

Veterans Advisory Council
Annual Report
Texas State University
FY 2019 - 2020

Major Accomplishments/Retention Initiatives

1. The Veteran Academic Success Center (VASC) staffed a booth and presented information pertaining to Texas State's Military-Connected Student (MCS) services at the Army Futures Command "Thank You, Austin" ceremony in conjunction with the Texas State University Army ROTC.
2. VASC hired and trained 36 MCS Guides and Tutors to provide STEM, writing, business, and Spanish tutoring and mentorship to 197 student veterans on over 557 occasions to help them achieve academic success.
3. VASC was contacted through email, phone, and "drop-ins" more than 600 times for guiding services.
4. VASC sponsored 50 student veterans through the *Bobcat Cadence* Sponsorship Program (supported by VA, Career Services, SDI, Counseling, ODS, and the Writing Center).
5. VASC coordinated with Project Healing Waters (PHW) to provide a weekly *Student Veteran Friday Fly-fishing* opportunity for student veterans. Over 33 VASC team members and 20 community members completed volunteer hours supporting this initiative that allowed more than 115 student veterans to experience fly fishing (supported by VATS).
6. VASC teamed with SDI, VATS, PHW, and the Samaritan Center to host 3 *Military-Connected Student Welcome Events* during the summer for new incoming MCS and their families (over 175 attendees).
7. VASC planned, organized, and conducted *Operation Veteran Academic Success* to raise funds during the annual Step Up for State university fund raising campaign receiving 224 gifts totaling \$8421.20.
8. VASC collaborated with the C&I department to continue offering a course for student veterans titled *EDP 2150 – Strategic Learning*, which was approved for inclusion in the 2019-2020 academic year. Total enrollment for fall and spring was 27.
9. VASC collaborated with University Seminar to provide a special section of *US 1100* for MCS during the Fall semester. Total enrollment for the fall semester was 16.
10. VASC maintained a military-connected student support cell during the fall and spring semesters at the Round Rock Campus to facilitate academic support and success.
11. The Samaritan Center teamed with VASC to host *Try Acupuncture*, a lunch and learn activity at the First Methodist church (15 attendees).
12. Veterans Affairs (VA) teamed with VASC during the fall semester to hold *Veteran VA Jumpstart Benefits Certification* to help student veterans complete class registration and VA financial assistance paperwork.
13. VASC teamed with American Dream University, the Air Force ROTC program, and the Army ROTC program to host a symposium on *Veteran & ROTC Employment* to assist attending individuals prepare for future employment opportunities (over 53 student veterans and their family members attended).
14. VASC planned, organized, and conducted weekly outreach activities including weekly Quad Days, weekly online social outreach initiatives, and monthly social activities to increase student veteran awareness of veteran resources.
15. San Marcos High School football coach teamed with VASC to conduct *weekly mentorship sessions* between football players and student veterans to discuss ethics, values, and leadership (9 volunteers supported 15 football players).
16. San Marcos High School teamed with VASC to conduct a 3rd annual *Military Appreciation Night* at a high school football game that recognized university students and community members for their military service (supported by VATS, ROTC, and PHW).
17. VASC teamed with Restoration Ranch Equine Program to host five *Equine Partnership Workshops* with the Samaritan Center for MCS and their families (over 80 attendees).
18. VASC participated (9 guides and 4 volunteers) in Operation Comfort to raise funds and awareness about veteran based social activities geared towards building community in creative activities and environments.
19. VASC facilitated food relief to 21 participants, 26 times in Fall 2019, and 7 participants, 15 times in Spring 2020.
20. VASC conducted *low GPA outreach* to 1,046 MCS during the fall and spring semesters.
21. VASC facilitated and participated in Choice Theory Training workshops (2 3-hour sessions) with Ms. Robyn Rogers (psychology department) and Dave Blankenship (consultant) in Fall 2019.
22. SDI and Round Rock Campus hosted five (5) Military Branch Anniversary Celebrations held throughout the FY. U.S. The Coast Guard Branch Anniversary Celebration served twelve (12) student veterans, U.S. Airforce Branch

- Anniversary Celebration served twelve (12) student veterans, U.S. Navy Branch Anniversary Celebration Served twelve (12) student veterans, U.S. Marine Corps Branch Anniversary Celebration served twelve (12) student veterans, and the U.S. National Guard Branch Anniversary Celebration served twelve (12) student veterans.
23. SDI sponsored two (2) Veterans Welcome Receptions that were held start of Fall 2019 and Spring 2020 to connect student veterans to on- and off-campus support services and resources, and served (136) participants
 24. SDI co-coordinated and co-sponsored three (3) Veterans Monthly Lunches that were held during fall and spring semester to connect student veterans to on- and off-campus support services and resources; programs served (141) participants including student veterans and non-veterans/faculty-staff ; lunches were sponsored by various Student Affairs Departments and Colleges.
 25. SDI and VAC Sponsored/hosted and Co-Coordinated two (2) Military Connected Social Events that were held in Fall 2019 and Spring 2020 to bring together Texas State student, faculty and staff veterans, and those associated with the military, to fellowship and learn more about services and programs that provide support and opportunities for student veterans at the university. The military connected social served eighty (80) participants ranging from Texas State students, student veterans, faculty, and staff.
 26. SDI coordinated one (1) Veterans Graduation Reception held in Fall 2019 honoring graduating veterans; the receptions served at least sixty-six (66) participants including 13 graduating veterans during fall (family/guests the program served was approximately (33) participants).
 27. SDI Coordinated one (1) Veterans Virtual Tribute in substitute for the Veterans Graduation Reception for Spring 2020 to honor graduating veteran; the tribute highlighted fifteen (15) graduating veteran participants.
 28. SDI partnered with Commencement Services and mailed out fifty-seven (57) red, white, and blue stoles to student veterans.
 29. SDI and VAC sponsored/hosted and co-coordinated one (1) Veterans Preview to give "just-in-time" information to help veterans successfully transition into Texas State. The Veteran Preview Served twenty-two (22) Veterans in Fall 2019.
 30. SDI sponsored and coordinated the Veterans Day Dinner and served seven (7) Veterans.
 31. Members of the SDI "Serving Student Veterans" brochures that provides overview and contact information for various veteran-specific programs or key departments at Texas State and that benefit student veterans; 500 brochures were re-printed.
 32. VAC facilitated one (1) "Transitioning from Service to School-Veteran Ally Training" for faculty and staff at Texas State. The training served thirteen (13) Participants.
 33. The VATS Lounge served (729) student veterans for FY 2020
 34. SDI FY2020 programs and initiatives served approximately (584) student veterans, military connected dependents, faculty, and staff.

Assessments

Assessment: Veteran Academic Success Center **Administered:** Fall 2019/Spring 2020

Findings: Data was collected from 19 student veterans who started and 17 who completed the online end-of-semester survey. The following is a summary of the completed survey results.

Demographics

- Time at Texas State University:
 - 16 – first 4 semesters
 - 2 – 3 years or longer
 - Credit load:
 - 2 – less than 12 credits
 - 17 – 12-15 credits
 - 0 – more than 15 credits
 - Time in the military:
 - 4 – less than 4
 - 7 – 4-8 years
 - 0 – between 9-15 years
 - 0 – more than 15 years
 - 1 – more than 20 years
 - Received tutoring primarily in the following topic:
 - 8 – Mathematics
 - 6 – Science
 - 1 – Business
 - 0 – Technology
 - 5 – Writing
 - 0 – Spanish
 - 2 – Engineering
 - 1 – other – study
- *note-a few clients indicated help in multiple topics
- Number of times visited during the semester:

- 8 - more than 7 times
- 0 - 5-7 times
- 6 - 2-4 times
- 3 - 1st visit
- 2 - no answer

1. Student response to the statement, “I am performing better on my homework, papers, and/or exams.”

- 14 (82.35%)– True
- 3 (17.65%)– Neither True or False
- 0 (0%) – False

2. Student response to the statement, “I am understanding the material better in my classes.”

- 13 (76.47%) – True
- 4 (23.53%) – Neither True or False
- 0 (0%) – False

3. Student response to the statement, “in general, the person was helpful.”

- 13 (76.47%) – Strongly agree
- 2 (11.76%) - Agree
- 2 (913%) – Neither agree nor disagree
- 0 (0%) – Disagree
- 0 (0%) - Strongly disagree

4. Student rating of overall experience while in VASC:

- 15 (88.24%) – Extremely Satisfied
- 1 (5.88%) – Moderately Satisfied
- 1 (5.88%) – Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied
- 0 (0%) – Extremely Dissatisfied

5. Written comments about student’s experience while in VASC:

- PLEASE CONTINUE RUNNING THIS AMAZING PROGRAM
- Keep up the great work!
- Keep up the great work!

Evidence of Improvement:

Military-connected students experience enhanced access to SLAC academic support services. Data collection in accordance with last year’s action plan indicate that the Veteran Academic Success Center (VASC) program targets of 150 clients with 300 visits during each long semester for a total of 300 clients and 600 visits and satisfaction rates at or above the 80% target were almost met. Result 1 targets for participation in the Veteran Academic Success Center (VASC) program were almost met in Fall 2019 (115 clients accumulated 381 visits), but not met Spring 2020 (82 clients accumulated 176 visits). The two-semester total was 197 clients visiting 557 times. Result 2 targets for the Veteran Academic Success Center (VASC) program satisfaction survey were almost met when: 88% of fall and 78% of spring respondents chose “extremely satisfied” to rate their overall experience at VASC; 88% of fall and 78% of spring respondents rated “strongly agree” or “agree” that the VASC tutor was helpful; and 82% of the respondents reported that they were performing better on homework, papers, and exams as a result of using the VASC services.

The unexpected resignation of the VASC program coordinator in early October impacted the program’s outreach initiatives and visibility on campus, thus resulting in lower participation and survey responses during Fall 2019. The April 1st start date of the new SLAC Assistant Director / Coordinator of VASC, coupled with the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent move to 100% virtual VASC services, severely impacted military-connected students’ participation in the program, also resulting in lower participation and survey responses during Spring 2020.

Presentation presented by Department Staff

1. VASC participated in and provided research data for instructional methods focused on veterans in the university classroom setting for the Department of Communication Studies.
2. VASC provided an information briefing titled “*Veteran Academic Success*” to 4 US 1100 sections (over 80 attendees).
3. VASC and SLAC staff members made two MCS-related presentations at a national conference in Fall 2019:
Reyes C. & Van Aacken C. (2019, October). *Get Grizzly (Grit + Resiliency for the Military-Connected Student)*. Concurrent session presentation at the 34th National College Learning Center Association Conference, Louisville, KY.
Reyes C. & Van Aacken C. (2019, October). *Operation Veteran Academic Success*. Concurrent session presentation at the 34th National College Learning Center, Louisville, KY.
4. Transitioning from Service to School: Supporting Student Veterans at Texas State- Various Members and partners of the Veterans Advisory Council

Special Recognition for Departments and/or Staff

1. Raquel Acosta – Outstanding Service to SLAC
2. Steven Alyea – VASC Outstanding Service to Veterans Award
3. Lindley Alyea – VATS Outstanding Staff Member Award
4. Brandon Oles – VASC True Grit Award
5. Dr. Harlan Ballard - VATS Above & Beyond Award (Staff)
6. Dr. Marc Wallace - VATS Above & Beyond Award (Faculty)
7. Cameron Crosby - VATS Above & Beyond Award (Student)

Major Objectives for 2019-2020

- Funding for regular and recurring retention-based student veteran programs.
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- Request and implement student veteran work-study placement and expansion.
- Continue to create and implement program that covers first-six weeks of events at Texas State.
- Support diversity and intersecting identities of student veterans including race/ethnicity, first-generation, age, gender, sexual orientation, gender expression/identity and ability.
- Continue to sustain existing and create new initiatives for student veterans via cross-divisional collaborative efforts.
- Assess and recommend programs centered on military dependents as a means to further promote military friendly and supportive institution.
- Maintain or increase ranking in Military Friendly: Top 10 Schools and Military Times Best: Colleges 2020.
- Create “Vet Direct” and “Veteran 2-Step” Programs in collaboration with Office of Undergraduate Admissions to assist veterans applying to and enrolling in Texas State.

Major Trends/Obstacles for 2019-2020

- Addressing issues related to intersections of identity (race/ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, gender expression/identity and ability), benefits, employment, and educational opportunities
- Increase representation, visibility and experiences of female/self-identified women student veterans and veterans of color.
- Student veterans are experiencing issues related to housing lease contracts.
- Continue to work with Provost to inform faculty of VAC to promote collaborative efforts to request and implement grant.
- Addressing issues related to programing with and Covid-19 Guidelines

