

*OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
FOR PERSONNEL AND READINESS*



*2015 – 2020 DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE  
VOLUNTARY EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN*

# CONTENTS

**LETTER FROM THE CHIEF** .....2  
**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY** .....3  
**VISION, MISSION, AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES**.....5

**Vision:** “Shaping quality voluntary educational experiences to foster better service members, better citizens”

**Mission:** “Champion policies, programs, and partnerships that enable access to quality postsecondary educational opportunities, empower informed service member decision-making, shape meaningful personal and professional pathways, and drive military student success in higher education”.

**Guiding Principles:** “Strategic Investment, service Member Empowerment, Stakeholder Involvement, Evidence-Based Decisions”

**STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS**.....10

**Focus Area One: Promote Quality Educational Opportunities**.....11

- Goal 1.1: Ensure awareness of and access to quality DoD VolEd opportunities for service members
- Goal 1.2: Better inform service member selection of educational opportunities so that decisions are based upon quality & value
- Goal 1.3: Execute programs and methods to ensure quality and value of DoD VolEd Opportunities.
- Goal 1.4: Define and implement key performance indicators to assess & continuously improve DoD VolEd quality outcomes

**Focus Area Two: Ensure Military Student Readiness And Success**.....13

- Goal 2.1: Provide tools and resources to enable college readiness and the pursuit of service member educational goals
- Goal 2.2: Leverage self-service capabilities to augment available services and reinforce personal responsibility
- Goal 2.3: Maximize the use and effectiveness of individualized counseling and face-to-face interaction
- Goal 2.4: Conduct empirically based assessments to better understand the unique requirements and educational needs of service members

**Focus Area Three: Enable a Viable Voluntary Education Community & Workforce**.....15

- Goal 3.1: Consistently and effectively communicate the value of an education and of DoD VolEd
- Goal 3.2: Foster a DoD-wide “community of support” to better enable workforce delivery of VolEd support services-
- Goal 3.3: Increase dialogue, collaboration, & partnerships across government, non-governmental organizations (NGO), academia, & industry
- Goal 3.4: Leverage collaborative research to provide a holistic understanding of VolEd trends and factors

**Focus Area Four: Cultivate a Culture of Organizational Effectiveness**.....17

- Goal 4.1: Implement a research and analytics agenda to proactively improve DoD VolEd policies and programs
- Goal 4.2: Ensure the relevancy and effectiveness of DoD VolEd policies that put the service member first and have demonstrable value to the Services
- Goal 4.3: Support joint problem solving through the sharing of ideas, best practices, and approaches
- Goal 4.4: Implement formalized performance measures to ensure the effectiveness and impact of DoD VolEd programs

**PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT & STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION**.....19

**APPENDIX**.....23

- Appendix A: Key Planning Factors and Assumptions
- Appendix B: Strategic Framework
- Appendix C: Executive Order 13607, “Establishing Principles of Excellence”
- Appendix D: DoD Instruction (DoDI) 1322.25 Memorandum of Understanding
- Appendix E: Community of Stakeholders
- Appendix F: Bibliography



## LETTER FROM DAWN BILODEAU

*Chief, Department of Defense Voluntary Education*

As our Armed Forces continue to transition into a smaller and more agile workforce, the role of Department of Defense Voluntary Education will be indispensable to the success of the Armed Services and the lives of our service members<sup>1,2</sup>.

Postsecondary education equips service members with skills that are both tangible and beneficial to our military Services and desirable in our competitive 21<sup>st</sup> century marketplace. Not only did the majority of service members continue to name education benefits as their primary reason for enlistment, but they also consistently named tuition assistance as more valuable than all other quality of life programs combined<sup>3</sup>.

We need to deliver on our promise to service members to shape quality voluntary educational experiences that support them beyond their military Service. In our current economy, it is expected that upwards of 60 percent of jobs will require at least some higher education<sup>4</sup>. Armed with education, service members can continue to close the unemployment gap experienced by veterans. Service member education and the preparation for both civilian life and veteran employment are at the forefront of Voluntary Education's vision and mission. With more than one million service members transitioning to veteran status over the next five years<sup>5</sup>, Voluntary Education's purpose is relevant, significant, and impactful.

In addition, quality educational opportunities have never been more important to the capabilities of our military Services. Today's warfare demands a new set of skills from the men and women who volunteer in our Armed Forces. Service members must be equipped with the leadership, technical acumen, and critical decision-making abilities to react to unforeseen scenarios and future operational challenges<sup>6</sup>. Education is the nexus of these elements. Our responsibility is to shape quality educational experiences for service members that enrich, foster, and develop their lives as service members and as citizens. This 2015 – 2020 DoD Voluntary Education Strategic Plan presents the vision and strategic focus areas for the coming years. It will serve to guide how we perform our mission moving forward.

In the 2015 State of the Union address, President Obama stressed the importance of quality educational experiences for service members and the educational attainment that provides them the opportunity to *thrive*. I pledge my enduring commitment to this strategic investment that will enable our service members to thrive in pursuit of their educational and career goals.

I hope you will join me in this vision. Together, we can make it a reality.

---

**Dawn Bilodeau**

**Chief, Department of Defense (DOD) Voluntary Education**



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Overview

The purpose of the 2015 – 2020 Department of Defense (DoD) Voluntary Education (VolEd) Strategic Plan is to ensure that DoD VolEd continues to shape quality educational experiences for service members. Education is fundamental to the success of the Armed Forces and plays a critical role in the recruitment of high-performing talent, the preparedness of service members for 21<sup>st</sup> century warfare, and ensuring successful service member transitions to civilian life where they become active and engaged citizens.

The strategic plan presents the direction of the VolEd community over the next five years. It focuses on promoting access to quality educational opportunities, ensuring military student readiness and success, enabling a community of support, and promoting a culture of organizational effectiveness. This Strategic Plan defines the DoD VolEd vision, mission, guiding principles, strategic focus areas, and supporting goals (Figure 1). These key elements are built upon the current DoD VolEd operating environment, strategic drivers, and key planning assumptions that influence both the current and future state of DoD VolEd (Appendix A). The integration of the vision, mission, guiding principles, strategic focus areas, and supporting goals constitute the DoD VolEd strategic framework for the 2015-2020 Strategic Plan. This strategic framework provides a single view of the strategic elements and their relationships within the plan (See Appendix B for the DoD VolEd Strategic Framework).

The vision articulates the DoD VolEd purpose and future-state. The mission statement furthers the vision by advocating for policies, partnerships and programs that enable access to quality postsecondary educational opportunities designed to inspire service member success. Built upon the vision and mission, the four guiding principles define the values that support DoD VolEd decision-making and strategic planning.

FIGURE 1 – DOD VOLED STRATEGIC PLAN: KEY ELEMENTS



The vision, mission, and guiding principles set the foundation for the strategic focus areas. The Strategic Focus areas organize efforts into specific categories for development and action that are then delineated into supporting goals and initiatives for the next five years.

## Current Operating Environment

Since its inception, DoD VolEd has been providing and ensuring high quality and valuable educational opportunities and programs for service members. These programs assist the men and women of the Armed Services in gaining the knowledge they need for their military career paths and chosen long-term professional ambitions when returning to the civilian workforce. In 2014, DoD VolEd spent \$638.7 million on programs and services for over 809,000 participants in 843,000 postsecondary education courses, with 50,000 degrees earned<sup>7</sup>.

Educational benefits have historically played a pivotal role in the recruitment and retention of quality personnel<sup>1</sup>. Over the past 15 years, the majority of service members and veterans named educational benefits as a primary and motivating factor for joining the Armed Forces<sup>8</sup>. According to the 2015 Military Compensation Retirement Modernization Commission report, tuition assistance was considered twice as valuable as quality of life benefits which include military housing, childcare, and

family support services<sup>9</sup>. Education is a strong motivator and valued by those who volunteer to serve the Armed Forces. It is DoD VolEd's responsibility to ensure service members succeed in receiving the support, benefits, and opportunities they deserve.

### *Strategic Drivers*

DoD VolEd is distinguishable from military education (accessions-related) and competitive education (mission-related graduate studies) by its authorization under 10 U.S.C. 2007 as "off-duty" education. DoD VolEd encompasses the programs and services that fund and otherwise enable service member participation in off-duty education pursuits.

The DoD VolEd program has recently experienced policy changes and fiscal constraints that impact the operating environment. This includes the President's Executive Order 13607, "Establishing Principles of Excellence for Educational Institutions Serving Service Members, Veterans, Spouses, and Other Family Members." The Executive Order emphasizes the importance of education in the Armed Forces by establishing guidelines, requirements, and accountability measures for educational institutions receiving Federal funding (Appendix C). Other recent policy changes include an adjustment to Tuition Assistance (TA) eligibility criteria and the requirement of educational institutions to sign a Memorandum of Understanding, as presented in DoD Instruction 1322.25, "Voluntary Education Programs," as a prerequisite to tuition assistance services (Appendix D). Lastly, a DoD Postsecondary Education Complaint System for service members and their families was implemented to capture feedback on the performance and services of educational institutions receiving tuition assistance.

The recent policy directives from the White House, DoD, and Department of Education have presented new requirements and introduced new ways of conducting business that require increased cooperation across the DoD stakeholder community, federal agencies, and the education community.

### *Problem Statement*

With the rising costs of education, increasing budget constraints, and the economy's emphasis on higher education, it is essential that service members are able to access their education benefits. There are numerous impediments that prevent service members from successfully attaining the education they deserve. Through the plan outlined in the pages that follow, DoD VolEd is focused on the resolution of the following issues:

- Due to the overwhelming amount of information on educational institutions and available benefits, service members may be unable to make informed decisions about their education and career goals<sup>10</sup>.
- Not all service members spend 20-30 years in the Service. Since 2005, veterans age 18 to 24 have consistently had a higher unemployment rate than nonveterans of the same age group<sup>11</sup>. Veteran unemployment is an issue that is projected to worsen over the coming years.
- Educational institutions may not be in compliance with the Principles of Excellence and DoD MOU.

### *Conclusion*

The 2015 – 2020 DoD VolEd strategic plan is actionable, relevant, and adaptable. This document describes the purpose of the DoD VolEd vision and mission and outlines how to maximize the next five years in order to achieve the DoD VolEd goals and future state. The strategic plan was developed through the use of a structured and dynamic planning process incorporating inputs from internal and external stakeholders. A core planning team comprised of a community of stakeholders from across the DoD and federal government worked together in facilitated sessions in order to refine critical elements of the Strategic Plan and articulate new directives to drive DoD VolEd in a positive direction (Appendix E).

# Vision, Mission & Guiding Principles

*“In a global economy where the most valuable skill you can sell is your knowledge, a good education is no longer a pathway to opportunity – it is a pre-requisite.”*

*- President Obama,  
Address to  
Joint Session  
of Congress,  
February 24,  
2009*

## VISION

DoD VolEd is essential throughout the service members' Military Life Cycle, from recruitment to transition into civilian life. The DoD VolEd vision (Figure 2) is to provide quality educational experiences that result in meaningful value for service members, the military services, and society.

FIGURE 2 - DOD VOLED VISION STATEMENT

**DoD VolED Vision Statement**  
***“Shaping quality voluntary educational experiences to foster better service members, better citizens”***

### *Shaping Quality Voluntary Educational Experiences*

Service members face unique challenges as students. Service members tend to be older, fully-employed part-time students, require financial assistance, and may be married with dependents; therefore, they can be considered non-traditional students<sup>12,13</sup>. Active duty service members typically attend multiple institutions, alternate between traditional classrooms and long-distance learning, and experience breaks in their education due to deployments and duty station transfers<sup>14</sup>. In order to attain a degree or certificate, service members must wade through an inordinate amount of information, including eligibility, funding and time restraints, in order to receive the appropriate benefits, determine their degree path, and choose a profession<sup>15</sup>. Service members are met with obstacles that prevent them from pursuing their education including their non-traditional profile, a challenging military life, and overwhelming amount of benefits information, requirements, and logistics. Therefore, an area of emphasis of the DoD VolEd vision is to shape quality educational experiences of service members so that they can achieve their educational, professional, and personal goals.

### *Foster Better Service Members*

The DoD and the military Services are placing a stronger emphasis on the role of education in military training<sup>16</sup>. Education prepares individuals to think critically, develop leadership skills, and acquire other tools that are crucial to warfare and the 21<sup>st</sup> century<sup>17</sup>. DoD VolEd provides service members access to quality educational experiences that support personal and professional development<sup>18</sup>. Postsecondary education fosters service members' ability to develop their capabilities as active leaders, thinkers, and problem-solvers in their military Service and beyond. A crucial element of the DoD VolEd vision is to ensure that service members have the ability to grow and achieve their utmost potential.

### *Better Citizens*

Veteran employment is a critical issue that impacts the military Services, service members, and society. The unemployment rate of veterans ages 18 – 24 has increased over the past 10 years and is projected to continue growing as the Armed Forces draws down<sup>19</sup>. In 2013, 22 percent of 18 – 24 year old veterans were unemployed as compared to 14 percent of non-veterans the same age<sup>20</sup>. Service members are aware of these harsh realities and cite employment as their primary concern for their transition to civilian life<sup>21</sup>.

DoD VolEd supports the transition into civilian life by providing service members with an education that improves their attainment of desired skills, employability, and competitiveness in the 21<sup>st</sup> century marketplace. Employment is a significant factor in determining the success of a service member's transition to civilian life. Not only does education support employment outcomes, but it also has an influence on the mental, physical, and social health of service members, their families, and their communities<sup>22</sup>. A DoD VolEd goal is to return service members from duty as fully engaged and capable citizens.

## MISSION

The mission (Figure 3) defines how DoD VolEd operates in order to support the educational needs of service members and enables the missions of the military Services. The DoD VolEd community advocates for service members and works to guarantee quality postsecondary educational opportunities.

FIGURE 3 - DOD VOLED MISSION STATEMENT

**DoD VolEd Mission Statement**  
***“Champion policies, programs, and partnerships that enable access to quality postsecondary educational opportunities, empower informed service member decision-making, shape meaningful personal and professional pathways, and drive military student success in higher education.”***

### *Champion Policies, Programs and Partnerships*

Championing policies, programs, and partnerships are crucial to the success of DoD VolEd. Carrying out the intent of policies, such as the Principles of Excellence, and the provision of impactful programs supporting service members in their educational pursuits, is reliant upon an active, responsive community of stakeholders and partners. The ability to collaborate as a unified community for the betterment of service members is vital to ensuring the delivery of quality, excellence, transparency, and value in the execution of mission requirements.

An important focus of the DoD VolEd desired vision is to ensure that participating educational institutions act consistently with the Principles of Excellence, are responsive to the unique needs of military students, and offer support services that meet the needs and expectations of service members.

### *Enable Access to Quality Postsecondary Educational Opportunities*

The DoD VolEd mission is to ensure that service members are properly informed of the array of educational opportunities available to them. Informed choices by service members regarding their educational investment is crucial to their success, and needs to involve such factors as the right institution to attend, the academic rigor and cost of a program, as well as the long-term marketability of their degree and return on investment<sup>23</sup>. This involves empowering them to navigate the vast amount of information available as well as the support of their education counselors. The expertise of counselors who are knowledgeable in postsecondary education and the issues affecting service members is vital to helping service members pursue clearly defined educational goals. Educational goal setting includes the type of degrees and certificates available, an education and career roadmap, pertinent benefits requirements, and meaningful information related to available institutions that meet their needs.

### *Drive Military Student Success in Higher Education*

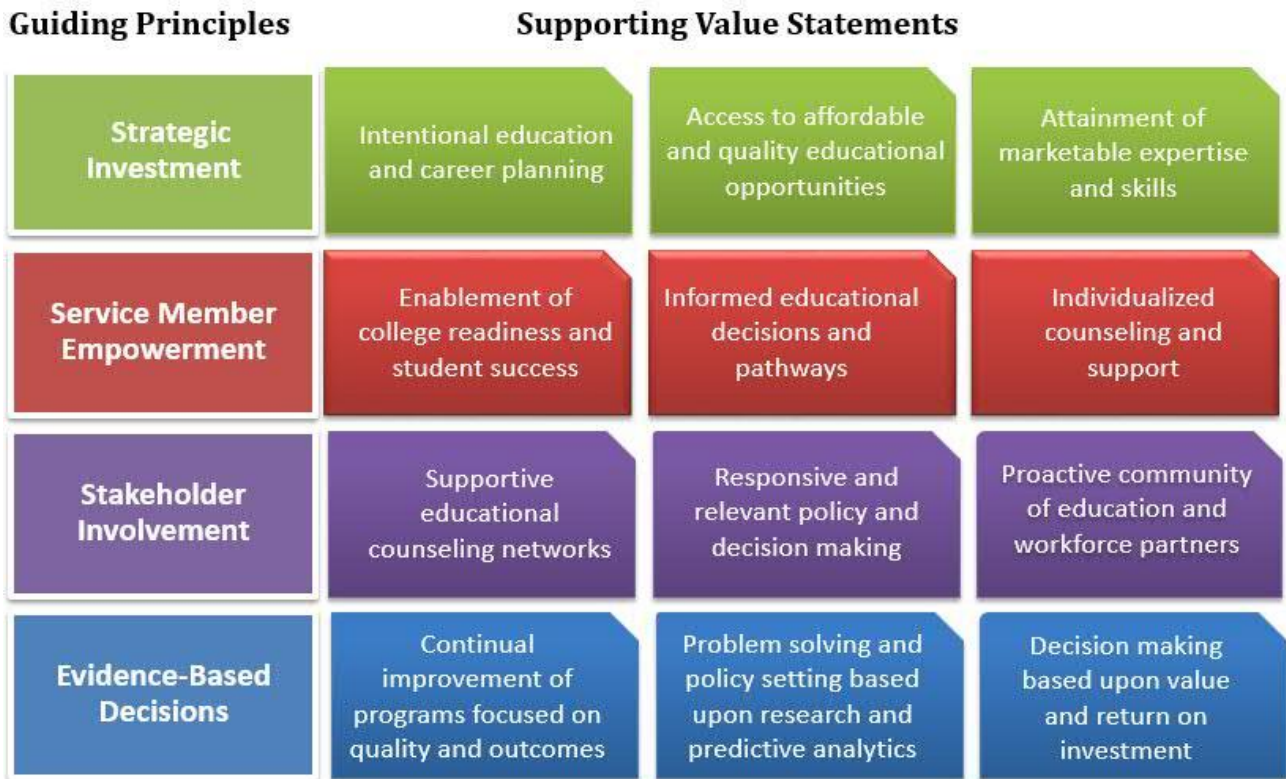
An important aspect of the DoD VolEd mission is a focus on improved student performance and measurable outcomes. It is imperative to provide service members with the necessary support and services required to enable military student success, including student preparedness, maximizing face-to-face counseling, assessments, collaborative data collection, and enforcing institutional compliance with the Principles of Excellence and the Memorandum of Understanding. DoD VolEd programs must be designed to guarantee both relevancy and effectiveness in order to impact and empower service member readiness and success in pursuing and achieving their educational goals.



## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Guiding Principles (Figure 4) constitute a set of defined beliefs and values used to guide actions, inform decision-making, and evaluate DoD VolEd’s alignment and accomplishment of the overarching vision and mission. These Guiding Principles are integral to the 2015 – 2020 DoD VolEd Strategic Plan and provide a lens through which the Strategic Focus Areas, specified supporting goals, and resulting initiatives will be evaluated to ensure progress towards the DoD VolEd vision.

FIGURE 4 - DOD VOLED GUIDING PRINCIPLES & VALUE STATEMENTS



Guiding Principles include:

**Strategic Investment:** DoD VolEd is committed to postsecondary education as a strategic investment in service members, the military Services, and the Nation.

**Service Member Empowerment:** DoD VolEd programs empower students results in successful outcomes. It is vital for DoD VolEd to empower service members through readiness and planning so that they can attain meaningful educational outcomes.

**Stakeholder Involvement:** An active and responsive DoD VolEd community is critical for success and requires proactive collaboration across a broad array of partners and stakeholders.

**Evidence-Based Decisions:** DoD VolEd is focused on using evidence-based decision-making and performance management to drive continual improvement of effective and impactful DoD VolEd policies and programs.

# Strategic Focus Areas

*“In the area of higher education, we know that college is one of the best investments students can make for their future. It should offer a high return on investment for every American who is willing to work hard, and it must provide preparation for a well-paying job and a strong future”.*

*-Arne Duncan,  
Secretary of  
Education*

## STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS

To accomplish the DoD VolEd desired future state, four overarching strategic focus areas (Figure 5) provide the foundation for strategic initiatives over the next five years. These focus areas are built upon the DoD VolEd vision, mission, and guiding principles and lay the groundwork for an actionable set of supporting goals (Appendix B). These supporting goals and initiatives are integral to the DoD VolEd efforts to achieve the vision and mission defined in this Strategic Plan.

FIGURE 5 - DOD VOLED STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS

Strategic Focus Areas															
<b>Focus Area One</b> Promote Quality Educational Opportunities				<b>Focus Area Two</b> Ensure Military Student Readiness and Success				<b>Focus Area Three</b> Enable a Viable VolEd Community				<b>Focus Area Four</b> Cultivate a Culture of Organizational Effectiveness			
Goal 1.1	Goal 1.2	Goal 1.3	Goal 1.4	Goal 2.1	Goal 2.2	Goal 2.3	Goal 2.4	Goal 3.1	Goal 3.2	Goal 3.3	Goal 3.4	Goal 4.1	Goal 4.2	Goal 4.3	Goal 4.4

**Focus Area One: Promote Quality Educational Opportunities** – DoD VolEd is focused on the promotion of quality educational opportunities for service members by ensuring awareness and access to affordable and valuable educational experiences. Important aspects include informed service member decisions regarding the quality and value of educational opportunities, as well as utilizing evidence-based methods to continuously monitor and ensure compliance of participating educational institutions with the Principles of Excellence (Appendix C) and DoDI 1322.25 (Appendix D).

**Focus Area Two: Ensure Military Student Readiness and Success** – DoD VolEd is committed to empowering military students and ensuring they are adequately prepared and equipped to succeed in their educational pursuits. This involves a focus on college readiness, personal involvement and responsibility, optimized use of educational counseling and support, and a more continual and dynamic process for assessing and responding to the needs of military students and the respective military Services.

**Focus Area Three: Enable a Viable Voluntary Education Community & Workforce** – DoD VolEd success in delivering upon its mission responsibilities requires an actively engaged community of support (Appendix E) that collaborates in a cohesive manner to support the voluntary educational needs of service members. This includes a concerted focus on effective and consistent communications, enablement of the DoD VolEd workforce, enhanced partnering and collaboration, and the leveraging of joint research to understand crucial educational trends and factors.

**Focus Area Four: Cultivate a Culture of Organizational Effectiveness** – DoD VolEd recognizes the importance of organizational effectiveness and will be vigilant in evaluating and improving performance through informed decision-making. This involves the use of meaningful research and analytics to verify the impact of DoD VolEd’s policies, programs and services on service members. Organizational effectiveness ensures that DoD VolEd maintains alignment with the vision, a focus on joint problem solving, and sharing of best practices across the DoD VolEd community and partnerships.

## FOCUS AREA ONE

### *Promote Quality Educational Opportunities*

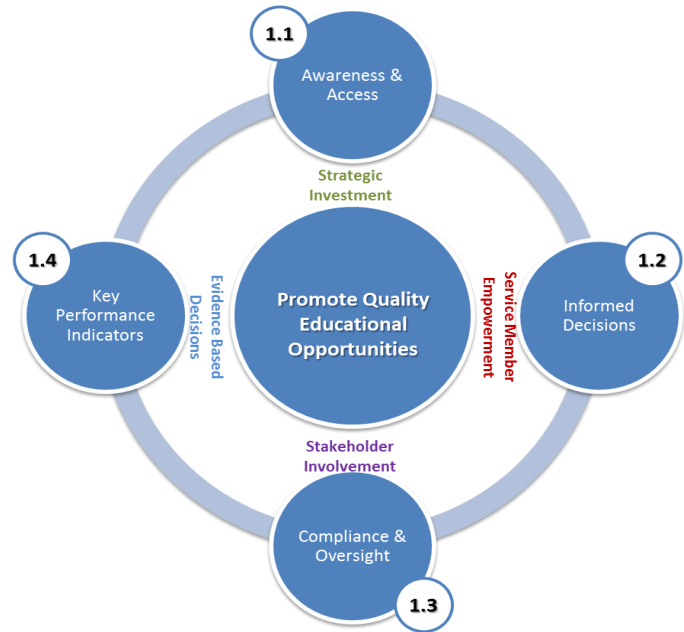
Knowledge is the currency of today's global economy<sup>24</sup>. Access to valuable and quality education is the foundation for sustained economic growth, achieving prosperity, health and well-being both in the military service and in society. The DoD VolEd program must leverage, and continuously improve upon, its ability to promote educational attainment and enable critical programs that foster service members in their personal and professional development.

An important aspect of Focus Area One (Figure 6) is to ensure service members have access to quality educational opportunities that are meaningful in terms of the DoD VolEd vision. Policies, such as the Memorandum of Understanding and Principles of Excellence, provide protection and stewardship of DoD VolEd beneficiaries through the advocacy and support of quality-based education opportunities.

The promotion of quality educational opportunities exemplifies the DoD VolEd purpose to provide service members with experiences that support their personal and professional development thus enabling them to be better service members and ultimately better citizens. VolEd is a strategic investment in development and capabilities of service members. It fills a particular niche across the DoD by complementing military training with education that inspires leadership, the attainment of marketable skills, and establishes a meaningful education and career pathway that extends beyond their military service.

To systematically advance the DoD VolEd vision to provide service members with quality educational opportunities requires four supporting goals to lead the approach. First, DoD VolEd's strategic investment in education begins with ensuring service member awareness of potential educational pathways that lead to the acquisition of desired skills and the preparation for marketable degrees. Service members must be aware of the programs, services, and affordable options. Second, it is essential to empower service members with the information necessary to discern quality, value, and applicability of programs in order to make informed decisions regarding their educational investment. Third, the involvement of educational institutions and their compliance with the Memorandum of Understanding is crucial to DoD VolEd's ability to ensure the quality and value of educational opportunities available to service members. Finally, the implementation and use of key performance indicators is necessary to measure and evaluate the quality of educational institutions through the compliance framework of the Memorandum of Understanding and performance standards of the Principles of Excellence. The following further details the supporting goal statements for focus area one and how DoD VolEd will work to ensure the promotion of quality educational opportunities for service members.

FIGURE 6 – FOCUS AREA ONE



**Supporting Goal 1.1: Ensure awareness of and access to quality DoD VolEd opportunities for service members.** Increase access to postsecondary education via academic programs that meet standards of quality and value. This includes program awareness, benefits, and services that support service members in their investment and pursuit of a meaningful education.

**Desired Outcomes:**

- Service members have access and engage in an array of postsecondary educational opportunities that support their personal and professional development and achievement of life-long goals.
- Participating institutions offer a range of choices that meet the educational needs of service members, and are discernable in terms of relative quality, value, and cost.

**Supporting Goal 1.2: Better inform service members' selection of educational opportunities so that decisions are based upon quality and value.** Equip service members with the information needed to make informed decisions regarding the quality, value, and true cost of available educational opportunities. This entails presenting service members with the information required to make educational decisions in context of their professional career objectives, educational goals, and required personal and financial investments.

**Desired Outcomes:**

- Service members are provided with accurate, complete, and intuitive information required to properly evaluate and compare available educational opportunities.
- More informed educational decisions by service members result in personally and professionally meaningful educational pursuits, more direct paths to those pursuits and positive student outcomes

**Supporting Goal 1.3: Execute programs and methods to ensure quality and value of DoD VolEd Opportunities.** DoD VolEd requires a mechanism to ensure participating institutions provide educational opportunities that are consistent and in compliance with the president's Principles of Excellence as defined in EO 13607 (Appendix C). This involves implementation and use of a formalized oversight and compliance framework in conjunction with the DoD Memorandum of Understanding.

**Desired Outcomes:**

- Formalized framework, applying government and industry best practices, to ensure compliance of institutions with the Principles of Excellence and DoD MOU requirements.
- Improved assessment methodologies and tools resulting in greater oversight and actionable evaluations regarding the quality and value provided by participating institutions.

**Supporting Goal 1.4: Define and implement key performance indicators to assess and continuously improve DoD VolEd quality outcomes.** Implement metrics and analytics to continually measure and assess the compliance and performance of participating institutions. This will involve the use of defined measures to inform a targeted risk-based assessment methodology and a systematic focus on improved quality and student outcomes.

**Desired Outcomes:**

- Measureable standards of performance are established and proactively used to evaluate and safeguard the quality and value of educational opportunities available to service members.
- Postsecondary outcome measures are defined, captured, and regularly evaluated to continuously assess and improve military student outcomes.

## FOCUS AREA TWO

### *Ensure Military Student Readiness and Success*

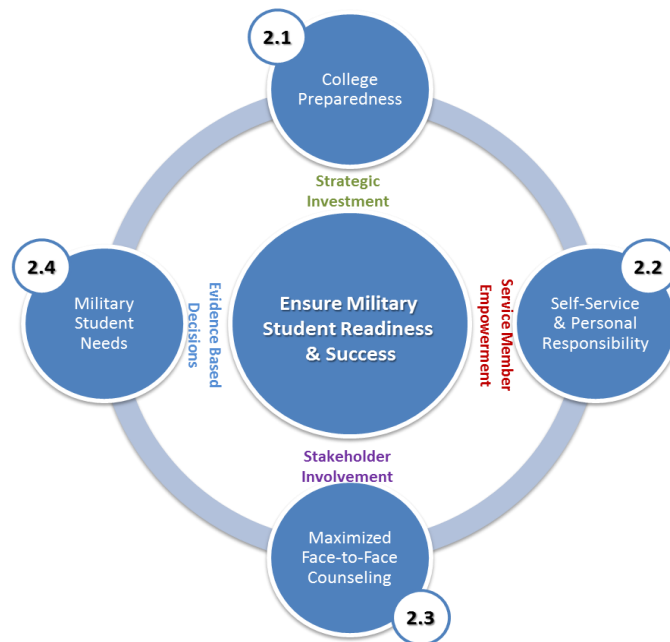
In order to achieve educational and career goals, students must first be prepared for the rigor and responsibility of the classroom. Academic preparation is highly correlated to student success in postsecondary education<sup>25</sup>. In conjunction with the promotion of quality educational opportunities, Focus Area Two—“Ensure Military Student Readiness and Success” targets the importance of service members being prepared and supported in achieving their educational goals (Figure 7).

Service members who make informed educational choices and those who are academically prepared are more likely to perform well in a rigorous academic environment and succeed in accomplishing their educational goals. A

key aspect of the DoD VolEd vision is to shape positive educational experiences that foster the learning and success of service members throughout their military service and beyond. In order to gain the maximum benefit from DoD VolEd offerings, service members must be prepared.

To support this endeavor, DoD VolEd has generated four strategic goals to ensure military student readiness and success. The first goal is focused on the provision of tools and resources to enable military student preparedness for the pursuit of their postsecondary education. This encourages service members to take individual responsibility for becoming well equipped to meet rigorous academic standards, and to be more adept in completing their courses of study and degree programs. Secondly, DoD VolEd supports the use of self-service capabilities that service members may leverage to further empower and reinforce their personal responsibility in realizing value from their educational investment. This provides an opportunity for military students to become proactive and engaged participants in the planning and execution of their own education and career pathways. The third goal is focused on maximizing the use and effectiveness of face-to-face interactions and individualized counseling to further enable student access. Finally, DoD VolEd will implement a more formalized and dynamic method to assess and understand the unique and evolving educational needs of service members, in order to continually improve the effectiveness and impact provided by VolEd support programs and services.

FIGURE 7 – FOCUS AREA TWO



**Supporting Goal 2.1: Provide tools and resources to enable college readiness and the pursuit of service member educational goals.** Better prepare service members to enroll, participate, and succeed in postsecondary education through the use of preparatory courses, counseling services, and tools designed to support college readiness and success.

**Desired Outcomes:**

- Service members are more prepared to successfully attend, complete, and attain their postsecondary education goals.
- Service members show continued persistence toward degree plan and educational goal completion.

**Supporting Goal 2.2: Leverage self-service capabilities to augment available services and reinforce personal responsibility.** Increase self-reliance and personal responsibility amongst service members through the use of self-service tools and capabilities designed to support the accomplishment of educational goals and endeavors.

**Desired Outcomes:**

- Self-service tools and resources are proactively used by service members, in conjunction with individualized counseling support, to enable educational goal setting and personal and professional development.
- Integrated and adaptive technologies promote improved persistence rates and student performance across the service member population.

**Supporting Goal 2.3: Maximize the use and effectiveness of individualized counseling and face-to-face interaction.** Improve the reach and effectiveness of educational counseling through the use of more targeted face-to-face interactions and virtual counseling services. This will entail a focus on how to best direct counseling activities to ensure the greatest impact and value in supporting military students.

**Desired Outcomes:**

- Targeted use of education counselors provides service members with the impactful support needed to succeed.
- Service members regularly engage with their education counselors for mutually agreed upon education checkpoints and milestones throughout their Military Life Cycle, in accordance with the vision to support mission and institutional competencies while in military service.

**Supporting Goal 2.4: Conduct empirically-based assessments to better understand the unique requirements and educational needs of service members.** Increase DoD VolEd's understanding of the educational needs of service members through more comprehensive and empirically-based needs assessments. Resulting information will serve as the foundation for continuous improvement and relevance of DoD VolEd programs.

**Desired Outcomes:**

- DoD VolEd programs and services are designed and continually improved based upon a clear and actionable understanding of the educational needs of military students.
- The use of analytics and feedback from military students is regularly evaluated to assess the effectiveness of DoD VolEd programs and services.

## FOCUS AREA THREE

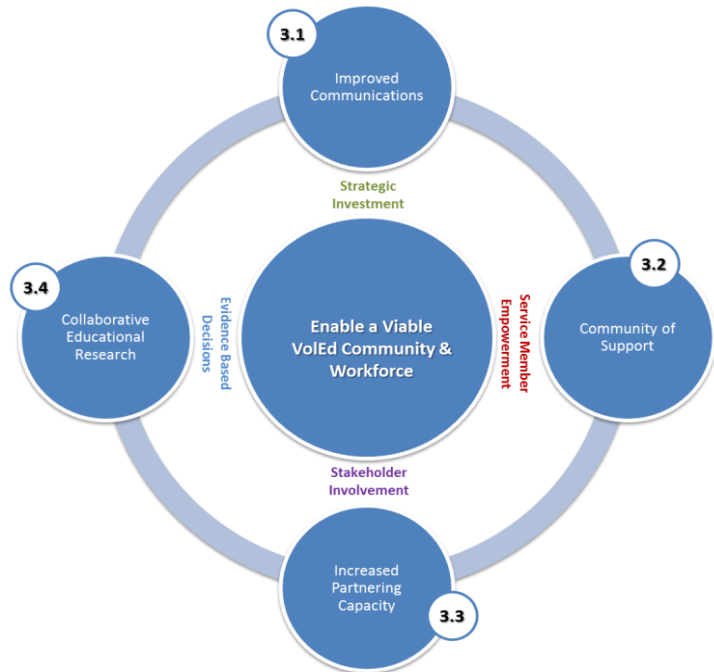
### *Enable a Viable Voluntary Education Community & Workforce*

A unified DoD VolEd community can act effectively through shared communications, clearly defined delivery channels and systems, open dialogue, and collaborative and strategic partnerships. DoD VolEd impact to the educational success of service members is most powerful when supported by a collaborative DoD VolEd workforce. Focus Area Three (Figure 8) serves as a platform for inspiring and building a vibrant “community of support” that engages VolEd educational professionals, researchers, policy makers, strategic partners, and educational providers to collectively achieve maximum outcomes in support of service members.

Actively engaged members who collectively focus on providing military students the necessary support to be successful, is integral to a successful DoD VolEd community. In order to meet the needs of the current and future DoD VolEd community, it is important to increase community engagement through communications, improved coordination of programs and services with cross-agency partners, and to provide professional development of education counselors. Partnerships introduce the ability to share information and perspectives that deepen understanding of the customer and their needs. The DoD VolEd community can collaborate to leverage meaningful data, disseminate important information, and to incorporate findings into existing programs and services that support joint reach and impact.

Focus Area Three—“Enable a Viable Voluntary Education Community”, consists of four supporting goals. First is the implementation of a strategic communications plan that supports an effective exchange of information throughout the DoD VolEd community. This is an investment in DoD VolEd’s ability to shape quality postsecondary education experiences. Secondly, DoD fosters a “community of support” that expands mentorship programs and collaboration across the DoD to enhance the delivery of support services to service members. Next, DoD VolEd will continue to build upon its partnering capacity to increase dialogue and collaboration across its agencies and to increase dialogue and partnerships across government, non-governmental organizations, academia, and industry. This then leads to the fourth goal of providing opportunities to conduct meaningful research and promote information sharing to continuously evaluate and improve DoD VolEd program function and design to adjust for changing needs and increased impact.

FIGURE 8 – FOCUS AREA THREE





**Supporting Goal 3.1: Consistently and effectively communicate the value of an education and of DoD VolEd.** Implement a strategic communications plan that establishes and proactively uses multiple delivery channels to support the flow of information and feedback throughout the VolEd Community. Target audiences include service members, the DoD VolEd professional community, key internal and external stakeholder groups, and senior leadership.

**Desired Outcomes:**

- The DoD VolEd community, including senior leadership, VolEd professionals, key stakeholders, and service members, are more informed on DoD VolEd matters through the adoption of new methods of communication.

**Supporting Goal 3.2: Foster a DoD-wide “community of support” to better enable workforce delivery of VolEd support services.** Increase DoD VolEd employee engagement and collaboration across the VolEd community through the meaningful use of forums, professional training, mentorships, knowledge sharing, and partnerships. These activities will serve to provide the framework and support for building the DoD VolEd workforce and enabling an effective “community of support.”

**Desired Outcomes:**

- An active and engaged DoD VolEd “community of support” facilitates knowledge sharing, training, and professional development and results in improved military student support DoD-wide.
- Enabling technologies are employed to support collaboration, training, and knowledge sharing across the DoD VolEd workforce.

**Supporting Goal 3.3: Increase dialogue, collaboration, and partnerships across government, non-governmental organizations, academia, and industry.** Continue to invest in cross-agency collaboration, partnering and information sharing. Additional strategic outreach efforts will be pursued to broaden the reach and effectiveness of the DoD VolEd community.

**Desired Outcomes:**

- Cross-agency partnerships are fully leveraged and result in improved coordination of VolEd programs, directives, and support services.
- Broadened understanding and support for the military Services and service members through increased dialogue with academia, non-governmental organizations, and industry groups through the meaningful use of forums, knowledge sharing, and partnerships. .

**Supporting Goal 3.4: Leverage collaborative research to provide a holistic understanding of VolEd trends and factors.** Support partnering among DoD VolEd professionals, academia, educational research groups, and industry to conduct meaningful and actionable research. The aim is to produce and use empirically-based research to gain greater insight regarding educational trends and factors that affect military student success.

**Desired Outcomes:**

- Collaboration between DoD, government agencies, educational research groups, academia, and industry trade groups promotes a more holistic understanding of military student needs.
- Educational research and longitudinal studies provide evidence-based insight regarding critical educational trends and factors used to identify and implement programmatic improvements.

## FOCUS AREA FOUR

### *Cultivate a Culture of Organizational Effectiveness*

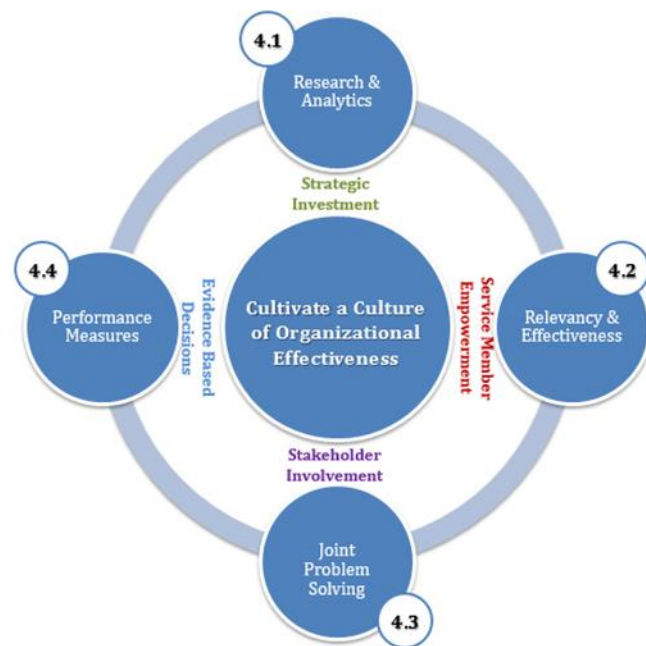
In the current climate of increased budgetary constraints, transition to a smaller total DoD workforce, and focus on 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, DoD VolEd must operate in a manner focused on optimized organizational performance and results.

It is a DoD VolEd strategic imperative to be aware of the performance and efficacy of related VolEd policies and programs through analytics, joint problem solving, and performance measurement. This allows DoD VolEd to make swift programmatic changes in order to meet the evolving educational needs of service members and the military Services.

Focus Area Four (Figure 9) highlights efforts to inspire creative solutions, improve program effectiveness and efficiency, and anticipate and adapt to budgetary constraints and resource limitations. This culture will strive to enhance DoD-wide VolEd policies and programs, through the use of evidence-based research, advanced analytics, and joint problem solving to promote improved effectiveness and Return on Investment (ROI).

Focus Area Four involves four supporting goals. First, DoD VolEd will implement a research and analytics agenda to proactively improve DoD VolEd policies and programs. It will strategically leverage data insights through predictive analytics and modeling, which is an investment in the effectiveness of DoD VolEd services and programs. Second, DoD VolEd will ensure the relevancy and impact of DoD VolEd policies, particularly policies that are customer-centric, put service members first, and have demonstrable value to the military Services. Third, active stakeholders will participate in joint-problem solving and share best practices, approaches, and ideas. This way, DoD VolEd can holistically address the diversity of needs in a systematic and inclusive way thereby nurturing the goals and achievements of many. Lastly, the implementation of meaningful performance measures will ensure the effectiveness and ROI of DoD VolEd Programs. The four supporting goals are detailed on the following page.

FIGURE 9 – FOCUS AREA FOUR



**Supporting Goal 4.1: Implement a research and analytics agenda to proactively improve DoD VolEd policies and programs.** Improve on the ability to produce results through informed decision-making based upon meaningful research and insightful data-analytics. This involves the definition and implementation of a deliberate multi-year research and analytics agenda to assist DoD VolEd in planning for and effectively adapting to emerging trends.

**Desired Outcomes:**

- Targeted research studies that provide empirically-based insights and are used to make fact-based decisions and systematically improve DoD VolEd policies and programs in a manner that addresses root cause issues.
- Advanced analytics and modeling capabilities are applied to provide a more predictive view of the future impacts of DoD VolEd policies and programs.

**Supporting Goal 4.2: Ensure the relevancy and effectiveness of DoD VolEd policies that put the service member first and have demonstrable value to the military Services.** It is imperative to ensure that policies and programs are responsive to changing strategic drivers and operational realities, and remain well-aligned to support accomplishment of DoD VolEd's vision and mission objectives. This involves the continual evaluation and championing of policies and programs that support the evolving educational needs of service members and the military Services in an effective and affordable manner.

**Desired Outcomes:**

- DoD VolEd policies and programs are relevant, sustainable, and effectively enable service members to accomplish their postsecondary educational goals.

**Supporting Goal 4.3: Support joint problem solving through the sharing of ideas, best practices and approaches.** Promote collaborative problem solving to address the common challenges faced across the DoD VolEd community in a more systematic manner. This involves joint collaboration to identify opportunities for the application of best practices and common approaches.

**Desired Outcomes:**

- Collaborative problem solving results in the identification of policy, program, and solution requirements that address the common challenges faced across the DoD-wide VolEd community.
- Joint solutions applied to reduce duplication of effort and support coordinated and consistent DoD VolEd efforts.

**Supporting Goal 4.4: Implement formalized performance measures to ensure the effectiveness and impact of DoD VolEd programs.** Apply formalized performance management to continually evaluate and improve DoD VolEd programs and work efforts. This includes the implementation of a meaningful set of performance measures to continuously assess the effect, impact, and return on investment of DoD VolEd.

**Desired Outcomes:**

- Meaningful performance measures are used to continuously assess the effectiveness and value of DoD VolEd, identify required programmatic changes, and support informed decision-making.

# Performance Measurement & Strategy Implementation

*“Attaining an overall end-state of a more collaborative, customer-focused, and results-driven way of thinking and working is central to long-term success”.*

*-OUSD (P&R)  
Strategic Plan,  
2012-2016*

## PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

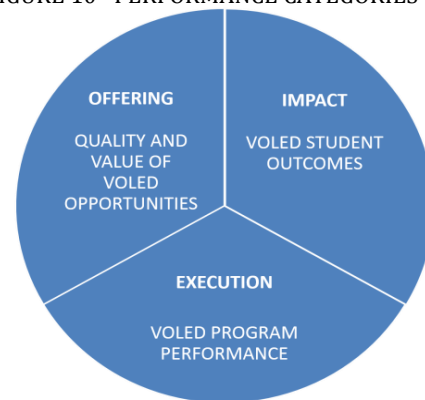
An important and final aspect of the 2015-2020 DoD VolEd Strategic Plans is the identification of a set of key performance indicators. The use of these indicators in strategic planning is well established in the management literature as an effective way to measure and improve organizational performance.

This Strategic Plan sets the stage for later use of key performance indicators to gauge the level of progress and impact made by DoD VolEd related to meeting its strategic and operational goals. Future components will define specific indicators related to each of the supporting goals defined in this plan.

To facilitate this measurement, DoD VolEd first established three primary categories (Figure 10) for the initial framing, development and identification of key performance indicators: offerings, impact, and execution. These categories are designed to encompass the strategic intent established by the vision, mission, and strategic focus areas, and consist of measures related to:

- Quality and Value of VolEd opportunities - Offering
- VolEd student outcomes - Impact
- VolEd program performance - Execution

FIGURE 10 –PERFORMANCE CATEGORIES



## KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR ONE

### *Quality and Value of Voluntary Education Opportunities - Offering*

The first key performance indicator category is designed to measure DoD VolEd offerings of educational opportunities to the service member and is further delineated by quality, value, and informed choices.

Category	Definition
<i>Quality</i>	Quality educational programs are consistent with the Principles of Excellence and support the unique needs of service members.
<i>Value</i>	The value of an educational experience provides tangible benefit to service members throughout their military life cycle and prepares them for their civilian careers.
<i>Informed Choices</i>	Informed choices enable service members to evaluate their investment based upon a holistic view and understanding of the quality, value, and total cost of an education. In addition, informed choices will lead to higher levels of customer satisfaction of education and services provided.

## KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR TWO

### *Voluntary Education Student Outcomes - Impact*

The second key performance indicator category is Voluntary Education Student Outcomes, which is centered on evaluating the ability to ensure service member preparedness, performance, and success in pursuing educational goals.

Category	Definition
<i>College Preparedness</i>	DoD VolEd is focused on ensuring service members are prepared to be successful students, thrive in a rigorous classroom or online environment, and balance the demands of pursuing an education with their military and personal commitments.
<i>Student Performance</i>	An important aspect for evaluating VolEd student outcomes will be to measure how well military students perform in the classroom or online, are persistent in their pursuit of an education, and successful in working toward their educational goals.
<i>Goal Attainment</i>	The ultimate goal of DoD VolEd is to enable military students in achieving their educational goals and realizing the intended value of their investment through the ultimate completion of a meaningful and marketable degree or certificate.

## KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR THREE

### *Voluntary Education Program Performance - Execution*

DoD VolEd program performance is the third key performance indicator category, and is focused on evaluating the execution of DoD VolEd programs in terms of program utilization, partnerships and outreach, and resulting impact/return on investment (ROI).

Category	Definition
<i>Program Utilization</i>	Program utilization captures how service members take advantage of the programs made available to them. It will be crucial to identify internal DoD VolEd program measures, such as service member participation in counseling, evaluation of the patterns of TA usage, and utilization by service members of available support services and tools.
<i>Partnerships and Outreach</i>	Partnership and Outreach entails the establishment of measures to evaluate the effectiveness of internal and external partnerships and outreach activities that contribute to enabling a vibrant VolEd community and workforce that is capable of supporting the pressing and evolving needs of service members.
<i>Impact/ROI</i>	The final form of measurement will be to establish a means to assess the impact and return on investment of DoD VolEd's supportive programs and services and how that provides direct value to service members, society at large, and DoD.

## **NEXT STEPS: STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION**

To execute and govern effective implementation of this strategy, DoD VolEd is adopting methods consistent with the approach used by Office of the Under Secretary of Defense Personnel and Readiness. This method provides DoD VolEd with a defined management system and method to effectively identify and manage execution of an actionable set of initiatives and ensure alignment to P&R's mission and focus areas.

A DoD VolEd Strategic Implementation Plan will be created to translate the high-level DoD VolEd Vision, Mission, Strategic Focus Areas, and Supporting Goals into an actionable set of initiatives. The Strategic Implementation Plan provides a framework to facilitate organized execution through detailed action planning and portfolio management as well as the ability to measure success through the application of key performance measures. This implementation plan will be evaluated in order to track ongoing strategy execution and reviewed annually to assess overall alignment and efficacy of the strategy.

An important aspect of DoD VolEd's approach to implementation is built with the understanding that this Strategic Plan is actionable and can provide DoD VolEd with a defined and adaptable strategic management capability. This approach is based upon the following important factors related to the VolEd vision:

- DoD VolEd will stay focused on prioritizing available resources and selecting initiatives that provide the most value and impact to the service members and the military Services.
- DoD VolEd will continually assess changes within the operating environment to ensure relevance of its initiatives for the DoD and service members, and make necessary adjustments over time.
- DoD VolEd's portfolio of supporting goals and initiatives will include a balance of near, mid, and long-term work efforts to build momentum, realize results, and provide enduring value.
- All initiatives will have quantifiable measures of success used to evaluate forward progress – DoD VolEd will regularly assess results against the milestones established within its implementation plan to ensure execution is occurring as planned and intended strategic and operational objectives are being realized.

# Appendix

*“Because knowledge is the currency of today’s global economy, we must keep expanding access to ... affordable higher education.”*

*-White House  
National Security  
Strategy, 2015*



## APPENDIX A: KEY PLANNING FACTORS AND ASSUMPTIONS

Key planning factors and assumptions result from integrating the perspectives of service members, leadership, and educational institutions. The team used the following assumption in developing this plan:

***Service Member / Societal Factors:*** Service members should have access to quality educational experiences that support them in acquiring new and competitive skills.

***Education Factors:*** Postsecondary education is a strategic investment and requires quality educational opportunities from institutions that meet the Principles of Excellence and Memorandum of Understanding requirements. It is critical that service members are intellectually and personally prepared to engage in an academic environment and are properly supported through programs and services.

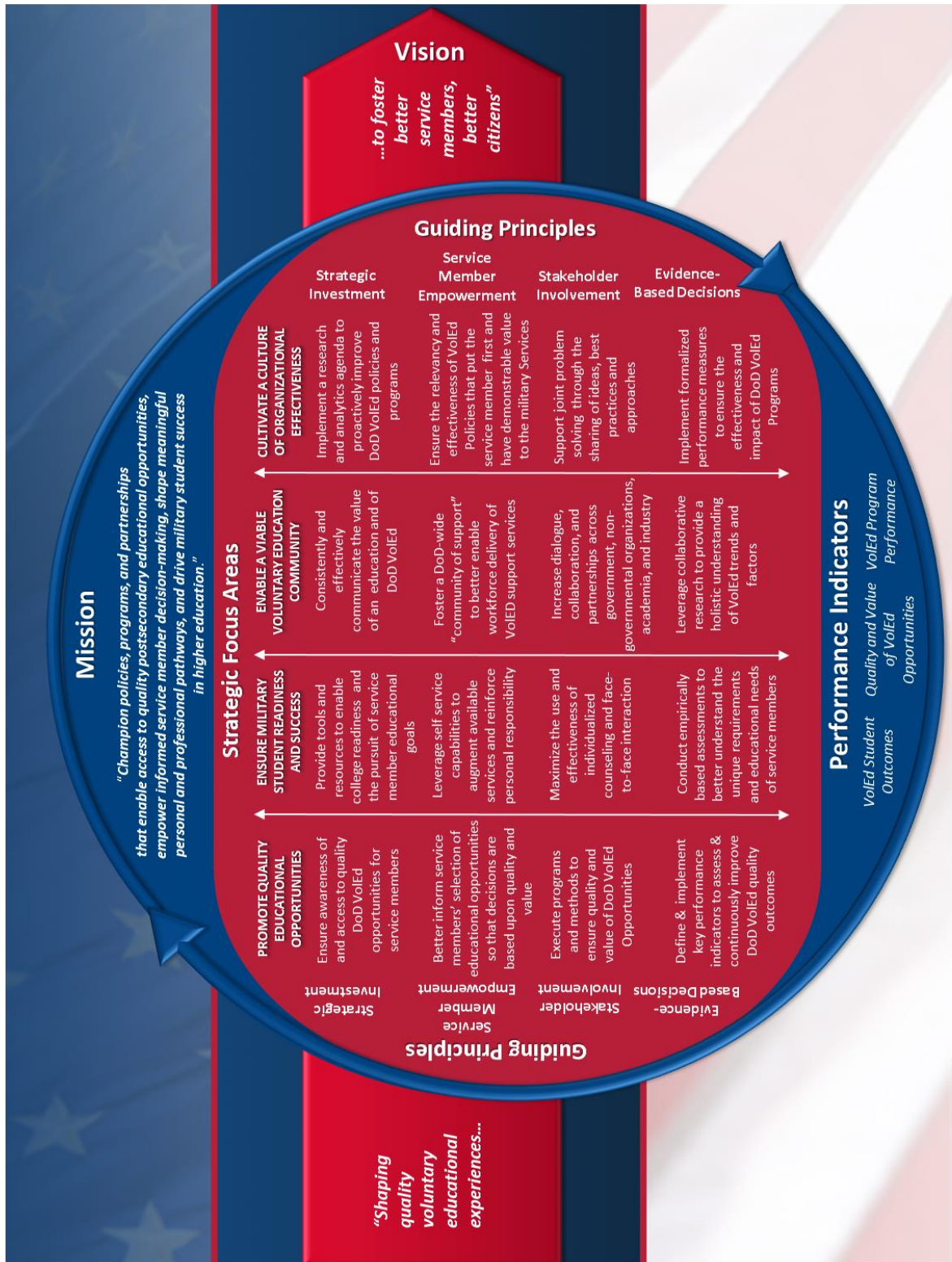
***Economic / Budgetary Factors:*** In an environment of decreased funding and increased budgetary requirements, DoD VolEd programs must offer affordable and valuable educational opportunities.

***Technological Factors:*** Emerging technologies provide DoD VolEd with unique opportunities that can enable and promote data and information sharing with internal and external stakeholders.

***Political Government Factors:*** Strong communication about programs, outcomes, and service member interests between DoD VolEd, government and stakeholders is important to success. This is particularly important with changes in leadership, increased program requirements, and eligibility criteria which create obstacles for involvement among educational institutions, providers, and service members.

# APPENDIX B: STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

The Strategic Framework provides a holistic view of the 2015- 2020 DoD VoEd Strategic Plan. It incorporates the Vision, Mission, Guiding Principles, Strategic Focus Areas, Supporting Goals, and Key Performance Indicators and demonstrates how these key elements interact.



## **APPENDIX C: EXECUTIVE ORDER 13607, “ESTABLISHING PRINCIPLES OF EXCELLENCE”**

EO 13607 was signed by President Obama on April 27, 2012. It promotes compliance with the “Principles of Excellence” for educational institutions that provide opportunities, programs, and services for service members, veterans, and their families. In summary, the Executive Order:

- Ensures that all of America’s service members, veterans, spouses, and other family members have the information they need to make informed educational decisions and are protected from targeting by educational institutions.
- Advocates for the implementation of student outcome measures and the expansion of DoD and veteran student data collection.
- Requires the Departments of Veterans Affairs, Defense, and Education, in consultation with the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) and Department of Justice, to create a centralized complaint system for students receiving DOD and veterans’ educational benefits.
- Establishes guidelines for agencies and institutions that receive Federal funding for education benefits.
- Strengthens oversight, enforcement and accountability activities within education benefit programs.
- Applies to a variety of DoD and veteran education benefits, including the GI Bill, Tuition Assistance Program, and Military Spouse Career Advancement Account Program (MyCAA).
- States that according to the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee, of the ten educational institutions collecting the most Post 9/11 GI Bill benefits between 2009 and 2011, eight were for-profit schools. Six of these schools had undergraduate student withdrawal rates above 50 percent.

## **APPENDIX D: DOD INSTRUCTION 1322.25, “VOLUNTARY EDUCATION PROGRAMS”**

DoD VolEd is authorized within Section 2005 and Section 2007 of title 10, United States Code, and governed by Defense policy set forth in DoD Instruction 1322.25, “Voluntary Education Programs.” A recent change to DoDI 1322.25 established eligibility criteria for tuition assistance and formalized the requirement for educational institutions to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with the DoD in order to provide educational programs and receive tuition assistance from service members. New provisions established under this recent change required the implementation of the DoD Postsecondary Education Complaint System for service members, spouses, and adult family members to register student complaints and the development of new rules to strengthen existing procedures for access to DoD installations by educational institutions. Additionally, all educational institutions providing education programs through the DoD tuition assistance program are required to comply with the following:

- Will provide meaningful information to students about the financial cost and attendance at an institution so military students can make informed decisions on where to attend school.
- Will not use unfair, deceptive, and abusive recruiting practices.
- Will provide academic and student support services to service members and their families.

## **APPENDIX E: COMMUNITY OF STAKEHOLDERS**

The following agencies provided subject matter expertise to the DoD VolEd community prior to the development of this plan, to better understand the educational and career development needs of service members and veterans, the current climate in U.S. post-secondary education, and the trends of the U.S. workforce.

---

<b>AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES</b>	<b>U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE – U.S. NAVY</b>
<b>AMERICAN COUNCIL ON EDUCATION</b>	<b>U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE – OFFICE OF THE UNDERSECRETRETRY OF DEFENSE</b>
<b>CONSUMER FINANCIAL PROTECTION BUREAU</b>	<b>U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION</b>
<b>U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE – U.S. AIR FORCE</b>	<b>U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY U.S. COAST GUARD</b>
<b>U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE – U.S. ARMY</b>	<b>U.S. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS</b>
<b>U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE – U.S. MARINE CORPS</b>	<b>STUDENT VETERANS OF AMERICA</b>

---

## APPENDIX F: FOOTNOTES

---

- <sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Defense (2014). Quadrennial Defense Review.
- <sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. (2007). Veteran Population Projections Model (VetPop 2007), Table 2S. Office of the Actuary.
- <sup>3</sup> Military Compensation and Retirement Commission (2015). *“Report of the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission”*.
- <sup>4</sup> The State of the Union address (2015). Retrieved March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2015 from: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/01/20/remarks-president-state-union-address-january-20-2015>
- <sup>5</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office (March 2014). Transitioning Veterans: Improved Oversight Needed to Enhance Implementation of Transition assistance. Report number: GAO-14-144.
- <sup>6</sup> U.S. Department of Defense (2014). Quadrennial Defense Review.
- <sup>7</sup> Proceedings from Council of College and Military Educators Conference: “Innovative Pathways to Military Student Success” (2015). Anaheim, California.
- <sup>8</sup> Gonzalez, G., Miller, L., Buryk, P., Wenger, J. (2015). RAND Office of External Affairs, *Higher Education Benefits for Post-9/11 Military Service Members and Veterans*, Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.
- <sup>9</sup> Military Compensation and Retirement Commission (2014). Military Compensation and Retirement Survey Results July 1, 2014 to October 10, 2014.
- <sup>10</sup> Buryk, P., Trail, T., Gonzalez, G., Miller, L., and Friedman, E. (2015). *Federal Educational Assistance Programs Available to Service Members: Program Features and Recommendations for Improved Delivery*, Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.
- <sup>11</sup> Military Compensation and Retirement Commission (2014). Military Compensation and Retirement Survey Results July 1, 2014 to October 10, 2014.
- <sup>12</sup> Gonzalez, G., Miller, L., Buryk, P., Wenger, J. (2015). RAND Office of External Affairs, *Higher Education Benefits for Post-9/11 Military Service Members and Veterans*, Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.
- <sup>13</sup> U.S. Department of Education (2012). Advisory Committee on Student Aid.
- <sup>14</sup> U.S. Department of Defense (2013). Demographics: Profile of the Military Community
- <sup>15</sup> Buryk, P., Trail, T., Gonzalez, G., Miller, L., and Friedman, E. (2015). *Federal Educational Assistance Programs Available to Service Members: Program Features and Recommendations for Improved Delivery*, Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.
- <sup>16</sup> U.S. Department of Defense (2012). OUSD Personnel & Readiness Strategic Plan (FY12-16).

---

<sup>17</sup> U.S. Department of Education (2011). U.S. Department of Education Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2011-2014.

<sup>18</sup> Kleykamp, M. (2013). Unemployment, Earnings, and Enrollment among Post 9/11 Veterans. *Social Science Research*, 42(3), 836-851.

<sup>19</sup> National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2014 (2013), Pub. L. No. 113- 66, § 401.

<sup>20</sup> U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (2014). Economic News Release, “*Table 2A: Employment status of persons 18 years and over by veteran status, age, and period of service, 2014 annual averages*”.

<sup>21</sup> Prudential Financial, Inc. (2012). *Veterans’ Employment Challenges: Perceptions and experiences of transitioning from Armed Forces to civilian life*.

<sup>22</sup> Cuthbert, R., Eimers, J., Lim, S., Nadler, A. (2013). Veterans Legal Services Clinic, “Denying Credit: The Failure to Transition Troops to Civilian Employment”.

<sup>23</sup> Bergman, P., Martorell, P. (2013). RAND National Security Research Division, “Understanding the Cost and Quality of Military-Related Education Benefit Programs”.

<sup>24</sup> The State of the Union address (2009). Retrieved October 20<sup>th</sup>, 2014 from [https://www.whitehouse.gov/the\\_press\\_office/Remarks-of-President-Barack-Obama-Address-to-Joint-Session-of-Congress](https://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-of-President-Barack-Obama-Address-to-Joint-Session-of-Congress)

<sup>25</sup> Act Policy Report (2005). Act Policy Report “*Courses Count: Preparing Students for Postsecondary Success*”