Only about 50 schools nationwide belong to the Education Department's Veterans Upward Bound program.

Eastern Kentucky University is not among them.

So the school created its own version of the program, accepting veteran applicants regardless of their scores on college admissions tests, determining their academic skill levels and offering special help to those who need it — in veterans-only classes.

"What we're trying to do … is not just talk about bringing veterans here," said Brett Morris, the school's director of admissions. "It's what do we do with them when we get them here."

Such initiative, along with what the school's president calls a "laserlike" focus on...
veterans, propelled Eastern Kentucky to the
top of our annual ranking of four-year
universities. Mountwest Community &
Technical College, based in West Virginia,
topped the list of two-year schools, while
Colorado Technical University led the way
among online and nontraditional schools.

More than 650 schools, a record, responded
to our 2013 Best for Vets: Colleges survey,
which consisted of nearly 150 questions.

The surveys demonstrated widespread
efforts by schools to accommodate vets and
active-duty service members:

* About 84 percent of responding institutions
  said they accept American Council on
  Education credits, which convert military training into academic
  hours.

* More than three-quarters waive late fees for students whose
  military education benefits arrive late, while about half waive
  interest, advance credit toward books and other expenses, or help
  students find emergency money.

* Almost 75 percent of schools offer online degree programs, which
  can be crucial for deployed troops.

But responding schools still showed room for improvement. Fewer
than 11 percent of institutions require faculty- and staffwide training
on veterans issues, and 43 percent had no such training available
even for staff members who would participate voluntarily.

Half of schools have special rules in place to give service members
in-state tuition. About six in 10 schools have a veterans office on
campus.
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