ARLINGTON (CBSDFW.COM) – As Brian Reddin looks over notes on the campus of the University of Texas at Arlington he will be the first to tell you he is not your typical student.

At 34 he's a little older than the traditional student, and says he has to study a little harder. “It takes me probably two or three times as long to write a paper than my fiancée who is in the program with me,” says Reddin.

Besides trying to be a great student Reddin is also a veteran.

The Army Sergeant recently returned from his last deployment to Iraq. “Doing aircraft recovery I did lose soldiers, and I knew soldiers on the aircraft that I helped recover,” explains Reddin “I went and cleaned up the scene. I do have sleeping problems at night.”

Reddin decided to go back to school when he came home. He’s studying social work, but realized it wasn’t always so easy being back in the classroom. “Reading a technical manual to a scholarly journal or article, it’s hard to pick up a lot of things. You have to have a dictionary next to you.”

He and other veterans are now part of a groundbreaking study
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Many of the veterans are themselves being studied. University researchers are using an optical imaging machine to study their brains.

The researchers want to see if there is a link between trouble in class and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. "We are shining light through the skull," explains Dr. Hanli Liu, a bioengineering professor at UTA "In certain areas of PTSD patients, they have de-activation, which means some part of the brain is not doing the right job."

Dr. Liu says the brain scanning device is much easier to use and less costly than using a MRI machine, where the patient could spend about 40 minutes in a tube.

"Quite a few of our participants have a pre-military service history of learning issues. Whether it's attention deficit disorder – whether it's a reading problem that may have been addressed somewhat when they were in public school," explains Dr. Alexa Smith-Osborne an Assistant professor in the School of Social Work UTA.

She's also behind the student veteran project which offers free services to help veterans returning to school.

Dr. Liu and Dr. Smith-Osborne say their work could also help auto
Hung Hoang

We need to compare these soldiers to other soldiers who only served in the U.S to minimize the bias.

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