To help draft the 8 Keys to Success, the Department of Education convened more than 100 experts to review approaches that could be scaled and replicated to foster veterans' success on campus and via distance learning.

A wide range of stakeholders participated in the discussions, including nonprofit organizations, foundations, veterans service organizations and importantly, veterans who had recently completed postsecondary education in a range of disciplines.

Best practices learned from existing programs provided the foundation for the keys to success, specifically best practices from the VA's highly successful VetSuccess on Campus programs.

WMU and two partner institutions, Kalamazoo Valley Community College and Kellogg Community College, have served as a VetSuccess on Campus site since April 2012, when U.S. Rep. Fred Upton announced a decision by the Department of Veterans Affairs to locate a VetSuccess on Campus program in southwest Michigan—the agency's first such program in the state.

THE 8 KEYS TO SUCCESS FOR SCHOOLS SERVING VETERANS

1. Create a culture of trust and connectedness across the campus community to promote well-being and success for veterans.

2. Ensure consistent and sustained support from campus leadership.

3. Implement an early-alert system to ensure all veterans receive academic, career and financial advice before challenges become overwhelming.

4. Coordinate and centralize campus efforts for all veterans, together with the creation of a designated space (even if limited in size).

5. Collaborate with local communities and organizations, including government agencies, to align and coordinate various services for veterans.

6. Utilize a uniform set of data tools to collect and track information on veterans, including demographics and retention and degree-completion statistics.

7. Provide comprehensive professional development for faculty and staff on issues and challenges unique to veterans.

8. Develop systems that ensure sustainability of effective practices for veterans.