

TRANSFORMING SOCIETY:

THE **GI BILL**
EXPERIENCE
at NC State

October 14 - December 22, 2004
NCSU Libraries

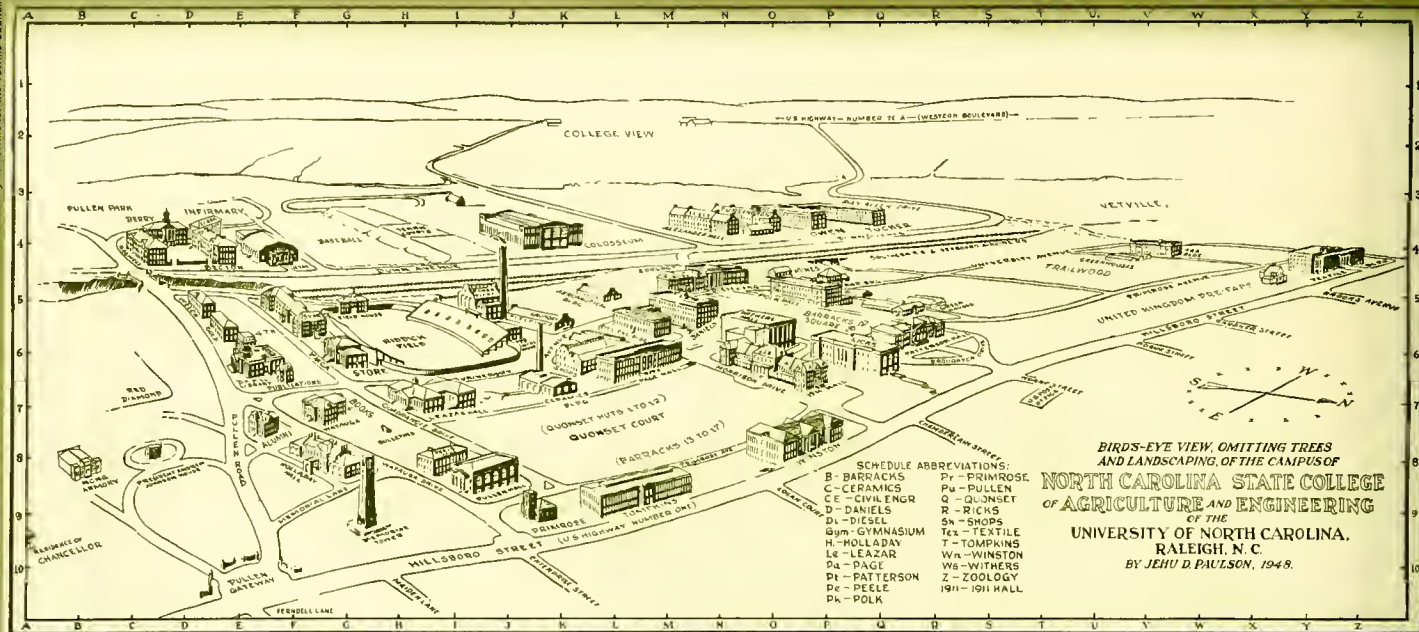


Transforming Society: The GI Bill Experience at NC State



*“I’m afraid that if it had not been for the GI Bill,
I would probably never have been able to get a college degree. . . .”*

– NC State Professor Emeritus Donald Moreland,
B.S. 1949, M.S. 1950, Ph.D. 1953



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COURTESY OF
STUDENT SUPPLY STORES

NC State campus in 1948, showing locations of Quonset Court, Trailwood, and Vaville.

INTRODUCTION

THE YEAR 2004 marks the sixtieth anniversary of one of the best-loved and most successful public policies ever adopted in the United States. The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 (GI Bill of Rights) offered nearly 16 million World War II veterans benefits that included mortgages, small-business loans, unemployment insurance, health care, job training, and free education. A great success, it was later extended to Korea- and Vietnam-era veterans, and became permanent as the Montgomery GI Bill in 1987. Millions have benefited from this legislation.

What began as a temporary measure to ensure an orderly transition to postwar life has had a lasting impact on many sectors of society. The best-known benefit is the opportunity the legislation offered for higher education. As stated by the political scientist Dr. Milton Greenberg, himself a World War II veteran and GI Bill beneficiary, "It is the college and university educational provisions that endure as the symbol and romance of the GI Bill."

The GI Bill has shaped both North Carolina State University and the lives of thousands of veterans who have attended it. In the late 1940s, nearly 80 percent of students were veterans, higher than the approximately 50 percent seen nationwide. Enrollment doubled in comparison to pre-World War II levels and continued growing. Through the 1950s and into the early 1960s, an average of around 2,000 veterans enrolled at NC State each year. During this period, the university constructed many buildings, expanded its programs, and rose rapidly in national prominence.

Drawing mostly on its own rich collections, the NCSU Libraries' Special Collections Research Center presents this exhibit to honor the veterans who have attended the university and to celebrate the legislation that helped make it possible for them to pursue their dreams.

— Dr. Robert Serow

Professor of Educational Research and Leadership
NCSU College of Education

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President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signs the Servicemen's Readjustment Act into law, June 22, 1944. The American Legion initially drafted the legislation and dubbed their proposal "a bill of rights for GI Joe and GI Jane." The powerful Hearst newspaper chain shortened its nickname to "the GI Bill (of Rights)."

HIGHER EDUCATION

AFTER WORLD WAR II ended in 1945, more than 2.2 million veterans accepted the government's offer of a free college or graduate education, accounting at one point for half of all enrollments nationwide, and 70 percent of all male enrollments. Why did so many decide to enroll in higher education? Many used the federal assistance to complete schooling that had been interrupted by military service, but the GI Bill also extended the opportunity for advanced education to men and women who previously had not planned to attend. Approximately five out of every six student-veterans were among the first members of their families to go to college.

By enrolling in an approved, full-time program, each veteran received a cost-of-living allowance of \$60 per month, later raised to \$90, with additional payments for families. In addition, the 1944 GI Bill paid such expenses as tuition, fees, books, and supplies, up to \$500 annually. Costs at even the most expensive colleges and universities seldom exceeded \$300 a year, so veterans from all backgrounds had unprecedented freedom to choose institutions best suited to their interests and ambitions.

The presidents of Harvard and the University of Chicago feared that admitting large numbers of veterans would lower academic standards. At schools across the nation, ex-GIs proved the skeptics wrong, earning top grades and dominating honor rolls. They approached their studies with a strong sense of purpose gained from war experiences and family responsibilities.

Estimates are that some 450,000 engineers, 240,000 accountants, 238,000 teachers, and 91,000 scientists advanced their education under the GI Bill, as did thousands of lawyers, doctors, dentists, journalists, members of the clergy, corporate executives, skilled crafts workers, and technical specialists. Because these professionals had higher earning capacities, they paid higher income taxes. Economists claim that for every dollar spent on GI Bill educational benefits, the nation received as much as eight dollars in taxes—an impressive investment yield.

The GI Bill provided benefits to all Americans who had served for at least ninety days between 1940 and 1947, whether as enlisted personnel or officers, decorated combat veterans or stateside supply clerks. The equitable spirit of the law contributed to its popularity.



Although the GI Bill is often associated with higher education, more than twice as many veterans used the benefits to complete high school or to receive vocational, farm, or on-the-job training. Shown here are two students in a welding shop at the Morehead City Technical Institute, May 1949. NC State's pioneer program in engineering extension offered a one-year, shop-oriented course.



Courtesy of Theodore J. Meyer

After serving in the Army Air Corps, Ted Meyer obtained a B.S. in engineering from NC State in 1948.

THE 1944 GI BILL AT NC STATE

IT WAS NOT SURPRISING that more than 300 veterans enrolled at NC State in fall 1945. As the *State College News* noted, "Quite a few of these veterans have been here before and they have returned to complete their requirements for graduation." Campus administrators expected another 500 for the winter 1946 term; instead, nearly twice as many registered.

Before World War II, the student body numbered approximately 2,500. By the fall of 1947, it had more than doubled to 5,328 students and included no fewer than 4,030 veterans. Veterans accounted for an estimated 76 percent of the student body, far higher than the national average of 50 percent. The majority of the former GIs wanted to obtain practical, career-centered degrees, and NC State offered strong programs in agriculture, the sciences, engineering, textiles, and teacher education.

Like most other colleges, NC State was unprepared for the dramatic increase in enrollment. To accommodate the surge in demand for classroom space and housing, college officials improvised creative short-term solutions. The administration rushed to acquire a dozen surplus Quonset huts and several two-story wooden army barracks. By the winter term of 1946–1947, makeshift classrooms filled the Court of North Carolina. Behind Patterson Hall, buildings were crammed around a fountain used during the war to circulate the water that cooled the engines in the Navy Diesel building. Although they provided temporary relief, the structures were notoriously drafty and considered an eyesore in the campus scenery.



Agromack, 1947

Assistant Professor Daniel Grosch teaches a genetics lab to a group of students including three veterans, [left to right] Charles "Chuck" Evans Gardner, Guy Jones, and Brantley Deloatche.

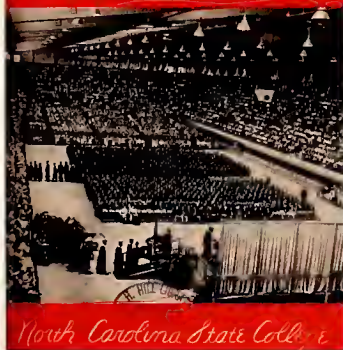
"In our sophomore Forestry class, out of about 52 students, only two or three were not veterans. This ratio was probably [similar] throughout the entire student body."

— Donald Moreland, Class of 1949



A dramatic increase in enrollment after World War II led to the overcrowding of classrooms at NC State. As an emergency measure, Quonset huts and converted two-story wooden army barracks were set up in the Court of North Carolina and behind Patterson Hall.

STATE COLLEGE NEWS



In 1950 a bumper crop of students (1,222, to be exact) graduated from NC State. Commencement exercises were held in the recently completed Reynolds Coliseum.

BUNKING UP

CROWDING AFFECTED every aspect of campus life. Students got used to standing in line: only one phone was available for each 200 men in the dorms, the supply store was tiny, elbowing for registration started at 5:00 A.M., and getting lunch in the sole campus cafeteria in Leazar Hall could entail waiting for half an hour.

The number of men assigned to each dorm room was increased from two to three, and then to four. Storage and social rooms were converted into bedrooms. Still, the college turned away qualified students for lack of residential space. The North Carolina State College Foundation borrowed funds for the construction of two new dormitories.

Technician, October 11, 1946



Student cartoon: "Just think . . . no more barracks life!"

The library provided an essential study space away from crowded and noisy residential quarters. When this photograph was taken in ca. 1950, the library was located in what is now Brooks Hall.



Students in the cafeteria line in Leazar Hall, ca. 1947.



Guests at a Newcomers' Party at the Verville YMCA in 1950. Pictured at center is James William Dickens (B.S. 1951, M.S. 1955), later an NC State professor of biological and agricultural engineering.



Totville Day Nursery, spring 1949.

CAMPING ON CAMPUS

TO HOUSE THE LARGE NUMBERS of veterans who were married or had families, the college created trailer parks and other temporary housing on the west side of campus. Most prominent among these new communities were Trailwood and Verville.

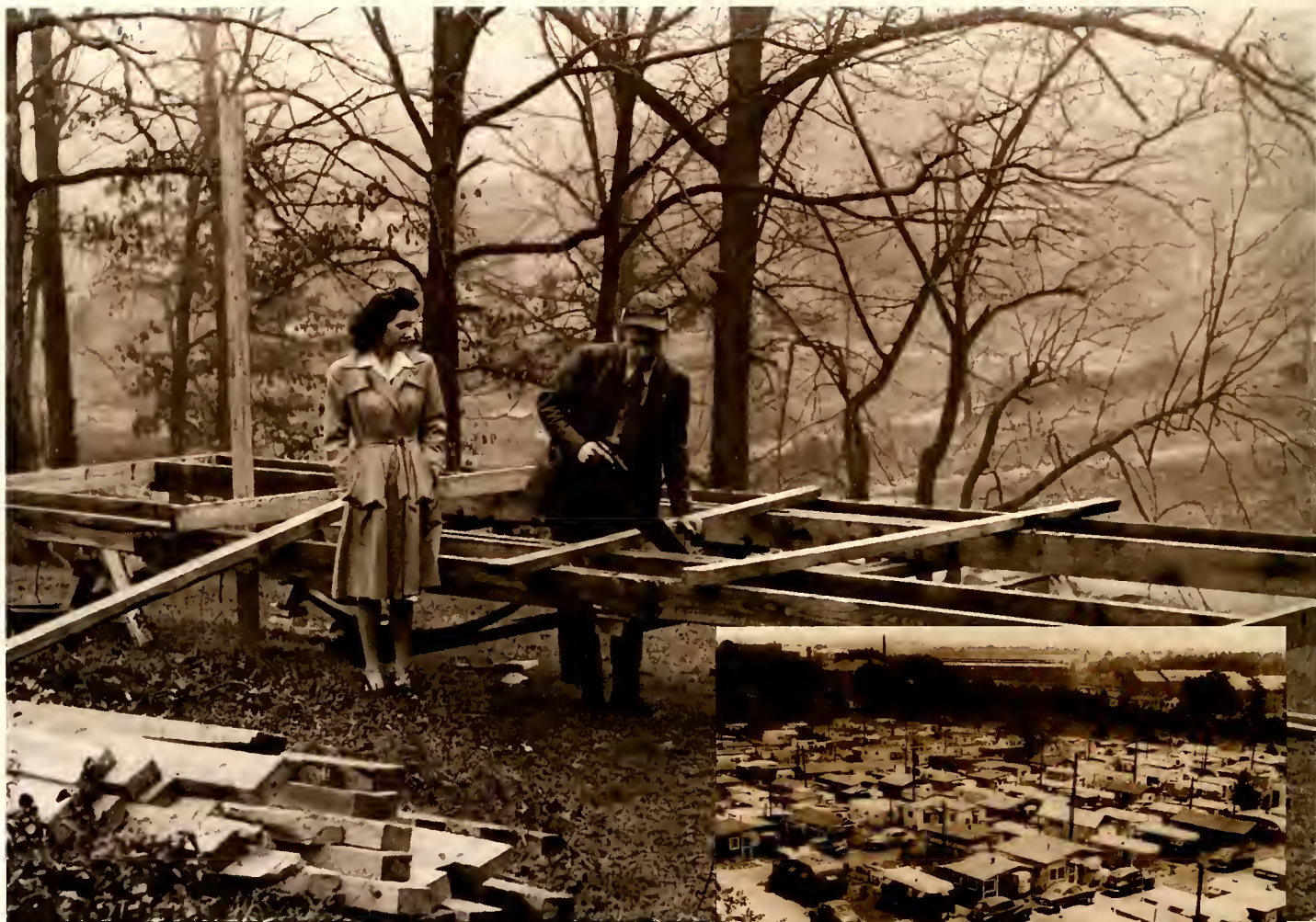
The nearly 600 residents of Trailwood brimmed with civic spirit, forming a town council, planting flower gardens, and chatting with their neighbors over picket fences. Their community was short-lived, however. In late 1948 a third of the trailers moved farther south on campus to make way for Williams Hall, and in 1949 the rest of the trailer park closed. A second trailer park known as Westhaven or Trailpark was established in April 1948 on the present site of Miller Field, and it remained there until August 1953. According to Lawrence Apple, "Life in Trailwood was rustic and spartan but sociable. All residents (around 200 families) shared two community bathhouses. A common sight early each morning were residents headed for the bathhouses with soap and towel in one hand and the family chamber pot in the other. So the bathhouses were the 'Trailwood Community Commons'—where everyone had to go and where community events and, yes, even some gossip were communicated."

Verville was not only bigger than Trailwood but longer lasting. The first residents moved into their units in November 1946, and the final residents, veterans of Korea, moved out in the late 1950s. Verville was a progressive community. Rents were scaled to income, residents could take classes on marriage and sex education, and the local branch of the YMCA claimed to be the first coed "Y" in the country. Verville was disbanded to make room for Bragaw dorm and Edward S. King Village, which was named for the YMCA leader who had provided special cultural and social service programs for veterans and their families throughout the 1950s.

Although GI Bill benefits were generous, growing families in Verville and Trailwood often needed two incomes to make ends meet. Private nurseries were not affordable, so parents shared baby-sitting responsibilities, and neighbors called on each other for help. Raleigh businesses and NC State pulled together to set up the Torville Day Nursery.

"Many strong and life-time friendships were forged in Trailwood because we had so much in common with our fellow students in background, circumstances, and objectives for the future."

— NC State Professor Emeritus Lawrence Apple, B.S. 1949, M.S. 1953, Ph.D. 1955



Above: A few veterans literally took matters into their own hands. In the winter of 1946, Charles C. Elder Jr., age twenty-four, gathered timber and sheet iron and set to work building his own trailer home. Right: Trailwood.





Emmett U. Dillard and his family at their trailer home in 1946. Dillard served as mayor of Trailwood between 1946 and 1947 and as an NC State professor of animal science until 1989.



Above: Vetville. Left: The Mutual Grocery was located in the basement of the Vetville YMCA and was owned and operated by local residents. Trailwood also boasted its own grocery co-op. Below: UNC President Frank P. Graham pushes a stroller while visiting Vetville.





Above: Veteran Fred Wagoner, member of the football team. Right: In spring 1946 both the student president and the vice president were veterans of World War II.

"The veterans provided good role models for the younger students and influenced them to study harder."

— Arthur Kelman,
University Distinguished Scholar,
M.S. 1946, Ph.D. 1949

GI JOES AND COLLEGE JOES

THE VETERANS WERE NOT JUST OLDER than typical college students. They were mature beyond their years, having traveled far from home and having endured hardships on the battlefield. Many started families, and they wanted to get a degree and a job as soon as possible. Veterans avoided the more frivolous undergraduate pastimes but excelled in varsity athletics, student government, campus publications, and other extracurricular activities.

While younger classmates sometimes complained about the "eager beavers" who favored studies over campus social life, the rivalry between veterans and nonveterans was generally good natured. A spoof in the May 23, 1947, issue of the *Technician* proposed a group called Veterans of Future Wars to lobby Congress for another GI Bill that would allow younger students to receive benefits down the road. Meanwhile, veteran and student reporter Jack Fisler engaged in some amiable teasing of his own by pointing out in the October 1946 *State College News* that the GI Bill covered all student fees, so veterans would receive free yearbooks, student newspapers and athletic tickets, and "see the Wolfpack in action . . . courtesy of Uncle Sam."

THE TECHNICIAN

of NORTH CAROLINA STATE COLLEGE

Vol. XXVI, No. 24 STATE COLLEGE STATION, RALEIGH, N. C., MAY 17, 1946 Office: 10 and 11 Thompson Hall

WAGONER IS PRESIDENT


Bill Thornton Wins Vice-Presidential Election;

Daniel Chosen Over Pickler As Secretary;


George Harrell Is Elected Treasurer As 1650 Vote In Closely-Contested Elections

Vote Cast Here Is Heaviest In History


The Student Council election here today was the heaviest in the history of the college. The vote was cast in the Student Union building, and the results were announced at 10 o'clock.



FRED WAGONER



BILL THORNTON



GEORGE HARRELL

Rising Senior Class Officers Are Elected; Pickler Is President

Jimmy Johnson of Scotland, N.C., and Carla Pickler of Raleigh were elected President and Vice-President, respectively, of the 1946-47 yearbook, the *Technician*. In a Junior election held on May 11, Pickler was elected President and Johnson Vice-President.

Seniors! Senior Invitations Are Ready For Distribution

There will be the quarterly distribution of the *Technician* to the seniors in the Student Union building on May 18.

Four Short Courses In Engineering To Be Offered This Summer

The School of Engineering will offer four short courses this summer. The courses are: 1. *Advanced Engineering Mathematics*, 2. *Advanced Engineering Physics*, 3. *Advanced Engineering Chemistry*, and 4. *Advanced Engineering Mechanics*.

Wagoner Is Victor Over House, 904-742

In one of the most important elections in the history of the college, Fred Wagoner was elected President of the Student Council. He defeated his opponent, Bill Thornton, by a vote of 904 to 742.



MINTERS

LUDWIG B. GUTHE
 SAMUEL K. THOMAS
 HERBERT CROSSLAND
 AUGUSTUS GUTHE
 DR. R. S. ANDERSON

President
Vice President
Secretary
Treasurer
Faculty Advisor

The *Companions Club* is currently ending its second year of existence on the State College campus. The club states the *huguenot* students for the purpose of promoting scholarship and understanding among students of different races and nationalities. Interesting and instructive programs are presented at the meetings, and the club's social activities include several meetings of entertainment at Deans Auditorium and a home extension of the *Companions Club* to the past have been to follow meetings of IFC. Clubs of other schools, parties with students from Peace College, a party going independent and the establishment of a *huguenot* society club and a *huguenot* fencing team.

Membership in the Conspicuous Club is open to all origin students at North Carolina State College and all incoming American students and faculty members.

MINI RS

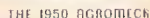
JULIUS LAMMER
JOHN J. RABINOVITZ
LEONARD H. GREENBERG

President
Vice President
Secretary-Treasurer



The purpose of the Hillel Foundation is to form a bond between the Jewish students at North Carolina State so that they may become better acquainted with each other, that they might have the opportunity of receiving instruction in Jewish law and that they may have the membership of a Hillel.

Outstanding events of the year have included an award event with Duke Woman's College, and the Uncommon of South Carolina chapters. Several well-known speakers are scheduled at various scale programs.

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D. C. STATE COLLEGE



Veterans Edit N. C. State Magazine



Technician. February 8, 1946

Veterans avoided the more frivolous undergraduate pastimes but excelled in varsity athletics, student government, campus publications, and other extracurricular activities.



Aerial view of campus showing construction of new buildings in the early 1950s.

BUILDING MOMENTUM

RAPID SCIENTIFIC, technological, and industrial developments during World War II and the Cold War motivated a greater emphasis on research. The GI Bill helped accelerate the growth of American colleges and universities and drew greater federal and state investment into higher education.

In 1945 NC State had outgrown its facilities, and its laboratories and equipment were outdated. The well-publicized crisis of housing World War II veterans in trailers and holding classes in Quonset huts convinced state lawmakers to appropriate funds for the expansion and improvement of the college.

Throughout the late 1940s and 1950s, NC State launched dozens of construction projects, recruited new faculty, overhauled the curriculum, and added new programs. The college sought closer ties to North Carolina industry and agriculture through extension and research, and it established four new schools: Design in 1946, Education in 1948, Forestry in 1950, and General Studies (now the College of Humanities and Social Sciences) in 1952.



Reynolds Coliseum (1949) became home to NC State's ROTC programs and the legendary Wolfpack basketball teams led by Coach Everett Case.



The Riddick Engineering Laboratories and Broughton Hall (shown here) boosted the engineering school's capacity in 1951.



The library outgrew its quarters in Brooks Hall and moved to the new D. H. Hill Library in 1953, now the East Wing of the current facility.

THE GI BILL: A LIVING LEGACY

THE 1944 GI BILL established a tradition of veterans' benefits enduring to this day. Many Korea- and Vietnam-era veterans used the less generous versions of the GI Bill to attend community colleges. The rapid growth of four-year and graduate programs during this era enabled thousands of others to attain bachelor's, master's, doctoral, and professional degrees.

With the end of the military draft in 1973, the GI Bill became less of a reward for service and more of an incentive for enlistment. In the all-volunteer military, the GI Bill has operated in a way similar to civilian retirement programs: service personnel contribute part of their pay, which is matched several times over by the government. The fifth version of the law, known as the Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB), introduced further modifications in the 1980s. After September 11, 2001, Congress approved a large increase in MGIB payments. Today, those benefits represent the most generous college financial aid awarded by the federal government.

From the perspective of six decades, the legacy of the GI Bill transcends specific issues of veterans benefits – encompassing two general principles about the relationship between citizens and government in a democratic society. The first is that it is in the nation's interest to assist deserving individuals in attaining the good and necessary things in life; the second is that the choice of the precise means by which to achieve such goals should be left in the hands of the individual beneficiary. Today, millions of Americans live richer, fuller lives as a result.



In 1952 Public Law 550 extended educational benefits to veterans of the Korean War. The NC State Veterans Association was reactivated, and in its peak year of 1957 the group counted more than 800 members. This photograph of an NC State classroom was taken in 1954.

With the end of the military draft in 1973, the GI Bill became less of a reward for service and more of an incentive for enlistment.

The Veterans Association remained active throughout the 1960s and 1970s, but it disbanded in June 1979 because of "a lack of qualified active members."



Agomeck, 1971

“Even if the ROTC scholarship covered all of my tuition, I would probably walk away from three years of school with close to \$40,000 in debt if I didn’t have these [Montgomery GI Bill] benefits, so it makes a huge difference.”

— Navy veteran and current NC State Air Force ROTC Cadet Kathryn Maitrejean



Photo by Becky Kirkland, NCSU



Courtesy of Bobby Moore

Current NC State Air Force ROTC Cadet Bobby Moore served in Iraq in 2003 as an Air Force reservist. Moore is a Montgomery GI Bill beneficiary.



Harlan C. Brown, NC State's college librarian from 1939 to 1971.

NCSU LIBRARIES

The NCSU Libraries, like the university, has changed considerably since the early GI Bill beneficiaries returned from the war and became students.

A 1939 “state-of-the-library” report prepared by librarian W. P. Kellam describes a staff of seven struggling to provide basic services and collections with a budget ravaged by the Great Depression. Estimating the collection size at around 52,000 volumes with 700 journal subscriptions, Kellam laments that within three or four years “the need for additional seating space and book stacks will have become urgent.” The 1945 *American Library Directory* (N.Y.: R. R. Bowker) notes that the collection had grown to 71,021 volumes, and that librarian Harlan Brown was on leave for military service. Brown undoubtedly had to grapple constantly with the space and resources problems when he returned to NC State. The opening of D. H. Hill Library in 1953 finally improved the situation by providing ample space for students, a staff of twenty-seven, and a collection of 158,000 books and 1,800 journal subscriptions.

Over the past sixty years, the Libraries has been transformed to a level of excellence that would have been hard to imagine in the 1940s. The Libraries is now an active participant in the teaching, learning, research, and service missions of the university. With a staff of approximately 300, the Libraries has over 3 million volumes and subscribes to more than 51,000 print and electronic journals. D. H. Hill Library is open twenty-four hours a day during the fall and spring semesters, welcoming more than 1.2 million visitors per year.

Unfortunately, today's students are all too familiar with the situation described by Kellam back in 1939 with regard to shortages of study seating and shelf space in the library. The growth of the student body and collections, the infrastructure demands imposed by technology, and development of Centennial Campus have all converged to create an urgent need for a renovated D. H. Hill Library and a new library building on Centennial Campus. Support from both donors and voters will be critical in raising the funds necessary to make a library facility on Centennial Campus a reality so that library excellence—an essential component in achieving academic success—can be sustained for future generations of NC State students.

America's debt to its veterans and to its men and women now in military service is incalculable. Against that perspective, the GI Bill is a modest gesture. Yet, this enlightened legislation continues to illustrate that access to quality education can transform the lives of individuals, universities, and society at large.

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