

Michigan university's 'Veteran's Promise' exploits economic crisis to promote military recruitment

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On Veteran's Day, Grand Valley State University, a public liberal arts university located in Allendale, Michigan, revealed a new initiative named the "Veterans Promise" that will guarantee admission for enlisted 2021 graduates of Michigan high schools.

According to GVSU's website, "2021 Michigan high school graduates who have signed enlistment papers to serve in the U.S. military for at least two years are reserved a spot at Grand Valley upon exit of their service or to begin online in their active-duty years."

The plan simultaneously throws support behind the parasitic recruitment policies of the US military while attempting to boost enrollment numbers at the school. No reports or descriptions of the program from GVSU have noted anything about reducing or covering costs for attending GVSU for the eligible students. It only guarantees admission to the school provided the prospective student survives their military service.

Thus, the roughly \$18k cost to attend GVSU stands strong to greet the newfound soldiers once they walk through the door.

In announcing the program, GVSU claimed military service allows students to gain "skills, discipline, and motivation" that would prepare them for a successful education. GVSU President Philomena V. Mantella claimed that the training, dedication and character gained in military service would enrich classroom discussions and increase diversity and talent on the campus.

While GVSU noted that it expects high school graduates to maintain good grades, the primary focus for their admission under the "Veterans Promise" is their military service.

Over the summer, financial insecurity dominated

college and university plans in the fall. GVSU noted income and enrollment shrinkages in May as among their concerns going into the semester. Because of these concerns, many colleges and universities launched programs to attract freshmen and maintain enrollment numbers. Many are also increasing their already outrageous tuition costs.

The new GVSU program is a blatant attempt to exploit the increasingly dire economic situation to boost enrollment and promote military recruitment at a time when geopolitical tensions are seething.

It is relevant to note that, according to a report from *Stars and Stripes*, an American military newspaper, the US Army has met its recruitment and retainment goals for this year. This development is even more significant in light of recent years of falling recruitment numbers in the Army. The success of Army recruitment this year, which was initially struggling in April, lies in the desperation, financial instability and poverty plaguing American youth and workers as a result of the ongoing pandemic and plundering of society by the ruling class.

During the 2008 crisis, which sent millions of workers and youth to the edges of the abyss, the US military openly admitted its recruitment numbers had improved. Now in 2020, the US military, with the assistance of universities like GVSU, is seeking to capitalize on the crisis, enticing desperate youth, with minimal financial security, with a reservation at a four-year school in exchange for their limbs, and sometimes their lives.

Now more than ever, with the economy in shambles, economic crises on the horizon, growing permanent job losses and continued assaults on benefits and wages, youth are looking to higher education for a hopeful

future. However, access to higher education is increasingly restricted to those who can afford the outrageous tuition costs. There is immense hostility among youth and workers to militarism and war, and particularly the looming threat of a third world war. At the beginning of this year, after US President Donald Trump's illegal drone murder of top Iranian General Qassem Suleimani, youth and workers took to social media, expressing an outpouring of opposition and hostility against US imperialism.

Posts expressed immediate fears of WWII and the establishment of a draft for war with Iran and open opposition to war with Iran, with #NoWarWithIran, #NoWarOnIran, and #FranzFerdinand trending on Twitter soon after the reports on the strike.

The military and GVSU offer to today's struggling youth is to risk it all in wars for American imperialism to receive the most basic stability. Most disturbing about this offer is that it is enticing enough for many youth to take it. The fact that so many young people are willing to risk their lives in order to secure an education is a thorough indictment of capitalist society, which has nothing else better to offer them.



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