

SERVICE TO SCHOOL



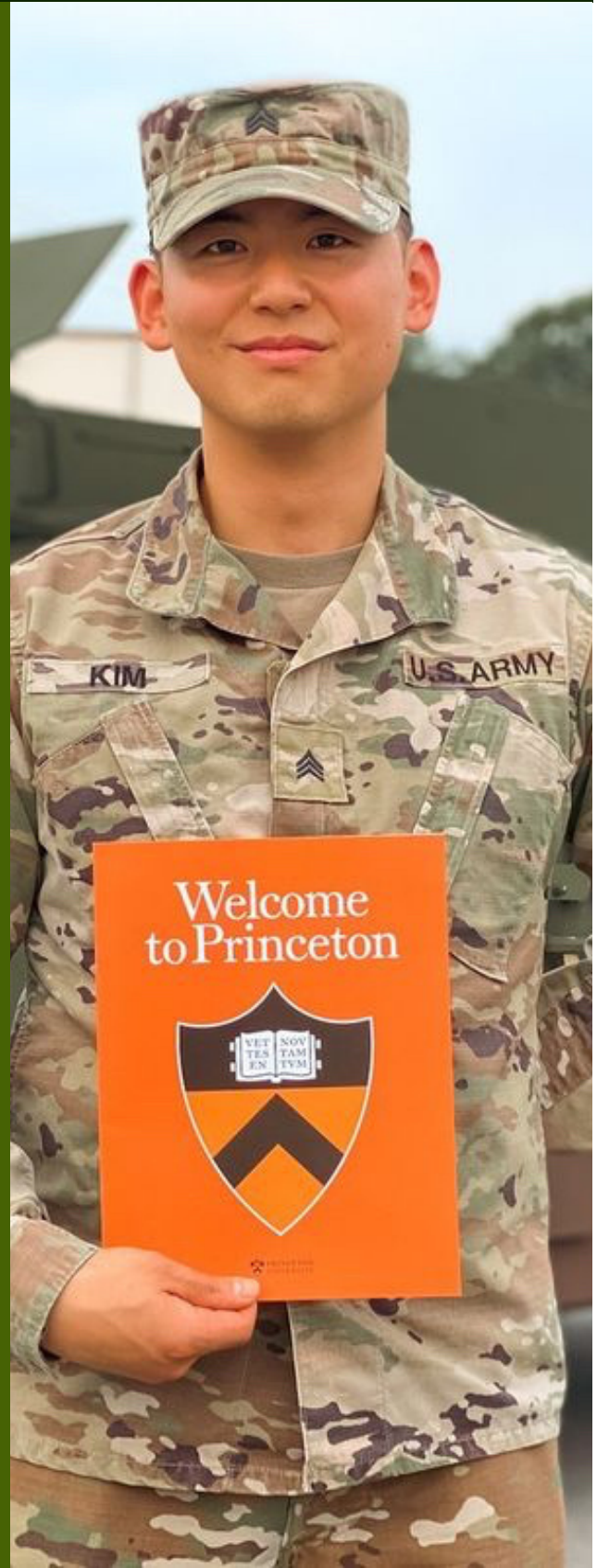
Impact Report

2017-2022

VetLink Program

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1. Executive Summary

This report and the data shared throughout highlight the growth and impact of the Service to School (S2S) VetLink program. In partnership with S2S, VetREC (Veteran Research and Education Curation LLC) collected, analyzed, then compiled the data in this report.

The report first overviews the background and history of S2S and the VetLink program and tells their story so far. It paints a picture of the demographic most served in this program, overviews the substantial growth VetLink has seen in numbers regarding Veteran applications, admissions, and enrollments at partner schools, and highlights the increase of schools partnering with VetLink. The report also highlights key supportive services.

A notable finding in the data collected for this report was the prevalence and impact of VetLink's peer-to-peer service and the positive psychological impact it has on VetLink applicants. The report is concluded with advice VetLink applicants want to share with future Veteran students, an assessment from the researcher and author of this report, VetREC, and a nod towards the future of the VetLink program.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

VetLink is impacting Veterans and the schools they apply to:

6x increase

in the amount of annual VetLink applicants applying to a partner school since 2017

3.4x higher

admission rate of VetLink applicants compared to traditional applicants at partner schools

100%

of VetLink applicants receive S2S supportive admissions services and 100% recommend these services



"I previously applied to 10 schools for fall of 2020 on my own and was denied from all 10 schools. It was a frustrating experience. This is when I finally decided to reach out to S2S. Right from the beginning I felt welcomed. I felt a sense of connection. From my experience, most Veterans are always willing to go above and beyond to help a fellow battle buddy, and S2S was no different. They had a passion for helping Veterans get into their dream schools, and that's exactly what they did for me."

-Enmanuel, VetLink applicant



"Through S2S, I received a great deal of help through the VetLink addendum and a great deal of guidance on how to write a personal statement or application essay. Due to my limited knowledge of and experience with writing personal statements, S2S played a crucial role in my understanding of how to write these essays."

-Helen, VetLink applicant



"Prior to signing up with S2S, I had doubts that my military experience and educational background would land me into any college, let alone any of the top universities. My [S2S] ambassador helped instill the confidence I needed to apply to elite colleges. He made himself available to revise my personal essays and has been assisting me as I transition from active duty to civilian life."

-Matthew, VetLink applicant

2. Background

Less than

8%

of active-duty enlisted Service Members have a bachelor's degree or higher. And of those,

60%

are first-generation students.

With such low numbers of enlisted Service Members having degrees and systemic barriers impeding their pursuits, many are highly unlikely to believe they are capable of pursuing a path of higher education. Given the barriers they face, they struggle to engage with college-going contemporaries. This can lead to:

- **Misperceptions** about academic abilities and college preparedness.
- **Uncertainty** about requirements and opportunities of being admitted to a selective/highly selective institution.
- **Challenges** in determining the best fit.
- **Lack of support** from social and family circles in the college choice process.
- **Being less likely to plan** for college early.
- **Lack of access** to admissions and application information.
- **Increased risk** of being discouraged to apply to selective colleges due to cultural misperceptions.
- **Increased risk** of being taken advantage of by predatory institutions.
- **Increased risk** of under-matching.

Service to School (S2S) was founded in 2011 as a grassroots effort by three Veterans and an admissions expert who wanted to change the game for Veterans. These founders believed all Veterans are capable of and should have the opportunity of and access to a great, top-tier education.

With the help of numerous volunteers, S2S grew into a national non-profit that connects U.S. Military Veterans and Service Members with mentors and support to ensure Veterans are being admitted to and attending our nation's best colleges and universities.

Since then, S2S has stayed laser-focused on their mission of supporting Veterans into higher-ed and have worked with thousands of Veterans during different points of the college and graduate school application process. In 2017, S2S founded the VetLink program, which is a network of partnerships with selective U.S. colleges and universities committed to admitting and enrolling student Veterans on their campuses.

With over 25 partner schools in the VetLink network, Veteran applicants are guided through admissions applications and processes in ways that lead to higher chances of admittance into their top schools of choice. With more Veterans on their campuses, schools are enriched and benefit from the diverse experience and leadership Veterans cultivate through service and bring with them into their higher education journeys.

3. The Story So Far

THE MISSION

Service to School (S2S) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit that provides free college and graduate school application counseling to U.S. Military Veterans and Service Members. S2S helps Veterans and Service Members apply for admission to the best college or graduate schools possible.

S2S offers support with school selection, essay writing, academic and career advising, peer-to-peer mentorship, and admissions application preparation through three main programs:

1. **Undergraduate Programs:** admissions support for Veterans & Service Members interested in pursuing a 4-year degree.
2. **Graduate Programs:** admissions support for Veterans & Service Members interested in pursuing an MBA, JD Law, or other graduate degree.
3. **VetLink:** a network of partnerships with selective colleges and universities committed to expanding access and opportunity for student Veterans.

ABOUT VETLINK

VetLink was developed to ensure that Veterans have the opportunity to apply, gain admission, and attend colleges and universities that will put them on a path toward lifelong success.

VetLink partner schools are widely known for academic excellence, aspiring students, leading-edge research, and high graduation rates.

VetLink directly connects applicants with admissions teams partners at their universities of choice. This helps applicants better prepare for admission and allows each school to receive supplemental information on the prospective Veteran student, which highly increases the student's chance of being accepted.

"I didn't want to fizzle out after the military. I wanted to evolve and take up another great endeavor for the purpose of bettering my family and self. I didn't just want to go to any school. I wanted to go to a school that would challenge me and give me the greatest opportunity."
-Jonathan, VetLink applicant

4. Who VetLink Serves

52.81%

of VetLink applicants
are first-generation
college students.

12%

were E-1 to E-3 rank.

75%

were E-4 to E-5.

12%

were E-6
or above.

14%

are women.

84%

are men.

40%

have filed a
service-
connected
disability
claim.

OUTREACH

S2S is committed to ensuring Veterans and Service Members have access to the information and data they need to make the most informed choices when applying for and selecting schools.

Approximately 47,000 stakeholders have viewed the S2S undergraduate handbook since 2011.

VetLink hosted 10 college fairs between 2021-2023, which attracted more than 1,500 applicants and provided opportunities for one-on-one conversations with admissions officers and peer student Veterans.

5. The Numbers

Applications

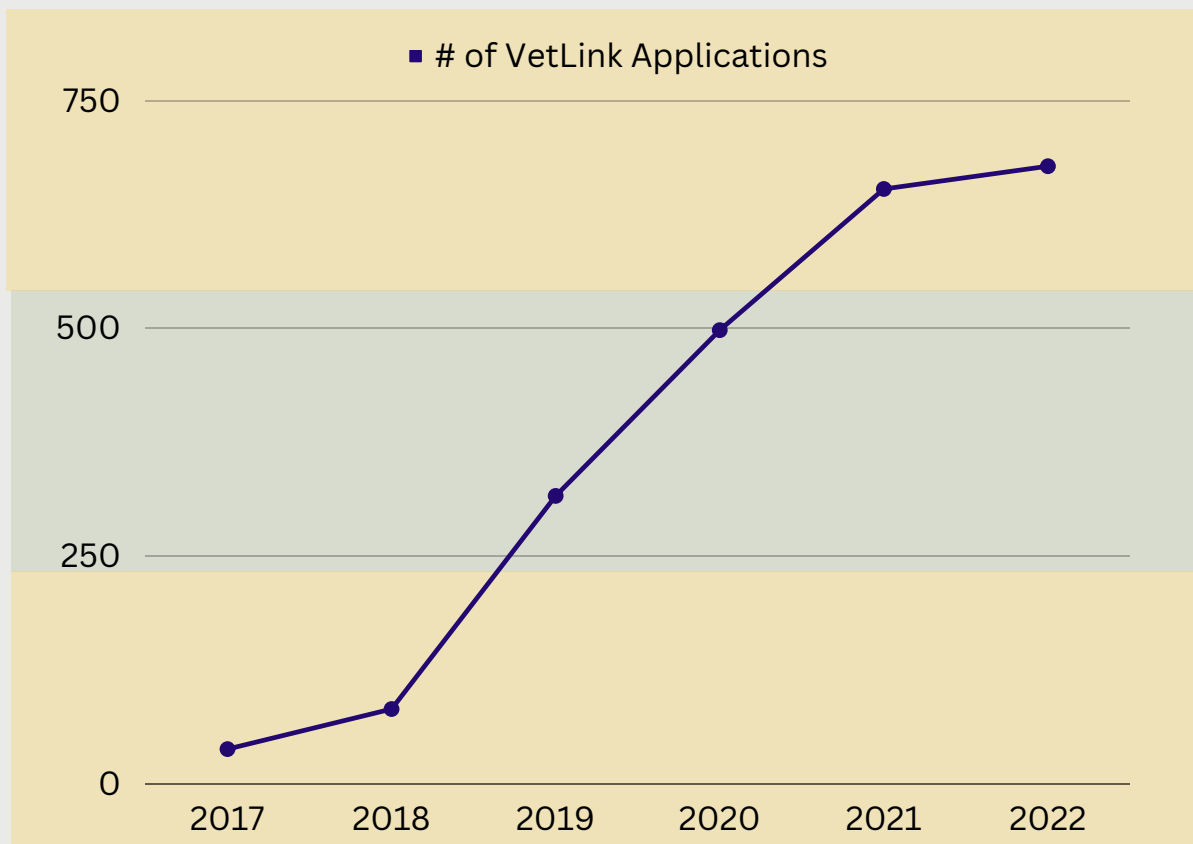
17.8x

increase in the total number of applications submitted to VetLink partner institutions by degree-seeking undergraduate U.S. Military Veterans since 2017.

Further, VetLink has seen an approximate **six-fold increase** in the number of Veterans and Service Members applying to selective schools through this program since 2017.

"The biggest benefit using S2S is the networking opportunities within the VetLink partnership and within the student Veteran community. Especially during unprecedented times, one of my concerns during the application process was, 'How do I feel a sense of community at these schools?' During my application process, I was able to schedule phone calls, webinars, or even exchange texts/emails with the Deans of Admissions, current student Veterans, or Veteran alumni from many of the schools I applied for."

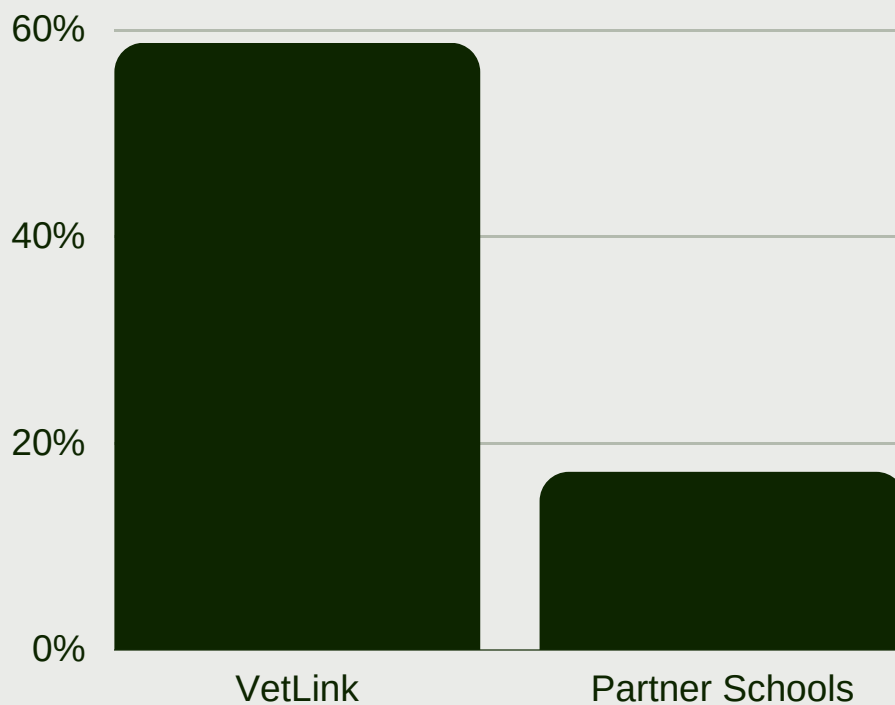
-Luke, VetLink applicant



Admissions

VETLINK APPLICANT VS. OVERALL SCHOOL ADMISSION RATES

The following graph shows a comparison between the average admission rate across 2017- 2022 for VetLink applicants versus all applicants at partner schools.



58.7%

Average admission rate for VetLink applicants

Veterans and Service Members who apply to selective schools through the S2S VetLink program have much stronger odds of getting admitted, with an average admission rate of 58.7%, compared to an overall average admission rate across VetLink partner schools of just 17.16%.

"Service to School allowed me to connect with someone who had a similar military background, and had achieved admission to another Ivy League school. I was given a first-hand perspective on what I was aiming to achieve.

My ambassador provided valuable insights into school selection, constructing an application, and essay writing (and re-writing). S2S was an incredible asset and played a significant role into my admission to Harvard."

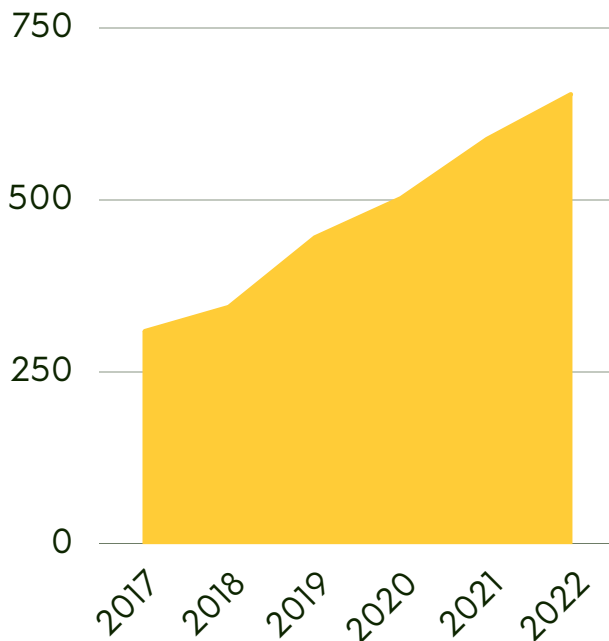
-Thomas, VetLink applicant

Enrollment

VetLink is putting more Veterans on the campuses of top colleges and universities across the U.S. Steadily, Veteran enrollment at VetLink partner institutions is increasing year by year.

MORE VETERANS ARE ATTENDING PARTNER SCHOOLS

This graph shows an increase in total number of Veteran enrollment across VetLink partner schools by year.



111%

increase in
Veteran
enrollment
across
VetLink
partner
schools
between
2017-2022.

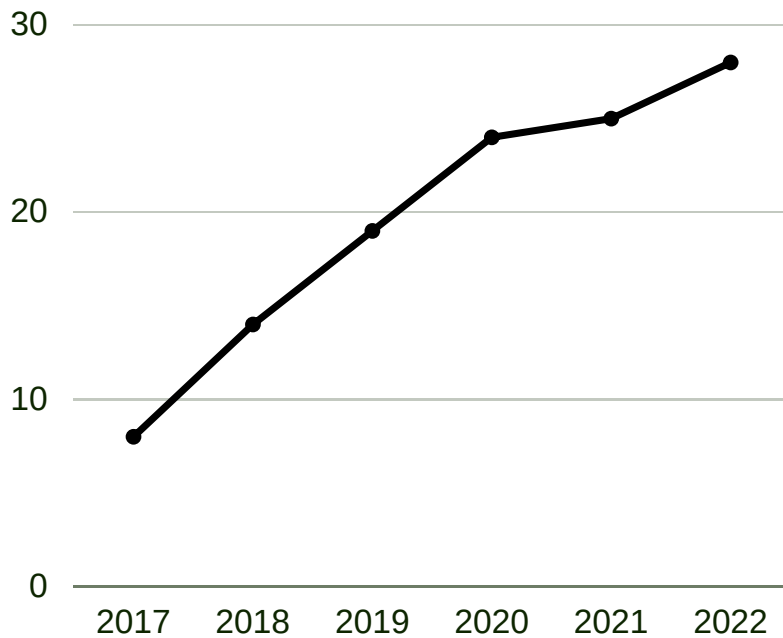
"Our VetLink partnership has been instrumental in our commitment to increase the number of U.S. Military Veterans and Service Members at Williams College. S2S connects us directly with prospective students so that we can build individual relationships and share about how Williams can support their goals and passions. We are proud to be part of the VetLink community in service of Veterans' higher education journeys."

-Alex DiAddezio, Senior Assistant Director of Admission at Williams College

Partnerships

VETLINK PARTNERSHIPS ARE GROWING

This graph illustrates the year-by-year growth of university and college partnerships within the VetLink program.



250%

increase in the number of partner institutions joining VetLink since 2017.

6. Supportive Services

When asked what the biggest benefit of using VetLink through the application process was,

71%

of applicants described feeling

"understood, supported, motivated, more confident, and like they belong at the school of their dreams."



100%

of VetLink applicants receive one-on-one support from a S2S advisor

94%

of VetLink applicants are paired with a peer mentor

92%

of VetLink applicants receive support writing their personal essays & statements

75%

of VetLink applicants submit an addendum to their application

90%

of VetLink applicants seek support selecting the right school

VetLink applicants shared what they think are the biggest benefits to using S2S throughout the application process:

Feeling understood, supported, confident, and motivated. Applicants shared extensively about how the supportive services provided by S2S's VetLink program helped them feel prepared, ready, and able to achieve their higher education dreams.

Accessing an ambassador, mentor, and/or advisor. This helped applicants bridge their military experiences with college admissions expectations, especially through writing essays and personal statements. It also helped them explore their academic interests and career paths and clarify their choices.

Gaining opportunities to network and connect with schools. Getting clear and quick answers to their questions as non-traditional students was essential for applicants. And being able to connect with existing student Veterans at the schools of their choice helped elicit feelings of community and belonging.

"It would have been difficult to accept new ideas about your possibilities without external peer-to-peer mentorship while isolated in an environment that keeps asking for more of your attention. I cannot possibly recommend anything more certainly than seeking out organizations like S2S since most Service Members come from humble beginnings and grow into selfless service without taking time to think about themselves. If you are unsure what is next after military service, it's never too early to invite S2S to the conversation. There is more to this life than surviving today, and these folks can help you imagine a future where you look forward to tomorrow."

-Jay, VetLink applicant

7. Peer-to-Peer



100%

of VetLink applicants would recommend peer-to-peer mentorship to other Veteran students.

CONNECTIONS

VetLink applicants valued being connected with someone who was invested in their success, believed in them, and understood their military experiences and background.

"Peer-to-Peer mentorship was instrumental for me. My ambassador served as a college counselor, peer editor, mentor, and sounding board in the months leading up to my application. Having someone invested in my success kept me honest and made the application process far less isolating than it might have been otherwise."

-Alexander, VetLink applicant

CONFIDENCE

Receiving mentorship with someone who had successfully walked the same path they are pursuing inspired VetLink applicants and increased their confidence.

"I found peer-to-peer mentorship beneficial in that it inspired me to find my voice and emphasized my story was worth telling and that I have the voice to share it effectively."

-Kyle, VetLink applicant

CERTAINTY

Being paired with a peer mentor who was readily available to answer questions and provide feedback helped reduce uncertainty for VetLink applicants about the college application and higher education process.

"It's reassuring and refreshing to know folks from very similar walks of life have achieved great things and getting that encouragement has helped propel me on my journey."

-Jeff, VetLink applicant

8. Advice for Future Applicants



ADVICE VETLINK APPLICANTS HAVE FOR STUDENT VETERANS OF THE FUTURE:

Believe in yourself.
Do not self-eliminate.

Start planning early.

Ask for and accept help.

Follow your passions and interests.

"There's nothing any admitted student has accomplished that you cannot achieve. Take a chance on yourself, and don't let a statistic discourage you from relentlessly chasing your goals. 'Believe you can, and you're halfway there.'"

-Ramon, VetLink applicant

9. Assessment

A data-driven review from VetREC, the researcher and author of this report.

- > **VetLink is empowering Veterans.** In the qualitative data from VetLink, applicants spoke loud and clear that they are feeling empowered through the services they are receiving in VetLink. They are feeling more understood, confident, motivated, and like they belong to community and something greater than themselves once again. In this way, VetLink is doing more than transforming education for Veterans; they are helping Veterans transition out of service.
- > **VetLink is driving Veteran applicants to partner schools.** The numbers show that since 2017, there has been a six-fold increase in the amount of Veterans applying for admissions to partner schools through VetLink. The numbers speak for themselves; Veterans are using this program because it works and they are getting value from it.
- > **VetLink is bringing partner schools quality applicants.** The average admissions for VetLink applicants across the six years this program has been active is 58.7%, compared to a cumulative overall admission rate of just 17.16% for traditional applicants at partner schools. It is clear VetLink is bringing high-quality applicants to partner schools, as they are 3.4x more likely to get admitted than traditional applicants.
- > **VetLink is enhancing the quality of the applicants VetLink schools receive.** Not only is VetLink bringing partner schools quality applicants; but VetLink is responsible for helping shape and prepare applicants. 100% of VetLink applicants received admissions preparation services from S2S and 100% of them recommend these services.

"The motto of VetREC is 'research with, not on Veterans.' My goal is to work with organizations to center and privilege the Veteran voice in research, services, and program development. As I collected and analyzed the data from S2S VetLink applicants, the Veteran voice came through loud, clear, and proud. Veterans' lives are being changed by this program. Through VetLink, S2S is transforming education with, not on, Veterans. This is an organization to keep an eye on; they are leading the way with Veterans in higher education."

-Dr. Jeni Hunnicutt, VetREC Owner & Director

10. Fueling the Future

Veterans who leverage S2S's programs are eight times more likely to attend a college with a high graduation rate compared to their Veteran peers. By placing Veterans at high graduation rate colleges, meaning at least 70% of its students graduate on time, S2S is providing an enhanced opportunity to earn a degree, break the cycle of low graduation rates, and open doors to a fulfilling career.

"Veterans offer so much wisdom and experience to any student body. S2S will help you take those experiences and form them into a competitive application. And beyond school admissions, S2S offers great mentorship towards a successful transition to civilian life."

-Timothy, VetLink applicant



S2S thanks you for your continued support of our programs.

Service to School

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