



VETERAN ALUMNI OUTCOMES

Prepared for Career Education Colleges
and Universities (CECU)

July 2021

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **In the winter of 2020/2021, 122 veterans (or family members benefitting from GI Bill funding) who had previously attended a proprietary institution responded to an online survey inquiring about their experiences at that institution.** Building on the results of the survey findings, 11 alumni of CECU member proprietary institutions participated in in-depth interviews about their experiences.
- **Just over half of survey respondents (51%) report that they were employed prior to attending the proprietary institution while 40% of respondents had attended another college prior to starting at the proprietary institution.** Of those who attended other colleges, most (53%) attended community colleges while 43% attended four-year colleges and 16% attended other career or technical colleges.
 - *Alumni feel that traditional institutions such as Community Colleges or career focused four-year institutions did not fit their needs. Many interview participants first attended traditional institutions prior to choosing a career college or university. They report being less comfortable with the learning environment, including lecture-based teaching, irrelevant basic courses, and lengthy timeframes. The accelerated pace and condensed coursework of proprietary institutions better fits their goals and lifestyles.*
- **Most survey respondents (59%) decided to pursue career studies at proprietary institutions to gain skills.** Additionally, nearly half of respondents indicate their main reasons were general self improvement/personal growth (48%), to earn more money (46%), and to advance in their field (45%).
 - *Veterans enroll at proprietary institutions for both personal enrichment and to increase job marketability. Most interview participants were motivated to attend CECU member institutions to gain the required skills and/or credentials to enhance their employability and salary.*
- **Respondents report positive experiences at proprietary institutions in relation to preparation for their future.** Nearly three-quarters of the survey participants or more somewhat or strongly agree that coursework was up-to-date with the needs of the workplace (79%), that their studies prepared them well for employment (78%), that their studies helped prepare them for future academic endeavors (74%), and that their program of study helped them obtain a past or current job (73%). Participants also overwhelmingly agree that the value of the education was worth the cost (80%).
 - *Alumni value the hands-on learning approach at proprietary institutions. Interview participants appreciate that most technical and medical learning is experiential rather than just lecture-based. They also laud proprietary institutions for eliminating basic courses that are not directly relevant to their focus of study.*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **Respondents also report positive experiences at proprietary institutions in relation to their classroom and academic experiences.** Nearly three-quarters of the survey participants or more somewhat or strongly agree that small class size was a strength of their program (82%), that the quality of instructors produced high-quality academic learning experiences (82%), that faculty and classmates served as a support structure (76%), and that they received academic support essential to achieving academic goals (74%).
 - *Alumni find proprietary institutions to be extremely supportive and welcoming.* Interview participants note financial assistance and academic supports provided to veterans. The presence of veterans among faculty and staff make them feel more at ease than at traditional institutions. Participants also cite ceremonies and related efforts to celebrate their service on Veterans' Day and Memorial Day.
- **Proprietary institutions were most helpful in achieving the goal of gaining skills (82%).** According to survey respondents, the skills/knowledge most important to their career since graduating are problem solving (40%), written communication (36%), leadership (36%), and attention to detail (35%). Proprietary institutions were quite a bit or a great deal helpful in preparing them with these important skills/knowledge (73%, 86%, 80%, and 76% respectively).
 - *Alumni gained valuable social skills at proprietary institutions.* Interview participants note the value of CECU member institutions for helping them to transition into civilian society and learn soft and hard skills such as oral and written communication, interpersonal skills, and management skills.
- **Respondents indicate that they have experienced positive outcomes as a result of earning their degree at a proprietary institution and generally have higher salaries in their current position than they did when they first enrolled at proprietary institutions.** Nearly two-thirds (63%) of survey respondents report increased income, half believe they had more career options as a result, and more than one-third (36%) received a job promotion. Further, two-thirds say their current job is highly related to the degree they earned from the proprietary institution.
 - *Alumni report positive personal and career outcomes.* Interview participants report feeling more socially adept due to their time at proprietary institutions. Many have gone on to pursue further education at other career institutions as well as traditional institutions. Alumni who are in the workforce enhanced salaries and job titles post-graduation.

KEY FINDINGS



ENROLLMENT MOTIVATIONS

BACKGROUND PRIOR TO ATTENDING PROPRIETARY INSTITUTIONS

Just over half of respondents (51%) report that they were employed prior to attending the proprietary institution.

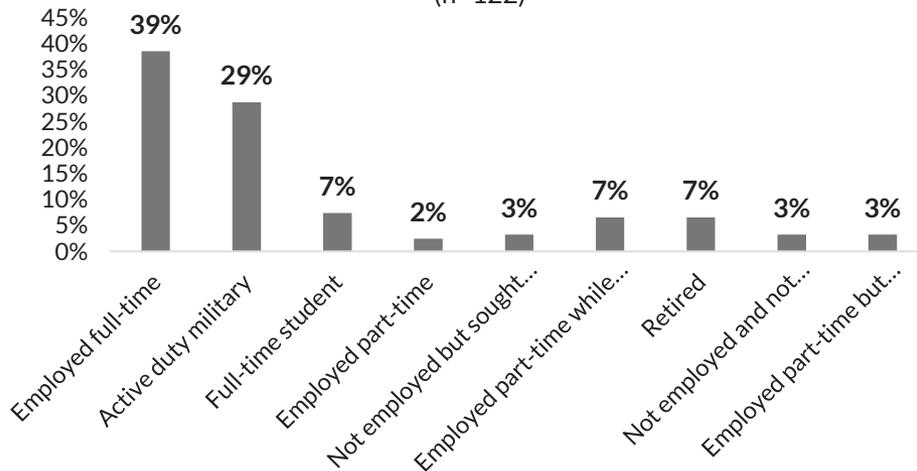
- 39% of respondents indicate that they were employed full-time; another 9% were employed part-time or working part-time while also in school, and 3% were employed part-time but sought full-time employment.
 - At the time of the survey, the percentage of respondents employed full-time jumped from 39% to 51%.

Over one-third (40%) of respondents had attended another college prior to starting at the proprietary institution.

- Of those who attended other colleges, most (53%) attended community colleges while 43% attended four-year colleges and 16% attended other career or technical colleges.

Which of the following best describes your state of employment before enrolling at a proprietary institution?

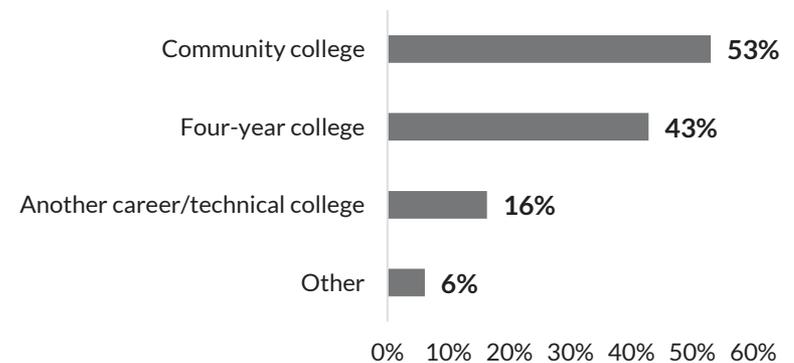
(n=122)



Which of the following types of college did you attend prior to the proprietary institution?

Please select all that apply.

(n=49)



CAREER COLLEGES ALIGN WITH VETERAN NEEDS

Most interviewed veterans have **already developed valuable skills and knowledge** during their service in the military. **Traditional institutions are less likely to recognize their competencies** and may not accept credits previously earned at career colleges, stalling the veteran's path to completion.



Several alumni report having **first tried attending traditional institutions but leaving due to mismatched teaching styles or non-recognition of their prior knowledge and experience**. Proprietary institutions tend to not require that students take courses that are unrelated to the credential they are pursuing. Alumni **appreciate the ability to begin learning relevant skills immediately**.

“ I didn't have to take unnecessary classes to get to a useful degree. You start out from the beginning doing your nursing stuff. I didn't have to go two years of basic classes and then get to my nursing. I was right in the middle of it.

*-P6, Veteran/Military Spouse;
Nursing*

“ I originally looked at a community college for a four-year degree, but that wouldn't have provided me what I wanted to do with my life after graduation, which was to be able to go anywhere I wanted to go with a degree.

-P10, Marines; Commercial and Residential Carpentry

CAREER COLLEGES ALIGN WITH VETERAN NEEDS

“Honestly, it's the same thing was when I went to [private institution] online. I **probably would have dropped out**. I wouldn't have been able to finish. Just **having the support** of whether it had been the **teachers who were more understanding about everything** and giving you a little bit of leeway here and there. I feel like it's just-- I honestly, I feel like trade school, they're just a better fit for people in need. A lot of **veterans actually agree that they like trade schools more than traditional colleges.**”

-P1, Army; HVAC, Welding, Medical Billing & Coding

“If I had to go to a four-year college, I **would have never finished**. I think the ability of having the smaller classrooms, more interaction with my classmates as well as the faculty more on a personal level and **knowing that I didn't have to go for four years to start my career**. But if I had to wait **four years doing all these extra classes**, I probably would not have finished.”

-P6, Veteran/Military Spouse; Nursing

“So [proprietary institution] is the **only trade school in the state that provides a carpentry program** that actually has a specialized associate's degree tied to it. So it was just the fact that it was the **only show in town, really.**”

-P10, Marines; Commercial and Residential Carpentry

“Well, [proprietary institution] was pretty much my first choice because this is the **only culinary college close to where I live.**”

-P9, Army; Culinary Arts, Hospitality Management

MOTIVATION TO PURSUE EDUCATION AT PROPRIETARY INSTITUTIONS

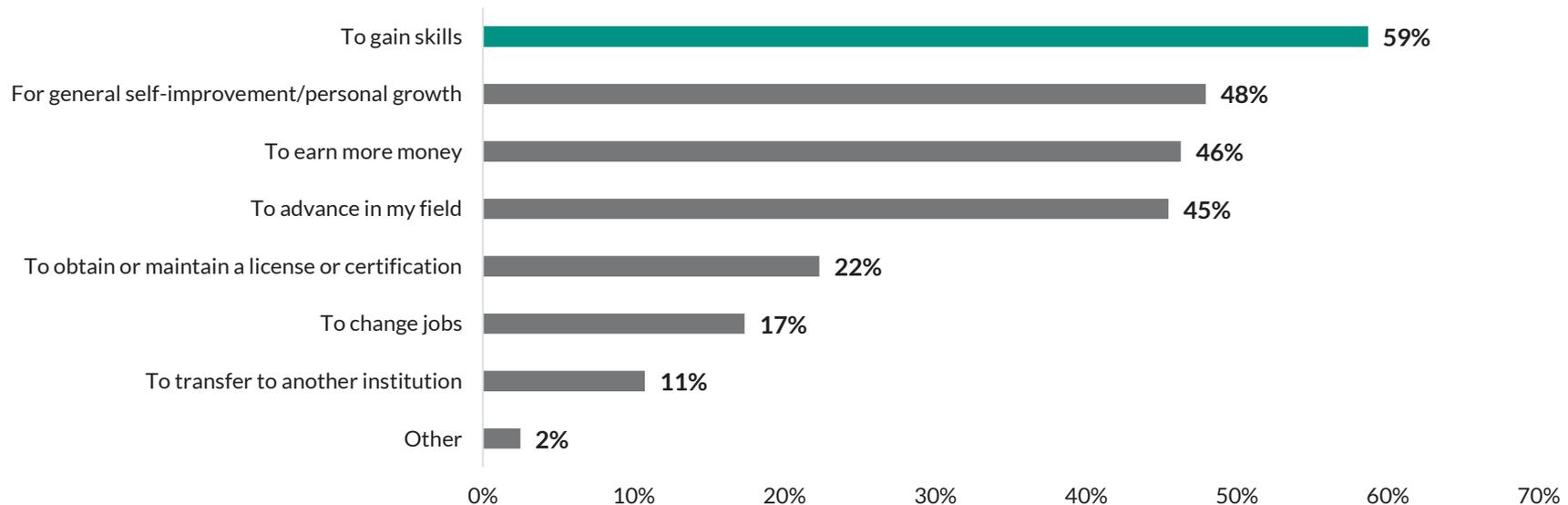
Most respondents (59%) decided to pursue career studies at proprietary institutions to gain skills.

- Nearly half of respondents indicate that the main reasons for furthering their studies were general self improvement/personal growth (48%), to earn more money (46%), and to advance in their field (45%). However, only 22% say they pursued their education for a license or certification and only 17% to change jobs while the fewest (11%) chose to attend the proprietary institution in order to transfer to a different institution.
- Further, most respondents (64%) pursued a bachelor's degree at their proprietary institution while another 23% pursued an associate degree.

What are the main reasons you decided to pursue career studies at a proprietary institution?

Please select all that apply.

(n=121)



INSTITUTIONS PROVIDE A BOOST TO CAREERS

A majority of interviewed veterans cite the **need for marketable job credentials and career advancement** as their primary motivators for enrolling in a proprietary institution.

“I wasn't really experienced in the workforce. I chose to go to [proprietary institution] in order to attain a trade that I could essentially do anywhere in the world.”

– P10, Marines; Commercial and Residential Carpentry

“I was a combat medic. [I wanted] the skills and competencies needed for working within healthcare administration. I believed [a degree] would improve my hire-ability within healthcare administration and getting into a good position for career advancement.”

– P3, Army; Healthcare Administration

Marketable Credentials

Students seek to learn a trade that can be **marketable in the labor force**. CECU member institutional education enables veterans to **develop and hone new capabilities**.

Career Advancement

Many veterans developed relevant skills while in the military; however, they **need paper credentials** that will be recognized in the civilian workforce. They enroll in proprietary institutions to **build on their existing skillset and broaden competencies** for new careers.

CAREER COLLEGES SCHEDULES ARE BENEFICIAL

Alumni express an affinity for the **accelerated pace of learning** at proprietary institutions, which they describe as being **reminiscent of their military training**. In addition, they can learn valuable skills and **acquire credentials in a shorter time** than if they had attended traditional institutions. Many veterans feel that they could not have finished a slower four-year program.

Veterans with families also **appreciate the daily schedule** at proprietary institutions that only takes part of the day for class. The ability to have most of the day free enables them to **pursue an education while also fulfilling their family responsibilities** to spouses and children. **Active-duty military** also enjoy a flexibility that may not be provided to them elsewhere.

“For a lot of my military training, I was used to the condensed courses where you have a really long school day that's cramming you full of information. **Doing condensed courses was a big thing for me.**”

-P3, Army; Healthcare Administration



“I love the fast-paced atmosphere of **mini-mesters** combined with the ability to go in the morning and have the rest of the day to finish whatever I need to finish. As an adult with three kids, that's **very important to me.**”

-P4, Army; Healthcare Administration

“The National Guardsmen that's there, that they help them **whenever they're deployed** for the two weeks and stuff like that. Because they **have a weekend class as well**, so they'll let them come in like if they're gone for their two weeks, to come back in on the weekends that are on Saturdays to catch up.”

- P9, Army; Culinary Arts, Hospitality Management



EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES

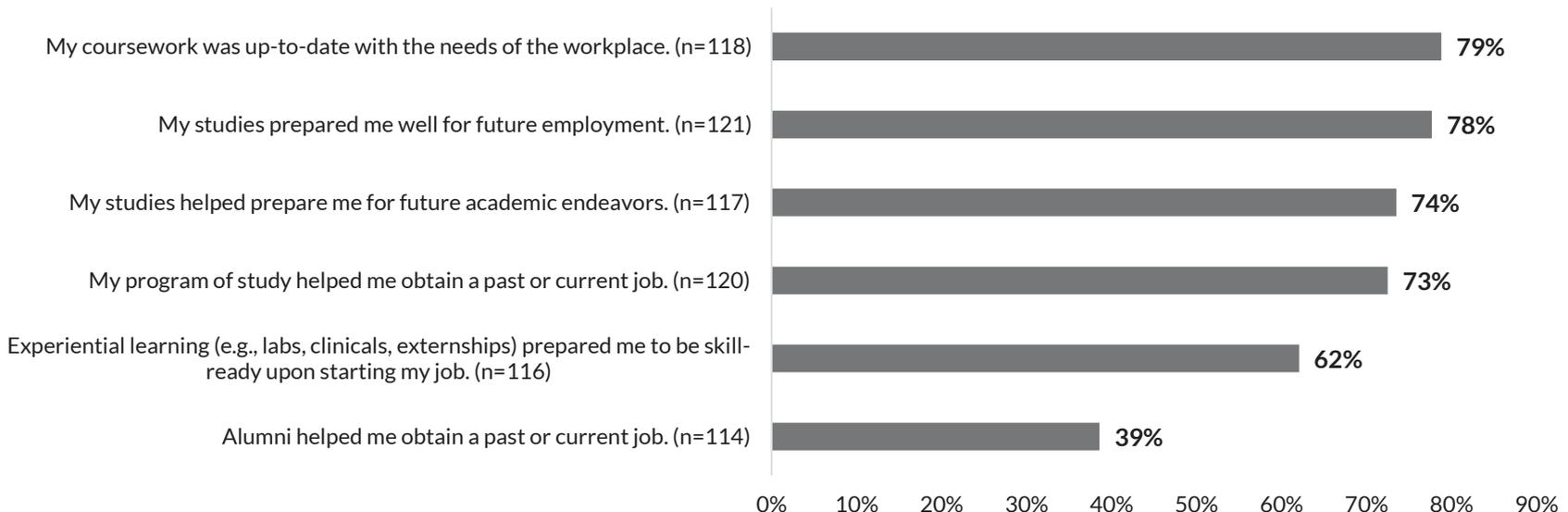
PERCEPTIONS OF EXPERIENCES AT PROPRIETARY INSTITUTIONS

Respondents report positive experiences at proprietary institutions in relation to preparation for their future.

- Nearly three-quarters of the participants or more somewhat or strongly agree that coursework was up-to-date with the needs of the workplace (79%), that their studies prepared them well for employment (78%), that their studies helped prepare them for future academic endeavors (74%), and that their program of study helped them obtain a past or current job (73%).
- Fewer (62%) respondents indicate that experiential learning (e.g., labs, externships) prepared them to be skill-ready upon starting their job, however only 39% agree that alumni helped them to obtain a past or current job.

Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements regarding your time at the proprietary institution.

(%Somewhat agree + %Strongly agree)



HANDS-ON LEARNING IS INCREDIBLY VALUABLE

Veterans consistently cite the importance of the **hands-on, participatory learning approach** at proprietary institutions as a **motivating factor for enrollment**. They value the ability to **begin experiencing what they choose to learn** rather than merely discussing the underlying theories.

Even during COVID-19 related social distancing, some programs provided students with **video instruction and materials with which to practice their trade**. Participants encourage proprietary institutions to **continue consistently emphasizing the experiential learning approach** to the greatest possible extent.

“First was the hands-on training. **80% of the actual experience was hands-on**. The minute we got there, I was out there welding, and that's actually what I wanted to do. **You could tell me how to do it, but if I don't see it with my own eyes, I won't learn.**”

– P5, Marines; Welding, Electrical Maintenance



“You've got **60% hands-on** because that's where you're really applying what you're doing. **You don't spend a lot of time on theory because you're going to actually do this**. I'm going to talk to you about it, and then we're going to work on it, and **you're going to touch every single aspect of this thing.**”

– P2, Army; Electrical Maintenance

FACULTY HAVE EXPERTISE AND EMPATHY

“ The best part is just how friendly, helpful, and knowledgeable that the staff is. And not just the instructors. I'm talking about even the receptionist. **Everyone was extremely knowledgeable and helpful.**

-P11, Army; Automotive Technology

“ They understood if we said, "Hey, we can't complete this day because of this operation or commitment. Can we complete it next week or a day late?" I think [a traditional institution] would have hindered the whole process. I probably would have dropped out or disenrolled.

-P8, Navy; Nursing

Alumni appreciate that faculty at CECU member institutions **tend to be highly knowledgeable in their fields.** Their expertise extends **well beyond theory** to encompass the mechanics and dynamics of skills practice. Alumni feel like they are learning from experts in their courses.



Faculty at proprietary institutions tend to be **more understanding of the special circumstances of active-duty service members and veterans** with medical needs. Participants indicate that **traditional institutions have tended to penalize service members and veterans** who have extra commitments.

ALUMNI LIKE LEARNING WITH OTHER VETERANS

Many interviewed alumni mention that they **often feel less at ease interacting with civilians**. Veterans feel **especially comfortable at CECU member institutions** because they **encounter other veterans among students, instructors, and staff**. They share that this allows them to focus on their studies more than they would at a more traditional institution where older veterans are a small portion of students.

The veteran **instructors and staff share many of the same lived experiences**, which results in a stronger sense of understanding of students' challenges and needs. **The bonds they form help to ease veterans' transition** from military service, and alumni feel as if they are **part of a community** that endures beyond their time in their program.

“At [proprietary institution], most of the **instructors were veterans**. Most of the senior staff are veterans. **They welcomed us like brothers and sisters**, which I enjoyed. **We feel that we're in the same team.**”

-P5, Marines; Welding, Electrical Maintenance

“My first chef for the basic course was a Marine in Vietnam. He gave some advice on different things. Sometimes **it's harder to talk to a civilian**. If you know that they're a **veteran, you can talk to him a little easier.**”

-P9, Army; Culinary Arts, Hospitality Management



VETERANS APPRECIATE SERVICE RECOGNITION

Some interviewed veterans have **not always felt supported or understood at institutions that do not acknowledge veterans**. Alumni stress that they do not seek special treatment due to their status as veterans; however, they do appreciate when people **recognize and honor their service**.



Proprietary institutions are **conscientious in celebrating holidays such as Veterans' Day and Memorial Day**. Alumni feel gratified when proprietary colleges hold ceremonies and celebrations in their honor. These small gestures go a long way to making veterans feel valued.

“ They actually did more than what they needed to do. As a veteran, **we don't really like to stand out**. We like to kind of blend, but I know **the whole school knew who we were and who we represented**, as far as the Department of Defense. So they did their fair share.

-P7, Marines; Dental Assistant

“ On Veterans Day, they set out cake and cookies. They asked all the veterans to come to the front, and **they held a ceremony thanking us for our service and recognizing the sacrifices** that we made. It was actually really, really awesome.

-P1, Army; HVAC, Welding, Medical Billing & Coding

PERCEPTIONS OF EXPERIENCES AT PROPRIETARY INSTITUTIONS

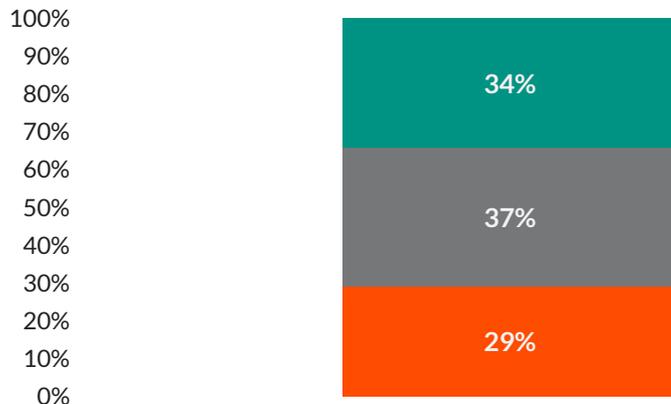
Net Promoter Score (NPS) provides a measure of how likely a respondent is to recommend something to another person. It represents one of many ways to gauge satisfaction with an institution as the decision to recommend a college to a specific person may include factors beyond their own personal experience.

- Interview participants express positive experiences at their proprietary institutions with some specifically indicating they would recommend the college or return themselves.

On a scale from 0 to 10, how likely are you to recommend the proprietary institution you attended to a friend, family member, or colleague?

(n=120)

■ Detractors (0=6) ■ Passives (7-8) ■ Promoters (9-10)



Net Promoter Score (NPS) = 5

“ I enjoyed every bit of it. I mean, they're polite to everybody. They really try to help you out.

– P9, Army; Culinary Arts, Hospitality Management

“ I would definitely say that it is a great experience. I would definitely recommend it to just about any other veteran that I know.

– P1, Army; HVAC, Welding, Medical Billing & Coding

“ I would keep everything the same ...I'm actually going to go back.

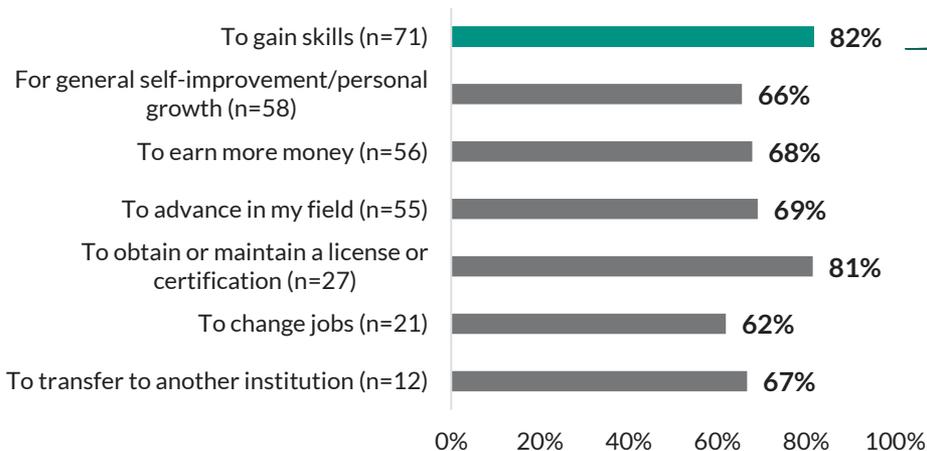
– P5, Marines; Welding, Electrical Maintenance

GOAL ACHIEVEMENT

More than half of respondents pursued career studies at a proprietary institution to gain skills (60%) and proprietary institutions were helpful in achieving this goal (82%).

- There is, however, some room for improvement in how helpful the proprietary institution can be in helping reach other top goals including general self improvement/personal growth (66%), to earn more money (68%), and to advance in their field (69%).
- According to respondents, skills gained through programs at proprietary institutions include management, information, communication, marketing, and programming.

How helpful was the proprietary institution in helping you pursue the following?
(%Very helpful + %Extremely helpful)



Please list the skills relevant to your current occupation that you gained at the proprietary institution.



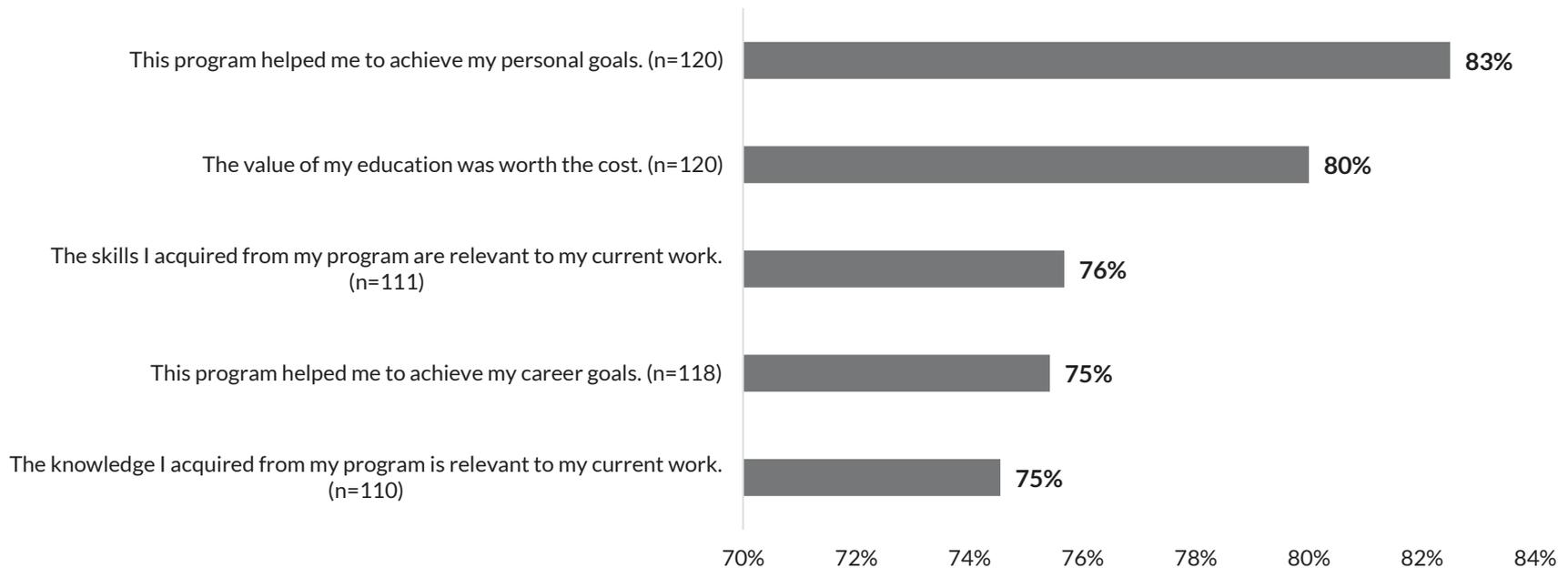
GOAL ACHIEVEMENT

More than three-quarters of respondents agree that their program helped them achieve their personal (83%) and career (75%) goals.

- Participants also overwhelmingly agree that the value of the education was worth the cost (80%) and that the skills (76%) and knowledge (75%) acquired are relevant to their current work.

Please indicate how much you disagree or agree with the following statements regarding the proprietary institution.

(%Somewhat agree + %Strongly agree)



ALUMNI GAINED NON-TECHNICAL SKILLS

Veterans note that some skills that they learned as service members do not translate into the civilian labor force.

In addition to technical skills and competencies, alumni report **learning important soft and hard skills** at proprietary institutions that have **helped them to better navigate the civilian world and the labor market.**

In addition to enhancing employability, **some alumni pursued training** at career and technical institutions in order **to achieve personal goals and to enrich their lives** by furthering their knowledge in specific areas of interest.

Major skills that participants particularly cite include:

- Oral communication
- Written communication
- Email etiquette
- Negotiation
- Interpersonal skills
- Management



“ I was exposed to stuff that goes on in society. I also learned how to **strengthen my writing, interviewing skills, talking to people, corresponding** through emails. **All that has prepared me** as I moved into positions that I've had to be able to communicate with people.

– P8, Navy; Nursing

“ I was infantry; **the only skills I had were good for the military.** It **didn't transition** into the civilian world. [Proprietary institution] prepared me to run my food truck more smoothly, **especially the financial aspects of accounting and how everything works in that field.**

– P9, Army; Culinary Arts, Hospitality Management

PREPARATION FOR THE WORKFORCE

According to respondents, the skills/knowledge most important to their career since graduating are problem solving (40%), written communication (36%), leadership (36%), attention to detail (35%).

- Proprietary institutions were quite a bit or a great deal helpful in preparing them with these important skills/knowledge (73%, 86%, 80%, and 76% respectively)
- However, while nearly one-third (31%) of respondents chose time management to be within their top five most important factors, less than half (47%) indicated that their institution was helpful in preparing them with that skill. Other factors chosen to be important at a similar rate (e.g., professionalism and use of technology in professional contexts) are much more highly-rated.

Which of the following have been most important in your career since graduating from the proprietary institution?

Please select up to five.

(n=121)



To what extent did your studies at the proprietary institution prepare you with the following skills/knowledge?

(%Quite a bit helpful + %A great deal helpful)



CAREER SUPPORT PROVIDES REAL VALUE

“ The school was good about offering career counselors. They have **mock interview, resume building**. They help prepare you for finding a job. That was **really beneficial to people like me, who the only job that I've had in my life was military**.

-P1, Army; HVAC, Welding, Medical Billing & Coding

“ They helped place us in those positions, and before my externship was even up, I was already hired. So **90 to 95 percent of us all had a job when we left school**.

-P7, Marines; Dental Assistant

Veterans who lack non-military career experience particularly cite the **importance of proprietary institutions' career preparation programs** for helping them transition into the civilian workforce.



In addition to **resume-building and mock interview services**, career preparation occurs while students are still enrolled in courses via **externship programs** with local companies. Many of these externships **lead to permanent positions**.



ALUMNI OUTCOMES

CAREER-RELATED OUTCOMES

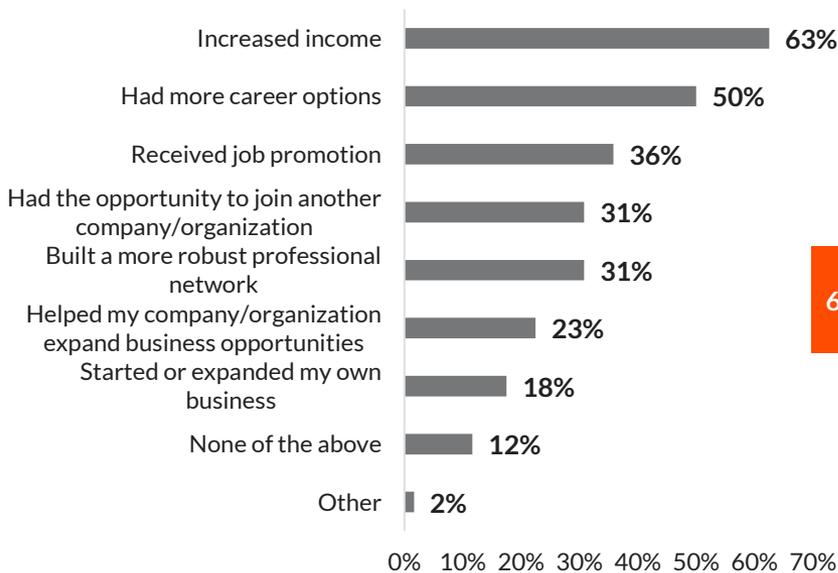
Respondents indicate that they have experienced positive outcomes as a result of earning their degree at a proprietary institution.

- Nearly two-thirds (63%) of respondents report increased income, half believe they had more career options as a result, and more than one-third (36%) received a job promotion.
- Further, two-thirds of respondents say their current job is very or extremely related to the degree they earned at the proprietary institution.

Which of the following have you experienced as a result of earning your degree at the proprietary institution?

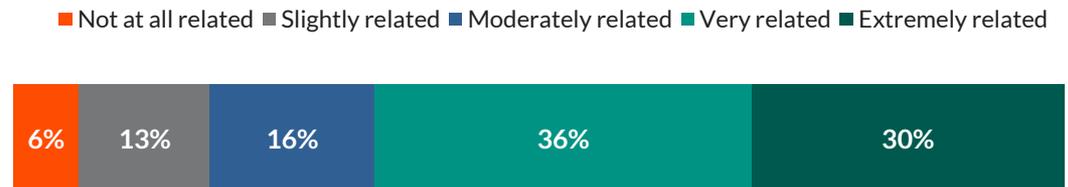
Please select all that apply.

(n=120)



Please indicate the extent to which your current job function is related to the degree you earned at the proprietary institution.

(n=64)

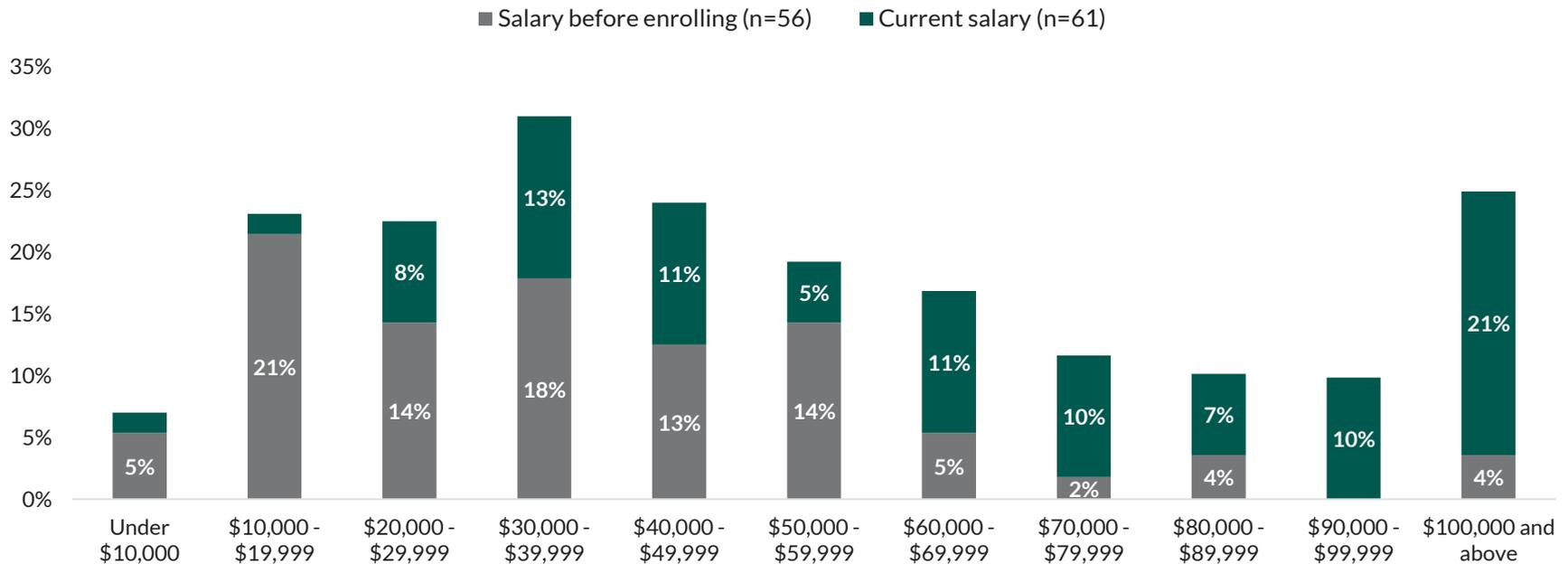


CAREER-RELATED OUTCOMES

Respondents generally have higher salaries in their current positions than they did when they first enrolled at proprietary institutions.

- Nearly three-quarters (71%) of respondents say that their salary was below \$50,000 prior to enrolling at their proprietary institution. In comparison, 38% of respondents say they have annual salaries below \$50,000 in their current position. Additionally, 30% of respondents now earn salaries of \$80,000 per year or higher as compared to just 8% prior to enrolling at a proprietary institution.

What was your approximate annual salary before enrolling at the proprietary institution/what is your salary in your current position?



ALUMNI REPORT POSITIVE CAREER OUTCOMES

“When I first started - before I was an LPN, I think I was making 10 bucks an hour. [After], I was making \$36, so its definitely a big difference.”

– P6, Veteran/Military Spouse; Nursing

“Had I not earned a degree, I would not have been marketable in any of the jobs that I've had since getting out. I also believe I was able to negotiate a better salary. Otherwise, I probably would have ended up doing something that did not require a bachelor's, and the pay would have been much lower.”

– P8, Navy; Nursing

Veteran alumni who have sought employment after graduation report earning higher salaries in their current positions than they did when they first enrolled at proprietary institutions.

Alumni also attribute their ability to obtain viable employment to earning degrees at proprietary institutions. Moreover, due to the accelerated pace of learning, they are able to obtain employment much faster than if they had attended a traditional institution.

Even when jobs do not align with the focus of study, having a degree enhances alumni's marketability, positions, and salaries.

ALUMNI ENJOY SUPPORT AFTER GRADUATION

After graduation, alumni are welcome to return to their institutions, use specialized equipment and facilities to practice their skills, further their learning, and obtain helpful advice. Instructors and other staff also regularly contact alumni to ensure that they are doing well, provide job leads and offers, assist with networking, and help alumni who wish to further their education. Alumni are grateful for this continuing sense of community.

“Even after you graduate, you can come back and ask questions. If you need to hone some more skills, you can come in and work on what you're needing help with. You can come and use their facilities and the chefs will give you critiques.”

– P9, Army; Culinary Arts, Hospitality Management



“They have a very successful job placement program. When you graduate, wherever you are in the country, you can reach out to a campus and they will assist you in finding employers in your area. The fact that they provide it lifelong is pretty valuable.”

P10, Marines; Commercial and Residential Carpentry

“Even though I already graduated, they keep sending me job offerings. [Proprietary institution] still reaches out at least once a month.”

– P5, Marines; Welding, Electrical Maintenance



APPENDIX

PARTICIPANTS: SURVEY



Gender (n=120)

Male	82%
Female	18%
Other/Non-binary	0%
Prefer not to respond	0%



Educational Status at Time of Survey (n=120)

Less than a H.S. degree	0%
Completed H.S. but not currently in college	0%
Completed some college but no degree	1%
Completed associate degree in college	22%
Completed bachelor's degree in college	75%
Completed master's degree	2%
Completed doctoral degree	0%
Completed professional degree	1%
Prefer not to respond	0%



Race/Ethnicity (n=120)

White	79%
Black or African American	16%
Asian	4%
American Indian or Alaska Native	3%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0%
Prefer not to respond	2%
Hispanic/Latinx	20%
Non-Hispanic/Latinx	80%

PARTICIPANTS: IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

P#	Area of Study	Military Branch/Role
1	HVAC, Welding, Medical Billing & Coding	Army
2	Electrical Maintenance	Army
3	Healthcare Administration (BS)	Army
4	Health Administration	Army
5	Welding, Electrical Maintenance	Marines
6	Nursing (LPN, RN)	Veteran/Military Spouse
7	Dental Assistant	Marines
8	Nursing (RN)	Navy
9	Culinary Arts (AA), Hospitality Management (BA)	Army
10	Commercial and Residential Carpentry	Marines
11	Automotive Technology	Army

METHODOLOGY: SURVEY

KEY OBJECTIVES

- Identify how veteran alumni perceive their experiences at proprietary institutions;
- Understand what motivates veteran alumni to pursue an educational program at a proprietary college;
- Examine how well program outcomes align with veteran alumni expectations, and;
- Understand how proprietary institutions prepare veteran alumni for the workforce.

SURVEY ADMINISTRATION & SURVEY SAMPLE

- The survey was administered online from November 2020 to February 2021 using the Qualtrics platform.
- Respondents were recruited via a panel and a contact list provided by CECU.
- The analysis includes a total of 122 respondents following data cleaning. The relatively low number of responses is indicative of convenience sampling* and as such, the results may not be uniformly generalizable to the entire population of veterans attending proprietary institutions.

RESPONDENT QUALIFICATIONS

- Must be a United States veteran, family member or spouse of a veteran, active-duty military, or reserve. If family member or spouse, must have used GI Bill money for education.
- Must have attended a proprietary institution.



METHODOLOGY: IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS



CECU's primary research questions are:

1. What motivates veterans to pursue an educational program at a proprietary institution?
2. How do veteran alumni perceive their experiences at proprietary institutions?
3. How did the programs align with veteran alumni expectations?

To answer these questions, Hanover Research conducted **eleven (11) in-depth interviews** with alumni of CECU member proprietary institutions across the USA.

Note: Qualitative research is exploratory and designed to add insight and a depth of understanding to a particular question or topic. Qualitative findings provide commonalities and trends but are not intended to be statistically significant or to provide generalizable conclusions.

AFTERWARD

Below are the reflections of the Chief of Staff of a CECU Member Institution on the importance of studying the veteran college experience.

Response by: David Tellez, CMDCM U.S. Navy (Retired). Honorably served in the United States Navy from June 1987 to December 31, 2014 and earned the Meritorious Service Medal for distinguish outstanding achievement while serving at Commander, United States Naval Forces Southern Command/Commander, United States Fourth Fleet.

Too many Veterans attend traditional higher education institutions and somehow get lost in a system that is too big, has limited target services, lacks identity, and falls short on necessary supports. As a result, Veterans lose interest, their grades suffer, and they often drop out, leaving with a negative perception of postsecondary education. To me, the CECU Veteran Alumni Outcome (VAO) report provides a genuine contrast between traditional and proprietary institutions for Veteran students. Every response in the VAO report makes sense. After serving in the military for 27 years, I know that Veterans are often looking for commonality, relevancy, and to be able to contribute again to their communities and nation.

Like proprietary institutions, the military classroom teaches skills that align with workforce needs, facilitates clear course expectations, assesses necessary competencies, and applies knowledge learned to real-world scenarios. Recognition in the military is also celebrated almost daily. When on active duty, recognition comes in many forms like promotion, graduation, retirement, a commissioning ceremony, and so on. Veterans want to attend an institution that they know best, feel comfortable with, excel in, and where achievement is recognized.

The VAO report provides a big picture of what many in higher education already know all too well – that too many Veterans struggle through a traditional college experience but excel at a proprietary institution, if given the opportunity.



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