

Veterans Advisory Council | University Administration
Annual Report
Texas State University
FY 2021

I. Major Accomplishments/Retention Initiatives

1. VASC hired and trained Veteran tutors to provide tutoring and mentorship to 153 student veterans on over 575 occasions in a face-to-face setting to help them achieve academic success.
2. VASC was contacted through email, phone, and “drop-ins” than 980 times for guiding services.
3. VASC sponsored 124 student veterans through the *Bobcat Cadence* Sponsorship Program (supported by VA, Career Services, SDI, Counseling, ODS, and the Writing Center).
4. VASC planned, organized, and conducted *Operation Veteran Academic Success* to raise funds during the annual Step Up for State university fund raising campaign receiving gifts totaling \$4235.00.
5. 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 2020-2021 academic year. Total enrollment for fall and spring was 24.
6. VASC collaborated with University Seminar to provide a special section of *US 1100* for MCS during the Fall semester.
7. 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.
8. VASC teamed with American Dream University to host a symposium to assist individuals preparing for future employment opportunities (60+ MilCon students and family attended).
9. VASC planned, organized, and conducted weekly outreach activities including weekly online social outreach initiatives, and monthly social activities to increase student veteran awareness of veteran resources.
10. VASC teamed with Restoration Ranch Equine Program to host *Equine Partnership Workshops* for MCS and their families.
11. VASC facilitated food relief to 15 participants, 21 times in Fall 2020, and 5 participants, 7 times in Spring 2021.
12. VASC conducted *low GPA outreach* to 632 MCS during the fall and spring semesters.
13. 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 2020.
14. VASC partnered with VATS to promote a suicide awareness march “Silkies Hike”. (More than 30 were in attendance)
15. VASC maintained open communication with Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing through the pandemic quarantine to facilitate communication about available services to veterans.
16. IIE-SI Coordinated one (1) Veterans Graduation Reception for Spring 2021 to honor graduating veterans; the graduation highlighted ten (10) graduating veteran students and had forty-two (42) total participants consisting of family members, faculty, staff, and community partners. Additionally, IIE-SI partnered with the San Marcos VFW to host the program.
17. IIE-SI gifted Veteran Red, White, and Blue Regalia Cords to a total of fifty-eight (58) student veterans for FY 2021
18. IIE-SI co-coordinated and co-sponsored one (1) Veterans Preview to give "just-in-time" information to help veterans successfully transition into Texas State. The Veteran Preview Served twenty-two (48) Veterans in Fall 2021.
19. IIE-SI co-coordinated and co-sponsored one (1) “Transitioning from Service to School-Veteran Ally Training” for faculty and staff at Texas State. The training served thirteen (7) Participants plus six (6) Student Veterans who served on the panel.
20. IIE-SI co-coordinated and co-sponsored the Fall 2021 Veteran Wrap Up- an informal, fun and festive program to express holiday goodwill and cheer to wrap up the end of the year, through interactive fellowship with other student veterans and their supporters. The program served twenty-one (21) participants.

21. IIE-SI co-coordinated and facilitated an ad hoc task force to support improvement projects with VetsWhatsNext Corporation in their mobile application. The ad hoc task force was comprised of thirteen (13) faculty, staff, community partners, VWN and TXST student Veterans. Over the span of the project the task force met fourteen (14) times.
22. IIE-SI and Trio continue to work on Veterans Upward Bound Grant to assist with Veteran Support Services prior to enrollment in Higher Ed.
23. IIE-SI co-coordinated and facilitated efforts with Chartwell in bringing Meal For Vets on campus to partner with TXST and provide a daily stipend for Veterans combating food insecurity. The program grants qualifying TXST Veterans an \$8 stipend to be used at TXST dining facilities.
24. The VATS Lounge served (169) student veterans for FY 2021.
25. VATS hosted a 22-A-Day Push Up Challenge with Campus Rec to bring Awareness to Veteran Suicide and promote suicide prevention. There was a total of twenty-nine (29) participants.
26. VATS collaborated with VASC to bring in speakers from American Dream U, VetsWhatsNext and Rice University to speak about transition, integration, and resilience to TXST Student Veterans. The program served thirty-three (33) participants.
27. VATS hosted and coordinated a “Silkies Hike”, - A mental health demonstration at TXST to promote comradery among the Veterans on campus in an effort to prevent Veteran Suicide. The program served twenty-seven (27) participants.
28. VATS Executive Board in honor of SPC Vanessa Guillen had U.S. Flag flown over U.S. Capitol and presented the flag to her family with a signed shirt by TXST Veterans and supporters for her Birthday Memorial. The video reached (3,948) viewers.
29. VATS held an Annual Paint Ball tournament to build Veteran Cohesion with TXST Student Veterans. The event served twenty-seven (27) student veterans.
30. VATS awarded nine (9) Above & Beyond Awards for FY2021
31. VATS assisted Elections Task Force and got campus community registered to vote.
32. VATS assisted City of Seguin with mass distribution of food in covid-19 relief efforts.
33. IIE-SI and VATS FY2021 programs and initiatives served approximately (4,497) student veterans, military connected dependents, faculty, staff, and supporters.
34. The Office of Disability Services (ODS) supported the SLAC/VASC (Student Learning Assistance Center/Veterans Academic Success Center) booth during New Student Orientation (NEO) and provided information regarding services ODS provides to Texas State’s Military-Connected (MILCON) Students.
35. ODS created Operation H.U.G.S. (Helping Underrepresented Groups) to reach out to MILCON students to help them achieve academic success and to address disparities in numbers of H.U.G.S currently registered with ODS.
36. ODS conducted training to 15 SLAC staff members, providing them with information on laws, rules, and guidance on ODS and on etiquette and protocol when working with students with disabilities.
37. The Office of Disability Services (ODS) staffed a booth during the VATS (Veterans Alliance of Texas State) Silkies March.
38. ODS served as a stop on the *Bobcat Cadence* Sponsorship Program.
39. ODS consistently supported MILCON initiatives sponsored by VAC, VATS, VASC, SLAC, the Institutional Inclusive Excellence.
40. ODS participated in the *Veterans Commencement Ceremony*
41. The Graduate College Reports:
 - a. Total military-connected graduate students throughout Fall 2020-Spring 2021 (unique students): 375
 - b. Total amount of events offered (small and large) open for graduate students (Fall 2020-Spring 2021): 34
 - c. Total amount of military-connected graduate student participation in events (Shop Talks, International Research Conference, etc.): 33
 - i. Amount of participation in Shop Talks: 24
 - ii. Amount of participation in the International Research Conference: 1
 - iii. Amount of participation in the Graduate Student Appreciation Week: 8
42. Dr. Selber| School of Social Work |Veteran Initiatives

- a. Reviewed and revised online student veteran needs assessment drafts and submitted to IRB for approval, approved March 2021.
 - i. Planning for needs assessment roll out fall 2021- ongoing.
 - b. Veteran internships--Revised social work veteran internship program with School of Social Work Director and Field Education Director
 - c. Justice involved veterans--Assisted in creation of collaboration with social work and criminal justice to target mental health issues including for justice involved veterans.
 - d. Co-Sponsored campus guest speaker. The Shawn Livingston Event, 100 Miles to Redemption – substance abuse and justice involved veterans, March 2021.
 - e. Assisted with End of year event for veterans and families (face-to-face)
 - f. Continued involvement with Task Forces and Community Collaborations
 - i. City of Austin Mayors Veterans Advisory Group—Employment and Engagement/Mental Health subgroups
 - ii. Veteran homelessness in response to covid evictions- City of San Marcos Homeless Network association regarding veteran homelessness
 - iii. University of Texas Institute for Military and Veteran Family Wellness Collaboration on focus group on suicide prevention
 - g. Continued work and support for Grants/Contracts/MOUS
 - i. MOU-- Program development for securing Veterans Administration VITAL employee for outreach and veteran resources – spring, summer 2021, ongoing.
 - ii. MOU Program development for securing Samaritan Counseling Center Hope for Heroes program for a repositioned staff member to assist veterans- spring, summer 202.
43. Admissions Sub-Committee:
- a. Continued to build on the prior year spreadsheet capturing all incoming military-connected students and pertinent information.
 - b. Continued to discuss the best practices for communicating content to all admitted students before start of semester.
 - c. Continued efforts in building relationships with admitted students and establishing a more personalized contact for those students who were incomplete or denied in the admissions process.
 - d. Continued as a collaborative effort to distribute “Road Map to Success” to incoming students.

II. Progress of VAC Goals

- a. Progress of VAC Goals
- b. Progress of VAC Strategies

III. Assessments

Assessment: Veteran Academic Success Center **Administered:** Fall 2020/Spring 2021

The formal survey target was not met in either Fall 2020 or Spring 2021 due to lack of completed responses. For Fall 2020, a total of 7 students responded to surveys. 66.67% were “Extremely Satisfied,” and 33.33% indicated that they were “Moderately Satisfied” with their overall experience. 100% believe they are performing better on Homework, Papers, and Exams. For Spring 2021, 2 students responded to surveys. 50% indicated that they were, “neither satisfied nor dissatisfied,” and 50% noted that they were “moderately dissatisfied” with their overall experience with VASC. 100% believe they are performing better on Homework, Papers, and Exams. We believe the low response rate correlates to increased digital communication and additional surveys from the university, various departments, and courses.

Findings Improvements:

Military-connected students experience enhanced awareness of and access to SLAC academic support services through new virtual and existing face-to-face Veteran Academic Success Center (VASC) programs. Data collection in accordance with last year's action plan indicate that the VASC program targets of 100 clients with 150 visits during each long semester for a total of 200 clients and 300 visits were surpassed and satisfaction rates at or above the 80% target were generally met. Result 1 targets for participation in the Veteran Academic Success Center (VASC) program were met in Fall 2020 (201 clients accumulated 417 visits) and in Spring 2021 (202 clients accumulated 563 visits). The two-semester total was 403 clients visiting 980 times. Result 2 targets for the Veteran Academic Success Center (VASC) program satisfaction were met according to feedback obtained during telephone and in-person conversations, virtual chats, and on tutoring surveys collected in the SLAC Lab. Result 2 targets for the Veteran Academic Success Center (VASC) program satisfaction as indicated by formal surveys was not met in either Fall 2020 or Spring 2021 due to lack of completed responses (9 total responses).

The new SLAC Assistant Director / Coordinator of VASC successfully reorganized and redirected the VASC team of guides and tutors, resulting in tremendous growth in the number of military-connected students served through a variety of virtual and in-person means.

IV. Special Recognitions for Team/Department/or Staff

1. Raquel Acosta – Above and Beyond Award, Outstanding service to SLAC Award
 2. Mary Anderson – Outstanding Service to Veterans Award
 3. Cameron Crosby – Above and Beyond Award, SLACer of the Year Award
 4. David Beadle – Above and Beyond Award
-
1. Dr. Katherine Selber, U.S. Embassy Kabul Afghanistan. Recognition for Veterans Supportive Work. December 2020.
 2. Dr. Katherine Selber, Texas State University- Recognized as Alpha Chi Honor Society Favorite Professor- Fall 2020.
 3. Dr. Katherine Selber, Texas State University- School of Social Work Teaching Award for Spring 2020.

VATS Above & Beyond Award Recipients- Spring:

1. Stephanie Brown - VATS Above & Beyond Award (Staff)
2. David Beadle - VATS Above & Beyond Award (Faculty)
3. Cameron Crosby - VATS Above & Beyond Award (Student)
4. Raquel Acosta - VATS Above & Beyond Award (Student)
5. Chartwells- VATS Above & Beyond Award (Veteran Friendly Office)

VATS Above & Beyond Award Recipients - Fall:

1. Jaime Rodriguez - VATS Above & Beyond Award (Staff)
2. Dr. Todd Sherron - VATS Above & Beyond Award (Faculty)
3. Jared Moore - VATS Above & Beyond Award (Student)
4. Army ROTC- VATS Above & Beyond Award (Veteran Friendly Office)

A. Major Objectives for next year (2021-2022)

Student Learning Academic Center/Veteran Academic Success Center

The SLAC Assistant Director / Coordinator of VASC, a U.S. Army veteran, will use his extensive background in marketing and communication to work with the Veterans Affairs, Admissions, and Student Diversity and Inclusion offices to create and revise videos, websites, New Student Orientation programs, etc. to expand military-connected students' awareness of existing services and create new services when

students' unmet needs are identified. For 2021-2022, the primary goal of the Veteran Academic Success Center (VASC) is to expand guiding and tutorial services (in-person and virtual) for military-connected students at the Round Rock campus while maintaining a high level of service to students at the San Marcos campus.

Ideally VASC staff liaisons will be placed in departments such as the Graduate College and Undergraduate Admissions to assist with identifying and supporting military-connected students early in their academic careers to ensure smoother transitions into the university environment and academic success during their first semester at Texas State. Military-connected students will experience enhanced awareness of and access to SLAC academic support services through new virtual and existing face-to-face Veteran Academic Success Center (VASC) programs. Working with the Veterans Affairs, Admissions, and Student Diversity and Inclusion offices to create and revise videos, websites, New Student Orientation programs, etc. to expand military-connected students' awareness of existing services and create new services when students' unmet needs are identified. All military-connected students using VASC services will provide usage and satisfaction data to determine future program improvements and modifications.

Institutional Inclusive Excellence- Student Initiatives & Veterans Alliance of Texas State

IIE-SI and VATS will continue to collect an analysis of qualitative data to demonstrate that at least 80% of participants can articulate a skill gained pertaining to issues related to diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility, and intersectionality through their participation in a chartered student organizations and programming. Additionally, we will assess the level of satisfactory of involvement and support services provided on campus. A focus group will be held before the end of each academic year to assess feedback. Furthermore, findings from focus groups and assessments will help establish what skills students identify as being developed through their participation in these chartered student organizations and programming under IIE-SI and will be used to further tailor program and support services.

VAC Admissions Sub-Committee

The Admissions Committee will continue tracking students via Admissions spreadsheet. The sub-committee will call students who are incomplete or denied keeping students engaged in admissions process. Additionally, the sub-committee will create a communication campaign for admitted students regarding next steps and resources with a "Next Steps" piece to appropriate students. Lastly, the sub committee will continue to create website content relevant to MilCon next steps on webpage.

B. Major Trends

C. Major Obstacles for next year

Admissions Sub-Committee

- Delegating responsibility for people on the committee to come up with content, call students, create communication campaign, etc.
- Getting buy-in from UG Admissions office as some of this relies on their staff spending time on this work and is typically kept in-house.

IIE-SI & VATS

- Elevating veteran programming at an Institutional level and sunsetting old programming to make room for future efforts.
- Seeking more sponsorships to fund programming outside of IIE-SI and VATS.
- Gain support and co-create with VAC and departments across TXST for a Military Connected NSO.