

## *Calculating the Return on Investment of the Post 9/11 GI Bill By Creating a GI Bill Calculator*

Calculating the Return on Investment (ROI) of the Post 9/11 GI Bill will provide greater oversight of GI Bill eligible institutions, while providing transparency to Veterans deciding where to invest their GI Bill education benefits. We recommend that the Committee direct the Department of Veterans Affairs to form a partnership with the Department of Education in order to share its data with the Institute of Education Sciences (IES). We suggest VA share the following data sets:

1. The name of the institution receiving benefits
2. The program attended
3. How much benefit used
4. Age and rank, if a Veteran
5. Whether it is a Veteran or their family using Post-9/11 GI Bill Dollars

Individual student-level data systems exist in many federal agencies, but federal data remains siloed, inhibiting the study of student outcomes. Even when agencies recognize the value of linking their data, there is no current infrastructure to facilitate such data sharing. This problem manifests itself in the inability of the VA to accurately report basic outcomes and return on investment of the billions of dollars spent on the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

While VA has made significant progress in the administration and oversight of Veteran education benefits, as the Department of Education moves towards programmatic level data, updating the GI Bill Comparison Tool is essential to ensure that Veteran students are given Veteran-specific outcomes to be at parity with the information given to nonveteran students. Without this necessary improvement to create a GI Bill Calculator, Veterans and their family members who take advantage of GI Bill benefits might enroll in programs that have low Veteran student success rates and low ROI for a specific degree pathway, despite having high institutional outcomes in general. In turn, many Veterans will continue to invest precious time and scarce taxpayer dollars on pursuing a degree or credential that will not produce desired results.

Better data could be used immediately to improve the GI Bill Comparison Tool and calculate the ROI of the Post-9/11 GI Bill, without VA having to obtain all the necessary data-sharing agreements themselves.<sup>4</sup> At present, the Department of Education's College Scorecard displays a range of student outcomes, like the average salary of an institution's graduates, since it is linked with IRS data, or debt data derived from the office of Federal Student Aid. The Scorecard will soon be presenting student outcome data at the even more meaningful programmatic level.

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<sup>4</sup> This data sharing is already established in 20 U.S. Code § 1015, which directs the Commissioner of Education Statistics to: develop a uniform methodology of reporting postsecondary spending, design systems capable of receiving and analyzing data from other federal agencies, disseminate data to stakeholders, and work with the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs to collect, study, and disseminate information on financial aid and education benefits.

If the Department of Veterans Affairs agrees to share its data with The Department of Education, all necessary data will be linked in order to disaggregate Veteran students down to the programmatic level, calculate the ROI of the Post-9/11 GI Bill, and create an improved GI Bill Calculator for all Veteran students. This will provide the transparency Student Veterans deserve when deciding where and how to invest their GI Bill benefits, further enhancing the ROI of the Post-9/11 GI Bill, and provide additional oversight over GI Bill eligible institutions of higher education.