondary institutions witnessed during the implementation of the original G.I. Bill once again has become evident in the current post-secondary system in the United States. The degree to which a post-secondary institution is considered military friendly relies heavily on how "effective" it is according to designations by outside entities as well as the satisfaction of its student veterans. Administrators face three challenges in regard to proving their effectiveness as a military friendly institution including: demonstrating their military friendly institution is effective in meeting student veteran needs; demonstrating effectiveness as the definition of military friendly changes; and pleasing stakeholders who have different definitions of military friendliness (Hoy & Miskel, 2008). The student veteran market may evolve as the higher education system and legislation changes. Consequently, administrators at post-secondary institutions must be intentional in designing and implementing their programs, policies, and procedures in order to be accurately designated as military friendly.

## **Defining Military Friendliness**

When defining the term military friendly for post-secondary institutions, Brown and Gross (2011) have emphasized the role of external associations as a key piece of the military friendly designation. External associations that have been involved in determining what constitutes military friendliness include government entities, such as the Department of Veterans Affairs, and state level entities, such as the University System of Georgia. However, institutions also actively seek this designation from a variety of external associations and veterans groups outside of federal and state initiatives.

The Department of Veterans Affairs and Department of Education have established a voluntary program for post-secondary institutions named the “Principles of Excellence” program (DVA, 2013). The executive order creating this program was signed by President Obama on April 27, 2012, with the purpose of providing guidelines for institutions receiving federal funding for their efforts in attracting and retaining special populations of students. The memorandum at the center of the “Principles of Excellence” program describes principles related to military friendliness that institutions must adhere to, as well as steps for implementation and mechanisms for enforcement (ACE, 2012).

In the competitive student veteran market, it is critical for post-secondary institutions to gain legitimacy from as many external associations as possible beyond just their participation in federal and state initiatives. Institutions must show that they also value being military friendly like their competitors. Although the basic tenets of what constitutes military friendliness have been outlined by scholars, the lack of objective

criteria in evaluating an institution's efforts can prove problematic for not only potential applicants, but also institutions themselves (Bradley, 2009; O'Herrin, 2011). However, at the core of military friendliness at all post-secondary institutions, whether in the for-profit or non-profit sector, are targeted programs and services in the areas of financial aid, student affairs, and academic affairs aimed at student veterans.

Because of the complexity of veterans' educational benefits in both their eligibility and payment systems, it is imperative that institutions have financial aid staffers who are knowledgeable and can assist veterans in bridging the gap between government documents and real-life implementation (Shankar, 2009). Without a targeted financial aid program to assist student veterans in navigating the programs, student veterans report difficulty not only in understanding their options, but also frustration with the uncertainty of the accuracy of payments (Steele, Salcedo, & Coley, 2010). Institutions that implemented targeted financial aid programs by designating a financial aid staffer to work exclusively on veteran issues have been reported to have an advantage in attracting and retaining student veterans (Bradley, 2009). Institutions that recognize the importance of financial aid programs customized to the needs of student veterans will be one step closer to the designation of military friendly.

Targeted student affairs programs are also integral for institutions to become military friendly. Student veterans are more often *non-traditional students* who fail to fit this mold of a *traditional student* which has been conceptualized as a student between the ages of 18 and 24 who enters college after secondary school and receives parental support and generally fit the demographics of being white, economically advantaged, and male (Tinto, 2002). Student veterans have indicated that they experience difficulty

transitioning into college life because of the challenges they are presented in meeting academic expectations, balancing their family and work responsibilities, relating to students who are not veterans, and coping with service-related disabilities (Steele, Salcedo, & Coley, 2010). Student affairs programs must address these challenges by providing academic and social support in the form of mentoring, academic advising, first year seminars, educational planning and organized outings for veterans (Bradley, 2009). Additionally, the formation of campus communities of veterans in which veterans serve as a social network for each other to assist with transitional issues is also imperative (Bradley, 2009; Brown & Gross, 2011; Lipka, 2011; O'Herrin, 2011). These changing demographics exert pressure for post-secondary institutions to change their approach or else encounter increased difficulties with program effectiveness, smaller market share, and public scrutiny (Hoy & Miskel, 2008).

In addition to differing from their traditional counterparts in demographics, student veterans have also chosen to enroll at community colleges and for-profit institutions in greater numbers than four-year institutions due to the institutions' convenience, job-related curriculum, and admissions requirements (Bradley, 2009; Greenberg, 2008). A competitive market perspective holds that post-secondary institutions will increase their competitiveness by enhancing their academic affairs programming which can be described as their technical core. It is in the best interests of post-secondary institutions to brand themselves as military friendly by adopting some of the successful strategies of community colleges and for-profit institutions such as priority registration, simplified application processes, targeted academic and counseling services, favorable transfer policies, lounges and centers for student veterans, online or distance

learning courses and degree programs, and research focused on meeting the needs of military students (Brown & Gross, 2011). However, post-secondary administrators must walk a very fine line in navigating veteran education. Although it is important for public four-year institutions to imitate certain aspects of for-profit institutions in order to remain competitive in the student veteran market, they must also maintain the academic integrity of their individual institution and protect the status quo for non-profit sector institutions.

Financial aid, student affairs, and academic affairs programs targeted at student veterans are all individually and collectively important for the recruitment and retention of student veterans, but the integration of these services into a cohesive network of assistance is integral for an institution to become military friendly. Nevertheless, post-secondary institutions cannot stop at solely implementing targeted programs. Post-secondary institutions must acknowledge the role of institutional culture to become closer to their goal of military friendliness.

### **Institutional Culture**

The concept of culture has generally been overlooked in the discussion of military friendliness. Kezar and Eckel (2002) have asserted that organizational culture can be defined as, “the deeply embedded patterns of organizational behavior and the shared values, assumptions, beliefs or ideologies that members have about their organization or its work” (p. 438). An effective military friendly institution is one that institutionalizes the military friendly ideology of the current external environment. In order for military friendliness to become imbedded in the institutional culture of a post-secondary institution, there must be a firm understanding of the impact that organizational culture

can have on the efforts of the institution or institutions will fall short of military friendliness.

The organizational culture of the military and post-secondary education can be characterized by the degree to which each institution is collectivist or individualist. Rhee, Uleman, and Lee (1996) have described collectivist and individualist cultures as being “conceptualized as syndromes that include beliefs, attitudes, norms, roles, values and behaviors in different cultures” (p. 1037). In collectivist cultures, such as the military, individuals perceive themselves as part of a larger group and generally consider the group’s needs as more important than individual needs (Rhee, Uleman, & Lee). In contrast, in individualist cultures such as post-secondary education, emphasis is placed upon the following: having a greater concern about one’s own fate than the fate of the in-group; giving personal goals priority over in-group goals; accepting confrontation; and defining oneself independently of one’s in-group (Rhee, Uleman, & Lee). Once student veterans leave the structured, collectivist environment of the military for the individualist environment of higher education, they may experience difficulties in adjusting to and assimilating into the new culture and bureaucratic structure. As such, student veterans may perceive their new environment, post-secondary education, as *non-military* friendly. Therefore, effective institutions will address institutional culture early on to prevent this culture shock from thwarting the effectiveness of their efforts in implementing targeted programs and services.

### **Intentional Strategy**

Although post-secondary institutions often choose to publicize their dedication to their social responsibility of serving those veterans who serve the greater society, it is

important to be cognizant that an altruistic dedication is not the sole purpose of providing targeted services to student veterans. Student veterans bring to the institutions something that a majority of their nontraditional counterparts do not possess in the form of guaranteed funding for the institution. Therefore, it is in the best interest of the institution to be intentional in their strategy to embed military friendliness throughout their organizational culture and structure.

If post-secondary institutions choose to compete in the student veteran market, then there must be a high degree of congruence between their strategic intent and their actions in regard to veterans' education (Ayoubi & Massoud, 2007). When Hamel and Prahalad (1989) developed the theory of strategic intent for use by business managers, the focus was on how to compete in innovate ways as corporations began to encounter global competitors for the first time. Defined as the systematic integration of strategy and implementation that is integral to effectively meeting institutional objectives and obtaining a strategic advantage, strategic intent has been utilized by administrators in post-secondary education in only a few areas despite institutions facing similar challenges in the market on a broader level (Bellamy, Becker, & Kuwik, 2003). Cognizant of the previous success of corporations in utilizing the facets of strategic intent to compete for business in a global market, researchers in the field of post-secondary education have applied this theory to internationalization in higher education, an initiative for which institutions have had to compete globally for students (Ayoubi & Massoud, 2007; Cornelius, 2012; Hamel & Prahalad). For those institutions that use strategic intent to successfully compete in the student veteran market, the result will be strategic advantage gained through enrolling and retaining greater numbers of student veterans,



and essentially receiving a higher proportion of funding from veterans' educational benefits than their competitors.

Strategic intent is often confused with strategic planning, a commonly used tool in post-secondary education. It is important to outline how strategic intent differs from strategic planning to best understand how institutions must be intentional when implementing new initiatives. According to Hamel and Prahalad (1989), the strategic planning process is a "feasibility sieve" in which managers are encouraged to evaluate the current problems of their organization and be realistic about the 'how' and 'what' of their strategic plans (p. 152). As a result, strategic planning creates incremental movement year by year towards the institutional goal instead of encouraging institutions to commit to more large scale goals (Hamel & Prahalad). In contrast to the incremental nature of strategic planning, strategic intent is the "obsession with winning at all levels of the organization" that is meant to be sustained by the organization until the vision has been realized (Hamel & Prahalad, p. 150). As such, strategic intent becomes the motivation for the organization and its members to follow through with their actions in becoming the best at what they have identified as their target (Hamel & Prahalad).

Beyond serving as a motivating force, Hamel and Prahalad (1989) have explained that strategic intent can be used to establish the criterion the organization will use to evaluate their effectiveness. Post-secondary institutions have the opportunity to compete in the student veteran market by either engaging in competitive imitation in which the institution offers what other institutions are offering to meet the needs of student veterans or engage in competitive innovation (Hamel & Prahalad). Strategic intent can help post-secondary institutions evaluate whether their targeted policies and programs are merely

imitations of their competitors or whether they are leading them to become the most innovative and competitive military friendly institution they can be.

Administrators must acknowledge that student veterans choose the institution that is the most military friendly based on their individual needs and act accordingly to ensure that their institutional offerings meet these needs. However, if all institutions offer the exact same services and programs while labeling them all as military friendly, they are missing the opportunity to garner a larger market share through intentional innovation. The concept of strategic intent is important because it provides guidance on the problems of defining military friendliness for institutions with differing missions and evaluating institutional efforts. Strategic intent allows for an institution to determine what “value-added” programs and services define the military friendliness of their institution while still ensuring that student veterans can expect a minimum level of service to meet their needs. The manner in which an organization’s strategy is outlined has an important impact on the perceptions of their stakeholders (Melewar & Akeel, 2005). By eliminating the one size fits all approach to military friendliness and focusing on how intentionality can guide action, institutions will be better able to meet the needs of their student veterans and define military friendliness based on their own individual characteristics and the institutionalized norms, values, and principles of their environment.

In summary, post-secondary institutions must strive to be perceived as military friendly in order to be competitive in the student veteran market. However, perception is not enough to qualify an institution as military friendly. Although an effective public relations and marketing campaign is needed, it alone is insufficient to achieve this designation. Institutions must take intentional action by implementing targeted services

and programs while embedding their efforts into their institutional culture. With nationwide reform acts such a *Complete College America* coming to the forefront of the discussion in post-secondary education, outcomes are becoming increasingly important. Post-secondary institutions must show that they are offering something of value through the provision of the services or else they will lose not only funding, but a favorable perception by key stakeholders and market share.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Student veterans are a sub-group of the student population that has important implications for post-secondary institutions. Providing educational services to student veterans presents an opportunity for institutions to not only receive guaranteed funding in the form of veterans' educational benefits, but also to engage in a public relations strategy that can enhance the image of their entire institution. Existing literature notes that targeted services and programs in the areas of financial aid, student affairs, and academic affairs are essential for institutions to meet the needs of student veterans. If institutions promote their institution as military friendly, but fail to actually implement these services and programs, then they run the risk of not only failing to meet their intended mission, but also of alienating a population of students. Additionally, the intended purpose of veterans' educational benefits has been to ease the transition from military life to civilian life. If institutions fail to meet the needs of these students, then they are also doing a disservice to society as a whole. Consequently, it is important for post-secondary institutions to ensure there is a high congruence between what they say they are going to do for student veterans and what they actually do for student veterans.

While several studies have explored what programs and services are important for an institution to become military friendly, few studies have addressed in depth how institutions can adapt these guidelines to their own institution and achieve this designation. Institutions must be intentional in their approach to meeting the needs of student veterans, but the response from post-secondary institutions at a strategic level has varied greatly from highly strategic to ad hoc to no strategic planning at all. Therefore, in this study, the strategies that are utilized by post-secondary institutions in becoming military friendly were evaluated using the theory of strategic intent as a lens.

### **Research Questions**

Because post-secondary institutions need to pursue the designation of military friendly in order to be competitive in the student veteran market, this research study focused on the following central question: What is the role of strategic intentionality in becoming military friendly for post-secondary institutions in the State of Georgia?

In exploring this central question, the following sub-questions were asked:

1. What is the strongest indicator of strategic intentionality in military friendly institutions in the State of Georgia?
2. What are the best practices for becoming military friendly for post-secondary institutions in the State of Georgia in relation to strategic intentionality?

### **Significance of the Study**

While there have been many studies on what administrators and student veterans consider as the important components of military friendly programs and services, few studies have explored how institutions utilize strategy to meet their vision of a military friendly institution. This study provides administrators in post-secondary institutions

insight into the role that an institution's intention to become military friendly impacts the real world implementation of their strategy. The research findings will benefit student veterans in that post-secondary institutions will be in a better position to ensure that the advertised programs and services will be effectively implemented. Thus, student veterans will more effectively utilize their veterans' educational benefits.

The research findings will also benefit post-secondary institutions by addressing the ambiguity of the term military friendly. Institutions will be able to apply the strategic intentionality framework to evaluate whether they are "putting their money where their mouth is." As such, post-secondary institutions can address not only the areas in which they are failing to successfully implement programs and services, but also more effectively implement these programs and services from the beginning. This research expanded upon the existing literature on higher education and student veterans and suggests areas for further investigation. Lastly, if the use of strategic intentionality as a framework is successful, it may be used to evaluate other programs at post-secondary institutions.

### **Procedures**

For this investigation, the researcher implemented a qualitative research design in the tradition of a multiple case study in order to determine the role of strategic intentionality in post-secondary institutions becoming military friendly. A purposive sampling strategy, also called purposeful sampling, was implemented in this investigation to identify individuals and sites for study that could inform an understanding of the research problem (Creswell, 2007). In the State of Georgia, 109 institutions are both eligible to receive veterans' educational benefits under Title IV and are Department of

Veterans Affairs “Principles of Excellence” schools. Three institutions were selected from these institutions as cases. All institutions selected are classified as “primarily non-residential,” are located within 15 miles of a military installation, and serve predominately undergraduate students. The researcher selected three individuals at each identified institution who have had experience in the institutional efforts of becoming military friendly to participate in the study.

During the investigation, the researcher gathered data from multiple sources during a one day site visit that included interviews with campus officials, document and audio-visual material reviews, field observations, and a descriptive survey. Data collected from the *Organizational Intentionality In Becoming Military friendly Survey* were analyzed using descriptive statistics to determine the degree of contribution of intentionality to the military friendliness of the participating post-secondary institution. The researcher utilized the QSR NVivo software program to code and analyze qualitative data collected from the case study.

### **Limitations, Delimitations, and Assumptions**

This study utilizes data from individual interviews to approximate the intentional strategies utilized by post-secondary institutions in becoming military friendly, and as such, is subject to response bias. Although bias is acceptable in qualitative research, a response bias in answering the researcher’s questions in the interviews may result in the researcher developing an inaccurate conceptualization of the strategic intentionality as it relates to the military friendliness of the institution. Because of the high stakes in the student veteran market, institutional personnel may have responded how they intended to be perceived and not how their individual institutions are actually functioning.

Conversely, the delimitation of using post-secondary institutions that are participants in the Department of Veterans Affairs' Principles of Excellence Program allowed for the researcher to successfully identify institutions that value the designation of military friendly. This provided the best opportunity for the congruence between intent and action to be evaluated.

Lastly, the assumptions of this study are that institutions that want to compete in the student veteran market do so by implementing programs and services targeted to student veterans. If institutions are being successful in competing in the student veteran market, then it is assumed they will have greater numbers of student veterans enrolled in their institutions, receive greater amounts of funding, and have a higher market share.

### **Key Definitions**

*Student Veteran* – The Department of Education (DOE) defines a student veteran as: a former member of the Armed Forces of the United States (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard) who served on active duty and was discharged under conditions which were other than dishonorable. While there is no minimum number of days a student must have served on active duty to be considered a veteran; periods of active duty for training, pursuant to an enlistment in the National Guard or Reserves, do not qualify a student as a veteran. Therefore, former or current members of the National Guard or Reserves are not considered to be veterans unless they had prior or subsequent service with an active component of the Armed Forces. Persons who attended military academies are considered veterans for financial aid purposes.

*Military friendliness* – Brown and Gross (2011) have defined military friendliness as a designation given by external associations to institutions that meet the needs of student veterans through targeted services, programs and initiatives. In their *2013 Guide to Military-Friendly Colleges and Universities*, Military Advanced Education, an external association, denotes a military friendly institution as one in which military culture, financial assistance, flexibility and support services are represented in targeted programs and services for student veterans.

*Organizational Culture* – Kezar and Eckel (2002) have defined organizational culture as, “the deeply embedded patterns of organizational behavior and the shared values, assumptions, beliefs or ideologies that members have about their organization or its work” (p. 438).

*Soldiers 2 Scholars* – Soldiers 2 Scholars is a program developed by the University System of Georgia (USG) that outlines the values and regulations institutions must follow to be perceived as a legitimate military friendly institution in the University System of Georgia.

*Principles of Excellence* – The Principles of Excellence is a voluntary program developed by the Department of Veterans Affairs with the purpose of providing guidelines for institutions receiving federal funding for their efforts in attracting and retaining special populations of students such as student veterans (DVA, 2013).

*Non-traditional Student* – A non-traditional student is a student who does not fit the definition of a traditional student which is defined as an individual between the ages of 18 and 24 who enters college after secondary school and receives parental



support and generally fit the demographics of being white, economically advantaged, and male (Tinto, 2002).

*Strategic intent*– Strategic intent is a concept in which the systematic integration of strategy and implementation is integral to effectively meeting institutional objectives and obtaining a strategic advantage (Bellamy, Becker, & Kuwik, 2003). Strategic intent incorporates stretch targets to force companies to compete in innovate ways through co-invention, engagement, and practice (Hamel & Prahalad, 1989; Smith, 1994).

*Strategic Planning* – According to Hamel and Prahalad (1989), the strategic planning process is “feasibility sieve” in which managers are encouraged to be realistic about the ‘how’ and ‘what’ of their strategic plans (p. 152). Strategic planning highlights the current problems of an organization and creates incremental movement year by year towards the institutional goal (Hamel & Prahalad).

*Title IV Institutions* – Title IV institutions are public, private non-profit, and private for-profit schools that are eligible to participate in the Title IV federal student assistance program, which is a program established by Title IV of the Higher Education Act and establishes rules for higher education institutions in regards to student financial assistance.

### **Chapter Summary**

Becoming military friendly has a potential strategic advantage for post-secondary institutions seeking to be competitive in the student veteran market. While the components of military friendly programs and services have been outlined frequently in multiple studies, what remained unexplored was how these institutions implement

military friendly initiatives in a successful manner. It is critical for institutions to implement these initiatives in an effective and efficient manner or else they risk not only losing valuable market share, but failing to meet the needs of an important population of their students.

Therefore, the purpose of this multiple case study was to determine if organizational intentionality impacts the successful implementation of military friendly initiatives in three University System of Georgia, four-year institutions in the State of Georgia. The findings of this study have important implications for both post-secondary institutions and student veterans. In this study, the goal of the researcher was to help post-secondary institutions better meet their goals of becoming military friendly, as well as assist student veterans in more effectively choosing the institution at which to utilize their educational benefits.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

In this literature review, the researcher presents a discussion of the phenomenon of military friendliness and its impact on post-secondary education in the United States, as well as an explanation of the strategic response of institutions to the pressure to become military friendly in order to compete in the student veteran market. A brief overview of the concept of strategic intent is first provided followed by an overview of military friendliness and its implications for higher education. Next, the review provides a targeted discussion of military friendliness in higher education in the United States, including a historical account of the relationship between veterans' educational benefits and higher education and the focus on military friendly initiatives in the current higher education environment. Subsequently, the study outlines becoming military friendly as a strategic process and varying strategies for implementing military friendly initiatives are identified.

Although the current literature is replete with information on what constitutes military friendliness, there are few studies that outline how post-secondary institutions intentionally decide to become military friendly and implement their vision through strategic processes. Therefore, the dearth of information on how institutions can successfully and effectively implement military friendly can be perceived as the gap in the literature. In exploration of this gap in the literature, the review concludes with a presentation as strategic intent as a theory that outlines the role of intentionality in the efforts of post-secondary institutions in becoming military friendly.

### **Focus on Intentionality**

It is important to emphasize that the focus of this study is on strategic intentionality of institutions in becoming military friendly, not on what constitutes military friendliness. In order to best understand the relationship between the two concepts, an overall understanding of what strategic intentionality is and, more importantly, what it is not must be provided early in the review. Strategic intent is the systematic integration of strategy and implementation integral to effectively meeting institutional objectives and obtaining a strategic advantage (Bellamy, Becker, & Kuwik, 2003). Strategic intentionality is not synonymous with strategic planning, a concept that is common in many organizations such as post-secondary institutions. In contrast to the incremental nature of strategic planning and focus on current organizational problems, strategic intent focuses on the organization's opportunities for the future and is the "obsession with winning at all levels of the organization" that is meant to be sustained by the organization until the vision has been realized (Hamel & Prahalad, 1989, p. 150). As such, strategic intent becomes the motivation for the organization and its members to follow through with their actions in becoming the best at what they have identified as their target (Hamel & Prahalad).

Strategic intentionality serves as the theoretical framework for this study. In the following sections, the discussion of military friendliness in higher education begins with an explanation of the components that other scholars have determined are critical for an institution to be military friendly. The discussion of military friendliness in previous literature has focused on a transactional process of implementing various programs and services targeted to student veterans to gain the designation of military friendly from

external associations (Bradley, 2009; Brown & Gross, 2011; Lipka, 2011; O'Herrin, 2011). The present literature review expands the discussion to include to the transformational process an institution goes through as they establish a vision for competing in a student veteran market, embed the vision in their culture (Rhee, Uleman, & Lee, 1996), and begin to strategically implement the vision to gain a competitive advantage.

### **Military Friendliness**

A definition of strategic intentionality has been provided in the previous sections, but it is as equally important to define and describe military friendliness in a holistic manner. The terms military friendly and veteran friendly are used interchangeably in the current higher education environment. At the time of implementation of the Post-9/11 G. I. Bill in August of 2009, the term military friendly was more commonly used in the literature. Brown and Gross (2011) defined military friendliness as a designation given by external associations to institutions that meet the needs of student veterans through targeted services, programs and initiatives. A key aspect of this definition that impacts the terminology used today is external associations. Prior to 2013, many external associations were designating schools as military friendly according to their own criteria. However, in 2013, Victory Media, Inc., successfully trademarked the term Military Friendly School™. Although the term military friendly itself is not trademarked, many organizations have chosen to use veteran friendly to avoid confusion.

For the scope of this study, the researcher has chosen to use the term military friendly instead of veteran friendly. Because institutions are implementing services and programs that are targeted to active duty service members and other military-affiliated

individuals without veteran status, the term military friendly better describes the current environment. The term student veteran(s) will be used throughout this study. Although the Department of Education (DOE) defines a student veteran as a former member of the Armed Forces of the United States (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard) who served on active duty and was discharged under conditions, which were other than dishonorable. The researcher also includes other individuals when using this term including current service members, current members of the National Guard or Reserves, and individuals who are actively utilizing veterans' educational benefits at post-secondary institutions.

### **Implications of Military Friendliness**

In the current environment of post-secondary education in the United States, there is a growing emphasis on demonstrated outcomes to prove an institutions' value. Competitive economic factors are in play in the student veteran market as post-secondary institutions at all levels seek to obtain the guaranteed funding that veterans' educational benefits provide. The higher education system of the United States can be described as subsidized using the *economic analogy* provided by Winston (1999). The subsidies in the current discussion refer to veterans' education benefits and have differing implications for private and public institutions. Historically, for-profit institutions, which rely heavily on federal student aid, have enrolled greater numbers of student veterans than their public, four-year counterparts (Dervarics, 2011; Greenberg, 2008). Currently, the 90/10 rule that states for-profit institutions can receive 90% of their revenue from federal sources, but must still obtain 10% from funds external to the government or else they will be ineligible for federal student aid programs does not apply to veterans' educational

benefits, but legislators are challenging this classification (Dervarics; Field, 2011).

Administrators in the for-profit sector must anticipate this challenge and extend lobbying efforts to prevent the re-classification while conducting a public relations campaign to extol the benefits of their education to student veterans.

Economic factors also influence the non-profit sector of higher education. The present study focused on the strategic intentionality of public, non-profit, four-year institutions in the State of Georgia. Because for-profit and community colleges have dominated the student veteran market historically, administrators at these institutions must make concerted efforts to attract and retain student veterans to compete with for-profit institutions that have well established recruiting and marketing strategies (Dervarics, 2011). Additionally, the recent economic recession requires institutions to develop academic programs that appeal to student veterans by demonstrating their effectiveness in leading to gainful employment. In order to better understand the current environment, it is important to gain an understanding of the historical relationship between veterans' educational benefits and post-secondary education.

### **History of Military Friendliness**

The effort to become military friendly is not a new concept in post-secondary education. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, several legislative acts were passed that provided educational benefits to veterans. The introduction of the Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1944, also known as the G.I. Bill of Rights, brought greater attention to the concept of military friendliness in higher education. The original G.I. Bill was created to ease the transition from military to civilian life for veterans returning home from World War II and delay their mass re-entrance into an already strained labor market (Mettler, 2005;

Thelin, 2004). Under the G.I. Bill, veterans were eligible for up to \$500 per year for educational or technical training along with a living allowance (U.S. DVA, 2009, November 6a). For the first time in the history of veterans' benefits, veterans were able to receive educational benefits that were valuable and convenient to use. As a result of this increased access to benefits, post-secondary institutions in the United States experienced their enrollments doubling between the years of 1943 and 1946 (Thelin). According to Thelin, the increase in access and subsequent increase in enrollments afforded by the G.I. Bill stimulated a "qualitative change in the structure and culture of the American campus" (p. 265). Institutions responded with new admissions procedures, massive construction of campus infrastructure, and a retooling of student services to meet the needs of non-traditional students (Thelin). Although meant as a temporary solution to the immediate concern of veterans returning to an environment unready to handle them, the veterans' educational benefits afforded by the original G.I. Bill had permanent, long-lasting impacts on higher education. As a result, post-secondary institutions began to take steps to meet the needs of student veterans, a phenomenon that in the current environment has been deemed becoming military friendly.

Just as the original G.I. Bill was implemented at a time of economic uncertainty in the United States, the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill was also implemented at a critical time for veterans for two important reasons: troop withdrawals from Iraq and Afghanistan, and the economic recession in the United States. Troop withdrawals from Iraq and Afghanistan are likely to create a large influx of veterans eligible and ready to utilize their earned educational benefits. Similarly, as more veterans face an uncertain job market due to the economic recession, many may choose to enter or return to school for increased



marketability. It is critical for post-secondary institutions to be prepared to respond to this influx of veterans into post-secondary institutions in an effective manner. The institutions that are best prepared for the influx will have a distinct advantage in recruiting and retaining student veterans, service members, and their dependents. Just as the first G.I. Bill created an impetus for post-secondary institutions to meet the needs of student veterans, the introduction of the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill has created the need for higher education administrators to evaluate not only how military friendly their institutions are currently, but what they can do to increase their visibility as a military friendly institution among potential student veterans.

During the first year of implementation of the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill, more than 500,000 veterans applied for eligibility and more than 300,000 veterans and their dependents used their educational benefits (O'Herrin, 2011). Post-secondary institutions were not only faced with an increased number of students enrolling in their institutions, but also with a group of students with characteristics varying greatly from their traditional counterparts. Traditional approaches to recruitment and retention were shown to be less effective in attracting and retaining student veterans because of their unique needs. As such, many researchers began to explore the programs and policies that institutions must implement in order to meet the needs of student veterans and subsequently become military friendly. In response to the increase in research, external associations capitalized on the interest in military friendliness and began to designate schools as military friendly according to their own criteria.

## **Role of External Associations**

Currently in post-secondary education, many institutions have chosen to market themselves as military friendly. The designation of a military friendly institution is not controlled by any of the formal accreditation bodies in post-secondary education.

Although Victory Media, Inc. has trademarked the term *Military Friendly School*<sup>TM</sup> and annually provides a list of the top 20% of institutions that meet their criteria for meeting the needs of student veterans, use of the term military friendly is open to any institution seeking to use it. Brown and Gross (2011) defined military friendliness as a designation given by external associations to institutions that meet the needs of student veterans through targeted services, programs, and initiatives. However, external associations considered qualified to give this designation have not been clearly identified.

Despite the lack of formal authority on what constitutes military friendliness, several organizations have published what they consider key components of military friendly institutions. In their *2013 Guide to Military-Friendly Colleges and Universities*, Military Advanced Education denotes a military friendly institution as one in which military culture, financial assistance, flexibility, and support services are represented in targeted programs and services for student veterans. Other authors have more broadly identified targeted financial aid, student affairs, and academic affairs programs as essential to becoming military friendly (Steele, Salcedo, & Coley, 2010; Lipka, 2011; O'Herrin, 2011; Shankar, 2009).

Although accreditation bodies have not delineated standards for military friendliness, organizational bodies for higher education at the state level have established guidelines for military friendly institutions in their states. For public, post-secondary

institutions in the University System of Georgia, the values and regulations needed to be perceived as a legitimate military friendly institution were outlined in the University System of Georgia's Soldiers 2 Scholars program. The Soldiers 2 Scholars initiative was created to prescribe requirements and best practices that the University System of Georgia determined to be necessary for one of its institutions to be considered military friendly (USG, 2011). The guidelines set forth by this program for an institution to be designated as military friendly included: establishing Military Resource Centers on campus; identification of military/veteran students, faculty and staff on campus; giving credit for military training and education; creating degree programs and certificates targeted to student veterans; encouraging tutoring and mentoring by Vets for Vets; training counselors and faculty to understand social, emotional, physical and academic challenges; offering convenient classes and freshman experience classes/military learning communities; forming a campus task force of administrators, faculty, staff and student veterans; and examining Board of Regents policies to better serve the military student (USG, 2013).

Although the Soldiers 2 Scholars program gained momentum initially at the state level, the "Principles of Excellence for Military Tuition Assistance and Veterans Education Benefits Programs," also called "Principles of Excellence," has garnered more attention in the discussion of military friendliness on a national level. An executive order signed by President Obama on April 27, 2012, established the "Principles of Excellence" with the focus of creating guidelines for all educational institutions receiving federal funding (Executive Order 13607). Designed as a voluntary program for post-secondary institutions, the purpose of this program is to provide more clear guidelines for

institutions that are receiving federal funding for their efforts in attracting and retaining special populations of students. In order to be designated as a “Principles of Excellence” school, institutions were requested to sign a letter indicating their commitment to comply with the guidelines of the program (Executive Order 13607). In 2013, the Department of Defense required post-secondary institutions to agree to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to receive funding through the Tuition Assistance program, a requirement that created controversy and hesitation among institutions. Despite the controversy and hesitation, the “Principles of Excellence” program remains the most salient example of the Department of Veterans Affairs and Department of Education’s intent to direct the strategy of post-secondary institutions in becoming military friendly.

The memorandum at the center of the “Principles of Excellence” program describes the principles that institutions should adhere to, as well as steps for implementation and mechanisms for enforcement for the Department of Defense, Department of Veterans Affairs, and Department of Education (ACE, 2012). The principles delineated by the memorandum for the institutions focus on consumer disclosure and encourage institutions to do the following:

1. Provide a personalized form covering the total cost of an educational program to the prospective student prior to enrollment at the institution.
2. Provide educational plans for all military and veteran education beneficiaries.
3. End fraudulent and aggressive recruiting techniques and misrepresentation.
4. Provide accommodations for service members and reservists absent due to service requirements.
5. Designate a point of contact for academic and financial advising.

6. Ensure accreditation of all new programs prior to enrolling students.
7. Align institutional refund policies with those under Title IV of the Higher Education Act.

### **Key Components of Military Friendliness**

The challenge for educational leaders in post-secondary institutions is to obtain the designation of military friendliness from associations external to their organization in a cost-effective manner that does not challenge the institution's established academic integrity while ensuring that the design of their financial aid, student affairs, and academic affairs programs meets the unique needs of student veterans. Although compliance with the "Principles of Excellence" program is important for post-secondary institutions to be considered a legitimate military friendly institution, the guidelines provided are broad in scope. The following section delineates the necessary components of being military friendly in the areas of financial aid, student affairs, and academic affairs.

**Financial Aid.** The implementation of the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill brought with it a complex eligibility and payment system with little guidance for institutions on how to navigate the program. Without guidance from their post-secondary institutions, program participants often reported difficulty in understanding their available options and frustration with uncertainty of the accuracy of payments (Steele, Salcedo, & Coley, 2010). One veteran is quoted as saying "Not to sound elitist...but if a 31-year-old Princeton grad has a hard time deciphering what he is entitled to, then I have no idea how a 21-year-old armed only with a GED could navigate this system" (Shankar, 2009, p. 303). This illustrates the need for post-secondary institutions to create programs and

positions that help to bridge the gap between government documents and real-life implementation.

Prior to the implementation of the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill, some post-secondary institutions took steps to ready themselves for the difficulties that would be created during the first year of implementation. Colleges, such as Calhoun Community College and Kellogg Community College, designated a financial aid staffer whose responsibility was to work exclusively on veteran issues (Bradley, 2009). Ensuring that someone on campus was knowledgeable about the policy and able to guide students through the process, these colleges had an advantage in assisting student veterans. However, challenges still existed even for institutions that had taken steps for preparation. The lack of clear program guidance in the form of a program manual often meant that both Veterans Administration staff and higher education institution staff were unable to accurately provide information, which often resulted in erroneous payments that had to be recouped by the Veterans Administration (U.S. GAO, 2011b). Additionally, in a time of economic uncertainty and budget cuts, the re-designation of financial aid staff for a program without an accurate estimation of program participants may have been unachievable for many institutions.

**Student Affairs.** In the field of higher education, the term *traditional student* has informally been defined as a student between the ages of 18 to 24 who enters college directly from secondary education and receives a substantial amount of support from parents (Tinto, 2002). Historically, traditional college students have also been more likely to be white, economically advantaged, and, until recently, male (Tinto, 2002). For post-secondary institutions, the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill has brought and will continue to bring

increased numbers of non-traditional students who do not fit the mold for which student affairs programs were originally designed.

In order for post-secondary institutions to effectively redesign student affairs programs, they must first understand the unique characteristics of student veterans. O'Herrin (2011) has outlined the characteristics of student veterans, which include the following: non-traditional, older, transfer students, and non-white. As with many non-traditional students, student veterans often have responsibilities outside of attending college, including families and employment (Bradley, 2009). Additionally, of 2.2 million troops who have deployed, 800,000 have done so multiple times and 14 to 19% of this group has signs of post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, and/or depression (O'Herrin). Therefore, institutions must also be prepared to handle a new segment of the student population with service-related injuries.

Student veterans are also more likely to view post-secondary education in a different manner than their traditional counterparts. An example of this differing mindset is a quote from Brian Hawthorne, a staff sergeant in the Army Reserves, who told the New York Times, "Vets are really not at college to get the traditional undergraduate experience... We are already professionals. College is a box checker, meaning we need a college degree to go into whatever we want to go into" (Lipton, 2010, p. A1). In addition, the spokesman for the Combat2College program, an initiative of Montgomery College to assist the transition from military to college life, noted that "many of the folks who went into the service did so because they were not students... that is not a criticism. That was an alternative for them. Now that they are coming back, they need to learn to be students, and .... college is a great place to make that transition" (Bradley, 2009, p. 7).

Whereas traditional students may use post-secondary as a time for personal exploration and development, student veterans may be at a different stage in their academic careers. The difference in worldviews between student veterans and traditional students must be acknowledged when designing student affairs programming.

Despite reported maturity and focus of student veterans, student veterans have indicated difficulties transitioning into college life resulting from challenges meeting academic expectations, balancing their responsibilities outside of school, relating to non-student veterans, and coping with service related disabilities (Steele, Salcedo, & Coley, 2010). Student Affairs at post-secondary institutions enrolling student veterans must provide both academic and social support to overcome these challenges and ensure student success. Bradley (2009) suggested that institutions can meet these challenges by providing mentoring, academic advising, first year seminars, educational planning, and organized outings for veterans. In addition, Lipka (2011) provided best practices of winners of the Success for Veterans grant including: greater visibility of services on campus; *vet friendly zones* where administrators had working knowledge of post-traumatic stress disorder and acquired brain injury; veteran-focused course development; alliances between counselor and student veterans; and strong relationships with local Veterans Affairs officials.

Special attention has been given to the formation of campus communities of veterans (Bradley, 2009; Brown & Gross, 2011; Lipka, 2011). The intent of these communities is to provide a social network for veterans so that they are able to assist each other in the transition to civilian life. Additionally, O'Herrin (2011) suggested the creation of learning communities could be beneficial in providing academic support to



veterans. Modeling learning communities for veterans after those created for traditional freshmen students could provide student veterans with a cohort with which they are more comfortable discussing academic and social difficulties. However, institutions must be sure that the creation of student veteran communities does not undermine the mission and vision of the individual institution. Post-secondary education offers an opportunity for students to engage in a variety of new experiences. Student affairs should focus on integration not isolation. Institutions should ensure that they do not unintentionally isolate veterans when attempting to ease their transition, but instead create programs that integrate student veterans into the campus at large.

**Academic Affairs.** In addition to differing from their traditional counterparts in demographics, student veterans have also chosen to attend community colleges in greater numbers than they have chosen four-year institutions (Bradley, 2009). According to O'Herrin (2011), in the 2007-2008 academic year active duty and student veterans made up 4% of all undergraduates, with 43% of veterans attending 2-year institutions, 21% attending public four-year institutions, and 12% attending private four-year, non-profit institutions. Veterans have traditionally been more likely to enroll in community colleges and for-profit institutions because of convenience and job-related curriculum (Greenberg, 2008). Community colleges and for-profit institutions have better established veteran-focused programs because of their greater experience enrolling student veterans. This infrastructure in combination with flexible learning options, such as online course and distance learning, has given community college and for-profit schools an advantage in attracting student veterans as well as navigating the complexities of the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill.

Although community colleges and for-profit schools have enrolled a greater proportion of student veterans in the past, the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill is projected to result in a greater number of student veterans choosing traditional public, four-year institutions in the coming years. However, whether this surge in enrollment in four-year institutions occurs is dependent upon market forces (Greenberg, 2008). Nonetheless, it is in the best interest of these institutions to adopt some of the strategies implemented by community colleges and for-profit schools to ensure their share of the market. It is important for colleges and universities to brand themselves as military friendly. Brown and Gross (2011) have defined a military friendly institution as one that adheres to the following: the principles of the membership in the Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (SOC); the nine principles of good practice for learning assessment of the Military Installation Voluntary Educational Review (MIVER); and the American Council of Education (ACE) standards for credit evaluation. Key characteristics of being military friendly are priority registration, simplified application processes, targeted academic and counseling services, favorable transfer policies, lounges and centers for veterans, and research focused on meeting the needs of military students (Brown & Gross).

A criticism of four-year institutions often reported by student veterans is their unwillingness to accept transfer credit or award credit for military training. In a survey of student veterans conducted by the RAND Corporation, only 47% of student veterans indicated they were satisfied with the transfer process (Kiley, 2011). The frustration of veterans regarding the transfer process can result in veterans categorizing the institution as *non-military friendly*; therefore, hurting the institution's ability to recruit student

veterans (Brown & Gross, 2011). To lessen barriers to transfer credit, a sophisticated credit evaluation system is needed.

The expansive opportunities for online and distance learning are often reported as important reasons veterans choose community colleges and for-profit schools over four-year institutions. The implementation of the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill may force four-year institutions interested in attracting veterans to decide whether they will move faster toward expanding distance learning already in place or create new online degrees to specifically target veterans and current service members.

**Integrated Services.** The availability of student veteran-focused programs in the areas of financial aid, student affairs, and academic affairs are all individually and collectively important for the recruitment and retention of student veterans. However, the integration of these individual services into a cohesive network of assistance is imperative for institutions to retain student veterans. Lipka (2011) described the factors that winners of the Success for Veterans grants had in common. Of these common factors, intentionally integrating the available services across campus was identified as important for an institution's success in meeting the needs of student veterans.

Of the grant winners described by Lipka (2011), the establishment of connections across campus departments was identified as important for enhancing the visibility and credibility of services. California State University of Sacramento, a grant recipient, created a Veteran Success Center that was able to expand its services solely from the provision of benefit certification in an isolated manner to including: vet-friendly zones; faculty, staff and traditional student training on veteran issues; courses focused on veteran issues; and collaboration with the local Veterans Affairs office (Lipka). Based on

these findings, there exists a potentiality for post-secondary institutions to strengthen their services to attract and retain student veterans through intentional integration. Nevertheless, post-secondary institutions cannot stop at solely implementing targeted programs. Post-secondary institutions must acknowledge the role of institutional culture to become closer to their goal of military friendliness.

### **Institutional Culture**

Although there is ample evidence in the research of what policies and programs are helpful to meeting the needs of student veterans, the difference between the culture of the military from which students are leaving and post-secondary education to which they are entering has been grossly overlooked. In order to create a culture of military friendliness at their institution, post-secondary institutions must have a firm understanding of the impact that organizational culture can have on his or her efforts. Organizational culture can be defined as “the deeply embedded patterns of organizational behavior and the shared values, assumptions, beliefs or ideologies that members have about their organization or its work” (Peterson & Spencer, 1991, p. 142). Without understanding the impact of organizational culture, post-secondary institutions will fail to become military friendly.

### **Collectivism vs. Individualism**

The organizational culture of the military and higher education can be characterized by the degree to which each institution is collectivist or individualist. Rhee and Uleman (1996) described collectivist and individualist cultures as being “conceptualized as syndromes that include beliefs, attitudes, norms, roles, values and behaviors in different cultures” (p. 1037). In a collectivist culture, individuals perceive

themselves as a part of a larger group and generally consider the group's needs as more important than individual needs (Rhee & Uleman). Collectivism is associated with the following characteristics: being concerned with an in-group's fate and giving its goals priority over one's own; maintaining harmony; interdependence; cooperation and conflict avoidance; reciprocity among in-group members; self-definition in terms of one's in-group; and a sharp distinction between one's in-group and out-groups (Rhee & Uleman). In contrast to collectivism, individualism emphasizes the individual and is characterized by the following: having a greater concern about one's own fate than the fate of the in-group; giving personal goals priority over in-group goals; accepting confrontation; and defining oneself independently of one's in-group (Rhee & Uleman).

The role of in-groups is also highly important in the discussion of collectivism and individualism. An in-group is defined as "a group whose norms, goals, and values shape the behavior of its members" or as a "group of individuals with whom a person feels 'similar' because of a common fate" (Rhee & Uleman, p. 1038). In collectivist cultures, an individual is generally accepted into an in-group independent of any achievements. In contrast, inclusion in an in-group in individualist cultures is more commonly attributed to achievement. How one becomes a part of an in-group has important implications for the discussion of organizational culture of both the military and education.

### **The Culture of the Military**

It can be argued that the military has its own unique organizational culture. According to Dunivin (1994), the culture of the military possesses the four qualities of culture including: it is learned from previous generations; it is broadly shared by

members; it is adaptive to conditions in which people live; and it is symbolic in nature. The culture of the military is learned from previous generations in the form of socialization training such as what occurs during boot camp (Dunivin). The enculturation is broadly shared by members of the military and, as such, all members engage in common activities such as saluting (Dunivin). The culture of the military is also adaptive to conditions in which people live, such as the integration of minorities into the military as a result of larger societal changes (Dunivin). Lastly, the culture of the military is symbolic in nature as exemplified by rank insignia and terminology that only fit within the context of the military (Dunivin).

Although it is well established that the military can be described as having its own unique culture, the organizational culture of the military can also be described as a collectivist culture in that service members put the needs of the military and country before their own individual needs when decision making. More specifically, members of military culture put the collective goal of national defense before any personal goals. Murray (1999) has designated military culture as “the ethos and professional attributes, both in terms of experience and intellectual study, that contribute to a common core understanding of the nature of war within military organizations” (p. 27). The common goal of war, or combat, is central to the military’s paradigm, the underlying collection of broad assumptions, beliefs and attitudes shaping military culture (Dunivin, 1994).

The traditional model of military culture is described as “an underlying combat, masculine-warrior paradigm, with complementary ethics/customs, laws/policies, force structures, enculturation, attitudes and interactions” (Dunivin, 1994, p. 537). According to Dunivin, the combat, masculine-warrior (CMW) paradigm is made up of two elements.

The first element is that combat is the military's core activity and, as such, combat is paramount to the image of the military (Dunivin). The second element is the image of a masculine-warrior as the military consists primarily of men and there is an embedded "cult of masculinity" within the culture (Dunivin, p. 534). These elements influence how service members think and act within their environment. However, once these service members leave this collectivist environment for post-secondary education, which has traditionally been described as individualist, they may experience difficulties in adjusting to and assimilating into the new culture and bureaucratic structure. As such, student veterans may perceive their new environment, post-secondary education, as *non*-military friendly.

### **The Culture of Post-Secondary Education**

Kezar and Eckel (2002) have presented four different academic cultural archetypes in post-secondary culture including: collegial culture, managerial culture, developmental culture, and negotiating culture. In a collegial culture in academia, culture arises from the disciplines of the faculty and there is a strong emphasis on scholarly engagement, shared governance, and rationality (Kezar & Eckel). In managerial cultures, the focus is on the goals and purposes of the institution with values being placed on efficiency, effective supervisory skills, and fiscal responsibility (Kezar & Eckel). In developmental cultures, culture is centered on the personal and professional growth of all members of the collegiate environment (Kezar & Eckel). Lastly, in negotiating cultures, the establishment of equitable and egalitarian policies and procedures are valued as well as confrontation, interest groups, mediation and power (Kezar & Eckel). Although individual institutions may be better characterized by one archetype than another, there

are not only elements of each archetype in every institution, but also a common cultural theme of individualism throughout post-secondary education.

Post-secondary education has traditionally been viewed through an individualistic perspective. Higher education has been viewed as a means for individual opportunity in that a college degree has been strongly promoted as a way for individuals to obtain better employment or become enlightened through knowledge. The emphasis has traditionally been on the individual and what higher education can do for that individual. Personal and professional growth is at the core of post-secondary education's culture. As such, individuals attempting to transition from a collectivist to individualist culture may experience difficulties in adjustment.

### **Misalignment of Cultures**

Student veterans who are entering or returning to post-secondary education from military service may experience difficulty in transition due to a misalignment of cultures. Because veterans' educational benefits were initially created to help ease the transition from military to civilian life for returning veterans, it is important for institutions to be knowledgeable about adjustment issues that student veterans may experience and develop a military friendly response to these issues. Using research conducted on adjustment issues of international students by Kelly and Moogan (2012), four key adjustment issues can be identified for students transitioning between cultures including general living adjustment, academic adjustment, socio-cultural adjustment, and personal psychological adjustment. Research conducted on international students is applicable to the discussion of student veterans because in each instance students are transitioning from their own culture, often times collectivist, to the culture of post-secondary education which is



individualist. When institutions successfully address these adjustment issues in their students, they are one step closer to becoming military friendly. However, failure to recognize and address adjustment issues resulting from the misalignment of cultures can result in several significant problems.

One result of failing to recognize the importance of cultural misalignment is *culture shock*. Kelly and Moogan (2012) use the following definition for culture shock: “the anxiety resulting from the loss of familiar signs and symbols when a person enters a new culture, familiar cues disappear and no matter how broad minded or full of goodwill one may be, a series of props have been knocked out from under” (p. 27). The degree to which a student veteran experiences culture shock is dependent upon the gap between the environments in which the student has been first acculturated, the military, and the environment in which they are entering, higher education.

In their study of internationally mobile students, Kelly and Moogan (2012) found that international students experience a “double cultural clash as they are forced to fit in with the culture of the associated classroom as well as with the Western lifestyle” (p. 27). Each post-secondary institution is unique, but student veterans may experience this “double cultural clash” as well. Student veterans have to enter and assimilate not only into the culture of higher education but also reintegrate into the civilian culture of the United States simultaneously. Institutions properly addressing this transition period through military friendly programs is critical. In the discussion of internationally mobile students (IMS), Kelly and Moogan noted that “if the higher education institution does not appreciate that a transition period exists, IMS are disadvantaged before they even begin. IMS cannot learn effectively until the education systems are aligned so that

acclimatization can occur and common ground established” (p. 29). In regard to military friendly initiatives, institutions that fail to address the impact of culture and, more importantly, cultural misalignment will fail to become military friendly.

### **High Stakes of Becoming Military Friendly**

It has been well established that institutions must react to the needs of student veterans through targeted services and programs. Additionally, post-secondary institutions must address organizational culture and cultural misalignment to best serve student veterans. However, it is not enough to simply create services and programs with the goal of serving student veterans. Instead, post-secondary institutions must be intentional in their strategy to imbed military friendliness throughout their organizational culture. The failure of an institution to implement their initiative in an effective and cohesive manner can lead to the institution being perceived as *non*-military friendly.

The financial benefits of enrolling greater numbers of student veterans can impact an institution greatly. Institutions at all levels have focused their efforts on attracting these types of students, and have developed various strategies to become military friendly. However, some institutions, such as for-profit institutions, have been accused of engaging in high-pressure marketing and recruiting tactics that are unethical (Dervarics, 2011). Further stimulating the debate is the for-profit sector’s high loan defaults, high dropout rates, difficulty in transferring credits, and skepticism from employers about the value of the degrees (Lipton, 2010). For-profits schools are accused of offering limited benefits for students while contributing considerable costs to the government (Dervarics).

Senator Tom Harkin (as cited in Lipton, 2010) has said that, “For-profit schools see our active-duty military as a cash cow, an untapped profit resource...It is both a rip

off of the taxpayer and a slap in the face to the people who have risked their lives for our country” (p. A1). Accounts from both former admissions advisers at for-profit institutions and military personnel who have had experience with them validate Senator Harkin’s stance on for-profit institutions (Lipton). Jason Deatherage, former admissions adviser at Colorado Technical University, told the New York Times, “There is such a pressure to simply enroll more vets — we knew that most of them would drop out after the first session...Instead of helping people, too often I felt like we were almost tricking them” (Lipton, p. A1). This in combination with accounts of a for-profit recruiter found in a barracks for wounded marines when only given permission to meet with prospective students at an education center on base has led to the increased focus of legislators on regulating for-profits (Dervarics, 2011).

For-profit institutions are not the only post-secondary institutions that have received criticism regarding their approach to becoming military friendly. Many institutions market themselves as military friendly by appearing on magazine and website lists of military friendly colleges. Without established criteria for these designations, service members and veterans are often misled into believing the institution appearing on the list has been evaluated by an authority on military friendliness (Pope, 2012). Pope also noted that for many of these lists, institutions actually pay to be included, a practice deemed unethical by many higher educational professionals. However, if institutions choose not to participate in these rankings, then they run the risk of appearing *non-military* friendly, a designation that could have serious financial and public relations consequences. Therefore, it is critical for post-secondary institutions to be intentional in

their implementation of military friendly initiatives to avoid engaging in false advertising and failing to meet the needs of their student veterans.

### **Strategic Intentionality**

At this point in the review of the literature, the definition and components of military friendliness have been well established. As this study focused on the implementation of these components, it is important to provide a thorough description of the concept of strategic intentionality as it relates to military friendliness in post-secondary education. Although post-secondary institutions often choose to publicize their dedication to their social responsibility of serving those veterans who serve the greater society, it is important to be cognizant that an altruistic dedication is not the sole purpose of providing targeted services to student veterans. Intentionality is missing from the discussion of military friendliness in higher education in the literature reviewed at this time. When creating and implementing a vision for military friendliness, it is in the best interest of an institution to engage in strategic intentionality. As such, in the following sections, the researcher provides an overview of the definition and history of strategic intent, the stages of strategic intent, and the strategic intentionality that post-secondary institutions can employ to become military friendly.

#### **Defining Strategic Intent**

Coined by Hamel and Prahalad (1989), strategic intent refers to the “obsession with winning” and sustaining the obsession to win that organizations create to achieve their goals. Bellamy, Becker, and Kuwik (2003) have further defined strategic intent as the systematic integration of strategy and implementation that is integral to effectively meeting institutional objectives and obtaining a strategic advantage. Strategic intent goes

beyond ambition to incorporate an active management process that includes: capturing the essence of winning; motivating individuals in the organization by communicating the value of the target; leaving room for contributions from the individual and team; sustaining enthusiasm as circumstances change; and using intent consistently to guide actions (Hamel & Prahalad).

### **Strategic Intent vs. Strategic Planning**

Strategic intent is often confused with strategic planning, a commonly used tool in post-secondary education. It is important to outline how strategic intent differs from strategic planning to best understand how institutions must be intentional when implementing new initiatives. According to Hamel and Prahalad (1989), the strategic planning process is a “feasibility sieve” in which managers are encouraged to be realistic about the ‘how’ and ‘what’ of their strategic plans (p. 152). Strategic planning can highlight the current problems of an organization instead of existing opportunities for the organization in the future (Hamel & Prahalad). As a result, strategic planning creates incremental movement year-by-year toward the institutional goal instead of encouraging institutions to commit to more large scale goals (Hamel & Prahalad). In contrast to the incremental nature of strategic planning, strategic intent is the “obsession with winning at all levels of the organization” that is meant to be sustained by the organization until the vision has been realized (Hamel & Prahalad, p. 150). Hamel and Prahalad emphasized that “the goal of strategic intent is to fold the future back into the present” (p. 152). As such, strategic intent becomes the motivation for the organization and its members to follow through with their actions in becoming the best at what they have identified as their target (Hamel & Prahalad).

## **History of Strategic Intent**

When Hamel and Prahalad (1989) developed the theory of strategic intent for use by business managers, the focus was on how to compete in innovative ways as corporations began to encounter global competitors for the first time. For the first time, Western companies were struggling to anticipate and compete with their global counterparts because their traditional approach to competitor analysis was ineffective (Hamel & Prahalad). By focusing on the existing resources of current competitors, Western companies' strategic approach to competition was reactionary and excluded potential competitors such as Komatsu and Honda (Hamel & Prahalad). According to Hamel and Prahalad, assessing the advantages held by current competitors will not clarify the "resolution, stamina, or inventiveness of potential competitors" and, therefore, "traditional competitor analysis is like a snapshot of a moving car" (p. 64).

Recognizing that Western companies' strategies for competing were ineffective, Hamel and Prahalad (1989) conducted an evaluation of the companies that had been the most successful in the global economy. Hamel and Prahalad found commonalities between these successful competitors that started with an ambition beyond their resources, but also included an obsession with winning at all levels that they deemed strategic intent. Strategic intent assisted companies in visualizing both the anticipated leadership position of the company in the global economy and the criteria through which the company would evaluate their efforts in achieving this position (Hamel & Prahalad). Two contrasting models of strategy emerged from this evaluation. Both models

recognized the following: the problem of competition in a hostile environment with limited resources; profitability is determined by relative competitive advantage; competition against larger competitors is difficult; balance in activities reduces risks; and consistency is needed in action across organizational levels (Hamel & Prahalad).

However, the central focus of one of the models is on maintaining strategic fit while the other focuses on the problem of leveraging resources. The difference in focus impacts how companies respond to competition and the actions they implement (Hamel & Prahalad). Western companies more commonly focus on narrowing their vision to align with their institutional resources. In contrast, Japanese companies were gaining an advantage by utilizing strategic intent to leverage resources through increased organizational learning and attempting to achieve ambitious goals.

Hamel and Prahalad (1989) also identified four strategies that Japanese companies were implementing to gain a strategic advantage including: building layers of advantage; searching for “loose bricks”; changing the terms of engagement; and competing through collaboration. Layers of advantage were built by expanding their “competitive weapons” (Hamel & Prahalad, 1989, p. 69). Applied to military friendliness, this would involve institutions expanding their offering of programs and services for student veterans even if at a risk to the institution. Searching for “loose bricks” involved exploiting the benefits of surprise by engaging in a careful analysis of the competitor’s market and engaging in an attack on the periphery of that competitor’s market territory (Hamel & Prahalad). For institutions seeking to compete in the military friendly economy, this would be analogous to a non-profit, four-year institution offering an online bachelor’s degree program targeted to student veterans. Changing the terms of engagement is refusing to accept the

leader's definition of the industry and is a form of competitive innovation (Hamel & Prahalad). Rather than engage in imitation, companies that utilize competitive innovation use a larger competitor's strengths against them to develop their own capabilities. Lastly, some companies can compete through collaborating using licensing, outsourcing agreements, and joint ventures. Realizing the need to enter the student veteran market as a whole, four-year institutions in the State of Georgia engaged in competitive innovation when they entered the Soldiers 2 Scholars program to compete against institutions that traditionally cornered the student veteran market.

### **Strategic Intent in Higher Education**

The corporations that Hamel and Prahalad (1989) described in their discussion of strategic intent had to face multiple external influences in order to maintain their competitiveness in an ever-changing global economy. Similar to these corporations, post-secondary institutions must have a strong understanding of external influences that they face in the higher education economy, such as evolving societal and cultural principles; politics and legislation; competitive economic factors; technological and instructional advances; and changing student demographics (Hoy & Miskel, 2008). Understanding these influences and intentionally implementing strategies for military friendliness will assist institutions in effectively ascertaining the needs of their organizations and constituents and making key alliances with strategic partners to achieve the designation of "military friendly" (Brown & Gross, 2011).

Despite the evidence that intentionally utilizing strategy has important benefits for corporations, post-secondary education as a whole has yet to fully embrace strategic intent as a guiding force for implementation of new initiatives. Post-secondary



institutions in the United States are often viewed as places for the exchange of ideas, not as businesses. Because the post-secondary institutions in this study are non-profit institutions, it is easy to overlook the application of a traditionally business concept such as strategic intent to the operation of these institutions. However, strategic intent has been applied in smaller segments of higher education. Cognizant of the previous success of corporations in utilizing the facets of strategic intent to compete for business in a global market, researchers in the field of post-secondary education have applied this theory to internationalization in higher education, an initiative for which institutions have had to compete globally for students (e.g., Ayoubi & Massoud, 2007; Cornelius, 2012; Hamel & Prahalad, 1989).

Although post-secondary institutions do not have the luxury of isolating themselves from the competitive market of higher education as whole, they do have the choice of deciding whether or not they want to compete in the student veteran market. If institutions choose to compete in the market, then there must be a high degree of congruence between their strategic intent and their actions in regard to veterans' education (Ayoubi & Massoud, 2007). Those institutions that successfully compete will obtain a strategic advantage through enrolling and retaining greater numbers of student veterans, and essentially receiving a higher proportion of funding from veterans' educational benefits than their competitors.

### **Role of Leadership in Strategic Intent**

As noted in the discussion of military friendliness in higher education, the efforts of an institution in becoming military friendly must be embedded in the organizational culture of the institution. Smith (1994) identified the existing culture of an institution as

the principal barrier to an institution changing its strategic direction. More specifically, the beliefs of individuals within an institution about what is possible can greatly limit the success of an institution in achieving their vision. According to Smith, leadership plays a critical role in ensuring that the process for changing strategic direction is a successful effort. In this process, leadership teams transform not only their selves, but also the institutional culture of the organization to create a commitment to a future significantly different than the present (Smith). The new vision for the institution gains commitment prior to any methods for achieving being revealed (Smith). Thus, the ability of an institution's leadership team to envision a future and garner commitment from individuals within the organization is deemed the Merlin Factor™ (Smith). These successful change agents in leadership engage in three tasks to achieve this goal including co-invention, engagement, and practice.

**Co-invention.** Smith (1994) interviewed four leaders deemed to have the “Merlin Factor” regarding strategic intent in their own organizations. These leaders from NASA, Campbell's Soup, The Rouse Company, and Land Rover shared commonalities for the co-invention stage of cultural change (Smith). In the co-invention stage of cultural change, leadership within an organization creates a vision for the future. Among the “Merlin” leaders interviewed by Smith, three common themes emerged including “become more than oneself” (p. 69) and “think the unthinkable” (p. 70), but also “become ambassadors from the future to the present” (p. 72).

Leaders in the co-invention stage “become more than oneself” by undergoing a personal transformation (Smith, 1994, p. 69). These leaders' willingness to be changed by their commitment to the organization's future increases their success in inspiring

change in others within the institution (Smith). What begins as a personal vision for the organization becomes strategic intent as others within the organization commit to the newly revealed future (Smith). At this stage of the process, a markedly different approach to thinking and a shared commitment among leadership is evident (Smith).

Leaders in this stage also begin to “think the unthinkable” (Smith, 1994, p. 70). Leaders must go beyond the existing cultural norms of the organization to envision a creative future. As noted by Hamel and Prahalad (1989), it can be difficult for individuals in an organization to envision a new future when there are limited resources to achieve this future. In order to overcome these cultural barriers, leadership within the organization must engage in creative thinking about means (Smith). By recognizing that existing ways of thinking are unproductive in achieving strategic intent, the leader must begin to think about future possibilities.

Lastly, “Merlin” leaders must also “become ambassadors from the future to the past” (Smith, 1994, p. 71). Hamel and Prahalad (1989) described strategic intent as a mechanism for bringing the focus of the future back to the present. In this stage of the process, the task of the leader is to represent and enact the vision in a publicly visible manner (Smith). Through confident and open interactions with members of the organization, leaders gain commitment and sets in most the organization’s movement towards the strategic intent (Smith).

**Engagement.** In the co-invention stage of strategic intent, the process is focused on the efforts of the leadership. However, in the engagement stage outlined by Smith (1994), all levels of the organization are encouraged to participate in the strategic intent of the organization based upon their own individual commitments, and change and

development activities result from the newly gained commitment. During this stage, Hamel and Prahalad (1989) focused on the “obsession with winning” at all levels of the organization is at the forefront of the discussion. Engagement cannot be a mandate from leadership, but rather individuals must engage in co-invention for his or herself. Central to this engagement is collaborative effort between the leadership and the individuals of the organization (Smith). Through an exploratory process, strategic intent, or a focus on winning, becomes integrated into the group identity of the organization (Smith). Smith has identified three strategies for increasing engagement including: enrolling other people as co-creators; putting people to the test; and building Dragonslayer teams.

In order to instill engagement in the strategic intent of an organization, involvement by individuals must be by choice and not a mandate from leadership (Smith, 1994). This strategy is described as “enrolling other people as co-creators” (Smith, p. 74). The strength of strategic intent is dependent upon the degree of commitment to it from members within the organization (Smith). Therefore, the process must be collaborative with individuals choosing to commit to the strategic intent and apply their own effort to see its realization. For the leader to be successful in their efforts, they must be willing to refrain from exerting their own personal perspective, allow others to ambitiously shape the future of the organization in their own context, and engage in dialogue (Smith).

Engagement is also conceptualized by Smith (1994) as, “putting people to the test” in order to determine commitment to the vision of the organization (p. 75). This visionary leadership puts “organizations to the test” as a whole and clarifies who is engaging in a co-creator role within the organization (Smith, p. 75). By testing the

individuals and the organization, the commitment to leadership, strategic intent, and the organization is strengthened (Smith). This process creates cultural alignment as people are empowered to act flexibly and with initiative with commitment to the strategic intent (Smith).

Inherent in setting up strategic intent is a misalignment between the ambitions of the organization and the available resources (Smith, 1994). Strategic intent according to Hamel and Prahalad (1989) is leveraging resources creatively to reach an ambitious vision for the future. An initiative such as this can bring distrust and frustration to individuals within an organization who are not yet committed to the strategic intent. Thus, it is highly important to develop what Smith denotes as “Dragonslayer Teams,” teams with a shared commitment to the strategic intent, who are capable of achievements deemed impossible under the traditional approach of the organization (Smith). Using the strategy of successful achievements, the perceptions of what is possible becomes modified.

**Practice.** In the practice stage of the process, organizational learning is emphasized to ensure the actions of the organization are in accordance with the values and shared future delineated by the organization’s strategic intent (Smith, 1994). In this stage, additional change agents and champions for the new culture are created (Smith). Smith has identified strategies that are central to the stage of practice including the following: “maintaining the future focus” (p. 78); “converting opposition to momentum” (p. 79); and “looking for magic” (p. 80).

By “maintaining the future focus,” organizations must recognize the importance of reviewing assumptions about not only an organization’s best path to achieve strategic

intent, but also the institutions' current actions (Smith, 1994, p. 78). When problems arise, organizations can use these occurrences as opportunities to identify the unknown about the future (Smith). According to Smith, "Merlin" leaders exhibit "grace under pressure" to remain steadfast to their commitment to the future of the organization (p. 79).

Opposition and resistance are common results of a stark difference between the present and the proposed future of an organization (Smith, 1994). Personal investment of an individual in the culture of an organization is common, and when there is change towards strategic intent reactions may vary (Smith). Through this opposition and resistance, a leader will gain valuable insight into the commitment of individuals within the organization to the strategic intent. Because commitment to strategic intent is always voluntary, some members may choose to no longer be involved further clarifying for the leader who the supporters are for the future of the organization (Smith).

Lastly, "looking for magic" is an important strategy for the practice stage of strategic intent (Smith, 1994, p. 80). This final leadership task involves leaders consistently looking for "magic of unanticipated opportunity" (Smith, p. 80). Many possibilities exist beyond what was identified during the initial commitment to strategic intent. Therefore, it is the task of the leader to maintain the perspective that there are no certainties and that each new development represents an opportunity (Smith). As such, leaders must be cognizant of how long term strategy and developing opportunities interact to impact strategic intent within an organization.

### **Indicators of Intentional Military Friendliness**

As this literature review has revealed, there are few strategies developed and ready for use by institutions that seek to become military friendly. Without the ability to follow a step-by-step, one size fits all approach for military friendliness, post-secondary institutions must look to the strategies developed by scholars when implementing similar initiatives in higher education. In a study of universities in the United Kingdom, Ayoubi and Massoud (2007) examined the degree of match between an institution's intent to become internationalized and their achievement in doing so. In evaluating the implementation of internationalization initiatives, Ayoubi and Massoud found successful institutions engaged in three common phases of internationalization including; setting up the design; choosing the best way to activate the design with real actions; and evaluating this process by comparing the design with implementation. Institutions implementing military friendly initiatives should strategically develop their approach utilizing these phases.

**Setting Up the Design.** If post-secondary institutions want to successfully implement military initiatives on campus, they must first determine what being military friendly means for their institution and take steps to "set up the design" (Ayoubi & Massoud, 2007). In this initial stage, the institution must clearly define what their vision of military friendliness represents at their institution. O'Herrin (2011) offered steps institutions should take to become military friendly including identifying specific needs of veterans through focus groups before initiating programs; developing tracking mechanisms; creating specific campus networks and contacts; establishing student veteran groups; creating learning communities; and streamlining disability and veteran services. In addition, institutions must ensure that their financial aid, student services and

academic affairs departments are equipped and ready to handle the unique needs of student veterans (Bradley, 2009; Brown & Gross, 2011). Institutions must have developed a detailed map of their military friendly initiative. Without having developed this conceptual map of what they want their initiative to look like in action, institutions run the risk of implementing programs and services in a haphazard fashion thus leading to a *non*-military friendly reputation among student veterans. Once the design of an institution's military friendly initiative is set up, an institution can move towards activating their military friendly design. However, it is important to note that central to an institution's strategic intentionality is the ability to adapt to changes in the environment. Although the vision should remain the same, the design may change to meet this vision as new developments occur. Without the ability to adapt, the conceptual map developed moves from a roadmap for inspiration to a strategic plan.

**Activating the Design.** The activating the design phase of a military friendly initiative should consist of two components: implementing the targeted programs and services on campus and most importantly marketing the institution as military friendly off campus to potential students and other stakeholders. How institutions implement their initiatives and market themselves depends heavily on the type of institution. Community colleges and for-profit post-secondary institutions will most likely have a very different approach than traditional four-year, non-profit institutions.

Because for-profit institutions and community colleges have historically dominated the student veteran market, non-profit, four-year institutions are at a disadvantage in attracting and retaining student veterans and must engage in effective marketing strategies (Dervarics, 2011). Community colleges are not only known for their



distance learning options targeted for student veterans, but also more than 200 of them are already listed on the G.I. Jobs List of *Military Friendly Schools*<sup>TM</sup> (Bradley, 2009). In contrast, four-year post-secondary institutions have had the reputation of having non-favorable credit transfer policies and generally ignoring the uniqueness of student veterans' needs (Brown & Gross, 2011). Therefore, these four-year institutions must extensively market how strong their military friendly initiative is and how they offer value above and beyond what for-profit and community colleges can offer to student veterans.

**Evaluating the Process.** Marketing themselves as military friendly is imperative for post-secondary institutions to attract student veterans to enroll in their institutions. However, evaluating the military friendliness of an institution is not only highly subjective, but an important component of the memorandum of understanding required for participation in the "Principles of Excellence" program. Any institution can call themselves a military friendly institution, but receiving this designation from an outside organization strengthens the credibility of the institution's efforts. However, with multiple organizations and experts giving this designation to institutions, there is confusion on not only what exactly military friendly means, but which organization's designation is best.

Brown and Gross (2011) have defined a military friendly institution as one that adheres to the following: the principles of the membership in the Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (SOC); the nine principles of good practice for learning assessment of the Military Installation Voluntary Educational Review (MIVER); and the American Council of Education (ACE) standards for credit evaluation. Additionally, post-

secondary institutions that are military friendly should conform to the values and regulations outlined by the “Principles of Excellence” program (DVA, 2013). It is evident that there are multiple sources giving out the designation of military friendly and each source defines their own criteria for military friendliness. However, an institution can evaluate their efforts using criteria of what being military friendly entails for their institution that they first set out. By implementing surveys and focus groups of key stakeholders, institutions can determine if they are effectively marketing themselves as military friendly. Additionally, using the focus on outcomes encouraged by the “Principles of Excellence” program, institutions can evaluate their success in effectively transitioning their student veterans into the civilian world and the value of the degrees they provide.

### **Chapter Summary**

Becoming military friendly has a potential strategic advantage for post-secondary institutions seeking to be competitive in the student veteran market. This study proposes that strategic intentionality has an important role in the implementation of military friendly initiatives in post-secondary education. It is through commitment of the leadership of an institution and its key stakeholders, that an institution can develop strategic intent to become military friendly and gain a competitive advantage in the student veteran market. In this literature review, the components of military friendly programs and services have been outlined. Additionally, strategic intent has been proposed as a framework for evaluating the process of becoming military friendly in higher education.

It is critical for institutions to implement military friendly initiatives in an effective and efficient manner or else risk not only losing valuable market share, but failing to meet the needs of an important population of their students. Therefore, the purpose of this multiple case study was to determine if organizational intentionality impacted the successful implementation of military friendly initiatives. The findings of this study have important implications for both post-secondary institutions and student veterans. It is the goal of the researcher that this study will help post-secondary institutions better meet their goals of becoming military friendly, as well as assist student veterans in more effectively choosing the institution at which to utilize their educational benefits.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODS**

In this chapter, the methods for exploring the research questions that direct this study are outlined. For this investigation, the researcher implemented a qualitative research design for determining the role of strategic intent in post-secondary institutions becoming military friendly. Therefore, it is important to describe the major underlying assumptions of the study and the researcher's worldview to understand the rationale for the choice of a qualitative research design. As such, the major underlying assumptions and researcher's stances are described first followed by the research questions, research design, selection of the sites, participants, instrumentation, data collection and analysis, and ethical considerations.

In this study, the researcher sought to determine the role that strategic intent plays in the success of a post-secondary institution becoming military friendly. The application of the components of the theory of strategic intent to the military friendly initiative in post-secondary education serve as a framework to evaluate the how institutional intent to become military friendly has impacted successful actions towards that goal. The focus of this study is not on what constitutes military friendliness, but instead the degree of strategic intentionality that higher education institutions implement in order to achieve a competitive advantage in the student veteran market. As such, this study sought to answer the research questions delineated in the following section.

#### **Research Questions**

Because post-secondary institutions need to pursue the designation of military friendly in order to be competitive in the student veteran market, this research study

focused on the following central question: What is the role of strategic intent in becoming military friendly for post-secondary institutions in the State of Georgia? This question was addressed by the following sub-questions:

1. What is the strongest indicator of strategic intent in military friendly institutions in the State of Georgia?
2. What are the best practices for becoming military friendly for post-secondary institutions in the State of Georgia in relation to strategic intent?

### **Researcher's Roles and Philosophical Stances**

The researcher, a student affairs professional at a post-secondary institution, assumed that intentionality impacted successful implementation of new initiatives in higher education and that the theory of strategic intentionality is appropriate for use in the post-secondary education environment. Additionally, the researcher, who ascribes to a pragmatist worldview, assumes that the use of qualitative methods in the form of a case study and descriptive survey should measure the degree of strategic intent of the participating post-secondary institutions and the best practices that these institutions utilized to achieve military friendliness.

Issues related to military friendly initiatives and meeting the needs of student veterans are important to the researcher for multiple reasons, and as such, may lead to some personal bias. The researcher has provided disability-related services to the student veterans, served on a Military Task Force, and collaborated on projects with the Military Resource Center at her home institution. Additionally, the researcher has several family members and friends who are utilizing their veterans' educational benefits through the G.I. Bill. This familiarity with student veterans and military friendliness not only creates

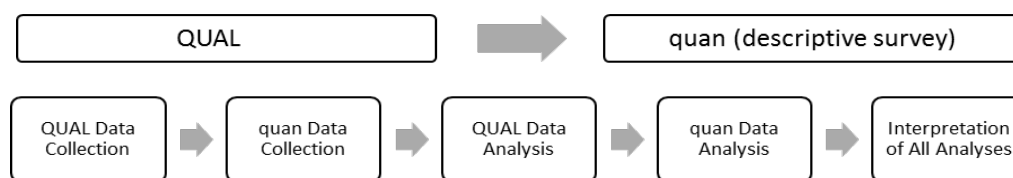
a great deal of commitment and investment of the researcher in this study, but may also lead to some personal bias. The researcher may be overly critical of initiatives at other institutions and must remain cognizant of this bias when analyzing data. The strategies to be used by the researcher to contain these biases will be presented in the data analysis section of this chapter.

### **Research Design**

The purpose of this study was to determine the role that strategic intentionality plays in post-secondary institutions becoming military friendly. The researcher utilized a qualitative approach to inquiry. A qualitative approach is justified in that it allows for an inductive approach to be taken, a focus on individual meanings, and the complex nature of certain situations and topics to be explored (Creswell, 2008). Because the concept of military friendliness is complex, the use of a quantitative method would be insufficient in exploring the role that strategic intent plays in post-secondary institutions becoming military friendly. Therefore, a qualitative approach overcomes the limitations of a quantitative approach to create a more in-depth investigation of the role of strategic intent in military friendly initiatives in higher education.

The study utilized a multiple case study design in which the data were collected in the form of interviews, document and audio-visual material analysis, field observations, and a descriptive survey (Creswell, 2008). The model that illustrates this data collection design is provided in Figure 3.1.

*Figure 3.1. Model of data collection and analysis in this study*



*Figure 3.1.* The model depicts the data collection process of this study. Qualitative data were collected during a case study that included interviews, field observations, audio visual material analyses, and document analyses. Quantitative data were collected from a descriptive survey. Qualitative and quantitative data were first analyzed separately, then an interpretation of both analyses was conducted.

In this study, the primary design was qualitative data collection in the form of a case study, which consists of interviews with campus officials, field observations, audio-visual material analyses and document analyses at three four-year, public, post-secondary institutions in the state of Georgia. A descriptive survey was embedded into the case study and completed by the official on campus who serves as the primary contact for military-related issues on campus, as well as other professionals identified as having a significant role in the institution's effort in becoming military friendly.

A collective case study, also known as a multiple case study, has been chosen for this investigation as it allows for the selection of multiple cases to explore the central issue selected (Creswell, 2007). Stake (2005) described a multiple case study as when “a number of cases may be studied jointly in order to investigate a phenomenon, populations or general condition” (p. 445). According to Yin (2008), a case study is the preferred method of investigation when “(a) ‘how’ or ‘why’ questions are being posed, (b) the researcher has little control over events, and (c) the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon with real-life context” (p. 2). Since the focus of this research is on how institutions are fulfilling their intent to become military friendly instead of what

constitutes military friendliness, a collective case study is an appropriate choice of method for the qualitative phase of the study.

Case studies are normally conducted to meet one of three purposes: a detailed description of the phenomenon; possible explanations of the phenomenon; or, an evaluation of the phenomenon (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). The ultimate goal of this research was an evaluation of the role that strategic intent plays in a post-secondary institution becoming military friendly. Saldaña (2011) has noted that researchers pursuing a case study may choose to do so deliberately, strategically, or for convenience. Recognizing the need to engage in an in-depth evaluation of the issue of becoming military friendly in post-secondary education, the researcher has deliberately chosen to conduct a collective case study at three post-secondary institutions with a common designation of military friendly in the State of Georgia, as this design will best answer the overarching research questions of the study.

The rationale for choosing a qualitative research design has been established. However, it is also important to outline how the findings from the qualitative data collection were interpreted and presented. Upon completion of the study, the researcher presented an interpretation of both the qualitative data collected and the findings of the descriptive survey respectively, but more importantly an interpretation of the integration of the findings were conducted. This interpretation is presented in the discussion section of Chapter IV. Overall, a qualitative approach to inquiry was justified in this study because it provided the opportunity for an in-depth investigation of the phenomenon of military friendliness.



## **Selection of Sites**

Identifying cases to study is an important component in conducting this type of qualitative research (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). Military friendliness is important to a broad spectrum of institutions and individuals at all levels of post-secondary education including community colleges, for-profit institutions, and public and private non-profit institutions. However, it is of the greatest importance for public and private, non-profit, four-year institutions to become military friendly as they have historically commanded a smaller share of the veterans' educational market. Therefore, the selection of a case that provides a broad, information-rich environment to study is highly important.

As noted by Stake (2005), although generalization should not be emphasized in case study research, instrumental case studies can be utilized to provide insight into an issue that can be a step toward applying the findings to other institutions. In order to identify these institutions, a typology was developed by the researcher. Balance and variety are important when developing the typology; however, the opportunity to learn is more important (Stake). Institutions in this study were strategically selected to provide typical case scenarios that may advance the understanding of how institutions that seek to become military friendly are able to do so effectively or ineffectively. When identifying institutions to serve as cases for this study, the researcher chose several selection criteria including: eligibility to receive veterans' educational benefits; participation in the Department of Veterans Affairs' "Principles of Excellence" Program; and specific institutional characteristics.

Title IV of the Higher Education Act establishes rules for higher education institutions in regard to student financial assistance programs. In order for an institution

to participate in any federal student assistance program, they must have signed a written agreement with the Secretary of Education. Veterans' educational benefits, such as the G.I. Bill, are considered a federal student assistance program. Therefore, the Title IV designation indicates that a school is eligible to receive veterans' educational benefits, but does not classify an institution as military friendly. In the State of Georgia, there are 211 Title IV institutions that are designated as eligible to receive veterans' educational benefits, but only 109 of these 211 institutions are considered by the Department of Veterans Affairs as "Principles of Excellence" schools. The institutions selected for this study were identified by the Department of Veterans Affairs as a "Principles of Excellence" institution, which is suggestive of both the institution's intent to become military friendly and their actions towards that intent.

Of the 109 institutions considered to be "Principles of Excellence" schools, the researcher selected three public, four-year, post-secondary institutions as cases for this study. All institutions are members of the University System of Georgia, are eligible to receive veterans' educational benefits, and have been identified by the Department of Veterans Affairs as a "Principles of Excellence" institution.

Additionally, because the literature (e.g., Bradley, 2009; Greenberg, 2008) has shown that student veterans are more commonly non-traditional students who do not reside on campus, the researcher chose to limit the sample to the "primarily nonresidential" classification of institutions according to the Carnegie Foundation classification system. As most student veterans are pursuing undergraduate degrees, the researcher chose institutions with high undergraduate populations as an additional criterion as is consistent with the literature (Bradley, 2009; Greenberg, 2008). In order to

maintain confidentiality, institutions are identified using code names and numbers: Military Friendly Institution 1, Military Friendly Institution 2, and Military Friendly Institution 3.

### **Sample and Sampling**

A purposive sampling strategy, also called purposeful sampling, was implemented in this investigation as individuals and sites for study were identified that can inform an understanding of the research problem (Creswell, 2007). Teddlie and Yu (2007) have defined purposive sampling as selecting individuals or institutions “based on specific purposes associated with answering a research study’s questions” (p. 77). According to Patton (1990), the advantage of purposive sampling is that it allows for the selection of information-rich cases to be studied in depth. The researcher selected three individuals at each of the identified case study institution who have had experience in the institutional efforts of becoming military friendly to participate in the study. According to Creswell (2002), three to five participants constitute an acceptable sample size for case study research. As such, this is an appropriate sample size for this case study because it allows for appropriate thematic saturation. The specific individuals selected for interviews were identified by the primary contact at each institution, the Director or Coordinator of Veterans Affairs, once the case study institutions were identified. Participants were selected based upon their role in the institution’s efforts in becoming military friendly as they are in the best position to answer the research questions accurately (Patton, 1990).

### **Instrumentation**

In this investigation, the researcher employed a survey to determine the degree of contribution of intentionality to the military friendliness of post-secondary institutions in

the State of Georgia. The role of strategic intent in the successful implementation of internationalization by post-secondary institutions has been explored by researchers such as Ayoubi and Massoud (2007) and Cornelius (2012). The *Organizational Intentionality In Campus Internationalization Survey* was developed using the factors identified by Hamel and Prahalad (1989), Prahalad and Hamel (1990), and Smith (1994) to investigate organizational intentionality and best practices by institutions implementing internationalization initiatives. The process of implementing an internationalization initiative for post-secondary institutions can be conceptualized as analogous to implementing a military friendliness initiative. As such, the researcher has been given permission by Cornelius to adapt the *Organizational Intentionality In Campus Internationalization Survey* to the topic of military friendliness (see Appendix A).

The *Organizational Intentionality In Campus Internationalization Survey* was developed by Cornelius (2012) utilizing the materials given to him by Smith (1994) and reviewed by a panel of experts. Content validity was established through pilot-testing of the instrument by the Assistant Vice President of International Studies at his home institution. According to Creswell (2008), a survey that has been modified may not have the same validity and reliability as the initial survey. As such, after the initial adaptation, the instrument was reviewed by the former Director of Military Affairs at the researcher's home institution.

The adapted *Organizational Intentionality In Campus Internationalization Survey* is referred to as the *Organizational Intentionality In Becoming Military Friendly Survey* for this study. The survey is divided into two major sections. The first major section includes questions on the demographics of the study's participants (Cornelius, 2012)

including the following: current position; years of service in the position, in military initiatives, in the university, and in higher education; and level of education.

Additionally, the researcher has added questions regarding the military service of the respondent and/or family members, as well as the use of veterans' educational benefits by the respondent and/or family members. The second major section of the study was designed by Cornelius to determine the degree of intentionality in internationalization as reported by the senior officer of international education at the university. In this study, the survey was adapted to determine the degree of intentionality in becoming military friendly as reported by the veterans' official at each institution.

The second major section of this survey is divided into 3 sub-sections. These 3 sub-sections correspond to the three areas of strategic intent including: creating a vision; intentionality in organizational commitment; and intentionality in practice (Smith, 1994). The response format is a 5-point Likert-type scale with number one meaning "least agree with" and number five meaning "most agree with."

In this study, the strategic intent of the selected institutions was also explored through an interview protocol developed by Cornelius (2012) and adapted to the topic of military friendliness by the researcher. The protocol developed by Cornelius was comprised of questions based on a thematic analysis of literature focused on the best practices related to intentional higher education internationalization. The researcher has conducted a thematic analysis of literature on the best practices for post-secondary institutions on becoming military friendly and adapted the survey accordingly. Topics addressed in the interview include: reasons the institution values being designated as military friendly; the decision makers and key stakeholders; the targeted programs,

services, and policies that were implemented; and the advantages of being military friendly for their individual institution.

### **Data Collection**

Creswell (2007) has noted that in case study research the researcher is the key instrument for collecting and analyzing data. Researchers conducting this type of research are not bound by instruments developed by others in the collection of their data; instead, they gather data from multiple sources and conduct their own analyses (Creswell). During this study, the researcher gathered data from multiple sources including interviews with campus officials, document and audio-visual material reviews, field observations, and a descriptive survey. All data were collected during site visits at the identified institutions.

Prior to beginning data collection, permission was obtained from the Georgia Southern University Institutional Review Board to survey and interview human subjects. In order to gain access to the sites, the researcher asked for the assistance of a shared colleague who acted as the gatekeeper, initiating contact and requesting participation. The official at each of the participating institutions was contacted by the researcher via email, and introduced to the study and its prospective impact on military friendliness in post-secondary education. The researcher then asked for the institution's willingness to participate in a case study. Upon agreement, a one-day site visit was scheduled at the institution.

Prior to arrival at the institution, the researcher asked for the assistance of the veterans' official at each institution selected for a case study in identifying the key decision makers and stakeholders involved in the institution's efforts in becoming

military friendly. Each veterans' official was given the same instructions for identifying participants by the researcher and chose participants who were involved in the military friendly initiative at his or her home institution. The researcher reviewed the selections to ensure that the participants identified were able to inform the research topic. During the site visit to the participating institutions, one-hour, face-to-face, structured interviews were conducted with the veterans official and the identified professionals to explore the strategic intentionality and best practices of the institution in implementing a military friendly initiative. The researcher contacted all identified participants and asked for their participation. An interview schedule was developed prior to the site visit. Interviews were audio-recorded using a digital recorder and transcribed using a transcription service.

The researcher also asked for the assistance of the veterans' official in identifying and collecting documents, such as mission and vision statements, as well as any applicable audio-visual materials prior to the site visit. The researcher also searched the institution's website for materials related to military friendly initiatives. During the search of the institution's website, the researcher collected strategic planning documents from the past 5 years at each institution when available, as well as collected documents that resulted from searches of the words "veterans", "military friendly", "student veterans", and "G.I. Bill". Additionally, the researcher collected documents from the veterans resource website at each institution.

During the site visit, the researcher conducted field observations prior to beginning the interviews, during time periods between interviews, and after interviews with participants. While conducting field observations, the researcher observed the physical location of the military resource center in relation to buildings such as the

student union, library, and other buildings where students congregate. The researcher reviewed signage and campus maps for directions to veterans resources. Additionally, the researcher looked for symbols and signs of military friendliness throughout campus including watching digital signage in a variety of buildings and reviewing bulletin boards. Lastly, all participants who were interviewed also were asked to complete the *Organizational Intentionality In Becoming Military Friendly Survey*.

### **Data Analysis**

Data collected from the *Organizational Intentionality In Becoming Military Friendly Survey* were analyzed using descriptive statistics to determine the degree of contribution of intentionality to the military friendliness of the participating post-secondary institution. The researcher used the same scoring methods for the *Organizational Intentionality In Becoming Military Friendly Survey* as Cornelius (2012). Each answer on the 5 columns on the Likert-type scale will correspond to a percentage using the following algorithm: 1=20%, 2=40%, 3=60%, 4=80%, 5=100% (Cornelius). The survey consisted of 10 questions in each of the 3 sections based upon the Smith's (1994) stages of strategic intent. All answers in each section were averaged to show an overall percentage outcome for that individual section. An overall percentage score was then tabulated by averaging all responses for the questions of the survey which corresponded to the overall degree of contribution of intentionality in becoming military friendly.

The researcher utilized the QSR NVivo software program to analyze qualitative data collected from the case study. Creswell (2007) provided advantages for utilizing computer software program in qualitative research. These advantages include: storing



and organizing data in a convenient way; locating text associated with a code or theme; locating common passages or segments that relate to two or more code labels; making comparisons among code labels; conceptualizing different levels of abstraction; concept mapping; ability to write and store memos as codes; and creating a template for coding data (Creswell). Through using QSR NVivo for analysis, the researcher was able to look more closely at the data in an effective and efficient manner.

According to Huberman and Miles (1994), data analysis in qualitative research is not a one size fits all approach; instead, it is a more customized approach. There are multiple approaches to data analysis in qualitative research, but it is the approach presented by Huberman and Miles that is the most appropriate for use in this study. Huberman and Miles have suggested a systematic approach to analysis that fits with the researcher's pragmatist paradigm and will enhance the probability that the findings of the study inform the best practices of other higher education professionals. Central to all approaches to qualitative data analysis is the steps of coding the data, combining codes into broader categories or themes, and displaying and making comparisons of the data in graphs, tables, and charts (Creswell, 2007). Researchers conducting qualitative inquiry engage in description, classification, or interpretation (Creswell). In this case study, each activity was incorporated at a more in-depth level.

The first step in the analysis of data was utilizing NVivo to manage the data in an appropriate format (Creswell, 2007). Each previously recorded interview was uploaded into the software system in audio format, listened to in its entirety to re-familiarize the researcher with the content of the data, and then sent to GMR Transcription to be transcribed verbatim. The transcripts of the interview were loaded into NVivo and, as

suggested by Agar (1980), transcripts were read through multiple times to get an overall conceptualization of each case before coding began. The researcher then described each case holistically.

The second phase in the data analysis was classification of the interview data through coding using NVivo software. Researchers engaging in qualitative investigation have the choice between using inductive coding, deductive coding, or using a hybrid of the two approaches to coding (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2008). In this study, the researcher chose to begin the data analysis using a deductive approach to coding followed by an inductive approach, open-coding. The researcher generated a preliminary coding list from a review of the literature. This preliminary coding list was loaded into NVivo for data analysis.

After the initial analysis of the data using the preliminary coding list, the researcher engaged in open-coding to further analyze the data. During open-coding, a researcher will take information from a transcript and segment it into categories of information (Creswell, 2007). After open-coding, the transcripts were read through an additional time. Important statements were highlighted and notes were made in the margins using NVivo. These statements were then reevaluated for deeper levels of meaning, categorized based on their meaning, and initial codes for further analysis were formed. Once the initial codes were developed, the researcher further analyzed them for deeper levels of meaning in the interpretation stage of data analysis and re-aggregated them into themes. The relationships between the themes were then analyzed and a diagram created to visualize and refine the relationships identified through the data analysis.

Data gained from documents, audio-visual materials, and field observations were also be uploaded into NVivo for management, but did need to be transcribed. In this step of the data analysis, the researcher used an *a priori* method of coding. Through this method of coding, researchers can utilize “prefigured” codes or “emergent” categories (Creswell, 2007). For this segment of analysis, the researcher used “prefigured” codes developed from the literature on strategic intent and military friendliness, but remained open to additional codes that emerged during the analysis.

### **Presentation of Findings**

In this study, a discussion serves as the primary form of data reporting with charts, tables, and figures being used as a secondary form to highlight the interpretations of the researcher. The organization of the report includes a presentation of the qualitative findings of the case study followed by a presentation of the findings from the survey and an overall interpretation using both sources. The qualitative findings obtained through interviews, content analysis, and observations were used to answer the research questions regarding the role of intentionality and the best practices in becoming military friendly as well as the strongest indicator of organizational intentionality in becoming military friendly. The results of the survey were used to strengthen the findings from the case study and identify any areas of discrepancy between participants. The results for each section of the survey along with the overall outcome were discussed for each participating institution and compared to the demographic characteristics of the survey respondent. The researcher also presents the qualitative data and compares the information gained with the demographic characteristics of each interviewee. The

researcher then mixed the findings from both phases of the investigation to illustrate relationships between intentionality and military friendliness.

### **Standards of Quality and Verification**

Creswell (2007) has noted that there are many standards available for assessing the quality of qualitative studies. Meeting these standards not only enhances the trustworthiness of the study, but also increases the confidence of the researcher that the research questions have been accurately answered. Lincoln and Guba (2005) have stated that trustworthiness of a study depends upon establishing the following: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. For this investigation, the researcher utilized several strategies to strengthen the trustworthiness of this investigation in alignment with the guidelines posited by Lincoln and Guba.

In order for a case study to be considered trustworthy, or valid, the researcher must establish credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 2005). Credibility can be established by addressing personal bias through reflexivity. Reflexivity is accomplished through examining “what the researcher knows” and “how the researcher came to know this” (Berg, 2004, p. 154). In order to reflexively address personal bias, the researcher journaled during data analysis in this study. Additionally, the researcher provides direct quotes from participants in the discussion section.

Dependability and confirmability can be established through triangulation (Creswell, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 2005). Stake (2005) identified two common procedures for validation of data in case studies including: redundancy of data gathering and procedural challenges to explanation. Both procedures were incorporated in this study. Additionally, because it is difficult for repetition to be achieved in observations

and interpretations, triangulation can also clarify meaning by identifying the multiple ways that cases are perceived (Stake). In this study, validation occurs in multiple formats. The interview protocol was evaluated for face validity by an official on the Military Taskforce at the researcher's home institution and a methodologist prior to interviews being conducted. Lastly, the data on strategic intent was also triangulated by a content analysis of institutional documents.

Lastly, according to Creswell (2007), decisions about a study's transferability can be made based upon the researcher's ability to provide rich, thick description. In this study, the researcher provided this level of description by describing in detail both the participants and settings so that readers may determine if the findings of this study are applicable at their institution. The researcher also reviewed and analyzed the institution's mission statement, vision statement, and strategic plans regarding military friendly initiatives when available, as well as any available audio-visual materials. This analysis allowed the researcher to develop a more complete conceptualization of the institution's intent to become military friendly. Field observations were also conducted as an additional source of data. Therefore, in the qualitative investigation of this study, the researcher presents four data sets including: structured interviews, document analyses, a study of audio-visual materials, and researcher observations.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Independent of the type of qualitative research being conducted, ethical considerations must be present in the mind of qualitative researchers throughout the data collection, analysis, and dissemination processes (Creswell, 2007). In a case study, the researcher is providing a composite of the participants' individual contributions

(Creswell). As such, it is important for the researcher to gain support from participants, provide information about the nature and purpose of the study, and refrain from deception (Creswell).

In this study, the policies of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Georgia Southern University were followed along with the guidelines for ethical research provided by the American Psychological Association. The researcher has completed IRB training from both the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI). Participation in this study was completely voluntary and informed consent was obtained from all participants. The researcher explained to the participants that the risks associated with participation in this study were believed to be no greater than what is expected during everyday life. However, if at any time, a participant had expressed a wish to end their participation or to not respond to any question(s), they would have been instructed that they were allowed to do so with no penalty.

For the document analysis component of this study, documents that were collected from the institution were publicly available either on the institution's website or on campus. Information collected from the participants in the interview and documents from the website are presented by the researcher in such a manner that participants cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the participants. Pseudonyms are being used for all participant names and the names of the institutions. All information has been and will remain confidential and data will be protected according to the standards of the Institutional Review Board at the researcher's home institution including encryption of all electronic files.

### **Limitations, Delimitations, and Assumptions**

This study utilizes data from individual interviews to approximate the intentional strategies utilized by post-secondary institutions in becoming military friendly, and as such, is subject to response bias. Although bias is acceptable in qualitative research, a response bias in answering the researcher's questions in the interviews may result in the researcher developing an inaccurate conceptualization of the strategic intent as it relates to the military friendliness of the institution. Because of the high stakes in the student veteran market, institutional personnel may have responded how they intend to be perceived and not how their individual institutions are actually functioning.

Conversely, the delimitation of using post-secondary institutions that are participants in the Department of Veterans Affairs' Principles of Excellence Program allows for the researcher to successfully identify institutions that value the designation of military friendly. This delimitation provided the best opportunity for the congruence between intent and action to be evaluated.

Lastly, the assumptions of this study are that institutions that want to compete in the student veteran market do so by implementing programs and services targeted to student veterans. If institutions are being successful in competing in the student veteran market, then it is assumed they will have greater numbers of student veterans enrolled in their institutions, receive greater amounts of funding, and have a higher market share.

### **Chapter Summary**

Becoming military friendly has a potential strategic advantage for post-secondary institutions seeking to be competitive in the student veteran market. While the individual components of military friendly programs and services have been outlined frequently

across multiple studies, what remains unexplored is how these institutions implement military friendly initiatives in a successful manner. It is critical for institutions to implement these initiatives in an effective and efficient manner or else they risk not only losing valuable market share, but failing to meet the needs of an important population of their students.

Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative study was to determine if strategic intentionality impacts the successful implementation of military friendly initiatives. The findings of this study have important implications for both post-secondary institutions and student veterans. It is the goal of the researcher that this study will help post-secondary institutions not only better meet their goals of becoming military friendly through effective program design and implementation, but also gain the strategic advantage they desire in the student veteran market. Equally as important, the findings of this study will assist student veterans in more effectively choosing the institution at which to utilize their educational benefits, a result that has far-reaching implications for individual students, post-secondary education, and society as a whole.



## **CHAPTER IV**

### **REPORT OF DATA AND DATA ANALYSIS**

The purpose of this study was to determine if strategic intentionality impacts the successful implementation of military friendly initiatives at post-secondary institutions. The study utilized a qualitative approach to inquiry in the form of a multiple case study. The qualitative findings obtained through interviews with campus officials, content analysis of documents and audio-visual materials, and field observations during the site visit were used by the research to answer the central research question regarding the role of intentionality and the sub-questions regarding the best practices in becoming military friendly and the indicators of organizational intentionality in becoming military friendly. The results of the descriptive survey were used to strengthen the findings from the case study and identify any areas of discrepancy between participants.

In this chapter, the results of the interviews with campus officials are presented by the researcher as the primary source of information. Findings from the content analysis of documents and audio-visual materials, field observations, and the descriptive survey will also be presented for each of the cases to strengthen the findings from the interviews. A thematic analysis was used to explore the qualitative data collected during the case studies. Descriptive statistical analysis was used to analyze the survey data and support the findings from the qualitative investigation. The first section of this chapter describes the key areas of the research investigation for this study followed by a description of the case study institutions and individual participants. The last section provides the presentation of the analysis of data for each of the research sub-questions regarding indicators and best practices relative to intentionality in becoming military friendly

followed by the role of intentionality in becoming military friendly. A summary of the findings of this investigation concludes this chapter.

### **Research Questions**

This research study focused on the following central question: What is the role of strategic intentionality in becoming military friendly for post-secondary institutions in the State of Georgia?

In exploring this central question, the following sub-questions were explored:

1. What is the strongest indicator of strategic intentionality in military friendly institutions in the State of Georgia?
2. What are the best practices for becoming military friendly for post-secondary institutions in the State of Georgia in relation to strategic intentionality?

### **Research Design**

The primary design of this study was qualitative data collection in the form of a multiple case study at three four-year, public, post-secondary institutions in the State of Georgia. At each institution, a one-day site visit was conducted and consisted of: interviews with campus officials; field observations; and the collection of documents and audio-visual materials for content analysis. Embedded into the case study site visit was a descriptive survey that was completed by each campus official that participated in an interview. The qualitative data collected from each of these data sets was designed to answer the overarching research question of the role of strategic intentionality in becoming military friendly for post-secondary institutions in the State of Georgia, as well as the sub-questions regarding the indicators of intentional military friendliness and the

best practices for intentional military friendliness for post-secondary institutions in the State of Georgia.

The researcher first explored the sub-questions regarding the indicators of intentionality in becoming military friendly and best practices relative to intentionality in becoming military friendly in post-secondary education through analyzing participant responses to the interview questions. The first eight questions of the interview protocol were designed to explore the indicators of intentionality in becoming military friendly in post-secondary education. The second ten interview questions were designed to explore the best practices relative to intentionality when implementing military friendly initiatives in post-secondary education. All participants were asked the same questions during the interview with the researcher following up with some participants for elaboration on their initial response.

The researcher utilized NVivo software to analyze the qualitative data collected. A transcript of each previously recorded interview was uploaded into the software system and read through multiple times to get an overall conceptualization. Each institution and participant were holistically described. Transcripts were coded using a preliminary coding list generated from a review of the literature and then open-coded to further analyze the data. A frequency analysis was conducted to look for themes and relationships were identified across participants and across institutions. In the frequency analysis, the number of references for each theme in the coding was calculated. The number of references for each theme was then divided by the total number of references for all themes to illustrate the percentage that that theme accounted for of all the themes identified during coding. This procedure was conducted for indicators of intentional

military friendliness for the first 8 questions of the interview questionnaire, as well as for the best practices related to intentionality in becoming military friendly in the second 10 questions of the interview questionnaire. After coding, the transcripts were read through an additional time and important statements were identified and tabulated. These statements were evaluated for deeper levels of meaning, categorized based on their meaning, and analyzed for deeper levels of meaning. The relationships between the themes that were generated from this step were then analyzed and a diagram was created to visualize and refine the relationships identified through the data analysis.

During the document analysis stage of this study, the researcher utilized NVivo to analyze 63 documents relating to military friendliness at the participating institutions. The researcher reviewed 21 documents at Military Friendly Institution 1, 20 documents at Military Friendly Institution 2, and 22 documents at Military Friendly Institution 3. The goal of this analysis was to identify examples of military friendliness within these items and utilize them to support the outcomes found in the primary source of outcome information in this study, the participant interviews. The content analysis also served as a method of triangulating the outcomes gathered from other data sets in this case study including the descriptive survey, audio-visual materials, interviews, and field observations. The documents obtained and reviewed were publicly available in the military resource center or on the institution's website and generally can be categorized into three types: plans, communications, and institutional data and operations.

The planning documents that were reviewed included: institutional strategic plans, outcome reports and interview summaries from strategic planning councils; enrollment management and recruitment plans; meeting minutes; and implementation plans. The

communication documents and materials included: press releases; marketing materials; calendars; and statements from the President and/or administration. Lastly, the institutional data and operations documents included: policy and procedure statements; mission and vision statements; and organization charts.

For the content analysis of the audio-visual materials, the researcher reviewed 52 photographs posted on the institutions' website, as well as photographs taken during the site visit. The researcher reviewed 15 photographs for Military Friendly Institution 1, 22 photographs for Military Friendly Institution 2, 15 photographs for Military Friendly Institution 3. Photographs on documents reviewed during the document analysis were also analyzed. The researcher selected the audio-visual materials to review based on the indications of military friendliness that were evident. The objective of the content analysis was to identify indicators and best practices relative to intentionality in becoming military friendly within the materials and use those findings to strengthen the findings of the participant interviews. This analysis also assisted in the triangulation of data from the additional data sets of the study. The indicators of military friendliness explored in the audio-visual materials included: flag displays from the various branches of the military and the United States flag; individuals in military uniforms; military and student veteran-related ceremonies; and other military symbolism, such as camouflage.

Field observations were also conducted for each case during the site visit stage of the study. During the field observations, the researcher explored each institution over one-day and took photographs of the military resource centers, student unions, and other administrative buildings. Observations were conducted before and after participant interviews while on campus. The researcher also observed interactions between members

of the campus community and engaged in informal conversations with students, staff, and campus visitors. Observation notes were taken by the researcher and used to strengthen findings from the participant interviews. The findings from the field observations were used to explore and validate the data collected from the additional sources of data in this study. The indicators observed during the field observations include: targeted messaging on digital signage and posters; identification of buildings on campus map; the location of the military resource center in relation to key student areas; the physical space and design of the military resource center; artifacts, plaques, and flag displays; and identification of military friendly personnel through the use of labeling.

### **Description of the Sample and Participants**

The institutions that served as cases in this investigation were public, four-year, post-secondary institutions in the State of Georgia that have been identified as a Principles of Excellence School by the Department of Veterans Affairs, are members of the University System of Georgia, and are eligible to receive veterans' educational benefits. All of the cases selected have high undergraduate populations, serve predominately non-residential students, and are in close proximity to a military installation.

Participants were selected at each institution to participate in interviews and a descriptive survey based upon their current or previous role in implementing a military friendly initiative at their current institution. For this study, the three participants from each of the three case study institutions are identified by their job title at their home institution.

The length of time that participants had been in their current position ranged from one to twenty-five years, with the mean being 7.83 years and median being 5 years. The total amount of time that participants had been involved in military friendly initiatives ranged from four to twenty years, with the mean being 9.94 years and median being 7.5 years. The length of time that participants had been at their current institution ranged from one to twenty-five years, with the mean being 8.11 years and the median being 5 years. Among the participants, four participants reported master's degree, one reported a specialist degree, and four reported doctoral degrees as the highest degree earned.

Participants were also asked questions regarding their prior military service and use of veterans' educational benefits, as well as questions regarding military service of immediate family members and use of veterans' educational benefits by family members. Of the nine participants, five had served in the military with the branches represented including the Army, Army Guard, Army Reserves, and United States Marine Corps. The length of military service for participants ranged from three to thirty-one years, with a mean of 11.0 years and the median being 8 years. Four participants reported that an immediate family member was either currently serving or had served in the military. Of the nine participants, three of the participants had used veterans' educational benefits and all were veterans themselves. Three participants also reported that a member of their immediate family has utilized veterans' educational benefits. Among these three participants, two were veterans who had also used veterans educational benefits and one was not a veteran.

## **Description of the Cases**

**Military Friendly Institution 1.** Military Friendly Institution 1 is a state institution in the University System of Georgia that has been classified by the Carnegie Foundation as a public, medium four-year, primarily non-residential institution with a very high undergraduate population. The institution provides services to roughly 600 student veterans and military-affiliated students which comprise around 14% of their student population. The institution is located within close proximity to two large, active military installations with one installation less than 13 miles away.

Three participants were selected at this institution to participate in interviews and a descriptive survey based upon their current or previous role in implementing a military friendly initiative at their current institution. The length of time that participants had been in their current position, as well as at their current institution was 1 year, 1.5 years, and 4 years. Among the participants, two participants reported master's degrees and one reported a doctoral degree as the highest degree earned.

Of the three participants, two had served in the military with the branches represented including the Army and Army Guard/Reserves. The length of military service for participants was 3 and 10 years respectively. The total amount of time that participants had been involved in military friendly initiatives 4 years, 5 years, and 20 years. One participant reported that an immediate family member was either currently serving or had served in the military. Of the three participants, one had used veterans' educational benefits and this same participant reported that a member of his/her immediate family has utilized veterans' educational benefits.



***Veterans Affairs Coordinator.*** The Veterans Affairs Coordinator at Military Friendly Institution 1 has been at the institution for the longest among the three participants, 4 years, with the duration being in the current role. As the primary contact for the institution for Veterans Affairs, the Veterans Affairs Coordinator is the certifying official for veterans' educational benefits and assists student veterans with admissions and enrollment. As the first staff member whose duties were completely dedicated to assisting student veterans, the Veterans Affairs Coordinator played an important role in the design and implementation of the Military Resource Center, an indicator that was identified as critical for the institution in becoming military friendly.

***Military and Veterans Programs Coordinator.*** The Military and Veterans Programs Coordinator at Military Friendly Institution 1 has been at the institution for the shortest amount of time among the three participants, 1 year, with the entire duration being in the current role. However, this participant has 20 years of experience in military friendly initiatives and is a veteran having served for 10 years in the Army. The experience with military friendly initiatives and veteran status were reported by the participants as factors for being hired into the current position. In this role, the Military and Veterans Program Coordinator is responsible for creating targeted programs and services for student veterans, conducting outreach with the military community, and moving the military friendly initiative on campus forward. The participant reported that the position was recently created as a response to the institution's strategy to increase their military friendliness and within his tenure had implemented a new military friendly initiative. The Military and Veterans Programs Coordinator identified the third participant from Military Friendly Institution 1 because of the role that the person had

played in directing the institution's effort in providing mental health and counseling services to student veterans.

***Mental Health and Substance Abuse Therapist.*** The Mental Health and Substance Abuse Therapist has been in this role for 1.5 years, but involved in military friendly initiatives for 5 years including providing mental health services to service members in a variety of settings. This participant identified as a veteran, but did not utilize veterans' educational benefits. In this role, the Mental Health and Substance Abuse Therapist provides counseling services to student veterans and military-affiliated students that are experiencing military related challenges or issues. The participant is also highly involved with the military friendly initiative at the institution which has been identified as a primary strategy for the institution in becoming military friendly.

**Military Friendly Institution 2.** Military Friendly Institution 2 is a comprehensive institution the University System of Georgia that has been classified by the Carnegie Foundation as a public, large four-year, primarily non-residential institution with a very high undergraduate population. The institution provides services to roughly 2000 student veterans and military-affiliated students which comprises around 12% of their student population. Located in a large metropolitan area, the institution is within close proximity to one large, active military installation that is less than 13 miles away.

The first participant to agree to participate in the study was the Director of Veteran Support Services who gained the participation of the Vice President for Operations and Assistant Dean of Student Success for this study. All participants had been in their current position for the duration of their tenure at the institutions. The length of time that participants had been in their current position and at the institution

was 5 years, 16 years, and 25 years. The total amount of time that participants had been involved in military friendly initiatives was 10 years, 15 years, and 18 years. Among the participants, one participant reported a master's degree and two reported doctoral degrees as the highest degree earned.

Of the three participants interviewed, all three had served in the military with the branches represented including the Army, Army Guard/Reserves, and the Marines. The length of military service reported by participants was 3 years, 8 years, and 31 years respectively. Two participants reported that an immediate family member was either currently serving or had served in the military. Of the three participants, two had used veterans' educational benefits and one of these participants reported that a member of their immediate family had also utilized veterans' educational benefits.

The impact of the participant's role on the institution becoming military friendly guided the researcher in the selection process. Among the participants interviewed at Military Friendly Institution 2, the Director of Veteran Support Services was the only participant whose role was completely dedicated to providing services to student veterans. The Assistant Dean of Student Success and Vice President of Operations were suggested by the primary contact for their role in providing administrative and financial support to military friendly initiatives on campus.

***Director of Veteran Support Services.*** In the role of the Director of Veteran Support Services, this participant is responsible for providing targeted programs and services to student veterans, collaborating with other campus departments, and acting as liaison between the institution and the Department of Veterans Affairs. The Director of Veteran Support Services is a combat veteran with 8 years of experience in two branches

of the military, the Marines and the Army Guard. This participant was described by other participants as a driving force behind military friendliness at this institution. When asked to identify other participants for the researcher to interview, the Director of Veteran Support Services identified the Vice President of Operations and the Assist Dean of Student Success as integral decision makers in the success of this institution's military friendly initiative.

*Assistant Dean of Student Success.* The Assistant Dean of Student Success is responsible for promoting collaboration between campus departments to enhance student success for all students including student veterans. This participant has been in the role for 25 years and has 15 years of experience with military friendly initiatives. The Assistant Dean of Student Success is a veteran with 3 years of service and has previously utilized veterans' educational benefits. The Assistant Dean of Student Success identified the support and buy-in of institutional leadership as a key indicator of intentionality in becoming military friendly, an indicator that his role had always provided.

*Vice President of Operations.* The Vice President of Operations at Military Friendly Institution 2 is responsible for engaging in strategic planning to allocate resources and funding to the various departments and initiatives at this institution. The Vice President of Operations has been in the role for 16 years. This participant served 31 years in the Army and has 18 years of experience in military friendly initiatives. Continuous growth was identified by the participant as important for military friendliness at the institution. As the Vice President of Operations, this participant indicated that this role has the means to allocate funding and resources to assist in continued growth.

**Military Friendly Institution 3.** Military Friendly Institution 3 is a state institution the University System of Georgia that has been classified by the Carnegie Foundation as a public, medium four-year, primarily non-residential institution with a very high undergraduate population. The institution provides services to roughly 500 student veterans and military-affiliated students which comprises around 7% of their student population. The institution is located within close proximity to one military installation less that is 13 miles away. However, this installation is not an active duty installation.

Three participants were selected at this institution to participate in interviews and a descriptive survey based upon their current or previous role in implementing a military friendly initiative at their current institution. The length of time that participants had been in their current position was 1.5 years, 7.5 years, and 9 years. For the total amount of time that participants had been involved in military friendly initiatives, two participants reported 5 years and one reported 7 years. The length of time that participants had been at their current institution was reported as 1.5 years, 9 years, and 10 years respectively. Among the participants, one participant reported master's degree, one reported a specialist degree, and one reported a doctoral degrees as the highest degree earned. Of the three participants, none had served in the military. One participant reported that an immediate family member was either currently serving or had served in the military and had utilized veterans' educational benefits.

***Veterans Resource Coordinator.*** The Veterans Resource Coordinator at Military Friendly Institution 3 serves as the certifying official for veterans' educational benefits and promotes collaboration and targeted programs and services on campus for student

veterans. The Veterans Resource Coordinator has been in this role for 1.5 years and is a military spouse. This participant identified continuous improvement as critical for success in sustaining military friendliness at Military Friendly Institution 3, an indicator that is a part of the duties of this role.

***Vice President of Student Affairs.*** The Vice President of Student Affairs at Military Friendly Institution 3 is responsible for providing leadership to the Student Affairs division that oversees support services, as well as targeted programming and services for all students including student veterans. The Vice President of Student Affairs has been in this current position for 7.5 out of 10 years at the institution and has had five years of experience in military friendly initiatives. This participant identified having a champion and having the right people in the right positions as important for military friendliness. As Vice President of Student Affairs, this participant is in the role to influence and make hiring decisions regarding positions that are critical to military friendliness at the institution.

***Associate Director for Counseling and Psychological Services.*** The Associate Director for Counseling Services at Military Friendly Institution 3 is responsible for the provision of counseling and mental health services to all students on campus including student veterans. This participant has been in this role and at this institution for nine years. The participant has been involved in military friendly initiatives for 5 years and was the individual who created and implemented a taskforce on military friendliness at this institution. As a result of the taskforce, additional support staff were hired and the military resource center opened.

## **Findings**

The purpose of this study was to explore the role of intentionality in becoming military friendly for post-secondary institutions in the State of Georgia. The researcher conducted a qualitative investigation in the form of a multiple case study. Data were collected from interviews, document and audio-visual content analysis, field observations, and a descriptive survey. Qualitative data collected from the interviews were utilized by the researcher to answer the research questions. Data collected during the content analysis, field observations, and descriptive survey were used to strengthen the findings. For this section of the chapter, the researcher will first present the findings of the descriptive survey as these results correspond to the degree of contribution of intentionality for the case study institutions and will be used to strengthen the findings of the interview, content analysis, and field observations. Next, the researcher will provide the context for the data analysis from the interviews, content analysis, and field observations. Then, the researcher will answer the research sub-questions regarding the strongest indicators of intentional military friendliness and the best practices for intentional military friendliness. Lastly, the researcher will present the findings corresponding to the overarching research question regarding the role of intentionality in becoming military friendly for post-secondary institutions.

### **The Degree of Contribution of Intentionality**

Data collected from the *Organizational Intentionality In Becoming Military Friendly Survey* were analyzed using descriptive statistics to determine the degree of contribution of intentionality to the military friendliness of the participating post-secondary institution. The survey consisted of three sections that correspond to the stages

of strategic intent: Intentionality in Creating a Vision for Military Friendliness; Intentionality in Organizational Commitment to Military Friendliness; and Intentionality in the Practice of Becoming Military Friendly. All answers in each section of the survey were averaged to obtain a mean score for that individual section. An overall percentage score was then tabulated by averaging the response for all questions on the survey. The outcome score corresponded to the overall degree of contribution for intentionality. The degree of contribution of intentionality was 83% for Military Friendly Institution 1, 78% for Military Friendly Institution 2, and 70%, Military Friendly Institution 3 (Table 4.1).

<u>Stages of Intentional Military Friendliness</u>	<u>MF1</u>	<u>MF2</u>	<u>MF3</u>
Intentionality in Creating a Vision for Military Friendliness	89%	87%	66%
Intentionality in Organizational Commitment to Military Friendliness	76%	65%	63%
Intentionality in Practice of Becoming Military Friendly	83%	83%	82%
Degree of Contribution of Intentionality in Becoming Military Friendly	83%	78%	70%

## **Context**

In order to answer the research questions of this study, the researcher analyzed the data collected from participant interviews, content analysis from documents and audio-visual materials, and field observations, as well as a descriptive survey. During the first stages of the analysis, the researcher coded the interview transcripts, documents, and



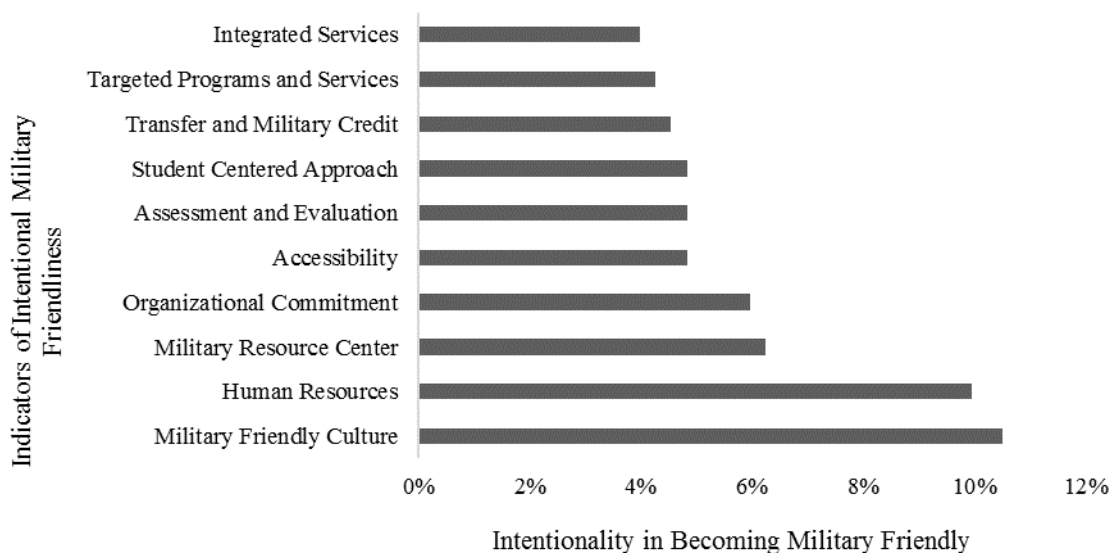
audio-visual materials using a preliminary coding list followed by open coding. Forty-eight themes emerged as indicators of intentional military friendliness and 39 themes emerged as best practices for becoming military friendly relative to strategic intentionality (see Appendix F).

A frequency analysis was conducted to explore the themes and relationships identified during the coding process for the interview data, as well as the data from the content analysis. In the frequency analysis, the number of references for each theme in the coding was calculated. The number of references for each theme was then divided by the total number of references for all themes to illustrate the percentage that that theme accounted for of all the themes identified during coding. This procedure was conducted for indicators of intentional military friendliness for the first 8 questions of the interview questionnaire, as well as for the best practices related to intentionality in becoming military friendly in the second 10 questions of the interview questionnaire. The procedure was also done for the document and audio-visual content analysis. For the presentation of this chapter, the findings of this frequency analysis will be presented for the interview data first followed by the content analysis. The findings from the field observations and descriptive survey will follow to strengthen the findings of the frequency analysis.

### **Indicators of Intentional Military Friendliness**

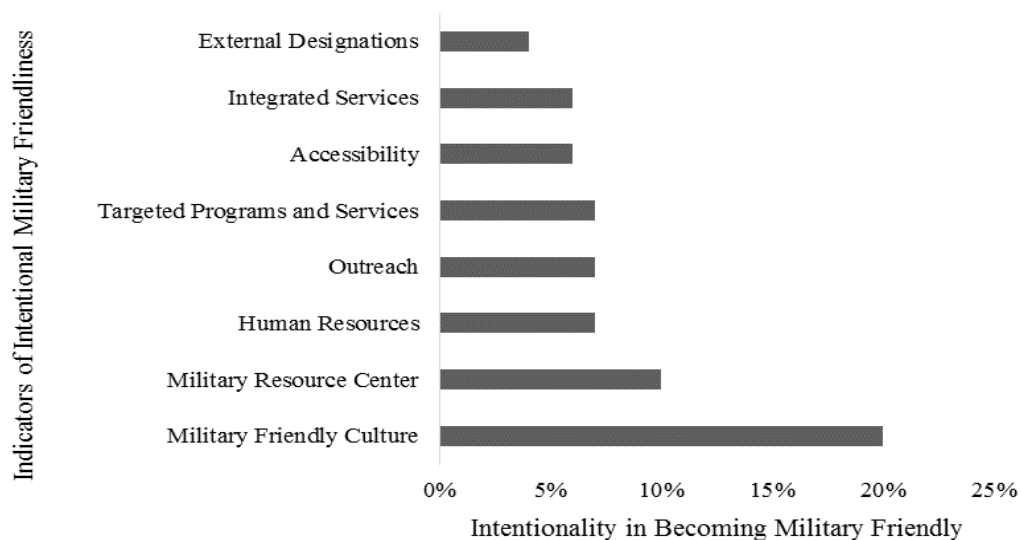
Indicators of intentional military friendliness were identified for all of the case study institutions collectively from an analysis of interview data, as well as a content analysis of documents and audio-visual materials. The findings from these analyses are presented below.

**Indicators of Intentional Military Friendliness from Interviews.** The first research sub-question was “What is the strongest indicator of strategic intentionality in military friendly institutions in the State of Georgia?” The researcher conducted a thematic analysis of participant responses to the first eight questions of the interview questionnaire to explore the themes corresponding to indicators of intentionality in becoming military friendly at the three case study institutions. A frequency analysis was then conducted to identify the indicators that occurred most often among all of the identified indicators for each of the three case study institutions collectively and individually. The researcher found that among the 48 themes that were identified as indicators of intentional military friendliness, 8 indicators accounted for 52% of all the indicators of intentionality in becoming military friendly at the three case study institutions. The indicators with the greatest frequencies include: a military friendly culture (11%); human resources (10%); military resource center (6%); organizational commitment (6%); accessibility (5%); assessment and evaluation (5%); a student centered approach (5%); and transfer and military credit (5%) (Figure 4.1). Among the eight indicators, having a military friendly culture, with 37 references and an 11% frequency, was identified as the strongest indicator of intentionality in becoming military friendly at the case study institutions and was identified by 7 of the 9 participants as the strongest indicator of intentionality.



*Figure 4.1* Strongest Indicators of Intentionality in Becoming Military Friendly from Participant Interviews across the Three Case Study Institutions

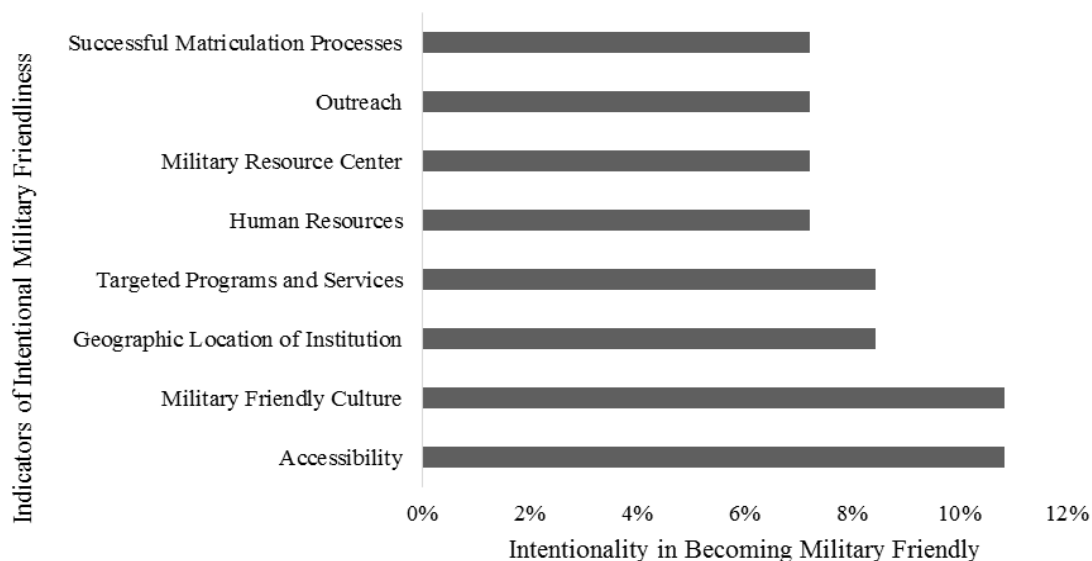
**Indicators of Intentional Military Friendliness from Content Analysis.** The researcher also conducted a content analysis of documents and audio-visual materials collected at the case study institutions. Of the twenty-three indicators of intentional military friendliness identified within the content analysis, 5 indicators were found to account for 51% of all indicators of intentional military friendliness. These indicators included: a military friendly culture (20%); military resource center (10%); outreach efforts (7%); human resources (7%); and targeted programs and services (7%) (Figure 4.2). A military friendly culture, with a 20% frequency, was found in 38 of the 63 documents analyzed.



*Figure 4.2* Strongest Indicators of Intentionality in Becoming Military Friendly from Content Analysis across the Three Case Study Institutions

#### **Indicators of Intentional Military Friendliness at Case Study Institutions.**

The researcher also analyzed themes for each of the individual case study institutions to identify the strongest indicator for each institution. For Military Friendly Institution 1, military friendly culture and accessibility were identified as the strongest indicators of intentionality in becoming military friendly with each having a frequency of 11%, respectively (Figure 4.3). All three participants at this institution referenced military friendly culture and accessibility as indicators of intentional military friendliness at their institutions. In contrast, the document analysis suggested that accessibility is the strongest indicator for this institution with an 18% frequency.



*Figure 4.3* Strongest Indicators of Intentionality in Becoming Military Friendly from Participant Interviews at Military Friendly Institution 1

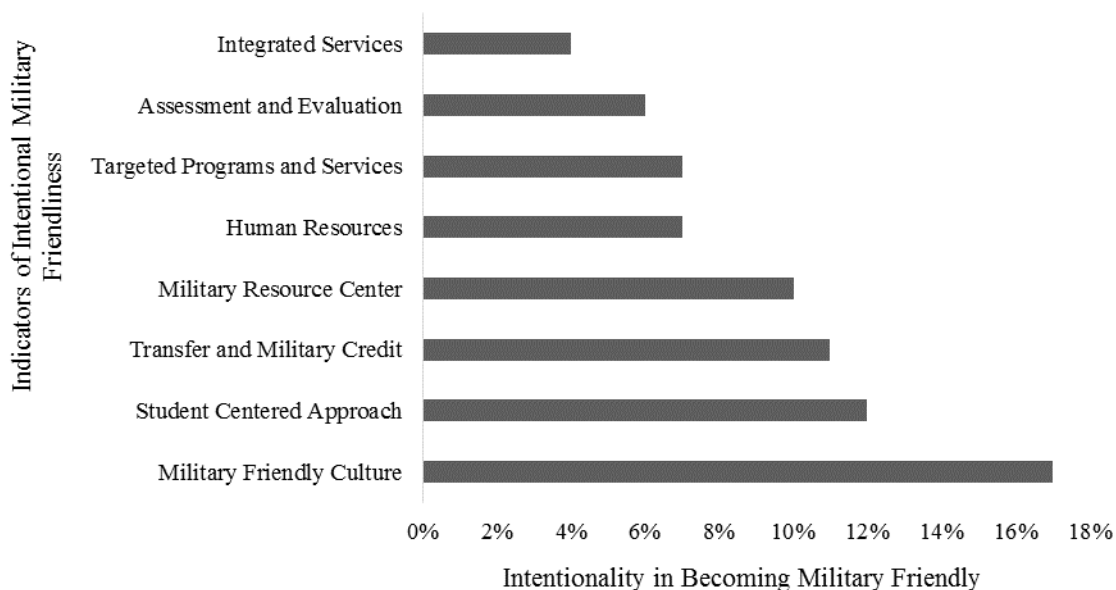
For Military Friendly Institution 2, human resources was identified as the strongest indicator of intentionality in becoming military friendly with a frequency of 15% (Figure 4.4). All three participants identified human resources as an indicator of intentional military friendliness. The document and audio-visual analysis revealed that a military friendly culture is the strongest indicator of intentional military friendliness with a frequency of 15%; however, this analysis also revealed that the second strongest indicator is human resource with 12%, a finding that supports the findings from the

interviews.



*Figure 4.4* Strongest Indicators of Intentionality in Becoming Military Friendly from Participant Interviews at Military Friendly Institution 2

At Military Friendly Institution 3, a military friendly culture, was identified through the thematic analysis as the strongest indicator of intentionality in becoming military friendly with a frequency of 17% (Figure 4.5). All three participants identified military friendly culture as an indicator of intentional military friendliness. This finding was supported overwhelming in the document and audio-visual analysis as a military friendly culture had a 29% frequency.



*Figure 4.5* Strongest Indicators of Intentionality in Becoming Military Friendly from Participant Interviews at Military Friendly Institution 3

In field observations conducted at the three case study institutions, several indicators of military friendliness were observed. Cultural symbols such as military flag displays, patriotic posters, and plaques with veteran focused messaging were visible across the institutions. At each institution there was a dedicated physical space called a military or veteran resource center with several commonalities across institutions including: a lounge area, technology for student use, and dedicated staffers. The location of the military resource center was in close proximity to high student traffic building such as the Student Union at all of the case institutions.

An analysis of the results from the descriptive survey strengthen the findings regarding the top four indicators of intentionality in becoming military friendly: a military friendly culture (11%); human resources (10%); military resource center (6%); and organizational commitment (6%). In Section C of the descriptive survey, Intentionality in the Practice of Becoming Military Friendly, question 8 asks the

participant's level of agreement with "this institution embarks on becoming military friendly with an enterprising campus spirit." Across all three institutions, there was an average response of 80% agreement indicative of a campus culture that is engaged in military friendliness. In Section B of the descriptive survey, two questions regarding the administrative structures for military friendliness add the findings from the previous analyses. Question 8 asks the participants their level of agreement with "This institution has established one of more competent administrative structures to implement the military vision of the institution." Administrative structures would include the Military Resource Center. Participants indicated an 82% agreement with this statement. Question 9 asks about the level of agreement with the statement: "All the administrative structures of the institution work in a coordinated manner to accomplish the military vision of the institution." The results indicated a 78% agreement with this statement across the three institutions. However, when responses are analyzed across cases, MF3 had a 73% agreement in comparison to the 80% agreement of the two other institutions.

### **Best Practices for Intentional Military Friendliness**

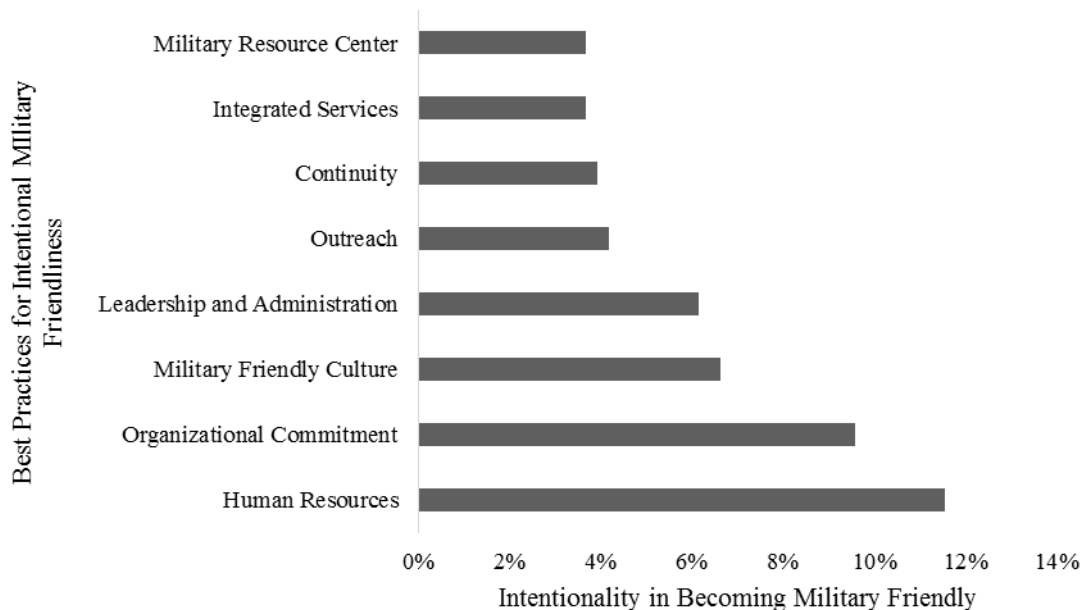
Best practices for becoming military friendly relative to strategic intentionality were identified for all of the case study institutions collectively from an analysis of interview data, as well as a content analysis of documents and audio-visual materials. The findings from these analyses are presented below.

**Best Practices for Intentional Military Friendliness from Interviews.** The second research sub-question was "What are the best practices for becoming military friendly for post-secondary institutions in the State of Georgia in relation to strategic intent?" The researcher conducted a thematic analysis of participant responses to the



second ten questions of the interview questionnaire to explore the themes corresponding to best practices relevant to intentionality in becoming military friendly at the three case study institutions. A frequency analysis was then conducted to identify the best practices that occurred the most among all the best practices for each of the three case study institutions collectively and individually.

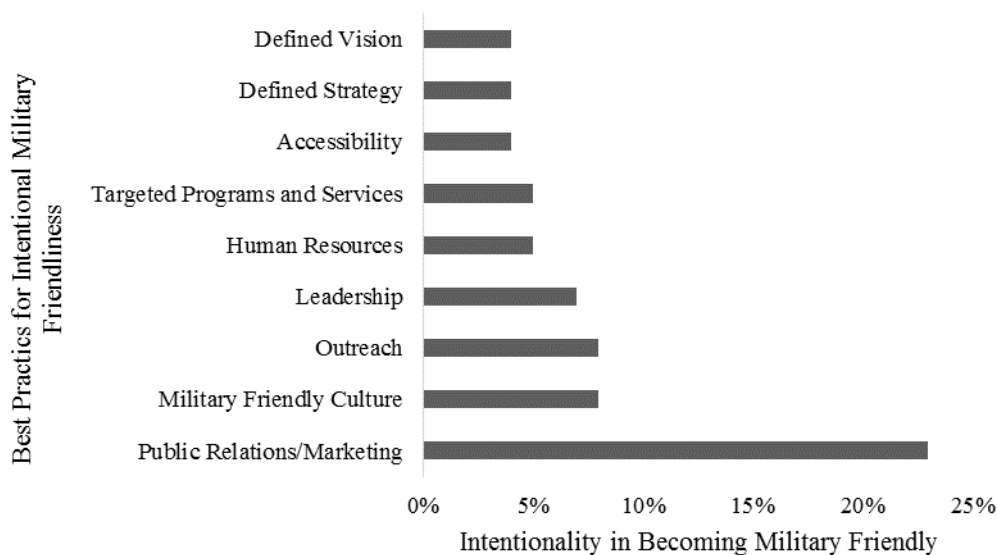
The researcher found that eight best practices accounted for 49% of all the best practices relevant to intentionality in becoming military friendly at the three case study institutions. The best practices with the greatest frequencies include: effective human resources practices (12%); gaining organizational commitment (10%); developing a military friendly culture (7%); supportive leadership and administration (6%); conducting outreach (4%); ensuring continuity (4%); integrating services (4%); and having a military resource center (4%) (Figure 4.6). Of the eight best practices identified through the thematic analysis, effective human resources practices, with a 12% frequency, was most the prominent theme relevant to best practices for intentional military friendliness at the case study institutions and referenced by all nine participants.



*Figure 4.6.* Best Practices of Intentionality in Becoming Military Friendly from Participant Interviews at all Case Study Institutions

#### **Best Practices for Intentional Military Friendliness from Content Analysis.**

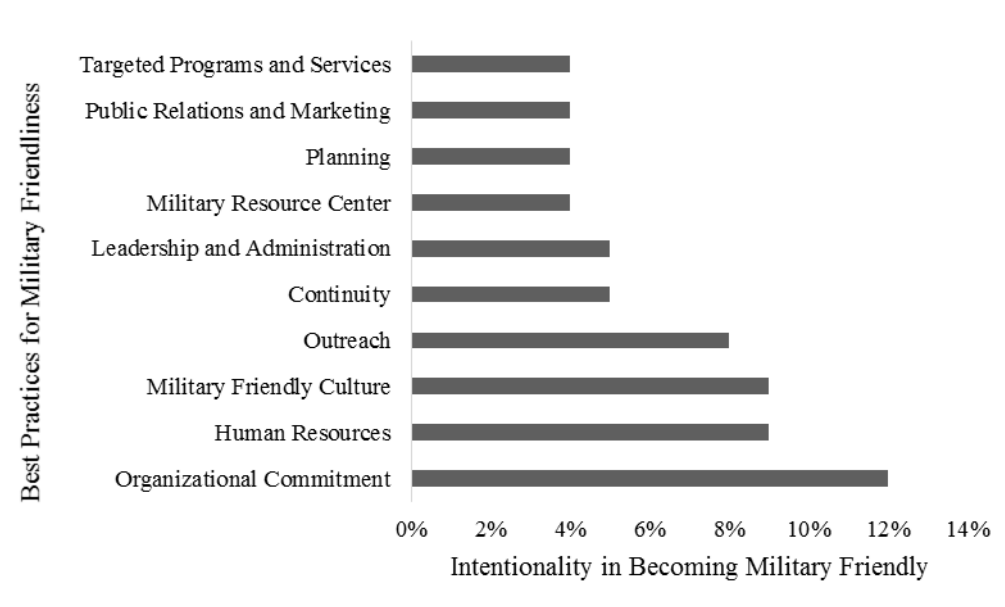
A document and audio-visual materials analysis revealed that four best practices accounted for 46% of the best practices at the case study institution. These best practices across the institutions include: engaging in public relations and marketing (23%); developing a military friendly culture (8%); conducting outreach (8%); and having the support and involvement of leadership in the military friendly initiative (7%) (Figure 4.7). There was a significant overlap between leadership and public relations as indicated by the large number of press releases available for each institution in which a member of the senior administration provided quotes.



*Figure 4.7* Best Practices of Intentionality in Becoming Military Friendly from Content Analysis at all Case Study Institutions

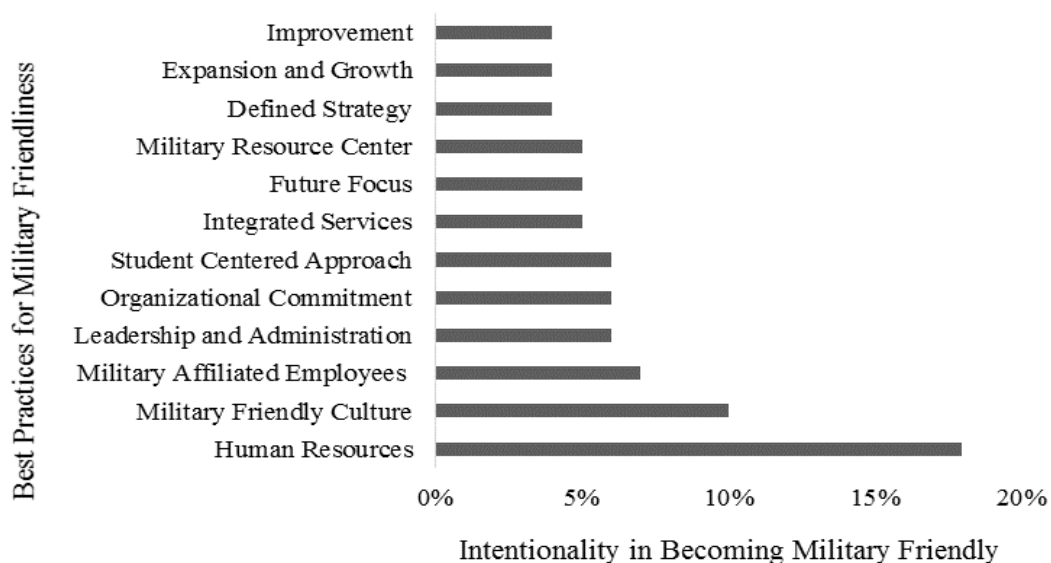
#### **Best Practices for Intentional Military Friendliness for Case Study**

**Institutions.** The researcher also analyzed the themes for each of the individual case study institutions to identify the best practices for military friendliness at each institution. For Military Friendly Institution 1, the best practice of gaining organizational commitment was identified by all participants as the most prominent theme relevant to best practices in intentional military friendliness with a frequency of 12% (Figure 4.8). The document and audio-visual material analysis revealed public relations and marketing as a top best practice (26%) frequency along with conducting outreach (11%) and increasing accessibility (11%).



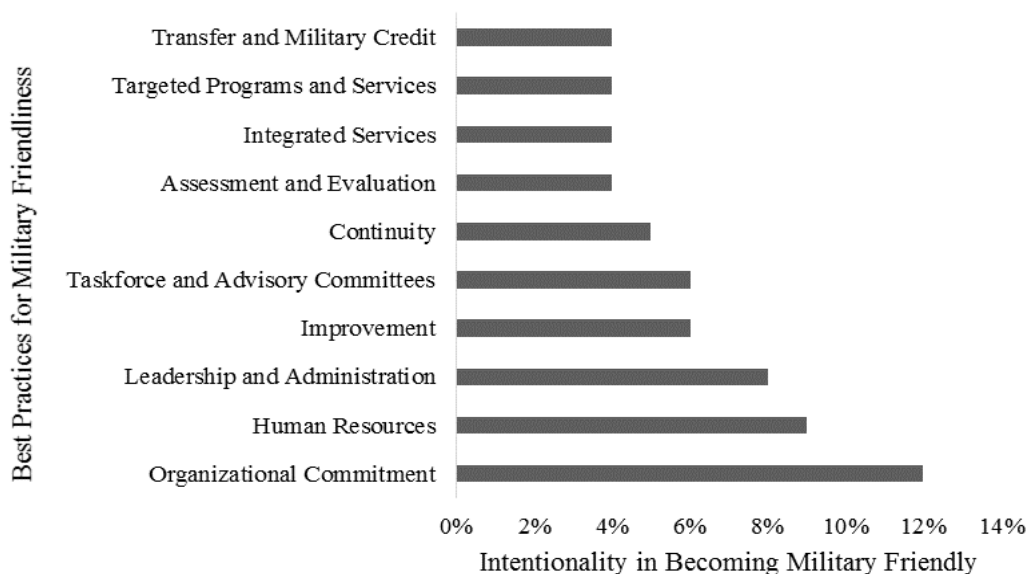
*Figure 4.8.* Best Practices of Intentionality in Becoming Military Friendly from Participant Interviews at Military Friendly Institution 1

For Military Friendly Institution 2, the best practice of effective human resources practices, with a frequency of 18%, was identified as the most prominent theme relevant to best practices in intentional military friendliness (Figure 4.9). All three participants identified effective human resources practices as a best practice. The document and audio-visual material analysis revealed public relations and marketing as a top best practice (24%) along with conducting outreach (16%).



*Figure 4.9.* Best Practices of Intentionality in Becoming Military Friendly from Participant Interviews at Military Friendly Institution 2

For Military Friendly Institution 3, the best practice of gaining organizational commitment, with a frequency of 12%, was also identified as the most prominent theme relative to best practices in intentional military friendliness (Figure 4.10). This theme was identified in responses from all three participants. The document and audio-visual material analysis revealed public relations and marketing as a top best practice (34%) along with developing a military friendly culture (11%).



*Figure 4.10* Best Practices of Intentionality in Becoming Military Friendly from Participant Interviews at Military Friendly Institution 3

The field observations conducted by the researcher revealed that organizational commitment and outreach were a significant theme at Military Friendly Institution 1 regarding best practices. One of their newest initiatives was a campus outreach program that created awareness through faculty and staff training. Those employees who had undergone the training received a sticker to place outside of their office, a visible symbol of the organization's commitment to being military friendly and developing a military friendly culture on campus. Field observations at Military Friendly Institution 2 also confirmed that the best practice of effective human resources is a significant component of intentional military friendliness. The researcher had interaction with the greatest number of people at this institution who were playing an active role in the military friendly initiative on campus. Lastly, the field observations at Military Friendly Institution 3 revealed that the integration of services and promotion of those services is an

important best practice. Information about veteran's services was observed by the researcher throughout campus and not just in the Military Resource Center.

The descriptive survey strengthened the findings from the thematic analysis of the interviews, content analysis from the documents and audio-visual materials, and the field observations. Section C of the descriptive survey corresponds to intentionality in the practice of becoming military friendly. Overall, the average response across the case study institutions was 83% agreement that their institution is intentional in the practice of becoming military friendly. Among the questions in this section, participants reported a 91% agreement with question 3, the statement that the "military friendliness change agents have been developed in the process of becoming military friendly at this institution." This finding strengthens the findings from the thematic and content analysis that effective human resources is an important best practice for military friendliness.

### **The Role of Intentionality**

The overarching research question was "What is the role of strategic intent in becoming military friendly for post-secondary institutions in the State of Georgia?" In order to answer the overall research question regarding the role of strategic intent in becoming military friendly for post-secondary institutions in the State of Georgia, the researcher analyzed the relationships between the themes identified in the interview questions for each of the stages of strategic intent: creating a vision, organizational commitment, and practice. The findings from the content analysis of the documents and audio-visual materials, field observations, and descriptive survey were then used to strengthen the findings from the interview analysis.

For the first stage of strategic intent, creating a vision for military friendliness, the researcher explored the themes gathered from the analysis of the qualitative data to explore how creating a vision impacted the implementation of a military friendly initiative at the case study institutions. “Having a champion” for military friendliness was a prevalent theme throughout the interview responses with 16 references among 6 participants. Three participants were identified either by self-identification or another participant as a champion. During the content analysis of the documents and audio-visual materials, having effective human resources practices was identified as an important best practice (5%) while having the right human resources was identified as an important indicator (7%) for intentionality in becoming military friendly. Among the 21 times human resources were identified in the documents and audio-visual materials, 7 of the references (33%) were to the concept of “having a champion” for military friendliness at the case study institution.

Field observations at the three case study institutions also confirmed the importance of having a champion for creating a vision of military friendliness. At each institution, the researcher was able to identify a participant that was acting as a champion for military friendliness as their institution. At Military Friendly Institution 1, the researcher observed in informal conversations with the Military and Veterans Programs Coordinator during the site visit that the participant has taken the role of champion since being hired and is setting a vision for the future of military friendliness at this institution. For Military Friendly Institution 2, the researcher observed from informal conversations with the Director of Veterans Affairs that there were two original champions of the military friendly initiative at their campus, one senior level administrator and one



administrator in student affairs. However, during informal conversations with student veterans in the Military Resource Center, the researcher observed that student veterans perceive the Director of Veterans Affairs as the champion for their needs on campus. This observation was supported in the interviews with the additional participants at Military Friendly Institution 2.

The champion is the individual who initiates military friendliness on campus; however, leadership and administration was identified as one of the most salient themes for creating a vision. Leadership and administration was identified by eight of the nine participants as a reason why their institution was successful in becoming military friendly when asked directly by the researcher. Additionally, leadership and administration accounted for 7% of the best practices identified in the content analysis as important for intentionality in becoming military friendly. Of the nine times that leadership and administration were identified as a best practice during the content analysis of the documents and audio-visual materials, public relations and marketing of the institution's military friendliness was a co-occurring theme in each instance.

The findings from the descriptive survey strengthened the findings from the thematic analysis of the interviews and the content analysis of the documents and audio-visual materials, as well as the field observations. Section A of the survey corresponds with the first stage of strategic intent, intentionality in creating a vision for military friendly. Overall, the average response across the case study institutions was an 81% agreement that their institution has been intentional in creating a vision of military friendliness. For the individual case study institutions, the results indicated an 89% agreement for Military Friendly Institution 1; 87% agreement for Military Friendly

Institution 2; and 66% agreement for Military Friendly Institution 3. Among the questions in this section, participants reported a 96% agreement with question 6, the statement that the “leadership of this institution is committed to the accomplishment of becoming military friendly.” This result strengthens the findings from the thematic and content analysis that leadership plays a critical role in intentionally becoming military friendly.

For the second stage of strategic intentionality, organizational commitment to military friendliness, the researcher explored several themes that emerged from the interview data. The most salient theme was that of organizational commitment through buy-in with 48 references. Buy-in refers to the demonstrated interest and commitment of campus stakeholders to the military friendly initiative. It was evidenced by faculty and staff voluntarily participating in military friendly programming and including aspects of military friendliness into their own programs and initiatives. All participants identified gaining buy-in from leadership and institution employees as critical for the success of military friendly initiatives. Additionally, the importance of implementing administrative structures was evident in the themes of creating a military resource center and streamlining services for student veterans through designated staffing and a centralized location of services, often referred to as a one stop shop. Communicating the institution’s efforts both internally and externally through public relations and marketing was an additional frequent theme relevant to organizational commitment with 17 references with 2 participants at each institution referencing public relations and marketing.

During the content analysis of the documents and audio-visual materials, the researcher explored the concept of organizational commitment and how it manifests in

military friendly initiatives. Although gaining buy-in from leadership and institutional employees was a common theme in the participant interviews, it was not a significant theme in the institutional documents and audio-visual materials. The themes that emerged from this stage of the analysis relative to intentionality in organizational commitment included: the administrative structures of a military resource center with a 10% frequency as an indicator; effective human resources through designated staffing with a 7% frequency as an indicator; and communicating institutional efforts externally and internally through public relations and marketing with a 23% frequency as a best practice.

Field observations conducted at the case study institutions supported the findings regarding intentionality through organizational commitment. The observations of the military resource center at the three institutions provide an important example of this commitment. Military Friendly Institution 1 had the smallest physical space of the three institutions, but a central location within the student union for ease of access for student veterans. However, the institution's leadership had just given approval for a much larger space within the student union, indicative of their commitment to military friendliness. Military Friendly Institution 2's military resource center was located within a predominately student support services building and was a large space with multiple pieces of technology for student veteran use. The technology within the center had been provided by the Vice President of Operations for use only by student veterans and military-affiliated students, an example of organizational commitment. Lastly, the military resource center at Military Friendly Institution 3 was a large space with adequate technology, but had a layout that conflicted with the needs of many student veterans. The

space had only one entrance with a blind entrance, solid door and hallway that turned at 90 degrees into the main space. Without clear and accessible exits, the layout of this space was not an ideal for student veterans experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder. Additionally, the entrance made it difficult for student veterans with physical disabilities to enter without assistance. The Veterans Resource Coordinator indicated that the administration was looking into providing solutions which may include a renovation to provide an additional exit.

The results from the descriptive survey did not correspond to the findings from the interviews, content analysis, and field observations. Section B of the descriptive survey corresponds to intentionality in organizational commitment to becoming military friendly. Overall, the average response across the case study institutions was a 68% agreement that their institution is intentional in organizational commitment to becoming military friendly. Among the questions in this section, participants reported an 82% agreement with question 8, the statement that “this institution has established one or more competent administrative structures to implement the military friendly vision of the institution.” A possible explanation for the inconsistency of this finding is the scoring of one participant at Military Friendly Institution 2. Despite the researcher’s observation of organizational commitment to military friendliness at this institution, the participant’s score on Section B was a 40%. In an informal conversation, the participant relayed to the researcher that there would never be enough that could be done to support student veterans because of the amount of respect and assistance that this population deserved, as well as the changing needs of student veterans in higher education. The lower score on

this section of the survey may be explained by the participant's focus on constant improvement in becoming military friendly.

For the third stage of strategic intent, intentionality in the practice of becoming military friendly, several themes emerged from the qualitative data with the most salient being creating a culture of military friendliness on campus with a frequency of 7% among all the best practices identified. Assessment and evaluation of institutional efforts to become military friendly in the form of benchmarks, feedback surveys, and tracking mechanisms was an additional theme that emerged from the data and comprised 3% of the best practices and 3% of the indicators of intentional military friendliness.

The findings from the content analysis of documents and audio-visual materials confirm the importance of a military friendly culture as an indicator of military friendliness and a best practice. With a frequency of 20%, a military friendly culture was identified as an important indicator for intentionality in becoming military friendly in the content analysis. Similarly, developing a military friendly culture, with a frequency of 8%, was also identified in the content analysis as a top best practice for becoming military friendly. For the theme of assessment and evaluation, the content analysis showed a frequency of 4% among the indicators and best practices of intentional military friendliness. However, assessment and evaluation was closely related to defined goals (4% frequency), defined mission (5% frequency), defined vision (7% frequency), and a defined strategy (6% frequency).

The field observations conducted by the researcher during the site visits overwhelmingly supported the findings from the participant interviews and content analysis that developing a military friendly culture is an important component of

intentionality in becoming military friendly for post-secondary institutions. Cultural symbolism was prevalent on all of the campuses that the researcher visited. The participants at the institutions used these symbols to communicate that their institutions, and more specifically their military resource centers, were welcoming to student veterans and military-affiliated students and accommodating to their needs. Utilizing military-affiliated staff, faculty, and students to promote the culture was also observed during the site visit. At Military Friendly Institution 1, the researcher was able to have an informal conversation with a frequent volunteer from the community, a veteran, regarding how he supports the student veterans at the institution. The researcher also had an informal conversation with a student at Military Friendly Institution 3 who is a student veteran and an employee of the center. The student reported that the ability to connect with other student veterans within the center enhanced its military friendliness.

The results from the descriptive survey supported the findings from the interviews, content analysis, and field observations. Section C of the descriptive survey corresponds to intentionality in the practice of becoming military friendly. Overall, the average response across the case study institutions was an 83% agreement that their institution is intentional in the practice of becoming military friendly. Among the questions in this section, participants reported a 93% agreement with question 7, the statement that the “During the process of becoming military friendly, as barriers are overcome and goals are met, employees’ enthusiasm and drive to succeed increases, momentum accelerates, and change is mastered.”

## **Response to the Research Questions**

The overarching research question for this investigation sought to explore the role that strategic intentionality plays in a post-secondary institution becoming military friendly. The research sub-questions sought to identify the strongest indicator of intentional military friendliness, as well as the best practices relative to intentionality in becoming military friendly for post-secondary institutions in the State of Georgia. These questions were answered by conducting a multiple case study at three post-secondary institutions in the State of Georgia. The primary source of qualitative data were interviews with campus officials. Other data sets used to strengthen the findings were content analysis of documents and audio-visual analysis, field observations, and a descriptive survey.

### **Indicators of Intentional Military Friendliness**

The first research sub-question sought to answer: What is the strongest indicator of strategic intent in military friendly institutions in the State of Georgia? From a thematic analysis of participant responses to the first eight questions of the interview questionnaire, the strongest indicators of intentionality in becoming military friendly at the three case study institutions were identified through a frequency and explored by the researcher by comparing the results found through content analysis, field observations, and the descriptive study. From the frequency analysis, the researcher found that 8 indicators accounted for 53% of all the indicators of intentionality in becoming military friendly at the three case study institutions and included: a military friendly culture (11%); human resources (10%); military resource center (6%); organizational commitment (6%); accessibility (5%); assessment and evaluation (5%); a student

centered approach (5%); and transfer and military credit (5%). Among the eight indicators identified, having a military friendly culture, with an 11% frequency, was identified as the strongest indicator of intentionality in becoming military friendly at the case study institutions from the participant interviews.

Participants referred to the importance of having a military friendly culture in several ways. According to the Military and Veterans Programs Coordinator at Military Friendly Institution 1, “So, these are the folks coming onto campus, and so, yes, you want to be veteran friendly, but you have to be military friendly, and I think that's an important concept because we focus on veterans, and it's huge, huge part of it. And I think another big part of it is to make sure that you're friendly, and your campus culture is built around being friendly to military-affiliated students.” The role of military-affiliated individuals in developing a military friendly culture was a common theme during the participant interviews identified by 5 of the 9 participants. Participants who are veterans identified military-affiliated employees as an important component of intentional military friendliness 16 times compared to 1 reference for participants who are not veterans. At Military Friendly Institution 3, none of the participants were veterans; subsequently, military-affiliated employees was not identified as an important component for intentional military friendliness at that institution by any of the participants.

A military resource center was also identified as a key component of intentional military friendliness because of the role it plays in developing a military friendly culture. According to the Veterans Resource Coordinator at Military Friendly Institution 3, “Once you can get them together and they – I hear it all the time where they're taking time to help someone else with a class they've already been through, they kind of know the



ropes, and they'll take time to give that person advice or help them study. They will actually bring in their books and let other veterans borrow them if they should need the help, so really just helping them connect with one another has been a great service." The military resource center serves as the focal point for military friendliness on campus and, as such, intentional efforts to allow a culture to develop can be generated from the center. Peer-to-peer connection in the form of student veterans mentoring other student veterans was a commonly referred to practice by 5 of the participants with 22 references, one that was deemed important to the institution's culture of military friendliness.

A content analysis of documents and audio-visual materials collected at the case study institutions supported the findings from the participant interviews that developing a culture of military friendliness is the strongest indicator of intentionality in becoming military friendly. Of the five indicators that were found to account for 51% of all indicators of military friendliness, a military friendly culture, with a 20% frequency, was the most prevalent indicator in a majority of documents and audio-visual materials analyzed. Symbols of military culture were found in almost all of the marketing photographs, brochures, webpages, posters, and digital signage on campus. Common symbols were service members in uniform, military flags, camouflage and boots, and the United States flag. Additionally, ceremonies and events such as ribbon cuttings, ground breakings for facilities, birthday celebrations for the military branches, and veteran guest speakers were common themes in the press releases.

In field observations conducted at the three case study institutions, several examples of military friendly culture were observed. Cultural symbols such as military flag displays, patriotic posters, and plaques with veteran focused messaging were visible

across the institutions. At all three institutions, the flags of each of the military branches were prominently displayed on the walls of the military resource center. At Military Friendly Institution 1, visitors in the Veterans Affairs Coordinator's office can observe plaques on the receptionist's desk with military friendly slogan's including "Heroes don't wear capes, They wear dog tags." Another observation from Military Friendly Institution 1 is their outreach campaign that utilizes stickers similar to "The Safe Space" initiative in higher education to indicate faculty and staff who have undergone training and education on the needs of student veterans and are committed to military friendliness of the institution. Observations outside of the military resource center at Military Friendly Institution 2 provided an example of military friendly culture being visible to all students. At this institution, the researcher observed digital signage in a building across campus from the military resource center with the message "Come In, We're Open" and directing students to visit the military resource center. At Military Friendly Institution 3, the researcher observed a display dedicated to faculty, staff, and students who had been killed in action that was located within the student union.

The findings from the descriptive survey strengthened the findings from the additional data sets that developing a military friendly culture is an important indicator of intentionality in becoming military friendly. Participants were asked their agreement with statements regarding culture on section C of the survey across two questions, question 3 and 4. Section C of the survey focuses on intentionality in the practice of becoming military friendly. Participants were asked to provide their level of agreement with the statements, "Military friendliness change agents have been developed in the process of becoming military friendly at this institution" and "Champions of the new

culture have emerged in the process of becoming military friendly at this institution.”

The overall mean scores across institutions was 91% and 89% agreement.

### **Best Practices for Intentional Military Friendliness**

The second research sub-question sought to answer: What are the best practices for becoming military friendly for post-secondary institutions in the State of Georgia in relation to strategic intent? A thematic analysis of participant responses to the second ten questions of the interview questionnaire was conducted to explore the themes corresponding to best practices relevant to intentionality in becoming military friendly at the three case study institutions. The results of a frequency analysis revealed that eight best practices accounted for 51% of all the best practices relevant to intentionality in becoming military friendly at the three case study institutions and included: effective human resources practices; gaining organizational commitment; developing a military friendly culture; supportive leadership and administration; conducting outreach; ensuring continuity; integrating services; and having a military resource center. Effective human resources practices, with a 12% frequency, was identified as the top best practice for institutions relative to intentionality in becoming military friendly. All nine participants identified effective human resources as an important best practice. According to the Veteran Resource Coordinator at Military Friendly Institution 3, dedicated staffing for student veterans is critical to the military friendliness of an institution as evidenced by the statement: “I think having so many people on board to make it military friendly and who genuinely care about the success of the students has been probably the best. It’s really the human resources that mean the most.” Effective human resources practices are important to intentionality in becoming military friendly because individuals are the first

step in designing a military friendly vision for the institution and then ensuring that the vision is realized. According to the Director of Veterans Affairs at Military Friendly Institution 2, “So if you build a center, you hire someone who’s dedicated and understands higher education and can get in there and start molding ideas and then plant seeds for more veteran friendly initiatives; without that, you don’t have the rest of it.”

The next best practice identified from the thematic analysis is gaining organizational commitment. Two sub-themes were identified regarding organizational commitment at the case study institutions including communication and gaining buy-in. Organizational commitment had to be communicated by the leadership “sending a message” to the institution that military friendliness is important. In addition, the Military and Veterans Programs Coordinator at Military Friendly Institution 1 addressed the importance of buy-in, “It can't just be your vision. It has to be – the faculty and staff, the ones that are buying in and the ones who aren't – it's that constant thing where you're creating that level of awareness.”

Of the remaining six best practices identified in the thematic analysis of the interview transcripts, three were confirmed by the content analysis of the institutional documents and audio-visual materials. These three best practices accounted for 46% of the best practices at the case study institutions and included developing a military friendly culture, supportive leadership and administration, and conducting outreach. The content analysis identified an additional best practice for intentionality in becoming military friendly, engaging in public relations and marketing, with a 23% frequency among best practices. The addition of this best practice brings the total count of best practices for intentionality in becoming military friendly to nine and includes: effective

human resources practices; gaining organizational commitment; developing a military friendly culture; supportive leadership and administration; conducting outreach; ensuring continuity; integrating services; having a military resource center; and engaging in public relations and marketing.

The researcher also analyzed data from each of the individual case study institutions to identify the best practices for military friendliness at each institution and strengthen the findings for the nine best practices of intentionality in becoming military friendly. For Military Friendly Institution 1, the document and audio-visual material analysis revealed public relations and marketing as a top best practice. The Military and Veterans Programs Coordinator at Military Friendly Institution 1 noted “I think it's promoting. You have to market. You have to do those kind of things because it's hard to measure success unless you have the people here to determine it.” For Military Friendly Institution 2, the best practice of effective human resources practices, with a frequency of 18%, was identified as the most prominent theme relevant to best practices in intentional military friendliness, a finding consistent with the overall findings regarding best practices. The best practice of gaining organizational commitment, with a frequency of 12%, was identified from the participant interviews as important for intentional military friendliness from at Military Friendly Institution 3 while the content analysis revealed public relations and marketing and developing a military friendly culture as important best practices. The field observations conducted by the researcher confirmed that effective human resources practices; gaining organizational commitment; developing a military friendly culture; supportive leadership and administration; conducting outreach; ensuring continuity; integrating services; having a military resource center; and engaging

in public relations and marketing are all important best practices for intentional military friendliness.

The descriptive survey strengthened the findings from the thematic analysis of the interviews, content analysis from the documents and audio-visual materials, and the field observations. Section C of the descriptive survey corresponds to intentionality in the practice of becoming military friendly. Overall, the average response across the case study institutions was 83% agreement that their institution is intentional in the practice of becoming military friendly. Among the questions in this section, questions 3, 4, and 7 correspond with effective human resources as a best practice for intentionality in becoming military friendly. Participants reported a 91% agreement with question 3, the statement that the “military friendliness change agents have been developed in the process of becoming military friendly at this institution”; a 89% agreement with question 4, the statement that the “Champions of the new culture of military friendliness have emerged in the process of becoming military friendly at this institution”; and a 93% agreement with question 7, the statement that “During the process of becoming military friendly, as barriers are overcome and goal are met, employees’ enthusiasm and drive to succeed increase, momentum accelerates, and change is mastered. The participants’ levels of agreement with these statements strengthens the findings from the thematic and content analysis that effective human resources is an important best practice for military friendliness.

### **The Role of Intentionality**

The overarching research question for this study sought to explore: What is the role of strategic intentionality in becoming military friendly for post-secondary

institutions in the State of Georgia? For the first stage of strategic intent, creating a vision for military friendliness, the researcher explored the themes gathered from the interview data on how creating a vision impacted the successful implementation of a military friendly initiative at the case study institutions. The theme of having a champion for military friendliness was prevalent throughout the interview responses and several participants were identified either by self-identification or another participant as a champion for military friendliness at their institution.

The champion of military friendliness at each institution was reported to have set the vision for their institution becoming military friendly. One such champion, the Associate Director of Counseling and Psychological Services, from Military Friendly Institution 3 noted that, "I had a vision of what to do and I did, and so I think that's hugely important to have someone who is aware of the needs and has a vision and can communicate that with others and get people on board and make it happen." Having a champion was supported by the content analysis of the documents gathered in this investigation, as well as supported by informal conversations between the researcher and other individuals on campus during field observations. Although having a champion who recognizes the need for military friendliness at the institution is the starting point in intentionality for becoming military friendly, one of the most salient themes that emerged from the thematic analysis was the role that the leadership and administration plays in institutional effort to become military friendly.

Leadership and administration was identified by eight of the nine participants as a reason why their institution was successful in becoming military friendly. The creation of a vision for military friendliness relies on gaining commitment for the initiative from

leadership, as well as having the leadership “send the message” that military friendliness is important to the overall success of the institution, another common theme from the interviews. The Vice President of Student Affairs at Military Friendly Institution 3 noted that leadership’s message can be powerful in influencing campus stakeholders and noted “So, that – you know, talking about that at an administrative council meeting when every single dean, department head, not just faculty but across staff was in that room, that’s a power message that our president gave when he said that.” When asked what the driving force behind military friendliness is at Military Friendly Institution 2, the Director of Veterans Affairs reported that “It’s having the right leadership in place that is willing to allow you to express your compassion for veterans. And, then reciprocating that and helping to incentivize implementation.” The findings from the interviews suggest that the first component of a successful military friendly initiative is to be intentional in garnering support from the institution’s leadership and administration and have the leadership be intentional and visible in their support of the initiative.

The support from leadership influences the vision for the case study institutions in several ways. One theme that emerged is that leadership had an important task in appointing a taskforce or advisory committee to guide the implementation of the military friendly initiative at the institution. The Director of Veterans Affairs at Military Friendly Institution 2 said of the role of leadership in developing a taskforce, “It was received with great attention by the president and they created a taskforce to try to assess the situation.” The participants reported that the taskforce on their campus was responsible for the following: pushing the military friendly agenda forward to gain buy-in from additional campus stakeholders; determining what military friendliness would resemble for their



institution; outlining goals and a plan to achieve goals; and also defining the benchmarks that the institution would use to assess their success. All of these related themes lead to the second stage of strategic intent, organizational commitment to military friendliness.

The findings from the descriptive survey support that the leadership of the case study institutions contributed to the intentionality in becoming military friendly. For Section A of the survey, *Intentionality in Creating a Vision for Military Friendliness*, the overall mean score across institutions was an 81% indicating that leadership had an important role in creating the vision. Participants reported a 96% level of agreement with question 6, “the leadership of this institution is committed to the accomplishment of becoming military friendly,” and a 93% agreement with question 7, “the leadership of this institution sustains the progress of becoming military friendly at the institution by tactically allocating resources to military friendly efforts and activities.”

For the second stage of strategic intent, organizational commitment to becoming military friendly, several themes emerged from the thematic analysis. The most salient theme was that of organizational commitment through buy-in. All participants from the case study institutions identified the ability to gain buy-in from leadership and institution employees as critical for the success of military friendly initiatives. According to the Military and Veterans Programs Coordinator at Military Friendly Institution 1, “I think it starts with, first, getting faculty buy-in. You have to get faculty, staff, leadership, administration – you have to get their buy-in. Without their support, unfortunately, you're just the one person out there, waving the poster or waving the flag, and eventually, there will be a couple people behind it, but that's it.” The shared vision, or co-invention, that results from buy-in allows for additional steps to be taken towards achieving military

friendliness such as establishing the administrative structures needed for military friendliness.

The importance of implementing administrative structures was evident in the themes of creating a military resource center, implementing targeted programs and services, and integrating services for student veterans through designated staffing and a centralized location of services, often referred to as a one stop shop. Of the administrative structures, the military resource center was identified as a critical component in an institution's status as military friendly by a majority of participants. The Director of Veterans Affairs at Military Friendly Institution 2 noted that "That's to me, an actual Resource Center is probably one of the most important best practices that have worked and would – I'm assuming if we were to choose out of all of them, that would be it." The Military Resource Center begins to be viewed as the center of knowledge not only for student veterans seeking services, but also for the leadership, faculty, and staff of the institution.

Communicating the institution's efforts both internally and externally through public relations and marketing was another salient theme relevant to organizational commitment and also confirmed in the content analysis of the documents and audio visual materials. Internally, the efforts can be communicated by leadership, through the marketing department through press releases, or through campus outreach. The Military and Veterans Programs Coordinator at Military Friendly Institution 1 noted that, "I think it's promoting. You have to market. You have to do those kind of things because it's hard to measure success unless you have the people here to determine it." At this institution, promotion was observed by the researcher through brochures, their outreach

program stickers, posters, and flyers. Exploring this participant's statement, the researcher noted that it is not enough to just be committed to becoming military friendly, but there must be intentionality in promoting this commitment.

The institutions that participated in the case study varied slightly in the way that they communicated their efforts. Military Friendly Institution 1, an institution in close proximity to military installations, emphasized the importance of word of mouth among student veterans and military-affiliated students. The Mental Health and Substance Abuse Therapist at Military Friendly Institution 1 stated that, "I think it's just an understanding that we do have veterans who are coming to school and the military population can be seen as a close-knit family, and if you take care of one soldier or one veteran very well that that news would spread to the rest of the population."

At Military Friendly Institution 2, receiving recognition and designations from external associations is an important feedback mechanism that they are being successful towards becoming military friendly, but also a way to promote their institution as a model for military friendliness to other institutions. According to the Vice President of Operations, "So that's how we measure it is in terms of the reputation and visibility that we're getting. It's nice when veterans call from other states and want to come here because they've heard about the program." Another communication method that emerged at Military Friendly Institution 2 was a dedicated webpage for promoting services targeted to student veterans. The Director of Veterans Affairs stated, "We have a Resource Center webpage. We have – our own information is on the Registrar's website. So the key to veteran friendly is being able to get other departments to understand how important it is to get your information on their website."

For Military Friendly Institution 3, communication of efforts was not an emphasized theme. This finding was confirmed by an analysis of the participant's responses on the descriptive survey. For the Organizational Commitment Section of the survey, the mean score of the responses for the question regarding their agreement that "all activities pertaining to becoming military friendly are clearly detailed and communicated to employees at all levels of the organization" was a 60%. However, the researcher was able to obtain and analyze 10 press releases in which the institution clearly communicated their efforts to external stakeholders. The institution may be communicating their efforts, but not in an intentional manner within their institutional environment.

For the third stage of strategic intent, intentionality in the practice of becoming military friendly, several themes emerged from the qualitative data with the most salient being creating a culture of military friendliness on campus. Additional themes that were significant included: a focus on innovation and the future; an emphasis on continuity for military friendly initiatives; a focus on improvement; overcoming barriers; and assessing and evaluating institutional efforts.

The role of intentionality in becoming military friendly is the most evident in institutional efforts to create a culture of military friendliness on campus. The theme of culture permeated both the indicators and best practices for military friendliness. Culture was referenced 28 times in regard to indicators of intentional military friendliness and 55 times regarding best practices for intentionality in becoming military friendly. Providing an opportunity for peer-to-peer connection, having prominent displays of military

friendliness through artifacts and ceremonies, and promoting awareness were all ways that the institutions addressed culture.

Providing the opportunity for peer-to-peer connection was identified as a way for institutions to assist the transition of student veterans from a military culture that was very structured to the campus environment that was less streamlined. According to the Director of Veterans Affairs, “Those students, when others are registering for classes, coming in, may be overwhelmed with some of the obstacles of getting in, can help, you know, saying, ‘Look, we’ve been there. We’ve successfully traversed this just as you did, and you will make it’.” The concept of safe zones appeared several times across the cases as well with several references to the military resource center as “a safe zone that they can go to, where other students who understand what they’re going through are there and they can talk and if they are going through something serious we have resources there that they can use.”

Providing the opportunity for peer-to-peer connection also overlapped with the importance of having military-affiliated employees involved in military friendly initiatives, a theme that was referenced 17 times as a best practice. According to the Veterans Affairs Coordinator at Military Friendly Institution 1, “We have quite a few who are military-affiliated or are veterans or are currently even serving National Guard reserve status, and through the initiatives that we’ve been coming up with through the past few years they’ve really come out to support it so I think on the faculty and staff side, us becoming more military friendly kind of helps to show that we’re also supporting the faculty and staff and they’re ready to support the students.”

Participants reported that certain efforts enhanced the military friendliness of their culture at their institutions. One such way was promoting awareness among faculty and staff through education and training. Military Friendly Institution 1 developed a training program that not only has a goal of promoting awareness of military friendliness, but also serves an intentional strategy to create a culture of acceptance. A key component of the strategy is a small green sticker that participants of the program place in a visible location to show student veterans that they can assist. The researcher observed several of these cultural symbols during field observations at the institution. Additionally, the researcher observed plaques with military friendly slogans, posters with patriotic themes, and prominent military flag displays within the military resource center. Several of these were observed at Military Friendly Institutions 2 and 3 including flag displays and posters. Digital signage was also observed on televisions in several buildings at Military Friendly Institution 3.

Being innovative was another strategy identified by several participants. According to the Director of Veterans Affairs, ‘So to me, that is the biggest indicator, is it breaking that traditional mold and saying, “We are welcoming a new trend of things and services”’. Innovation is seen as a critical component of engaging in competition in the student veteran market. The Associate Director of Counseling and Psychological Services at Military Friendly Institution 3 indicated that when determining what the institution should do next, the question that is asked is, “Is there something we can offer, that we’re in a position to offer that perhaps other universities aren’t in a position to offer so that we can set ourselves apart, or even contribute to the body of research, literature, or what is being done as best practices.” Although scholarships for military-affiliated

students were mentioned as way to be innovative by two participants at Military Friendly Institution 2, all institutions identified resolving the issues with accepting military credit as an indicator for military friendly that would require an institution to be innovative.

For Military Friendly Institution 2, the Assistant Dean of Student Success noted: “We’re not ready to just rest and sit back and wait. We’re looking for an edge.” A focus on improvement was referenced by seven of the nine respondents for a total of 21 times. The focus on improvement overlapped with the development of strategy for Military Friendly Institution 3. According to the Associate Director of Counseling and Psychological Services, the strategy for continued military friendliness involves an analysis of, “here’s our strengths, here’s our weaknesses and here’s what we’re doing well, what we can improve, and let’s just develop a strategy based on that.”

An emphasis on continuity was also identified as important for the success of military friendly initiatives in post-secondary institutions. Having a champion is important in the first stages of implementing a military friendly initiative. However, institutions that have been intentional in their implementation of military friendly initiatives will have systemized their efforts so that the initiative self-sustains and is no longer reliant upon the one champion to keep the initiative going. According to the Vice President of Operations at Military Friendly Institution 2, “It’ll outlive all of us that are here now – it’s just – institution wise, that it will continue. There’s always that risk that some good program built around personalities and – heaven forbid I get run over by a bus out here or something like that – but I like to believe everything that got started will continue and I was part of it.” Although having a champion is a key component of the best practice of effective human resources practices, institutions must be intentional in

their design and implementation so there is organizational commitment throughout several layers of the organization.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter presented the findings of this qualitative investigation. The role of strategic intentionality, the strongest indicator for intentionality in becoming military friendly, and the best practices relative to intentionality in becoming military friendly were explored. The findings identified having a military friendly culture as the strongest indicator of intentionality in becoming military friendly. Additionally, the findings identified nine best practices across the three stages of strategic intent for becoming military friendly including: effective human resources practices; gaining organizational commitment; developing a military friendly culture; supportive leadership and administration; conducting outreach; focusing on continuity; integrating services; establishing a military resource center; and promoting military friendliness through public relations and marketing. When analyzed within the framework of strategic intent, the best practice of obtaining the support of leadership and administration corresponds with the first stage of strategic intent, creating a vision. The best practices of effective human resources practices, gaining organizational commitment, conducting outreach, integrating services, and establishing a military resource center correspond with the second stage of strategic intent, organizational commitment. The best practices of developing a military friendly culture and focusing on continuity correspond with the third stage of strategic intent, practice. Additionally, the findings also explore the overall role of intentionality in becoming military friendly. The next chapter will discuss these



results and their implications for intentionality in becoming military friendly at post-secondary institutions in the State of Georgia.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

#### Summary of Study

This qualitative investigation in the form of a multiple case study was designed to explore the role of strategic intentionality in becoming military friendly for post-secondary institutions in the State of Georgia. For this study, military friendliness was based on the designation of an institution as a “Principles of Excellence” school by the Department of Veterans Affairs, eligibility to receive veterans’ educational benefits, and being a member of the University System of Georgia. Each of the institutions selected as a case in this study met the typology set forth by the researcher. Three participants from each case study institution were selected to participate in the study based upon their role in implementing the military friendly initiative at their institution and their ability to contribute to the exploration of the research questions.

In order to answer the overarching research question regarding the role of strategic intentionality in becoming military friendly for post-secondary institutions in the State of Georgia, the researcher conducted one-day site visits to each of the three case study institutions. During the site visit, data were collected from participant interviews, the administration of the *Organizational Intentionality in Becoming Military Friendly Survey*, and field observations. Documents and audio-visual materials were also collected for content analysis. The results for the survey were analyzed using the SPSS statistical software to gain descriptive statistics. NVivo qualitative research software was used to conduct a thematic analysis of the qualitative data collected based upon the

indicators and best practices of intentionality in military friendliness gained from the literature investigation.

The strongest indicator of intentionality in military friendliness was identified as a military friendly culture. Nine best practices relative to intentionality in becoming military friendliness were identified and included: effective human resources practices; gaining organizational commitment; developing a military friendly culture; supportive leadership and administration; conducting outreach; ensuring continuity; integrating services; having a military resource center; and engaging in public relations and marketing. By exploring the findings for the two research sub-questions, indicators and best practices for intentionality in becoming military friendly, the researcher was able to explore the role of strategic intentionality in becoming military friendly for post-secondary institutions and determine that intentionality plays a significant role in an institution becoming military friendly. In the following sections, the researcher will present an analysis and discussion of the research findings followed by the researcher's conclusions. Recommendations for future research and how the findings will be disseminating will also be provided.

### **Analysis of Research Findings**

On average, five themes emerged from the outcomes from the thematic analysis of participant interviews for each interview response. There were 351 references to themes corresponding to indicators of intentional military friendliness and 407 references to themes corresponding to the best practices relative to intentionality in becoming military friendly. The analysis of these themes allowed the researcher to first explore the

role of strategic intentionality for becoming military friendly, and then generate several findings from this analysis.

### **Indicators of Intentional Military Friendliness**

The first research sub-question was “What is the strongest indicator of strategic intent in military friendly institutions in the State of Georgia?” The most prominent indicator of intentionality in becoming military friendly that emerged from this study was a military friendly culture. Participants revealed that a having military friendly culture is essential for the future of military friendliness at their institutions. More specifically, a military friendly culture impacts the entire matriculation process from increasing the numbers of students that institutions are able to recruit and enroll to increasing the number of students who are retained and achieve degree completion, important outcomes in the current higher education market.

Participants also revealed that successfully transforming institutional culture in a military friendly culture ensured continuity for the military friendly initiative on campus. A military friendly culture is an indicator that organizational commitment in the form of buy-in from leadership, faculty, staff, and students has been achieved and the initiative is more likely to benefit from resource allocation and higher prioritization among other initiatives. The findings were supported by amount of press releases where a military friendly culture was the prominent theme identified. Additionally, the descriptive survey further strengthened these findings.

Although a military friendly culture was identified by all participants as an indicator of their intentionality in becoming military friendly, several participants revealed that there is additional room for improvement. At each institution the ability to

reward transfer and military credit emerged as a key indicator of military friendliness relative to culture. According to the participants, providing credit for military experience promotes a culture of understanding. This practice was identified as communicating to the student that they are welcome and that the institution has a strong understanding of their military experience. The indicator of transfer and military credit was found across planning documents, press releases, and policy documents at the three institutions.

### **Best Practices for Intentionality**

The second research sub-question was “What are the best practices for becoming military friendly for post-secondary institutions in the State of Georgia in relation to strategic intent?” This investigation revealed the presence of nine best practices across the stages of strategic intent. In the first stage, creating a vision for military friendliness, the analysis revealed the best practice for intentionality in becoming military friendly is support from the leadership and administration of the institution. For the second stage of strategic intent, organizational commitment, the best practices of effective human resources practices, gaining organizational commitment, conducting outreach, establishing a military resource center, and integrating services emerged as the indicators of intentionality in becoming military friendly. For the third state of intent, intentionality in practice, developing a military friendly culture and public relations and marketing emerged as the best practices for intentionality.

Participants reported that having a support from the leadership and administration of the institution was a critical factor in whether the military friendly initiative was set into motion at their institution. This finding was also substantiated from the document analyses that show in press releases that leadership was central to implementing several

key programs and services that identify their institution as military friendly.

Additionally, the inclusion of military friendly initiatives in strategic goals was initiated by leadership. The formation of taskforces was also reported as a result of supportive leadership. These taskforces consistently were identified as an important practice in designing the vision for military friendliness at the institutions.

The best practices of effective human resources, organizational commitment, conducting outreach, establishing a military resource center, and integrating services were salient best practices relative to intentionality in organizational commitment. Generating buy-in from campus officials and “putting the right people in the right places” were identified as a driving force in military friendliness at the case study institutions. The administrative structures of a military resource center and integrating services were inter-related. The military resource center was viewed by the participants as the central hub for services and knowledge. The center provided the framework to integrate services for student veterans and military friendly students across campus.

For the third stage of strategic intent, practice, developing a military friendly culture, and engaging in public relations and marketing were central to intentionality in becoming military friendly. Participants reported that efforts in the second stage of strategic intent would culminate in a military friendly culture that would, in turn, drive the military friendliness of the institution in the future. As one participant at Military Friendly Institution 1 noted having a military friendly culture is important, but culture must be promoted consistently and aggressively to sustain the military friendliness of the institution to both internal and external stakeholders.

## **The Role of Strategic Intentionality**

The Overarching Research Question was “What is the role of strategic intent in becoming military friendly for post-secondary institutions in the State of Georgia?” The descriptive survey revealed that the degree of contribution of intentionality to the three case study institutions becoming military friendly was 77%. With the evidence from the survey that intentionality plays an important role in military friendliness, the researcher further explored the overall role of strategic intent through the framework of strategic intent. Thematic analysis from the participant interviews was intertwined with content analysis, field observations, and the findings from a descriptive survey to confirm that intentionality plays an important role in becoming military friendly. The three stages of strategic intentionality – vision, commitment, and practice – will be discussed individually in the following sections.

**Vision.** For the first stage of strategic intentionality, creating a vision for military friendliness, having a champion was identified by the participants as critical for setting the vision of military friendliness for their institution, a finding that was supported by the content analysis of the documents gathered in this investigation, as well as supported by informal conversations between the researcher and other individuals on campus during field observations. Having champion for military friendliness was the starting point in intentionality in that the champion brought the attention of leadership and administration to the need for military friendliness at the institution.

Identified by eight of the nine participants (89%) as a reason why their institution was successful in becoming military friendly, leadership “sent the message” that military friendliness is important to the overall success of the institution. The Vice President of

Student Affairs at Military Friendly Institution 3 noted that leadership's message can be powerful in influencing campus stakeholders. The support from leadership influenced the vision for the case study institutions in several ways including the appointment of a taskforce or advisory committee to guide the implementation of the military friendly initiative at the institution. The participants reported that the taskforce on their campus was responsible for pushing the military friendly agenda forward into the second stage of strategic intent, organizational commitment. The taskforces and advisory committees that were formed accomplished the following: worked to gain buy-in from additional campus stakeholders; determined what military friendliness means for their institution; outlined goals and a plan to achieve goals; and also defined the benchmarks that the institution would use to assess their success.

**Commitment.** For the second stage of strategic intent, organizational commitment to becoming military friendly, organizational commitment through buy-in emerged as a critical component of intentionality in becoming military friendly. All participants from the case study institutions identified the ability to gain buy-in from leadership and institution employees as critical for the success of military friendly initiatives because shared vision that results from buy-in allows for the establishment of the administrative structures needed for military friendliness.

The implementation of administrative structures was realized by the institutions through creating a military resource center, implementing targeted programs and services, and integrating services for student veterans through designated staffing. Of the administrative structures, the military resource center was identified as a critical component in an institution's status as military friendly by a majority of participants.



The military resource center served a framework through which the efforts of the institution could be coordinated and communicated.

Communicating the institution's efforts both internally and externally through public relations and marketing was an important component of intentionality relevant to organizational commitment and was also confirmed in the content analysis of the documents and audio visual materials. Communication by leadership, through the marketing department through press releases, or through campus outreach was revealed by the participants as important mechanisms for intentionality. Through further exploration, the researcher noted that it is not enough to just be committed to becoming military friendly, but institutions must also be intentional in promoting this commitment. The institutions that participated in the case study varied slightly in the way that they communicated their efforts. Military Friendly Institution 1, an institution in close proximity to military installations, emphasized the importance of word of mouth among student veterans and military-affiliated students. At Military Friendly Institution 2, receiving recognition and designations from external associations was an important feedback mechanism confirming that they are being successful toward becoming military friendly, but also served as a way to promote their institution as a model for military friendliness to other institutions. For Military Friendly Institution 3, communication of efforts was not an emphasized theme in the participant interviews. However, the researcher was able to obtain and analyze 10 press releases in which the institution clearly communicated their efforts to external stakeholders. Therefore, the institution may be communicating their efforts, but not in an intentional manner within their institutional environment.

**Practice.** For the third stage of strategic intent, intentionality in the practice of becoming military friendly, developing a culture of military friendliness on campus was overwhelmingly revealed as the critical component of intentionality in becoming military friendly. Culture was referenced 28 times in regard to indicators of intentional military friendliness and 55 times regarding best practices for intentionality in becoming military friendly. Providing the opportunity for peer-to-peer connection was identified as a way for institutions to assist the transition of student veterans and establish a “safe zone” for student veterans and military-affiliated students. Peer-to-peer connection and having military-affiliated employees involved in military friendly initiatives, a theme that was referenced 17 times as a best practice, supported the development of a military friendly culture on campus.

According to participants, the military friendliness of their culture was developed by promoting awareness among faculty and staff through education and training, an intentional strategy to create a culture of acceptance. Being innovative was another strategy identified by several participants in regard to developing a military friendly culture and engaging in competition in the student veteran market. All institutions identified resolving the issues with accepting military credit as an indicator for a military friendly culture that would not only require an institution to be innovative, but be an important message to student veterans that they have a military friendly culture.

A focus on improvement was referenced by seven of the nine respondents for a total of 21 times and overlapped with the development of strategy. Continuity was also identified as important for the success of military friendly initiatives in that institutions that have been intentional in their implementation of military friendly initiatives will have

systemized their efforts so that the initiative self-sustains. Participants reported that institutions must be intentional in their design and implementation of military friendliness to ensure this systematization or else they are at risk to see their military friendly initiative fail to grow.

### **Discussion of Research Findings**

The research findings of this study are discussed within the framework of the stages of strategic intent: vision, commitment, and practice. In the review of the literature on military friendliness in higher education and strategic intentionality, it was suggested that institutions that had successfully become military friendly would have done so through the systematic integration of strategy and implementation (Bellamy, Becker, & Kuwik, 2003). It was further suggested that institutions that had achieved this integration of military friendly initiatives would share common indicators and best practices. The present study sought to explore if these indicators and best practices were common themes at the three case study institutions. Furthermore, the researcher sought to explore the overall role that intentionality had played in the institution becoming military friendly. The findings regarding the indicators and best practices of intentional military friendliness will be discussed first followed by a discussion on the overall role of intentionality in becoming military friendly for the three case study institutions.

#### **Best Practices and Indicators of Intentionality**

There are several studies regarding what constitutes military friendliness; however, few studies have addressed the indicators of intentionality in becoming military friendly. Hamel and Prahalad (1989) identified four strategies that organizations can implement to gain a strategic advantage including: building layers of advantage;

searching for “loose bricks”; changing the terms of engagement; and competing through collaboration. The strategies identified by Hamel and Prahalad can be applied to findings of this study on the indicators of and best practices for intentional military friendliness in post-secondary institutions.

**Building Layers of Advantage.** Post-secondary institutions that are intentional in their implementation of military friendly initiatives will expand their competitive weapons to building layers of advantage (Hamel & Prahalad, 1989). It was proposed that institutions would do so by expanding their offering of programs and services for student veterans. For the institutions participating in this study, indicators that a competitive advantage was achieved included: increasing accessibility, seeking to offer transfer and military credit, and offering a student centered approach to student veteran education. The ability to offer transfer or military credits was viewed as a competitive weapon by all of the institutions participating in the case study and was one of the top eight strongest indicators identified from the participant interviews. The first institution to be able to successfully offer credit on a consistent basis was viewed by the participants as having a distinct advantage.

**Searching for Loose Bricks.** Post-secondary institutions that are intentional in their implementation of military friendly initiatives will also analyze the competition’s market and engage in an attack on the periphery of that market (Hamel & Prahalad, 1989). For public, four-year military friendly institutions, searching for loose bricks would involve analyzing the for-profit and community college markets and launching an attack to compete. All of the institutions indicated expanded credit options, something that for-profit and community colleges have used to attract students, as an indicator of

military friendliness. The theme of increased accessibility was also common throughout the research findings. For Military Friendly Institution 1, searching for loose bricks involved analyzing their geographic location and implementing services to compete with local installations on post. Recognizing the opportunity to increase their market share in their geographic area, Military Friendly Institution 1 began offering application fee waivers for applying to the institution for active duty military members, as well as waiving all fees associated with tuition for these individuals.

**Changing the Terms of Engagement.** Institutions that are intentional in their implementation of military friendly initiatives change the terms of engagement and engage in competitive innovation (Hamel & Prahalad, 1989). These institutions refuse to accept the leader's definition of the industry, criteria set forth by external associations, and instead define military friendliness for their own institution to gain a strategic advantage (Hamel & Prahalad). The theme of competitive innovation was prevalent among the case study institutions. The concept of institutions becoming models of excellence was a salient theme as an indicator of military friendliness. Institutions differed in their approach to become a leader in military friendliness. Some institutions engaged in competitive innovation while others chose competitive collaboration (Hamel & Prahalad). The strongest example of competitive innovation from the participant interviews was a statement from the Director of Veterans Affairs at Military Friendly Institution 2 who discussed the external designations that many institutions use as their benchmark for their success in becoming military friendly. For this participant, meeting the criteria set forth by external associations is not the best indicator of military friendliness because of the lack of credibility of these organizations and the ability for

many institutions to obtain the designation relatively easily. Instead, the innovation of the institution in offering better services for student veterans was identified as a stronger indicator of intentionality in military friendliness. Although competitive innovation is important in the discussion of intentionality in military friendliness, Hamel and Prahalad identified a fourth strategy for intentionality in implementing initiatives, competitive collaboration.

**Competitive Collaboration.** Post-secondary institutions that are implementing military friendly initiatives may also compete with other institutions by engaging in competitive collaboration through joining agreements such as the Soldiers 2 Scholars program or becoming a model for excellence by collaborating with other institutions. Both of these indicators were identified in the findings of this investigation. For Military Friendly Institution 1, the renewed interest in the Soldiers 2 Scholars program was seen as a way to be more competitive in the student veteran market by finding out what their competitors were doing more easily. The focus on the Soldiers 2 Scholars program was an interesting finding in this study. This program began as an effort to bring consistency to military friendly initiatives in the University System of Georgia by offering guidance at the State level. However, as institutions began to implement their own initiatives, the program received less attention. The renewed interest in the Soldiers to Scholar program allows institutions to focus less on what constitutes military friendliness and instead allows institutions to benchmark their initiatives to other similar institutions to ensure that they remain competitive and innovative. Institutions also engaged in competitive collaboration by offering to train other institutions about how to implement military friendly initiatives. For Military Friendly Institution 1, the Military and Veterans

Programs Coordinator described their approach as being involved in events to not only showcase their military friendliness, but also offer guidance to other institutions implementing similar initiatives.

### **The Role of Intentionality**

The indicators of and best practices for intentional military friendliness are important for the discussion of intentionality in becoming military friendly for post-secondary institutions. However, it was exploring the role of strategic intentionality as a whole in implementing military friendly initiatives that was the overarching goal of the present study. Intentionality was shown to play an important role in the case study institutions' success in becoming military friendly. According to Hamel and Prahalad (1989), organizations that utilize strategic intent to gain an advantage focus on vision, commitment, and practice when implementing their initiatives. When applied to higher education, Ayoubi and Massoud (2007) determined that strategically intentional organizations successfully implement their initiatives through setting up the design of their vision, activating their design, and evaluating their process. The research findings from this investigation provide salient examples of how these military friendly institutions implementing their initiative in each stage of strategic intent.

**Vision.** In their study on internationalization efforts in higher education, Ayoubi and Massoud (2007) noted that institutions that utilized strategic intentionality in becoming internationalized set up the design of their initiative through developing a detailed map. For military friendliness, this detailed conceptual map becomes the vision for the initiative. An investigation of the literature revealed that for post-secondary institutions becoming military friendly, these maps of should include: conducting focus

groups with student veterans before implementing initiatives; developing tracking mechanisms; creating specific campus networks and contacts; establishing student veteran groups; creating learning communities; streamlining services; and ensure that financial aid, student affairs, and academic affairs departments have resources to achieve these demands (Bradley, 2009; Brown & Gross, 2011; O'Herrin, 2011). The Associate Director of Counseling and Psychological Services at Military Friendly Institution 3 confirmed that these indicators are in alignment to the map that she created when designing the initiative at their institution. For this institution, all of the indicators from the literature were included on their checklist.

For other institutions, the vision of military friendliness was less reliant upon the criteria already defined by external associations and instead was more dependent upon the vision of the person leading the charge. Overall, the strongest indicator of intentionality from the research findings was developing a military friendly culture. A finding that was consistent with the investigation from the literature. Organizational culture can be defined as “the deeply embedded patterns of organizational behavior and the shared values, assumptions, beliefs or ideologies that members have about their organization or its work” (Peterson & Spencer, 1991, p. 142). Institutions that embedded military friendliness into their organizational culture were more likely to reduce the cultural misalignment that can occur as student veterans transition from one distinct culture, the military, to another, post-secondary education (Kelly & Moogan, 2012). The finding that a military friendly culture is the strongest indicator of military friendliness across the institutions strengthens the assertion that intentionality played an important role in the successful implementation of their military friendly initiatives.



According to Smith (1994), the existing culture of an institution is the principal barrier to an institution changing its strategic direction and leadership plays an important role in achieving this transformation. The ability of an institution's leadership to envision military friendliness as a critical component of their future and gain commitment for that future is what Smith deemed as the Merlin Factor™. Leaders with the Merlin Factor™ are successful change agents because they engage in co-invention, engagement, and practice.

***Co-invention.*** Leaders with the Merlin Factor™ engage in co-invention and create a vision for the future by doing the following: “become more than oneself”, “think the unthinkable”, and “become ambassadors from the future to the present” (Smith, 1994). In the findings from this research, the theme of having a champion emerged as an important indicator of military friendliness, as well as a best practice. Eight of the 9 participants referred to having a champion as the first component of their military friendly initiative. The champion is the first leader of the initiative who becomes the driving force behind military friendliness and engages the administration to become a co-champion for the initiative. Once the champion has been established and leadership is involved, the initiative can move into the engagement phase.

***Engagement.*** In the co-invention stage, the process is focused on the efforts of leadership, but in the engagement stage, a collaborative effort begins to form that integrates the vision into the group identity of the organization (Smith, 1994). This stage includes: enrolling other people as co-creators, putting people to the test, and building Dragonslayer teams (Smith, 1994). The role of leadership in this stage was identified from the research findings as creating a taskforce. The Director of Veterans Affairs at

Military Friendly Institution 2 identified the creation of a taskforce as a direct result of the institution's leadership taking a role in the military friendly initiative at the institution. Once the taskforce was created, the research findings suggested that vision for military friendliness at the institutions began to take a more delineated form. The Director of Military Affairs at Military Friendly Institution 2 further noted that the taskforce developed the goals and recommendations that would constitute the military friendly initiative at their institution.

***Practice.*** In this stage of creating the vision, organizational learning is emphasized to ensure that actions of the organization are in accordance with the values and shared future delineated by the strategic intentionality of the organization (Smith, 1994). The strategies that are central to this stage include: "maintaining the future focus"; "converting opposition to momentum", and, "looking for magic" (Smith). In this stage, leadership has to continue to support the initiative by taking a long-term focus. According to the Military and Veterans Programs Coordinator at Military Friendly Institution 1, it is this long-term focus that will sustain the initiative. Leadership plays a role in encouraging the focus on the future by sending the message to the organization that this initiative is important.

***Commitment.*** In the second stage of strategic intent, the focus is on organizational commitment to intentionally becoming military friendly. In this stage, the design created in the first stage of strategic intent becomes activated through several intentional steps. The literature suggested that a strategically intentional military friendly initiative should consist of two components: implementing targeted programs and services, and marketing the institution as military friendly both externally and internally.

In order for these two components to be realized, the research findings suggest that buy-in from the organization must be achieved and administrative structures must be implemented.

Organizational commitment through gaining buy-in was an important best practice identified in the research findings. Institutions increased buy-in through outreach programs in which awareness was created on campus. Military Friendly Institution 1 created an outreach program that was highly visible to generate interest. The institutions also maximized their military-affiliated employees to generate support across campus from individuals who shared a common experience with the students they were trying to reach. According to the Military and Veterans Programs Coordinator at Military Friendly Institution 1, garnering feedback from military-affiliated employees was an important factor in the implementation of the institution's military friendly initiative.

The implementation of administrative structures also played an important role in an institution becoming military friendly. Establishing military resource centers and integrating the targeted programs and services for student veterans are important administrative structures for military friendliness for post-secondary institutions (Lipka, 2011; USG, 2013). Targeted programs and services along with a student centered approach were indicators of intentionality in becoming military friendly identified in the research findings. However, it is the integration of these services that was identified as one of the 9 best practices for intentionality in becoming military friendly from the research findings.

The ability to implement administrative structures are evidence that the institution is intentional enough in their efforts to become military friendly that they allocated the

needed resources to sustain the initiative. According to the Mental Health and Substance Abuse Therapist at Military Friendly Institution 1, intentionality in becoming military friendly means that the institution allocates resources to the initiative instead of solely outlining policies. As was asserted by Hamel and Prahalad (1989), evidence of strategic intent in organizational efforts relies upon institution's aligning their strategy with their implementation. An assertion that is confirmed by the findings that these institutions are "putting their money where their mouth is" when it comes to establishing the administrative structures critical to military friendliness.

The establishment of a Military Resource Center is an important best practice that was seen as integral to gaining organizational commitment. Having a "one stop shop" in the form of a military resource center has been identified as a critical component of military friendliness throughout the literature (Bradley, 2009; Brown & Gross, 2011; Lipka, 2011; USG, 2013). The research findings show that the establishment of the military resource center allow the efforts of the institution to be more focused and for all members of the community to have a centralized location for information. Regarding the military resource center, the Director of Veteran Affairs at Military Friendly Institution 2 indicated that it was not only necessary, but that it needed to evolve as the military friendly initiative progressed. Although the creation of a detailed vision has been established as an important indicator of intentionality, the institution being adaptable in its approach and allowing the initiative to evolve organically is another research finding that aligns with Hamel and Prahalad's (1989) theory of strategic intentionality. Once the organizational buy-in and administrative structures have been established, the institution

can progress in this stage of strategic intentionality to public relations and marketing campaigns within the campus community and among external stakeholders.

By publicizing the efforts and successes of the institutions in becoming military friendly, institutions not only have the opportunity to generate greater buy-in, but also a greater opportunity for resources to be generated to support their efforts. The resources can come from two primary sources: financial support from grants or the university, and funding from student veterans choosing to enroll at the institution. The research identified from the documents from the Strategic Planning and Resource Council that military friendly initiatives at Military Friendly Institution 1 received competitive grant funding to further their initiatives. In the interview with the Military and Veterans Programs Coordinator at Military Friendly Institution 1, the relationship between marketing, buy-in, and grant funding was outlined as interconnected and essential for the success of their military friendly initiative. In an institutional operations document from Military Friendly Institution 2, the rapid expansion in enrollment of student veterans was outlined one of the reasons why the institution had seen employee growth from Fall 2008 to Fall 2011.

Public relations and marketing are important in the discussion of gaining resources from the enrollment of student veterans as well. The investigation of the literature suggested that institutions that were intentional and successful in their implementation of a military friendly initiative would make concerted efforts to attract and retain student veterans to compete with the institutions that historically dominated the student veteran market (Dervarics, 2011). Student veterans, as well as military-affiliated students bring with them to post-secondary education guaranteed funding for the

enrolling institution. The Military and Veterans Programs Coordinator at Military Friendly Institution 1 identified consumer choice as an important factor driving the need to engage in public relations and marketing. The Mental Health and Substance Abuse Therapist at Military Friendly Institution elaborated on this point by remarking that assisting student veterans in maximizing their benefits by providing quality education at a fair price was essential for military friendliness.

**Practice.** For post-secondary institutions implementing military friendly initiatives, the third state of strategic intentionality is that of practice. More specifically, military friendly institutions use intentionality in their actions toward becoming military friendly and actively engage in the process of evaluation to assess their progress toward their vision of military friendliness (Hamal & Prahalad, 1989; Smith, 1994). For post-secondary institutions becoming military friendly, assessment and evaluation of progress towards military friendliness depends upon the vision identified during the first stage of strategic intent.

Brown and Gross (2011) identified a military friendly institution as one that has received a designation given by an external association to institutions that meet the needs of student veterans through targeted, programs, and initiatives. Some institutions such as Military Friendly Institution 3, originally defined their visions based upon the criteria set forth by these external associations, but through assessment and evaluation have slowly evolved their vision. The Associate Director of Counseling and Psychological Services at this institution indicated that their success relied upon staying up to date on policy and trends, as well as maintain a holistic view through assessment. In regard to the designations from external associations, Military Friendly Institution 2 indicated that

there are difficulties with using these designations for evaluating your effort because there can be a significant disconnect between what an institution says they are doing on a survey and what is actually being done at the institution.

Strategic intentionality is the “obsession with winning at all levels of the organization” that is meant to be sustained by the organization until the vision has been realized (Hamel & Prahalad, p.150). The methods in which institutions intentionally evaluate and assess their approaches to sustain the initiative include: surveying and getting informal feedback from their stakeholders; and implementing tracking mechanisms that evaluate successful matriculation of student veterans. According to the Veterans Resource Coordinator at Military Friendly Institution 3, evaluation and assessment has to be present throughout the stages of implementation and not done on an ad-hoc basis. A focus on continuity and the long term success of a military friendly initiative is integral to the success of an institution using strategic intentionality to implement their initiative.

Lipka (2011) identified that feedback from student veterans is an essential component of military friendliness. The findings of this study confirmed that feedback from these stakeholders is an important indicator of strategic intentionality in becoming military friendly. The Military and Veterans Programs Coordinator at Military Friendly Institution 1 noted that, “Everybody thinks they crack the code by reading a book or this research report, and at the end of the day, they don't know what's best for the veteran students unless you talk to the veteran students because everybody will go, ‘Oh, I have this program and we have that.’ Great. No one cares.” For the case study institutions,

feedback from student veterans provides the dialogue to identify areas of improvement that can be incorporated into their vision and put into action.

The ability to identify and track student veterans throughout the matriculation process was identified as an important component of military friendly initiatives (USG, 2013). The findings of this study show that it is an important indicator of intentionality in becoming military friendly. At Military Friendly Institution 1, the Military and Veterans Programs Coordinator noted that indicators for intentionality in becoming military friendly included a tracking mechanism to assess the recruitment, enrollment, progression, and graduation of student veterans. By tracking enrollment, institutions are able to identify how successful they are in their efforts in promoting and marketing their military friendliness. Conversely, by tracking degree completion, institutions can evaluate their success in implementing the military friendly programs and services they have identified as important for student veteran success. Subsequently, these feedback mechanisms allow the institutions to continuously improve their initiatives.

Post-secondary institutions can also assess their military friendliness by examining the organizational culture at their institutions. The strongest indicator of intentionality in becoming military friendly discovered in this investigation is that of a military friendly culture. Institutions that have successfully and intentionally embedded military friendliness within their organizational culture will have a distinct advantage in the student veteran market. These institutions will be more likely to see a growth in enrollment as their military friendly status becomes recognized by stakeholders.



## Conclusions

This qualitative investigation sought to explore the role of strategic intentionality in becoming military friendly for post-secondary institutions in the State of Georgia through a multiple case study. Several conclusions can be drawn from the findings of this study.

The results of this study identified a military friendly culture as the strongest indicator of intentionality in becoming military friendly. The study also revealed nine best practices relative to intentionality in becoming military friendly including: effective human resources practices; gaining organizational commitment; developing a military friendly culture; supportive leadership and administration; conducting outreach; focusing on continuity; integrating services; establishing a military resource center; and promoting military friendliness through public relations and marketing. The best practice of obtaining the support of leadership and administration corresponds with the first stage of strategic intent, vision. The best practices of effective human resources practices, gaining organizational commitment, conducting outreach, integrating services, and establishing a military resource center correspond with the second stage of strategic intent, commitment. The best practices of developing a military friendly culture and focusing on continuity correspond with the third stage of intent, practice.

Of particular interest regarding the best practice of effective human resources practices is that despite the overwhelming support from participants for greater numbers of designated staffing for student veteran needs, the participants emphasized that the individual had to be the right person for the right position. Understanding the job and the needs of student veterans are seen as essential. A military background is viewed as

highly preferred among participants with military experience, but not among participants with no military experience. Additionally, despite the strong focus on developing a military friendly culture through the organization at all levels, participants emphasized that designated staff and targeted programs and services should be closely integrated and in a central location, the military resource center. These finding should be of particular interest to the leadership and administration of institution's implementing military friendly initiatives. Allocating resources for staffing and administrative structures such as the military resource center has been identified as highly important, but leadership should be intentional in the organizational structure for both.

Additionally, strategic planning is of particular importance in this study. Despite the findings showing that institutions are engaging in strategic intentionality at all three stages, military friendliness was not evident in the strategic plans of the institutions except for in very small and relatively less significant statements. Strategic intentionality is identified as the systematic integration of strategy and implementation so it could be assumed that institutions that are intentional in their approach to military friendliness would include these initiatives in their plans explicitly. However, the researcher did uncover several planning documents at the institutions that were SWOT (strengths, weakness, opportunities, and threats) analyses. In these documents, military friendly initiatives were consistently identified as opportunities, a finding consistent with strategic intentionality.

This study has explored the role of intentionality through the framework of strategic intentionality by post-secondary institutions in becoming military friendly. Strategic intentionality plays a role in defining an institution's vision for military

friendliness, the organizational commitment to military friendliness, and the practice of becoming military friendly. In addition, intentionality influences the process of implementing a military friendly initiative from start to finish with an emphasis on the role that human resources in the form of leadership and administration, having a champion, and designated staffing plays in successful implementation, as well as an emphasize on military friendly culture as both an indicator of successful implementation and a transforming influence on the institution as a whole. Strategic intentionality can also be describe as an important mechanism for identifying the strongest indicators of intention military friendliness and the best practices relative to intentionality for becoming military friendly.

The findings of this study have shown that strategic intentionality serves as an important framework for evaluating the efforts of post-secondary institutions in becoming military friendly. The researcher concludes that the systematic integration of strategic intentionality and implementation of military friendly initiatives allows post-secondary institutions to more effectively achieve military friendliness by institutionalizing military friendliness into the organizational culture, creating commitment from leadership to allocate financial resources and establish administrative structures, and providing a mechanism for institutions to evaluate their successes.

### **Recommendations**

The following are the researcher's recommendations in implementing the findings reported in Chapter 4 of this study. Because the nature of this study, the data sets are specific to this investigation. As such, the researcher does not assume generalizability to institutions outside the scope of this investigation. Because of the level of consistency

between the research findings and the literature investigation, along with the provision of rich, thick descriptions to support these results, the researcher maintains that the recommendations provided below will be useful and beneficial to post-secondary institutions that are seeking to implement a military friendly initiative or evaluate their current military friendly initiative:

1. The researcher recommends that post-secondary institutions review the strongest indicators of intentional military friendliness found in this study. An exploration of the findings will allow institutions to evaluate their vision of military friendliness in relation to the criteria set forth by external associations and their own institutional values and goals.
2. The researcher recommends that post-secondary institutions review the best practices for intentionality in becoming military friendly in this study. By exploring these research findings, institutions will be able to strategize their implementation efforts and evaluate the contribution that their individual practices are having on their military friendliness as a whole.
3. The research recommends that the leadership and administration at post-secondary institutions review the research findings to intentionally support military friendly initiatives on campus by taking an active role in creating a vision, gaining organizational commitment, and practicing military friendliness at their institution.
4. The researcher recommends further exploring the lower score on organizational commitment compared to vision and practice on the *Organizational Intentionality*

in *Becoming Military Friendly Survey*. Additionally, the researcher recommends exploring the lower overall score for Military Friendly Institution 3.

5. The researcher recommends further exploring why planning did not emerge as an indicator or best practice in becoming military friendly.

In addition to these recommendations, the researcher identified areas for future investigation. As such, the researcher recommends the following as suggestions for future research:

1. To the researcher's knowledge, this is the first study that investigates the role of strategic intentionality on the implementation of military friendly initiatives in post-secondary education. Therefore, additional studies are recommended to confirm and elaborate on the findings of this study.
2. The theory of strategic intentionality is a concept that has been explored from a business perspective multiple times. As applied to post-secondary education, the theory of strategic intentionality has been explored only through internationalization efforts. Additional studies that explore strategic intentionality and higher education initiatives are recommended to explore the application of the theory beyond internationalization and military friendliness.
3. Due to the small sample size of this study, the *Organizational Intentionality in Becoming Military Friendly Survey* was utilized from solely a descriptive perspective. Because there are few instruments regarding intentionality, the researcher recommends the development of a more robust instrument to measure the contribution of intentionality to military friendliness.

4. The design of this study limited the case study institutions to those who had already been identified as established military friendly institutions. Because institutions may be at different points in the process of becoming military friendly, the researcher recommends the research be expanded to explore intentionality at institutions at all phases of the implementation process. Additionally, the researcher recommends the research be expanded to institutions outside of the public, four-year classification, and outside the State of Georgia.
5. The present study explored the role of intentionality from the perspective of campus officials involved in military friendly initiative. In order to gain a broader conceptualization of intentionality in military friendly initiatives, the researcher recommends that future research includes student veterans and employees in roles not directly related to student veterans.
6. Lastly, the researcher recommends that factors such as military affiliation of employees be included in future research on the role of intentionality.

### **Dissemination**

The researcher will ensure that this study is disseminated in the following ways:

1. The researcher will seek to publish this research in journals on Student Affairs practices in higher education and strategic planning in higher education.
2. The researcher will make this research available to higher education institutions, organizations, and agencies focused on military friendly initiatives in higher education, as well as strategic planning in higher education.
3. The researcher will make this research available to other researchers exploring military friendliness and/or strategic intentionality in higher education.

4. The researcher will make this research available to all participating case study institutions.

## REFERENCES

- American Council on Education (ACE). (2012). *From soldier to scholar II: Assessing campus programs for veterans and service members*. Retrieved from:  
<http://www.acenet.edu/news-room/Documents/From-Soldier-to-Student-II-Assessing-Campus-Programs.pdf>
- Ayoubi, R. M., & Massoud, H. K. (2007). The strategy of internationalization in universities: A quantitative evaluation of the intent and implementation in UK universities. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 21(4), 329-349.
- Bellamy, A., Becker, P., & Kuwik, P. (2003). Developing a technology management curriculum from the perspective of strategic intent. *Journal of Technology Studies*, XXIX, 2.
- Berg, B. (2004). *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson Education.
- Brown, P. A., & Gross, C. (2011). Serving those who have served: Managing veteran and military student best practices. *The Journal of Continuing Higher Education*, 54, 45-59.
- Bradley, P. (2009). Welcome back: As new G.I. Bill takes hold, colleges strive to aid vet's transition. *Community College Week*, 22(3), 6-7.
- Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (2013). *Methodology: Size and setting classification*. Retrieved from  
[http://classifications.carnegiefoundation.org/methodology/size\\_setting.php](http://classifications.carnegiefoundation.org/methodology/size_setting.php)



- Cornelius, A. R. (2012). Intentional internationalization of higher education: A strategic institutional response to globalization. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Georgia Southern University, Statesboro, GA.
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Creswell, J. W. (2008). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- DiRamio, D., Ackerman, R., & Mitchell, R. L. (2008). From combat to campus: Voices of student-veterans. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, 45(1), 5.
- Fereday, J., & Muir-Cochrane, E. (2008). Demonstrating rigor using thematic analysis: A hybrid approach of inductive and deductive coding and theme development. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 5(1), 80-92.
- Gall, M., Gall, J., & Borg, W. (2007). *Educational research: An introduction*. Boston: Pearson Education.
- Greenberg, M. (2008). The New G.I. Bill is no match for the original. *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 54(46), A56.
- Hamel, G., & Prahalad, C. K. (2005). Strategic intent. *Harvard Business Review*, 83(7), 148-161.
- Hobbes, L. (2012). 2013 Guide to military-friendly colleges and universities. *Military Advanced Education*, 7(10), 17-44.
- Hoy, W. K., & Miskel, C. (2008). *Educational administration. Theory, research and practice*. (8th ed.) NY: McGraw-Hill.

- Kiley, K. (2011). Veterans and colleges say they're satisfied with new GI benefits, in spite of a rough first year. *Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from: <http://www.chronicle.com/article/Start-Up-Woes-for-New-GI-Bill/125322>
- Lipka, S. (2011). To support student veterans, be visible and engage other students, grant winners advise. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from [http://www.chronicle.com/article/Grant-Winners-Offer-Tips-on/126653/?sid=at&utm\\_source=at&utm\\_medium=en](http://www.chronicle.com/article/Grant-Winners-Offer-Tips-on/126653/?sid=at&utm_source=at&utm_medium=en)
- Kezar, A. J., & Eckel, P. D. (2002). The effect of institutional culture on change strategies in higher education: Universal principles or culturally responsive concepts? *The Journal of Higher Education*, 73(4), 435-460.
- Melewar, T. C., & Akel, S. (2005). The role of corporate identity in the higher education sector: A case study. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 10(1), 41-57.
- O'Herrin, E. (2011). Enhancing veteran success in higher education. *Peer Review*, Winter 2011, 15-18.
- Patton, M. (1990). *Qualitative evaluations and research methods* (2nd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Rhee, E., Uleman, J. S., & Lee, H. K. (1996). Variations in collectivism and individualism by in-group and culture: Confirmatory factor analyses. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 71, 1037-1054.
- Saldaña, J. (2011). *Fundamentals of qualitative research: Understanding qualitative research*. NY: Oxford University Press.

- Shankar, R. (2009). Recent development: Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008. *Harvard Journal on Legislation*, 46, 303-320.
- Smith, C. E. (1994). The Merlin factor: Leadership and strategic intent. *Business Strategy Review*, 53(1), 67-83.
- Stake, R. E. (2005). Qualitative case studies. *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed., pp. 443-466). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Steele, J. L., Salcedo, N., & Coley, J. (2010). How Military Veterans Are Using the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill and Adapting to Life in College.
- Teddle, C., & Yu, F. (2007). Mixed methods sampling a typology with examples. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 1(1), 77-100.
- Theelin, J. R. (2004). *A history of American higher education*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Tinto, V. (2002, October). Enhancing student persistence: Connecting the dots. In Presentation prepared for the Optimizing the Nation's Investment: Persistence and Success in Postsecondary Education Conference.
- United States Department of Veterans Affairs (2013, January 18). *Schools that participate in the Principles of Excellence Program*. Retrieved from the Department of Veterans Affairs website:  
[https://www.gibill.va.gov/resources/education\\_resources/Principles\\_of\\_excellence/poe\\_list\\_2012.html](https://www.gibill.va.gov/resources/education_resources/Principles_of_excellence/poe_list_2012.html)
- University System of Georgia (2011, May 10). *University System of Georgia expands effort: 12 institutions offer 'Soldiers 2 Scholars'*. Retrieved from

[http://www.usg.edu/news/release/special\\_program\\_eases\\_path\\_to\\_college\\_for\\_military/](http://www.usg.edu/news/release/special_program_eases_path_to_college_for_military/)

Yin, R. (2008). *Case study research: Design and methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

APPENDIX A

“ORGANIZATIONAL INTENTIONALITY IN BECOMING MILITARY FRIENDLY  
SURVEY”

*Part I: Demographics***Respondent Demographics**

1. What university do you represent?

2. What is the title of your current position?

3. How many years have you been in your current position?

4. How many years have you been involved in military friendly initiatives in higher education?

5. What is the total number of years you have served at this university?

6. What is the highest degree you have earned?

7. Have you served in the military? If so, how long and what branch?

8. Have you utilized veterans' educational benefits?

9. Has anyone in your immediate family served in the military? If so, who, for how long, and what branch?

10. Has anyone in your immediate family utilized veterans' educational benefits? If so, who?

### **Institutional Demographics**

11. How many student veterans were enrolled at your institution for Fall 2013?

12. What percentage of the overall population of your institution do student veterans represent?

13. How many staff members are designated to work with student veterans at your institution?

14. Does your institution have a Military Resource Center or other physical space designated for student veterans?

15. What is the average age of student veterans at your institution?

16. How many active duty service members are enrolled at your institution?

17. Has your institution established relationships with active military installations? If so, with which installations?

18. What is your proximity to military installations?

19. What external associations have designated your institution as military friendly?



*Part II*

*To the best of your knowledge, please rate the following items pertaining to your institution by checking the appropriate box based upon the following scale:*

**Level of agreement with each statement:**

**From “Least Agree With” (1) to “Most Agree With” (5)**

Section A	Don't Know 0	Least 1	2	3	4	Most 5
1. Military friendliness at this institution began with the institution's leadership establishing a vision that had the end in mind.						
2. The leadership of this institution committed to becoming military friendly based on what the institution will look like in the future, and not based on the institution's current or past identity.						
3. The process of becoming military friendly at this institution was initiated by a charge from the leadership of the institution.						
4. This institution's leadership ensured that the vision for becoming military friendly was clearly articulated in the institution's mission statement.						
5. This institution's leadership ensured that the vision for becoming military friendly was clearly articulated in the institution's strategic plan.						
6. The leadership of this institution is committed to the accomplishment of becoming military friendly.						

7. The leadership of this institution sustains the progress of becoming military friendly at the institution by tactically allocating resources to military friendly efforts and activities.						
8. The leadership of this institution assumes responsibility for defining the future of military friendliness at the institution.						
9. The leadership of this institution inspires employees to increase their capabilities beyond their current levels to successful become a military friendly institution.						
10. The leadership of this institution assumes responsibility for the success or failure of this institution becoming military friendly.						

<b>Section B</b>	<b>Don't Know 0</b>	<b>Least 1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Most 5</b>
1. This institution has developed a strategic plan for becoming military friendly based on the vision established by the leadership of the institution.						
2. This institution's strategic plan for becoming military friendly is amply publicized throughout the institution.						
3. The scope of the challenge of becoming military friendly is clearly outlined and communicated to employees at all levels of the organization.						

4. The core competencies, along with policies and operational procedures, required for becoming military friendly are clearly established and communicated to employees at all levels of the organization.						
5. Employees at all levels of the organization have a sense of identity with the military friendly vision of this institution.						
6. Employees at all levels of the organization have an opportunity to become critically engaged in the military friendly vision of this institution.						
7. Employees at all levels of the organization are committed to the military friendly vision of this institution.						
8. This institution has established one or more competent administrative structures to implement the military friendly vision of the institution.						
9. All the administrative structures of this institution work in a coordinated manner to accomplish the military friendly vision of the institution.						
10. All activities pertaining to becoming military friendly are clearly detailed and communicated to employees at all levels of the organization.						

<b>Section C</b>	<b>Don't Know 0</b>	<b>Least 1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Most 5</b>
1. A culture of organizational flexibility, innovation, and enthusiasm exists at this institution regarding military friendliness.						
3. Employees at this institution feel inspired as they work toward the achievement of the vision of military friendliness.						
4. Military friendliness change agents have been developed in the process of becoming military friendly at this institution.						
4. Champions of the new culture of military friendliness have emerged in the process of becoming military friendly at this institution.						
5. Continuous risk-taking and improvisation is seen as critical in the process of becoming military friendly at this institution.						
6. Innovation during the process of becoming military friendly is accomplished through creativity and experimentation.						
7. During the process of becoming military friendly, as barriers are overcome and goals are met, employees' enthusiasm and drive to succeed increase, momentum accelerates, and change is mastered.						
8. This institution embarks on becoming military friendly with an enterprising campus spirit.						

9. The institution engages in a systematic approach to military friendliness.						
10. This institution has a mechanism in place to successfully assess the effectiveness of the process of becoming military friendly.						

APPENDIX B

“STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE”

*Part I: Demographics*

*Respondent Demographics*

1. What is the title of your current position?

2. How many years have you been in your current position?

3. How many years have you been involved in *military friendly* initiatives in higher education?

4. What is the total number of years you have served at this university?

5. What is the highest degree you have earned?

*Part II: Introduction to the role of intentionality in becoming military friendly*

Research Sub-Question #1:	What is the strongest indicator of intentionality in successfully becoming military friendly at a four-year, not for profit, post-secondary institution in Georgia?
---------------------------	---

Interview Questions		Supporting Research
1.	What do you consider to be the reasons why this institution has become military friendly?	Brown & Gross, 2011; DVA, 2013; Greenberg, 2008; Kiley, 2011; USG, 2011
2.	Why do you think being military friendly is important to this university?	Bradley, 2009; DVA, 2013; Steele, Salcedo, & Coley, 2010 ; Lipka, 2011; O'Herrin, 2011; Shankar, 2009; Thelin, 2004; USG, 2011
3.	What do you consider the indicators of military friendliness at this institution?	ACE, 2012; Bradley, 2009; DiRamio, Ackerman, & Mitchell, 2008; DVA, 2013; Steele, Salcedo, & Coley, 2010 ; Lipka, 2011; Nichols-Casebolt, 2012; O'Herrin, 2011; Shankar, 2009; Thelin, 2004; USG, 2011
4.	In your estimation, of those indicators, what are the two more important indicators of successfully becoming military friendly at this institution?	ACE, 2012; Bradley, 2009; DiRamio, Ackerman, & Mitchell, 2008; DVA, 2013; Steele, Salcedo, & Coley, 2010 ; Lipka, 2011; Nichols-Casebolt, 2012; O'Herrin, 2011; Shankar, 2009; Thelin, 2004; USG, 2011
5.	In your estimation, of those indicators, what is the strongest indicator of successfully becoming military friendly at this institution?	ACE, 2012; Bradley, 2009; DiRamio, Ackerman, & Mitchell, 2008; Steele, Salcedo, & Coley, 2010 ; Lipka, 2011; NicholsCasebolt, 2012; O'Herrin, 2011; Shankar, 2009; Thelin, 2004



6.	Based on your experience in military friendly initiatives in higher education, do you believe there are other indicators of military friendliness that this institution has yet to embrace?	ACE, 2012; Bradley, 2009; DiRamio, Ackerman, & Mitchell, 2008; DVA, 2013; Steele, Salcedo, & Coley, 2010 ; Lipka, 2011; Nichols-Casebolt, 2012; O'Herrin, 2011; Shankar, 2009; Thelin, 2004; USG, 2011
7.	How does this institution assess its success in becoming military friendly?	ACE, 2012; Bradley, 2009; Steele, Salcedo, & Coley, 2010 ; Lipka, 2011; O'Herrin, 2011
8.	What does the future look like for military friendliness at this institution?	ACE, 2012; Bradley, 2009; Steele, Salcedo, & Coley, 2010 ; Lipka, 2011; O'Herrin, 2011

Research Sub-Question #2:	What are the best practices relative to intentionality in successful internationalization?
---------------------------	--

Interview Questions		Supporting Research
1.	What is the driving force behind military friendliness at this institution?	Bellamy, Becker & Kuwik, 2003; Cornelius, 2012; Hamel & Prahalad, 1989; Kezar & Eckel, 2002; Melewar & Akel, 2005; Smith, 1994
2.	Is this institution employing a specific model or approach as a strategy for becoming military friendly?	Ayoubi & Massoud, 2007; Bellamy, Becker & Kuwik, 2003; Cornelius, 2012; Hamel & Prahalad, 1989; Kezar & Eckel, 2002; Melewar & Akel, 2005; Smith, 1994
3.	How does this institution prioritize its military friendly activities and engagements?	Cornelius, 2012; Hamel & Prahalad, 1989; Hobbes, 2012; Kezar & Eckel, 2002; Smith, 1994; USG, 2011
4.	Based on your experience in military friendly initiatives in higher education, what do you believe are the best practices for institutions in becoming military friendliness?	Brown & Gross, 2011; DVA, 2013; Hamel & Prahalad, 1989; Hobbes, 2012; Lipka, 2011; USG, 2011

5.	Do you believe this institution is following best practices in the industry for becoming military friendly?	Brown & Gross, 2011; DVA, 2013; Hamel & Prahalad, 1989; Hobbes, 2012; Lipka, 2011; USG, 2011
6.	What are some of the best practices in becoming military friendly that have contributed to your institution's success?	Brown & Gross, 2011; DVA, 2013; Hamel & Prahalad, 1989; Hobbes, 2012; Lipka, 2011; USG, 2011
7.	Are there some best practices in becoming military friendly that contribute more than others at this institution? If so, why?	Brown & Gross, 2011; DVA, 2013; Hamel & Prahalad, 1989; Hobbes, 2012; Lipka, 2011; USG, 2011
8.	What sustains such a high level of military friendliness at this university?	Bellamy, Becker & Kuwik, 2003; Brown & Gross, 2011; DVA, 2013; Hamel & Prahalad, 1989; Hobbes, 2012; Lipka, 2011; Smith, 1994; USG, 2011
9.	What must this university do to continue sustain military friendliness?	Bellamy, Becker & Kuwik, 2003; Brown & Gross, 2011; DVA, 2013; Hamel & Prahalad, 1989; Hobbes, 2012; Lipka, 2011; Smith, 1994; USG, 2011
10.	What do you consider are some improvements that can be made at this institution relative to best practices in becoming military friendly?	Bellamy, Becker & Kuwik, 2003; Brown & Gross, 2011; DVA, 2013; Hamel & Prahalad, 1989; Hobbes, 2012; Lipka, 2011; Smith, 1994; USG, 2011

APPENDIX C

“INFORMED CONSENT FOR SURVEY AND INTERVIEW”



**COLLEGE OF EDUCATION  
DEPARTMENT OF LEADERSHIP, TECHNOLOGY, AND HUMAN  
DEVELOPMENT**

**INTERVIEW AND SURVEY INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

Dear Research Participant:

Please accept this request for your participation in my research. As a doctoral student in the Doctorate of Education in Higher Education Administration program at Georgia Southern University, this research is being conducted as a part of my dissertation research. The title of my study is *The Use of Strategic Intentionality by Post-Secondary Institutions in Becoming Military Friendly*. The proposed study will be conducted with campus officials who are the centralized point of contact for student veterans on their respective campuses. The research focuses on the role that organizational intentionality, in the form of strategic intent, plays in the successful implementation of *military friendly* initiatives in post-secondary education. The purpose of this study is to determine how intentionality has impacted successful implementation of *military friendly* initiatives at four year, public, not-for-profit institutions in the State of Georgia.

Participation in this research will include answering questions in a confidential interview questionnaire designed to explore your experience with the implementation of *military friendly* initiatives at your institution. The anticipated time for completion of the interview is one hour. Additionally, participation will include a survey designed to explore your assessment of the degree of intentionality in the implementation of *military friendly* initiatives at your institution. The anticipated time to complete the survey is fifteen minutes.

The risks of participating in this study are minimal. The study is not an anonymous study. However, the study has been designed to ensure participant and institutional confidentiality, and your participation is completely voluntary. If you choose not to participate, discontinue your participation, or decline to answer any part of the questions in the interview, you may do so at any time without penalties. The results of the research may be published, but your name and your institution's name will not be used. There are no direct benefits for your participation. However, participation in this study may help offer insight into the role that intentionality plays in the strategic implementation of *military friendly* initiatives.

The findings from this study will be presented in my dissertation project for completion of the degree of Doctor of Education in Higher Education Administration from Georgia Southern University. Strict confidentiality will be maintained throughout this study. Data will be handled in accordance to the standards of the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects (Federal Register, 1991) and the Ethical Principles in the Conduct of Research with Human Participants (APA, 1982). The interview will be audio recorded on the researcher's personal lap top computer, which requires a password for access that only the researcher knows. A back up recording will be

collected using a digital recorder that will be stored in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's home office. Interview transcriptions and your signed consent form will be kept in separate locked file cabinets in the researcher's home office, to which only the researcher has access. All data will be destroyed three years following the completion of the study.

Participants in this study have the right to ask questions and have those questions answered. If you have questions about this study, please contact me as the principal investigator of the project, Allison Gorman, via e-mail at [agorman@georgiasouthern.edu](mailto:agorman@georgiasouthern.edu), or by telephone at (912) 484-1199. Participants may also contact my faculty advisor, Dr. Teri Melton, via e-mail at [tamelton@georgiasouthern.edu](mailto:tamelton@georgiasouthern.edu). For questions concerning your rights as a research participant, contact Georgia Southern University Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs at 912-478-0843.

You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your records. This project has been reviewed and approved by the GSU Institutional Review Board under tracking number H14431.

You must be 18 years of age or older to consent to participate in this research study. If you consent to participate in this research study and to the terms above, please sign your name and indicate the date below.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

I, the undersigned, verify that the above informed consent procedure has been followed.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Investigator Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

APPENDIX D

“DOCUMENT AND AUDIO-VISUAL REVIEW FORM”

## Document &amp; Audio-Visual Review Form

Type of Document or Audio-Visual Material:  Document  Audio and/or Visual

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Author(s) (*if provided*): \_\_\_\_\_

Operation Produced By: \_\_\_\_\_

Affecting What Aspect of Military Friendliness: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Publication: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What indicators of intentionality in becoming military friendly at this institution are published in this document or audio-visual material?

2. Among the indicators present in this document, which one can be identified as the strongest indicator?

3. What best practices for intentionality in becoming military friendly at this institution are published in this document or audio-visual material?

APPENDIX E  
“OBSERVATION FORM”



## Observation Form

Participant Designation: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What indicators of intentionality in becoming military friendly at this institution are prominently displayed in this institution's environment?

2. Among the indicators displayed, which one can be identified as the strongest indicator?

3. What best practices for intentionality in becoming military friendly at this institution are displayed in this institution's environment?

APPENDIX F

“MOST COMMON THEMES FROM FINDINGS”

Theme	Description	Examples
Military Friendly Culture	The inclusion of military friendliness into the organizational culture of the institution. Evidenced by a shared commitment to providing a welcoming and favorable environment to student veterans.	“And I think another big part of it is to make sure that you're friendly, and your campus culture is built around being friendly to military affiliated students”
Human Resources	As an indicator, human resources refers to the individuals who were hired to provide services to student veterans. As a best practice, human resources refers to the human resource practices for hiring individuals to participate in military friendly initiatives.	<p>“I think my position is a huge one, having that person that’s solely dedicated to them to support their needs”</p> <p>“I think having so many people on board to make it military friendly and who genuinely care about the success of the students has been probably the best. It’s really the human resources that mean the most”</p>
Military Resource Center	The space designated for student veterans where targeted programs and services are located.	“Because it is a place where – it’s kind of like the hub. It’s kind of like the place where they come and they find out where to go, they make connections with other veterans or military students, and they can come here and study”
Organizational Commitment	The commitment of the organization’s leadership and members to implementing a military friendly initiative. Evidenced by “buy-in” from campus members and allocating resources to achieve the goals of the initiative.	“We have – over the course of last five years at becoming military friendly has gone from a mid-level leadership initiative to an institutional goal, which has been a lot support and driven by the president of the university”
Accessibility	The implementation of policies, procedures, services, and programs that increase the ability of student veterans to enroll and be successful at the institution. This may take the form of online courses, reduced fees and tuition, or satellite campuses.	“Because their lives change daily, you know, they may have a mission, they may have training, they may have a deployment that takes them away, we want to have that flexibility with the availability of classes during the day and during the evening and the option of online just to help with the flexibility of their actual lives”
Assessment and Evaluation	The efforts taken by the institution in measuring their success in meeting their goals for military friendliness. Common methods	“Well, first off, we assess individuals. We send out satisfaction surveys, that’s No. 1. No. 2, are they retained, did they get

	included surveying veterans, developing tracking mechanisms, and reviewing enrollment numbers.	the benefits and the resources they are eligible for, are there services that are there to support them, advising, tutoring, counseling, a place to go, a place to hang out, other military veterans to associate with?"
Student Centered Approach	A focus of the institution in meeting the unique needs of a student population such as student veterans.	"I think first and foremost whenever we are putting together a program or a plan it's usually something that will this improve or will it enhance the experience for the student and will it help them in some way be more successful?"
Transfer and Military Credit	Credit available for student veterans for their completion of military training and/or their military experience.	"Definitely to look at the goals we've had set out from the beginning about what makes us veteran friendly, such as let's award academic credit for military education and experience"
Targeted Programs and Services	Programs and services in the areas of financial aid, student affairs, and academic affairs that have been designed to meet the needs of student veterans.	"...so from the very start just having that contact, helping them through the process, making sure that they have the resources that they need, whether it may be tutoring, psychological counseling services, career services, all those things that really make up the building blocks to being successful"
Integrated Services	The integration of the targeted programs and services into a cohesive network or "one stop shop" to increase accessibility.	"Having an integrated team, which is what we pride ourselves on here is the Resource Center is kind of a hub that we link the veterans up or dependents or spouses to the rest of the university"
Outreach	Efforts of the institution to engage campus and community stakeholders to promote their military friendliness and encourage their participation in their initiative.	"I think the future looks like more outreach by the entire university as a whole, I think it looks like more events, activities, and functions by the entire university for active duty military, and more inter-base activity, engaging with family readiness groups, just different child youth development centers, maybe the high school, but just more engrained in the military culture"
Successful Matriculation Processes	Increased enrollment and re-enrollment of student veterans at the institution, as well as academic progression, degree completion, and	"It's always nice to have these – and everybody talks about these – designations and there's recognition, and that's great, but at the end of the

	graduation.	day, the success is seeing the students and seeing them – we measure success by reenrollment and degree completion. That's success”
Continuity	Sustainment of the military friendly initiative in the future due to a focus on continuous improvement and innovation.	“In order to sustain it, I think is to continue to understand what has yet to be met. What we talk about, what’s been done, what needs to be done, and then to maintain stability, continue supporting what’s currently there, but to also try to understand what has yet to be accomplished. I think that’s important”
Buy-In	The demonstrated interest and commitment of campus stakeholders to the military friendly initiative through voluntarily participating in training programs, integrating military friendly initiatives into their own initiatives, becoming knowledgeable and making referrals, and allocating resources to support military friendly initiatives.	“I think it starts with, first, getting faculty buy-in. You have to get faculty, staff, leadership, administration – you have to get their buy-in. Without their support, unfortunately, you're just the one person out there, waving the poster or waving the flag, and eventually, there will be a couple people behind it, but that's it”
Having a Champion	The champion is the first leader of the initiative who becomes the driving force behind military friendliness and engages the administration to become a co-champion for the initiative.	“One best practice, again, would be leadership buy-in, having that champion, and having that champion designate a person that people can see and they can make the connection with this is that person and then having that person rally everyone else off campus”