

AN EXPLORATION OF FACTORS AFFECTING RETENTION AND PERSISTENCE
OF UNDERGRADUATE MILITARY VETERAN STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY
OF MISSOURI

Martha L. Pickens

Dr. David Bergin, Thesis Supervisor

ABSTRACT

Using the retention and persistence theories of Tinto and Bean as a framework, this qualitative multi-case study analyzed the personal and institutional factors that are assisting and impeding the persistence efforts of four undergraduate military veteran students at a large Midwestern university. Results indicate that all four students found the college experience to be much more difficult than they anticipated. Lack of preparation in high school, time away from the classroom, advances in technology, and a struggle to balance academic and other obligations were all cited as challenges. The personal development each student gained through military service was cited as making a positive difference in the college experience. The students' goal orientation also had a great impact on their persistence. Sources of support included campus resources for veterans, and family, friends and mentors.