

[illegible]

December 2013

A hand-drawn mind map on yellowed paper with "EDUCATION" at the center. Branches include "Kahn Acad.", "STANCE TRAINING", "MILLION STUDENTS", "WHAT'S THE MODEL?", "OUR GREATEST ASSET IS RIGHT HERE", "MILLENNIALS", "REINTEGRATION to SOCIETY", "EMPLOYMENT", "LEAVING BY the 1,000's", "HIRING BY the 100's", "SOCIAL WORKERS", "TEACHERS", "PEOPLE WHO U", "LESS BUREAUCRACY", "VA", "HEALTH", "IMPROVED QUALITY of LIFE", "GI BILL", "WE NEED MAKE CHANGES WE WANT to COMPETE", and "WHAT ARE WE FUTURE".





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# IMAGINING COLLECTIVE IMPACT

Improving Education Opportunities for our Military Families

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Welcome .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Understanding the Need.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Moving to a New Model.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>A Vision for Collective Impact .....</b>	<b>11-12</b>
<b>Case for Change.....</b>	<b>13-15</b>
▪ Plan of Action .....	13-14
▪ Immediate Next Steps .....	15
<b>Appendix A: Participating Organizations .....</b>	<b>16</b>

*No single organization by itself can close the growing need for educational funds to educate our fallen and wounded Service member's children alone; there is a funding gap of over **\$1.7 billion**.<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.nogreatersacrifice.org/freedomsfuture>

# WELCOME

Returning Service members require support as they integrate back into the communities they left to serve our nation. All across the United States, organizations have sprung up as people do their part to welcome these brave men and women back home. Grassroots efforts often make all the difference in people's lives and families by providing essential care, resources, and guidance at a critical time.

These organizations operate in what I like to call a sea of goodwill – a widespread atmosphere of support for and pride in our vets – within which groups seek to match donors with needs. However, such efforts can be uncoordinated, missing opportunities to leverage resources and experience across government, non-profits, communities, and institutions of higher learning, for greater impact.

I recently took part in a unique workshop that convened a variety of actors in the military education space seeking to find ways to address this challenge. It was an important moment in which organizations came together, broke down silo walls and began to imagine what powerful collective impact we can have for our active duty military, our veterans and their families.

This white paper follows directly from that workshop and is the beginning of an important conversation across the public, private, and civic sectors to find ways to work together.

Our nation owes the best it can give to our returning service members, and I am confident that through this effort we can find ways to fulfill our promise to them.

Admiral Michael Mullen

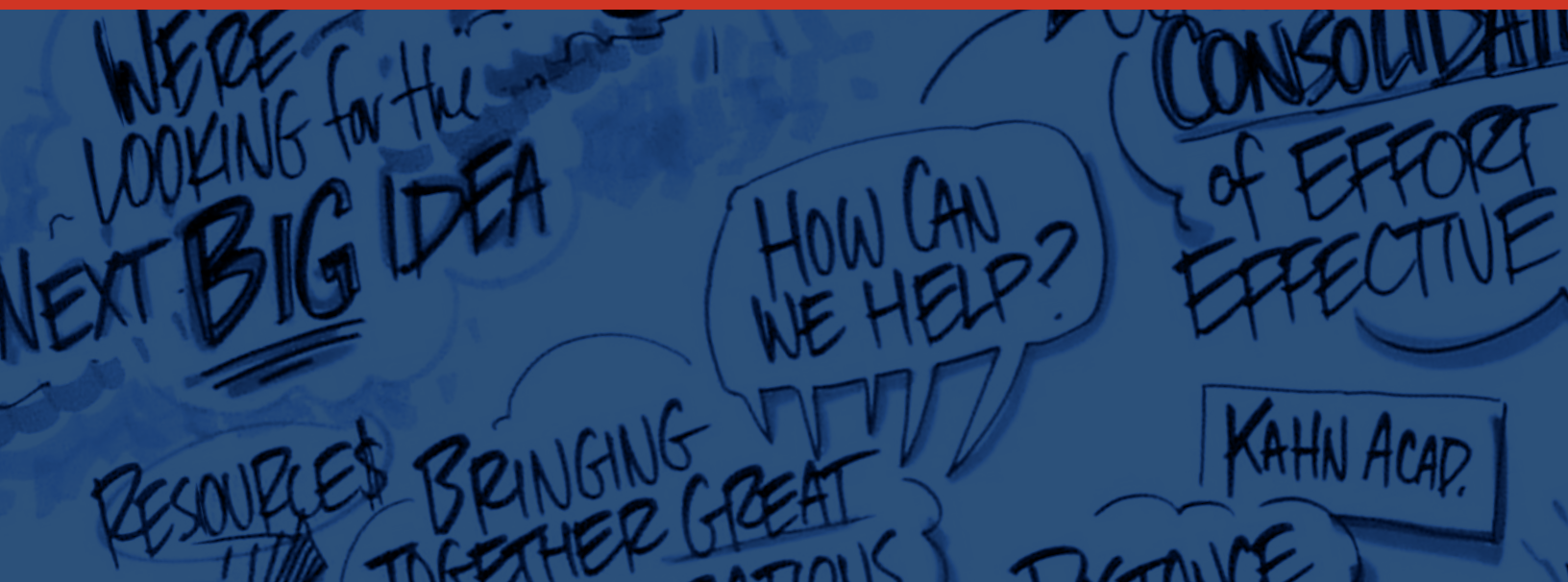
U.S. Navy (Retired)

17<sup>th</sup> Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff



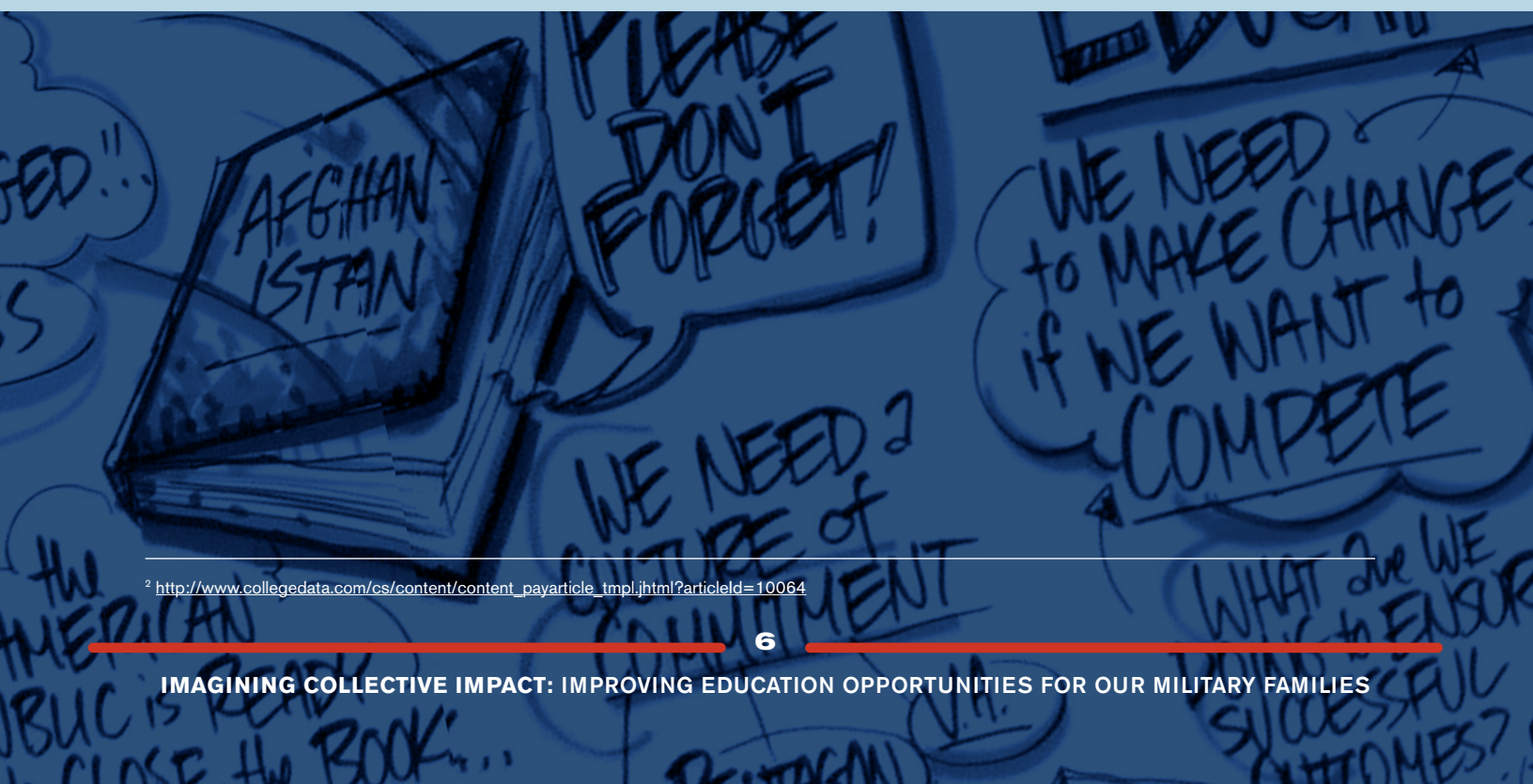
**Photo Credit:** United States Navy  
Admiral Michael G. Mullen, 17<sup>th</sup>  
Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of  
Staff. – United States Department  
of Defense





*In its most recent survey of college pricing, the College Board reports that for the 2012–2013 academic year:*

- A “moderate” college budget for an in-state public college averaged **\$22,261**
- A “moderate” budget at a private college averaged **\$43,289<sup>2</sup>**



<sup>2</sup> [http://www.collegedata.com/cs/content/content\\_payarticle\\_tmpl.html?articleId=10064](http://www.collegedata.com/cs/content/content_payarticle_tmpl.html?articleId=10064)

# INTRODUCTION

This year, Dixon Center for Military and Veterans Community Services at Easter Seals identified the need for a change and developed a plan to convene key players in the military education social and civic sectors. On September 13, 2013, over 25 organizations came together to discuss one critical component of success for our active duty Service members, veterans and their families: Education.

*400,000 organizations now operate to bridge the gaps and improve the outcomes of military Service members transitioning to civilian lives.<sup>3</sup>*

The convening aimed to re-conceptualize how these organizations accomplish their mission and deliver services. Attendees were inspired and challenged by Admiral and Mrs. Mullen to examine the challenges in providing educational opportunities for our military. The meeting was extremely unique since the group aimed to conceptualize a new model of collective impact to improve long-term education services, benefits, and outcomes.

The result of this convening is a community of like-minded organizations who understand and embrace collective impact. The group is now dedicated to mobilizing around the opportunities and challenges ahead, and is committed to creating a forum that enhances collaboration, leverages capability, and aligns efforts to move veteran advocacy forward. But this is just the beginning – work is still needed to produce meaningful impact for our military families.

This whitepaper outlines the vision for how military education organizations will accomplish their mission and deliver services in the future by creating programmatic partnerships that deliver measurable benefits for not only our military families, but also the organizations supporting this effort.

We are much stronger together than apart.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.heraldtribune.com/article/20130807/ARCHIVES/308071013?p=1&tc=pg>

# UNDERSTANDING THE NEED

Today, as record numbers of veterans return home from war, they deserve educational opportunities not only for themselves, but also for their families. However, many challenges stand between our military families and higher education.

The convening attendees agreed that **the rising cost of education is** a significant challenge. Today, a 4-year degree costs on average between \$22,261 – \$43,289 per year,<sup>4</sup> and rising costs are a certainty.<sup>5</sup> Veteran education benefits are often not enough to cover these increasing expenses. Equally challenging, is **how to facilitate educational opportunities for military spouses, who greatly underutilize available educational funds.** According to a recent DOD survey, Veteran spouses only use 3.5 percent of available educational resources.<sup>6</sup>

Another significant challenge convening participants identified is that **many military education support organizations operate independently, resulting in duplicative efforts and lost value for military families.** Upwards of 400,000 organizations devote their time, personnel and resources to veteran needs,<sup>5</sup> often addressing the same issues across multiple professional sectors and confusing military families in the process. These duplicative efforts also contribute to donor apathy and create inefficiencies that result in loss of value for those seeking support.

*For the current academic year, the average published in-state tuition at public, four-year colleges and universities is **\$8,893**. The average tuition prices at private institutions is **\$30,090** (an increase of 3.8 percent between 2012-13 and 2013-14)<sup>5</sup>*

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<sup>4</sup> [http://www.collegedata.com/cs/content/content\\_payarticle\\_tmpl.jhtml?articleId=10064](http://www.collegedata.com/cs/content/content_payarticle_tmpl.jhtml?articleId=10064)

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2013/10/24/the-rise-in-tuition-is-slowing-but-college-still-costs-more>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.armytimes.com/article/20130415/EDU02/304150009/More-troops-families-using-Post-9-11-GI-Bill>



# MOVING TO A NEW MODEL

The attendees of the convening understood that despite legislative benefits such as the Post 9/11 GI-Bill and Survivors and Dependent's Educational Assistance (DEA) program, the gap between many military families and their ability to attain higher education continues to expand. The group agreed that the concept of “**Collective Impact**” should be explored to address these challenges. As the Stanford Social Innovation Review article “**Collective Impact**” by John Kania and Mark Kramer describes, “large-scale social change requires broad cross-sector coordination, yet the social sector remains focused on the isolated intervention of individual organizations.”<sup>7</sup> In other words, collective impact happens when independent organizations collaborate to address a specific problem by consolidating their efforts and resources.

Collective impact breaks down barriers by focusing on **5 conditions for success: common agenda, shared measurement, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication, and a backbone support organization**. Without these elements, collective impact cannot be actualized, and organizations will continue to work separately to produce isolated impact.

*Tuition and fees continued to increase...and federal grant aid declined by **10 percent**, at a time when many families were still recovering from financial strains brought on by the recession.<sup>8</sup>*

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.oregon.gov/gov/docs/OEIB/keynoteChange.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2013/10/24/the-rise-in-tuition-is-slowng-but-college-still-costs-more>

# Five CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS



## Common Agenda

All participants have a shared vision for change including a common understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving it through agreed upon actions.



## Shared Measurement

Collecting data and measuring results consistently from all participants ensures efforts remain aligned and participants hold each other accountable



## Mutually Reinforcing Activities

Participant activities must be differentiated while still being coordinated through a mutually-reinforcing plan of action



## Continuous Communication

Consistent and open communication is needed between the many players to build trust, assure mutual objectives, and drive motivation



## Backbone Support

Creating and managing collective impact requires separate organization(s) with staff and a specific set of skills to serve as the backbone for the entire initiative and coordinate participating organizations and agencies

Source: [www.ssireview.org/articles/entry/collective\\_impact](http://www.ssireview.org/articles/entry/collective_impact)

# A VISION FOR COLLECTIVE IMPACT

By the end of the convening, attendees were unanimous in their support of collective impact to achieve the educational opportunities sought by our military and their families. The group succeeded in imagining collective actions that could address these foremost challenges, including:

1. **DEVELOP A CENTRALIZED REPOSITORY OF VETERAN AND FAMILY DATA:** The sheer size and diversity of the military community makes measuring and understanding impact nearly impossible for any one organization. If the community leverages a common data repository of military family needs and educational opportunities, it will facilitate a better understanding of how to best employ limited resources and how the application of those resources impacts the community.
2. **DEVELOP A ONE-STOP SHOP FOR ACTIVE DUTY SERVICE MEMBERS, VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES:** Many resources are dedicated to educating military and their families, but it isn't always easy for these individuals to clearly assess their options. A centralized information source will enable learning about available funds and unique educational paths. This central source will also provide a common application for scholarships and grants, improving the process to not only deal with the cost of education, but the administrative challenges, as well.
3. **REDUCE CONFUSION BY SPEAKING WITH ONE VOICE:** Mission overlap increases competition, which overwhelms veterans, families, and donors with information, and creates a problem of trust. A legitimized collective group with a lead change agent can clarify the message for veterans and their families, allowing them to more accurately assess their options. With a lead agent, donors will also have peace of mind contributing to an organization that has the power to make a real impact.
4. **DRIVE CONSISTENCY WITHIN THE POLICY SECTOR:** Many states have different policies when it comes to veterans and their educational benefits, which adds to the inconsistent, confusing message. A consistent and transparent policy will increase opportunities while empowering national organizations to more effectively collaborate across states for vital military family support.



These solutions require input from each sector, including social-civic, policy, and education champions. True collective impact is only possible through collaboration.

If the ideas above are implemented, there will be tremendous benefits for our military families. The organizations that engage also stand to benefit in important ways, including:

- Realizing shared savings opportunities, such as economies of scale in marketing, financial and operations support with other organizations within the collective
- Gaining access and trust from a wider donor base
- Increasing access and focus to target populations
- Improving relevance as an organization
- Increasing the organization's ability to thrive and survive amidst uncertainty

As donor apathy and uncertainty increase, it is critical for organizations to adapt to these realities. Collective impact provides an opportunity to evolve and leverage the strengths of other organizations for the benefit of the greater good.

	Solutions				Sectors Needed		
Challenges	Form a Central Repository	Create a One Stop Shop	Speak with Once Voice	Policy Consistency	Social-Civic	Policy	Education
Increasing Costs of Education	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Underutilization of Education Benefits		X	X	X	X	X	
Lost Value to Vets from Duplicative Efforts	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Lack of Policy Cohesion			X	X		X	

# CASE FOR CHANGE

Admiral Mullen stated, “The challenge...is how do you connect the ***Sea of Goodwill*** with the need?” This convening was a step in that direction by consolidating and partnering those in the ***Sea of Goodwill*** and better aligning their intended ends to the need.

The fragmentation of large and small efforts results in waste and confusion for our military and their families as competition and silos reduce the impact of these numerous organizations. Aligning the efforts of support organizations will enable collective impact and leverage strength through shared resources.



## PLAN OF ACTION

There are three phases to create successful collective impact: ***Initiate Action, Organize for Impact, and Sustain Action & Impact.*** Following the convening, the attendees committed to a number of next steps, including:

- Briefing their organization's board for input and feedback
- Engaging in a dialogue with another organization about collective impact
- Establishing a partnership that will aid in closing the gaps identified at the convening

This effort is currently in Phase 1, but with the identified next steps it will build momentum and move to Phase 2. The goal of these efforts is to identify any community champions that have not yet engaged with this effort and to bring the group together to connect challenges, solutions, and those that can make change happen. The attendees of the convening identified the characteristics of the organizations that should be included in future conversations, including:

- Educational Institutions
- Military, Veteran, and Family Representation/Advocates
- Commercial Partners
- Government Representatives (Federal & State)

It is imperative that diverse organizations join this effort, as the solutions outlined above can only be achieved through different skill sets working together to identify and connect projects and solutions.

Components for Success	Phase 1 Initiate Action	Phase 2 Organize for Impact	Phase 3 Sustain Action & Impact
GOVERNANCE & INFRASTRUCTURE	Identify champions across the community	Create infrastructure (backbone & processes)	Facilitate & refine plan
STRATEGIC PLANNING	Map the landscape and use data make case and define the scope	Create common agenda (goals & strategy)	Support plan implementation
COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT	Facilitate outreach to the community	Engage community & build public will	Engagement & Advocacy
EVALUATION & IMPROVEMENT	Assess baseline data to identify issues & gaps	Establish shared metrics	Collect, track & report progress

Source: <http://www.oregon.gov/gov/docs/OEIB/keynoteChange.pdf>



## IMMEDIATE NEXT STEPS

In the near term, identifying community champions and engaging in collaborative action will establish the foundation necessary for collective impact. Dixon Center at Easter Seals will continue supporting this effort, driving the next steps outlined above to fruition.

For organizations that embrace this concept, this effort will allow them to evolve from just surviving to instead making the most impact on mission need. This effort is the beginning of a fundamental change in how we as a collective group accomplish our goals.

	① 1st Qtr 2014	② 2nd Qtr 2014	③ 3rd & 4th Qtrs 2014
	Working group webinar to discuss white paper, working group goals, identify attendees and agenda for the next summit.	Hold a summit to identify the shared metrics and reinforcing activities for this effort. Focus on identifying and connecting – as we identify a broader collective impact together	Create programmatic change through a national network of educational assistance providers. Create parallel efforts and work together to identify and connect on viable solutions.
<b>What You Can Do Now?</b>	Identify additional invitees to the working group and provide summit agenda recommendations	Volunteer to host, plan, or support the summit. Attend the summit and bring constructive ideas and approaches	Get involved, bring skills and resources to the team, and help define success.

# APPENDIX A: PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

This convening could not have been successful without the support and input from great Americans across a large number of organizations. We want to thank the following organizations to participate in this forum as we seek to enhance educational opportunities and benefits to veterans and their families:

American Council on Education	Military Officers Association of America
American Legion	National Military Family Association
The Center for a New American Security	Navy Seal Foundation
Children of Fallen Patriots Foundation	No Greater Sacrifice
Craigslist/CraigConnects	POS REP
Dixon Center at Easter Seals	Pat Tillman Foundation
EOD Memorial Foundation	Prudential
Easter Seals	P3 Communication
Fisher House Foundation	Sapient
Folds of Honor	Seabee Memorial Scholarship Association
Freedom Alliance	Sentinels of Freedom
Green Beret Foundation	Soldiers of Life
Hope for the Warriors	Student Veterans of America
Joining Forces	Team Rubicon
Jones Day Center	Thanks USA
Marine Corps Scholarship Foundation	Veterans of Foreign Wars
Military Child Education Coalition	Warrior Gateway



*We are stronger together than apart.*