

# Equity in Success



## Veterans Education and the MAP Initiative

### ISSUE

Veterans qualify for just 36 months of Post-9/11 G.I. Bill educational benefits which are not enough to fund a four-year degree program. Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) can bridge this critical gap at little to no additional cost to taxpayers. There are 1.57 million Veterans living in California, the largest population in the nation. In Fall 2022, there were 23,566 Veterans and active-duty military enrolled in the California Community Colleges and using their educational benefits. If Veterans were awarded a year of credit, the annual savings could total \$1.67 billion. Nationwide, there were 822,775 service members in higher education. If just 25% were awarded one semester of credit (15 units), the savings could total \$6.4 billion.

Each year approximately 200,000 service members transition from military to civilian life. Transition stress is a significant factor that disproportionately affects younger Veterans ages 18-34. Post-9/11 Veterans are more likely to say they struggled with lack of structure in civilian life and felt disconnected from family or friends. Some surveys indicate over sixty percent reporting difficulty adjusting to civilian life. Forty-five percent report feeling that their military skills and experience are often dismissed by civilian educators and employers.

The promise of higher education is reported as the number one motivation for service members. More than seventy percent of service members state that their time in the service promoted their interest

in higher education, training, and certification or licensing programs. While service members are clear in their desire and preparation for higher education, they also cite significant barriers to completing their educational goals including:

- Lack of financial resources/ financial burden (56%)
- Personal/family obligations (28%)
- GI Bill benefits expire before degree completion (25%)
- Issues related to wellness and/ or disability (23%)
- Conflict between job and school (22%)

Easing the transition by offering wrap-around services and college course credits to those entering higher education will help reduce the barriers cited above.

## REQUESTS

RCCD is calling on state and federal leaders to scale Mapping Articulated Pathways (MAP) nationwide and establish MAP Centers for Excellence to ensure that Veterans get the college credit they deserve (up to one year of credit) for their military training and coursework.

- **CA State Funding:** Authorize \$6 million in annual funding to scale MAP statewide to articulate Military Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) and other forms of CPL for working adults. RCCD submitted this request to the California Community Colleges Board of Governors, and it was included in the Community Colleges Chancellor's 2023-24 budget proposal to the Governor. The funding will support expansion of MAP to all 116 California community colleges, plus all CSUs and UCs.
- **Federal Funding:** Authorize \$15 million in annual funding to scale MAP to all 936 community colleges nationwide and then to the remaining 690 regionally accredited public colleges and universities.
- **Complete the development of MAP modules** needed to support scaling statewide and nationwide, including development of a national common course numbering system in collaboration with state and federal agencies to ensure a seamless pathway from service to higher education or career training into a profession.

California can lead the nation in solving this longstanding systemic inequity for Veterans and working adults by empowering the community colleges of the country.

## BACKGROUND: THE CALIFORNIA MAP INITIATIVE

The Riverside Community College District hosts the California MAP Initiative which is leading the effort to deploy MAP in California's 116 Community Colleges and beyond. The MAP project began in 2017 as a strategy to increase Veteran access as part of the Norco College Veteran's Initiative. The Phase 1 design and beta testing was made possible by California Assemblymember Sabrina Cervantes, District 60, and the California Latino Legislative Caucus which sponsored an appropriation to expand access to higher education for Veterans by implementing MAP and by developing a regional Veterans Resource Center at Norco College. In 2018, the project (Phase 2) was adopted by the 12 member colleges of the Inland Empire Desert Regional Consortium. In 2021, Assemblymember Cervantes and the California Latino Legislative Caucus sponsored a \$2 million appropriation to begin funding Phase 3 to scale MAP statewide.

In 2022, the California MAP Initiative was formed to lead the effort to maximize CPL for all Veterans and working adults statewide. In February 2022, the MAP 2022 Cohort of 55 colleges was formed and in 2023, it was further expanded to 76 colleges dedicated to maximizing CPL. The California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office has incorporated the MAP Initiative as a key component to its Vision 2030 Strategic Plan and supports scaling the project to all California Community Colleges and beyond.



## BACKGROUND: CREDIT FOR PRIOR LEARNING

Most Veterans receive just two to three units of college credit for their military training, even though most qualify for significantly more based on the credit recommendations listed on their JST. The American Council on Education (ACE) has evaluated thousands of military occupations and courses and makes credit recommendations for college course credit. Unfortunately, the credit is not linked to courses at local colleges. To guarantee that all Veterans receive all the credit they deserve, each college course needs to be matched or articulated and approved by faculty with one or more of the 5,000+ credit recommendations. This task is further complicated by rank-and-file faculty and administrators at colleges who have limited understanding of credit for prior learning or how to make, approve, store, share and transcribe the myriad of articulations possible. Even for colleges that focus on articulating their courses to ACE credit recommendations, there is no system to share those articulations with other colleges and universities to which students might transfer or take additional classes. There is also no system to facilitate working adult credit for industry certifications. Each college also has a unique class numbering system which prevents large-scale sharing of articulation decisions. Lastly, institutions are less likely to grant CPL for fear it will not be honored at a transfer institution.