

Veterans Advisory Council
Annual Report
Texas State University
FY 2017 - 2018

Major Accomplishments/Retention Initiatives

1. SDI co-coordinated and sponsored two (2) *Veterans Welcome Receptions* were held during the start of fall 2016 and spring 2017, and served 219 participants including student veterans (90), dependents (5), non-veterans/faculty/staff/students/guests (103).
2. SDI co-coordinated and co-sponsored four (6) *Veterans Monthly Lunches* were held during fall and spring semester to connect student veterans to on- and off-campus support services and resources; programs served 106 participants including student veterans (198), dependents (3), and non-veterans/faculty-staff (82); lunches were sponsored by various Student Affairs Departments (Center for Student Retention, Counseling Center, and LBJ Student Center).
3. SDI coordinated two (2) *Veterans Graduation Receptions* held during fall 2017 and spring 2018 honoring graduating veterans; both receptions served at least 82 participants including 10 graduating veterans during fall and 21 graduates spring (family/guests he program served just over 100 participants).
4. 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; 750 brochures were re-printed. Revisions are presently being made (Summer 2018) for Fall 2018 dissemination.
5. SDI FY2018 programs and initiatives were attended by 497 veterans and 162 veteran dependents.
6. SDI filled position for Student Development Specialist I – Coordinator for Veteran Programs.
7. Veteran Affairs (VA) teamed with VASC on four occasions to hold *Veteran VA Jumpstart* Spring and Fall Benefits Certification to help student veterans with completing class registration and VA financial assistance paperwork.
8. Veteran Academic Success Center (VASC) hired and trained 20 student veterans to provide STEM, writing, business, and Spanish tutoring and mentorship to 290 student veterans on over 955 occasions to help student veterans achieve academic success.
9. VASC sponsored 94 student veterans through the *Bobcat Cadence Sponsorship Program* (supported by VA, Career Services, SDI, Counseling, ODS, WC).
10. VASC coordinated with Project Healing Waters (HW) to provide a weekly *Student Veteran Friday Fly-fishing* opportunity for student veterans. Twelve VASC team members and 20 community members completed numerous volunteer hours supporting this initiative that allowed more than 100 student veterans to experience fly fishing (supported by VATS).
11. VASC teamed with Department of Health and Human Performance to support the annual *San Marcos Kids Fish* event at the San Marcos fish hatchery, providing the opportunity for special needs children to catch a fish (over 20 volunteers and 100 children attended).
12. VASC teamed with The Department of Health and Human Performance to host the annual *VETREC on H2O* which provides the opportunity for student veterans to learn about SCUBA certification, fly fishing instruction, or kayak instruction (over 50 attended).
13. VASC teamed with Restoration Ranch, Project Healing Waters, the Samaritan Center, and VATS to host the 3rd Annual *Veterans Outdoor Family Day* with 204 participants. The outdoor-fest-based event was an opportunity for veterans and family to discover available outdoor activities the University and in the local community. Activities included: Restoration Ranch (horse body work demo and clinic demo.); Healing Waters (fly casting and tying); Yoga (demo and info table); Sierra Club (info table); VASC (info table), Veterans Land Board (info table and Mobile Support Center); Samaritan Center (demo and info table); Operation Comfort (info table), VATS & VI (info table); Texas Parks and Wildlife & Urban L (info table); Texas Veterans Land Board (info table); Grace After Fire (info table); and a BBQ dinner ().
14. VASC planned, organized, and conducted weekly outreach activities to increase student veteran awareness of veteran resources, including weekly Quad Days, weekly online social outreach initiatives, and monthly social activities.
15. VASC initiated a new monthly information bulletin titled “*Bobcat Spotlight*” that included a short informative interview and photo of the veteran friendly office representative that was posted on websites and social media (completed 5 Bobcat Spotlights).

16. VASC teamed with San Marcos High School football coach to conduct *weekly mentorship sessions* between football players and student veterans to discuss ethics, values, and leadership (12 volunteered supporting 15 football players).
17. VASC teamed with San Marcos High School teamed to conduct a *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 HW).
18. VASC teamed with HW and VATS to host a *Veteran Family Camping* activity at Canyon Lake Military Camping facility (over 20 veterans and their families attended).
19. VASC teamed with Operation SCUBA to host *Try S.C.U.B.A.*, which introduced student veterans to SCUBA instruction and a submerged pool activity designed to introduce beginners to the basics and benefits of SCUBA diving (6 attended).
20. VASC teamed with HW to host a *Volunteer Appreciation Dinner* that recognized community and student veteran volunteers who supported numerous outdoor activities conducted during the year that impacted over several hundred attending veterans and their family members (over 100 attended).
21. VASC and Veterans Initiative conducted low GPA outreach to 126 student veterans during the spring semester. The following table provides a brief summary of the results: 126 number of students – 29 picked up phone on first call, 98 were left a voicemail; 126 were sent a text message within 10-60 minutes after a voice message; 23 students returned a call or text back; 36 were sent an email base on a request for additional information; 8 scheduled a Bobcat Cadence, but cancelled; 10 scheduled a Bobcat Cadence and completed it; 7 scheduled a student skills appointment; 7 completed a study skills appointment; 42 knew very little about services or events for veterans.
22. Veterans Advisory Council (SDI, VASC, VATS) coordinated a fall *Bobcat Veteran & Family BBQ* to welcome and provide information for student veterans. Over 100 attended including student veterans (49), dependent (1), and non-veterans/faculty-staff/students (25). Event supported by the VAC, VI, VA, Counseling, Career Services, ROTC, and numerous nonprofit organizations.
23. VAC (Career Services, SDI, VASC and VATS) partnered with American Dream University to host a *Symposium on Veteran & ROTC Employment* to assist attending individuals with preparing for future employment opportunities. Workshops focused on developing tactics, techniques, and procedures to foster leadership skills and abilities. Participants included student veterans (29), dependents (10) and non-veterans/faculty/staff/students (48). Just over 20 family members and guests also attended, but could not be tracked.
24. VAC facilitated two (2) *Transition from Service to School: Helping Student Veterans Succeed at Texas State* through the Office of Professional Development to 19 faculty/staff during fall 2016 and 17 faculty/staff during spring 2017; 36 new veteran friendly staff spaces were created.
25. VAC assisted in delivering the *Lorenzo Estavillo Veterans Award for Academic Excellence* to one student, Noah Heacox.
26. VAC member, Dr. Katherine Selber (Professor in School of Social Work) was named Chancellor's Fellow for the Texas State University System.
27. Veteran Alliance of Texas State (VATS) held 8th Annual Stars and Stripes Golf Tournament with over 50 participants and met fundraising goal of \$10,000 to benefit VATS.
28. Veterans Alliance of Texas State awarded several *Above & Beyond Award* (Stacie McGee, Melissa Hyatt, Ross Wood, Blake Holbrook, Maria Bernal Mora, Lincoln Pulliam, Rashad Salters, Juan Garcia, Veteran Affairs Office) for outstanding contribution to student veterans at Texas State.
29. VATS held two (2) Coffee Breaks that served 32 student veterans and with a total of 38 participants.

Assessments

Assessment: Transition from Service to School - Evaluation

Administered: fall 2017/spring 2018

Findings: Data was collected from 33 of 36 faculty and staff across all University divisions and who completed evaluations as part of the training during fall and spring semesters. 97.1% of participants rated the training as excellent for meeting its objectives (who are our student veterans, their experiences and services at Texas State). 97.1 % of participants indicated excellent as their overall impression of the workshop. 92.5% of participants rated the presenters as excellent. Findings indicated that the training met its objectives by

successfully improving faculty/staff participants' awareness and knowledge of student veterans at Texas State, student veterans' needs and the various veteran-specific and support services available at Texas State.

Improvements: Based on data collected from the Office of Professional Development's post-training evaluation, training facilitators will: 1) assist Professional Development in the promotion of training to increase number of participants; 2) train VAC Committee Members to offer training at Round Rock Campus and substitute existing presenters in event of scheduling conflicts; 3) review content, language and information during summer of 2017 to ensure it is up to date; and 4) increase number of completed evaluations and contracts upon completion of training. Co-facilitators will meet and review training during summer of 2018 and changes to be implemented in fall 2018.

Assessment: Veteran Monthly Lunch Evaluation

Administered: FY 2018

Findings: Data was collected using post-event evaluations from three (3) *Veterans Monthly Lunches* held during fall 2017 and spring 2018 that served at least 181 participants who were tracked in the Events Management Tracking System. Of the 181 TXST participants, 121 were student veterans, 2 were dependents, and 58 were non-veteran students or faculty-staff. 78 evaluations were completed and collected. Participants reported being "satisfied" with overall experience (81%), food (77%), location (69%), and marketing (60%). Participants also indicated they benefited from meeting with VATS student organization (67%), faculty/staff (67%), TXST departments/offices (56%), and off-campus organizations (52%). The findings indicate that participants are highly satisfied with the information and connection gained from attending an informal lunch setting..

Improvements: Based on results obtain through the post-event evaluation, SDI will: 1) continue to co-ordinate and co-sponsor program with support of various offices, departments and services that support veterans; 2) increase marketing promotion to increase number of student veteran participants; 3) provide a variety of meals as recommended in qualitative data; 4) maintain the number of monthly lunches offered and on alternating days; 5) seek and provide opportunity for Veterans Friendly Offices to sponsor lunch; 6) increase number of evaluations by encouraging participants to complete before departing; 7) continue to seek more off-campus organizations to attend; 8) ensure that proper implementation of collecting and reporting evaluations is in place. SDI will review all changes with coordinating partners during summer 2018 and implement in FY 2019.

Assessment: Veteran Academic Success Center

Administered: Fall 2017/Spring 2018

Findings: Data was collected from 57 student veterans who completed the online end-of-semester survey. The survey results indicated that students' time at Texas State were *first 3 semesters* (65%) or *3 years or longer* (35%). Additionally, their credit load included less than 12 credits (21%), 12 to 15 credits (72%), and more than 15 credits (2%). Student veterans also indicate their time in the military as less than 4 years (5%), 4 to 8 years (63%), between 9 and 15 years (14%), and more than 15 years (17%). Participants reported receiving tutoring primarily in mathematics (36%), science (44%), business (5%), writing (7%), other-study (16%), or provided no answer (3%). Additionally, they indicated that their number of times visited during the semester were more than 7 times (25%), 5 to 7 times (11%), 2 to 4 times (45%), 1st visit (16%), or provided no answer (5%). Students rating of overall experience while in Tutor Corps as excellent (55%), good (31%), fair (7%), poor (7%), or provided no comment (3%). One participant's written statement accurately summarizes the themes of the groups qualitative responses: "veteran-to-veteran assistance makes the tutoring process more comfortable plus it allows for greater networking and relationship building." Qualitative responses also strongly encouraged a continuation and growth of program, space, and subject matter.

Improvements: Based on data collected from the survey instrument, Tutor Corps staff will implement the following in Fall 2018: 1) continue to train new and returning tutors on current policies and procedures; 2) continue to train tutors to be aware of demographic trends indicated in the survey and be equipped to support a high percentage of new university students; 3) add a training module to new and returning tutor training that includes a review of the past year survey-collected qualitative comments and a corresponding discussion.

Presentation presented by Department Staff

1. Transitioning from Service to School: Supporting Student Veterans at Texas State (fall 2017 and spring 2017) – Anson Davis (Veterans Benefits Coordinator, Veterans Affairs), Dr. Hillary Jones (Senior Psychologist, Counseling Center), Jesse Silva (Assistant Director, Student Diversity & Inclusion),

Dr. Carl Van Aacken (Lab Coordinator, Student Learning Assistance Center; Co-Director, Tutor Corps), and Ross Wood (Career Advisor, Career Services)

2. VASC provided an information briefing titled "Veteran Academic Success" to the Department of Counseling, Leadership, Adult Education & School Psychology (20 attended).
3. VASC provided an information briefing titled "Veteran Academic Success" to the Department of History (25 attended).
4. VASC provided an information briefing about Bobcat Cadence and the Veteran Academic Success to the Honors College (7 attended).

Special Recognition for Departments and/or Staff

1. Dr. Katherine Selber – Named Chancellor's Fellow for Texas State University System
2. Lindley Workman Alyea – VASC Outstanding Service to Veterans Award
3. TK Phelps – VASC Outstanding Achievement Award
4. Melissa Hyatt - VATS Above & Beyond Award (Staff)
5. Ross Wood - VATS Above & Beyond Award (Staff)
6. Blake Holbrook - VATS Above & Beyond Award (Student)
7. Veterans Alliance of Texas State - Maria Bernal Mora, Lincoln Pulliam, Rashad Salters, and Juan Garcia – VATS Above & Beyond Award (Student)
8. Veteran Affairs Office – VATS Veteran Friendly Office Award

Major Objectives for 2017-2018

- Funding for regular and recurring retention based student veteran programs.
- 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 2018.
- 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.
- Seeking grant for National Research Center on Student Veteran Excellence via School of Social Work (Dr. Selber).

Major Trends/Obstacles for 2017-2018

- 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 womyn 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 in order to promote collaborative efforts to request and implement grant.