



Higher-Education Veteran Recruiting Problems and Recommendations for Improvement

Recruiting practices by institutions of higher learning is an area fraught with deceptive and misleading practices, due to a number of competing incentives. While veteran recruiting practices differ from civilian recruiting in some respects – recruitment at military bases, discounts offered for veterans, focus on the military friendly culture of the institution – many of the practices faced by veterans are variations of common problems. Below are some frequently encountered deceptive and dubious recruiting/marketing practices we have witnessed at Veterans Education Success and our recommendations for potential solutions to curb these practices and allow for students to make the best decision about their education.

Key Forms of Recruiting and Marketing Problems:

- Aggressive and high-pressure tactics designed to enroll veterans as soon as possible, which includes constant phone calls, emails, and emotional manipulation by recruiters designed to unduly influence potential students.
- Misrepresentations regarding tuition, accreditation, transferability of credits, courses and degrees offered, quality of education, availability of career assistance, job placement success and job prospects, and other crucial information during recruitment.
- Deceptive lead-generators and websites masking as military-related promoting and partnering with low-quality colleges.
- Misleading ads giving the impression of strong connection with the Pentagon or veterans.
- Schools going onto military bases to recruit.

Recommendations for Actions Accreditors Could Take to Improve College Recruiting Practices:

- Accreditors should move away from a desk-audit model (where materials submitted by the school are assumed to be accurate) to a real-audit mindset (where the veracity of the submissions is actually investigated through sampling).
- Accreditors should deploy their limited resources to focus on institutions on the basis of the proportion of their budgets spent on marketing and recruitment, as well as on risk factors, such as law enforcement investigations, federal agency investigations or probationary status or HCM status, volume of student complaints on VA's GI Bill Comparison Tool and at USED.
- For institutions with significant advertising outlays, accreditors should require documentation and evidence for any claims made about institutional scholarships, graduation, placement, and earnings outcomes.
- Accreditors should interview students regarding the recruitment tactics they experienced or witnessed; these students should not be provided by the university, and their accreditors should not divulge their identities to the school.
- Accreditors should interview students who recently withdrew or left the school about the recruitment tactics they experienced or witnessed. Accreditors should review institutional

withdrawal policies and whether institutions create procedural obstacles for students seeking to withdraw after actually experiencing the quality of educational services.

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- Accreditors should conduct anonymous interviews with recruiters about tactics used, as well as interviews with recent recruiters who no longer work at the school.
- Accreditors should conduct “secret shopping,” posing as prospective students, to review what the enrollment procedures are actually like.
- Accreditors should closely review schools’ marketing and recruiting documents and practices. Because many bad actor schools have “cleaned up” their printed material but continue to deceive in verbal conversations (for example, an ITT campus president told us that their materials were clean but they would instruct recruiters to “do anything and say anything” to get the enrollment), accreditors should review school recruiter phone call logs (to find aggressive contacts, such as repeated phone calls to the same person) as well as performance metrics including quotas recruiters must meet. Accreditors should also listen to recorded recruiter phone calls to hear if deceptions are made.
- Accreditors should review all institutional recruiter training materials and interview trainers.
- Accreditors should ask the college how it responds if it finds a recruiter misleading prospective students.
- Accreditors should review payments and documents regarding any recruitment/marketing outsourced to call centers or other lead generator firms, and should examine what those lead generator companies are doing in the school’s name.
- Accreditors should ensure that institutions adopt and honor refund policies that enable students to receive reasonable refunds upon withdrawal (including 100% refunds for withdrawals before a reasonable census date).
- Accreditors should carefully consider and review school marketing and recruitment budget compared to school expenses, as a whole, with particular interest in amount spent on marketing and recruiting as compared to instruction.
- Accreditors should look at teacher turnover and interview recent teachers or staff who have left to ask them if they have concerns.
- Accreditors’ training for their own staff should include testimony from students who have been harmed by these practices, as well as testimony from recruiter whistleblowers, to help become aware of what to look for. (VES can provide both student complaints, such as [this](#), and whistleblower testimony such as [this](#) and [this](#).)