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## GI Bill: No Data On Graduation Rates Confuses Program's Benefit, Efficiency

The Huffington Post | By Tyler Kingkade  
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History professor Meredith Richards Marti, left, gives a handout to U.S. Marine veteran John Wangler during their history class at Collin College in Frisco, Texas, Tuesday, Oct. 16, 2012. (AP Photo/LM Otero)

The federal government has spent more than \$20 billion helping 817,000 veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan go to college. Yet, nine months after President Obama [signed an executive order](#) directing the Veterans Administration, the Department of Defense and the Department of Education to track completion rates, no one knows how many vets actually graduate.

Earlier this month, a partnership was announced between the Department of Veterans Affairs, Student Veterans of America and the National Student Clearinghouse. Together they will [research and track student veteran college completion rates](#), Stars & Stripes reports. The news comes as veterans' advocates worry Congress [may cut](#) some [post-9/11 G.I. Bill benefits](#) as they squabble over the federal budget deficit

"Degrees, certificates of completion, certifications, licensing—that to me is how you measure," U.S. Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki [told a crowd at the national conference of Student Veterans of America](#). "Not who goes in the front door, but who completes the

program."

The statement mirrors current trends in higher education that include state-based proposals to tie state funding to completion rates.

The Post 9/11 G.I. Bill is a program that cost the federal government [\\$4.65 billion in 2011 alone](#). By the end of the 15-year program, the [total cost is expected to top \\$90 billion](#). It covers in-state tuition at public universities or \$17,500 per year at private or for-profit schools. Living and materials stipends are also included. Veterans who have served active duty for at least three years since September 2001 are eligible, according to Stars & Stripes.

[Initial estimates predict that nearly nine-of-ten student veterans](#) will drop out.

Student veterans also [face trouble obtaining in-state tuition rates](#) and other confusion with the GI Bill. Recent federal legislation sailed out of Congress that [would create a centralized complaint process](#) to track student issues concerning the GI Bill, USA Today reported, aimed to help ensure veterans complete their degree programs.