

Veterans Advisory Council
Annual Report
Texas State University
FY 2015 - 2016

Major Accomplishments/Retention Initiatives

1. SDI hired Student Development Specialist I position for Student Veteran Programs.
2. SDI co-coordinated and sponsored two (2) *Veterans Welcome Receptions* were held during the start of fall 2015 and spring 2016, and served 177 participants including student veterans (55), dependents (2), non-veterans/faculty-staff (60).
3. SDI co-coordinated and co-sponsored six (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 205 participants including student veterans (110), dependents (7) and non-veterans/faculty-staff (88); lunches were sponsored by various Student Affairs Departments (Center for Student Retention, Dean of Students, Department of Housing and Residential Life, and LBJ Student Center) and Operation Supply Drop.
4. Two (2) *Veterans Graduation Receptions* held during fall 2015 and spring 2016 honoring graduating veterans; both receptions served at least 70 participants including 14 graduating veterans during fall and 28 graduates spring (including family/guests the program served just over 120 participants).
5. VATS Executive Board held an *Officer Retreat* during summer 2016 to introduce new executive board to prepare programs and meetings, learn University policy and procedures, and discuss strategies for increasing membership, and included the newly established Round Rock Veterans Alliance.
6. VATS successfully held *Peace Paper Project*, a week-long community-arts initiative and veteran paper workshop that utilizes uses hand papermaking and pulp printing as a form of trauma therapy, social engagement, and community activism; donated military uniforms were used in this process and held in the Texas State Quad.
7. Veterans Alliance of Texas State (VATS) awarded 3 persons with *Up & Beyond Award* (Jesse Silva, Meghan Parker, and Ross Wood) for outstanding contribution to student veterans at Texas State.
8. Veterans Alliance of Texas State and Veterans Initiative held *Quad Outreach Days* to spread awareness of veteran services and to build rapport with vets.
9. Veterans Alliance of Texas State with support of SDI and Veterans Initiative held the 6th Annual Golf Tournament which included a silent auction and benefited Central Texas Returning Heroes, a local non-profit organization that is assist with disaster relief in Central Texas
10. Round Rock Veterans Alliance was created in fall 2015 as a registered student organization at the Round Rock campus and will operate under the guidance of VATS (chartered student organization).
11. *Female Veteran Empowerment Initiatives* including *Women Empowering VATS (WEVATS)* were created to support and increase representation female veterans in programs and services; initiatives were created by Aggie Barabin and DeAnna Dotson, Intern of Veterans Initiative, sponsored by SDI and included Focus Groups (13

- participants), Coffee & Conversations (6 participants) and Low Ropes Challenge at Campus Rec (5 female veteran participants).
12. SDI, Veterans Initiative and University Marketing created a Texas State brochure, “*Serving Student Veterans*,” 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 printed.
 13. Two (2) *Transition from Service to School: Helping Student Veterans Succeed at Texas State* were facilitated through the Office of Professional Development to 29 faculty/staff during fall 2015 and 20 faculty/staff during spring 2016; 42 new veteran friendly staff spaces were created.
 14. Veterans Initiative hired 2 interns for fall 2015, 5 for spring 2016 (4 BSW students and 1 MSW), and 2 for summer 2016
 15. Veterans Initiatives continues to outreach to student veterans with low GPA that included 76 contact in fall 2015, 490 in Spring 2016, and 97 in Summer 2016. Contacts were made via email, texts, face-to-face and follow up meetings. Referrals to appropriate services were made upon establishing contact.
 16. Veterans Initiatives updated *Veterans Resources List* that consists of contact information for on- and off-campus support services for student veterans.
 17. Veterans Initiative created *Veteran Welcome Folders* for new and transfer student veterans that included information about support services and programs
 18. Veterans Initiative attended and represented Texas State at various conference, panels and networks including the Texas Veterans Commission at Texas A&M Central Campus and another at TAMU-College Station; UT-Military Social Work Conference; an Education Panel including students from UT, University of Houston and TAMU; Texas State’s Office of Disability Services’ *Student Veteran Panel Lunch & Learn*; and *Chalkboard Campus* a program for children about party politics
 19. Veterans Initiative including Dr. Chavkin and 2 former interns published an article in the “Professional Development: The International Journal of Continuing Social Work Education”
 20. Veterans Initiative assisted and attended support programs for student veterans including *Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing, Operation Scuba, Underwater Archeology, SUP Paddleboard Yoga & Kayaking, Rescues 4 Warriors*. They also held a program called *VET Rec* at the San Marcos river which featured all these programs in one day.
 21. Veterans Initiative interns held a screening and discussion for PBS Documentary “*Debt of Honor*” which highlights the experiences of veterans with disabilities.
 22. Veterans Initiative intern (Mike Hart) assisted in the further development of the *Veterans Guiding Veterans* Program that helps student veterans with mentoring and transitioning to Texas State
 23. Veterans Initiative received *Veterans Friendly Office Award* in Spring 2016
 24. Veterans Advisory Council assisted in the hosting of *Texas Army National Guard Summer Program* which had 16 families participate who received information on preparing for college (admissions, financial aid, college life), Hazelwood Act, GI Benefits, and showcased Texas State as the featured site.

Progress of 2012-2017 Administrative Support Plan

- Goal 1: Support the recruitment of high quality/diverse veteran students

- Objective 1: Highlight and showcase veteran graduation and success stories (On-going)
- Objective 2: Identify and maximize recruitment opportunities (Completed/On-going)
- Objective 3: Identify issues and concerns student veterans have with the application and orientation processes (Completed/Remove)
- Goal 2: Facilitate/improve veterans' transition into/through college.
 - Objective 1: Identify transition needs of incoming student veterans (Completed/On-going)
 - Objective 2: Highlight, promote, and disseminate information about resources and services available on campus to student veterans (Completed/On-going)
- Goal 3: Promote/increase veteran student retention success.
 - Objective 1: Identify existing areas of service for student veterans (Completed/On-Going)
 - Objective 2: Serve as an advocacy group for student veterans within the campus community and to the administration (Completed/On-going)
 - Objective 3: Identify areas of concern for student veterans currently enrolled [i.e. support, academic, financial, family] – (Completed/On-going)
 - Objective 4: Identify and promote inter-agency and community connection/services (partnerships) for student veterans and family members (On-going/Revised/Addition)
 - Objective 5: Promote training opportunities for the campus community on how to support student veterans (Completed/On-going)
 - Objective 6: Create and promote student veteran leadership, employment and development opportunities (On-going/Revised)
- Goal 4
 - Objective 1: Continuous assessment process to support development of programs and advocacy for student veterans (Completed/On-going)

Assessments

Assessment: Transition from Service to School Evaluation
2015/spring 2016

Administered: fall

Findings: Data was collected from 51 of 53 faculty and staff across all University divisions and who completed evaluations as part of the training during fall and spring semesters. 82.4% of participants rated the training as excellent for meeting its objectives (who are our student veterans, their experiences and services at Texas State). 84% of participants indicated excellent as their overall impression of the workshop. 91.4% 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 2016 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 2016 and changes to be implemented in fall 2016.

Assessment: Veteran Monthly Lunch Evaluation

Administered: FY 2016

Findings: Data was collected using post-event evaluations from six (6) *Veterans Monthly Lunches* held during FY 2016 and that served 205 participants. 110 evaluations were completed and collected. Participants reported being “very satisfied and satisfied” with overall experience (96.3%), food (92.8%), location (94.5%), and marketing (92.7%). Participants also indicated they benefited from meeting with VATS student organization (83.6%), faculty/staff (85.5%), TXST departments/offices (86.4%), and off-campus organizations (71.8%). The findings strongly 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-coordinate 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; and 7) continue to seek more off-campus organizations to attend. SDI will review all changes with coordinating partners during summer 2016 and implement in fall 2016.

Assessment: Veteran Welcome Reception Evaluation

Administered: Fall 2015

Finding: Data was collected using post-event evaluations from the fall 2015 *Veterans Welcome Reception* and that served 66 participants. 27 participants completed evaluations as part of the program. Participants reported being “very satisfied and satisfied” with overall experience (96.3%), food (96.3%), location (96.3%), and marketing (92.6%). Participants also indicated they benefited from meeting with VATS student organization (92.6%), faculty/staff (92.6%), TXST departments/offices (100.0%), Alkek’s student Veteran Books and Resources (88.9%) and off-campus organizations (81.5%). The findings strongly demonstrate that student veterans have high satisfaction with accessibility of information, resources, representatives that serve their needs.

Improvement: Based on the finds gained via the post-event evaluation, SDI will: 1) continue to co-coordinate and sponsor the program with support of various offices, departments and services that support veterans at the start of each semester; 2) host the program in a smaller room fit for size of audience; 3) increase marketing and promotions; 4) collect completed evaluations to ensure a more thorough assessment, and 4) seek additional off-campus organizations to share information and resources. SDI will review program changes during summer of 2016 and implement in fall 2016.

Presentation presented by Department Staff

1. Transitioning from Service to School: Supporting Student Veterans at Texas State (fall 2015 and spring 2016) – Meghan Parker (Assistant Director, Student Learning Assistance Center), Blanca Sanchez-Navarro (Supervising Counselor, Counseling Center), Dr. Katherine Selber (Professor, School of Social Work), Jesse Silva

(Assistant Director, Student Diversity & Inclusion), and Ross Wood (Career Counselor, Career Services)

Special Recognition for Departments and/or Staff

1. Meghan Parker – Veterans Alliance of Texas State Above & Beyond Award
2. Jesse Silva - Veterans Alliance of Texas State Above & Beyond Award
3. Ross Wood – Veterans Alliance of Texas State Above & Beyond Award
4. Veterans Initiative – Veteran Friendly Office Award

Major Objectives for 2016-2017

1. Funding for regular and recurring retention based student veteran programs
2. Complete and submit TRiO Upward Bound grant that serves student veterans
3. Request and implement student veteran work-study placement and expansion
4. Create and implement program that covers first-six weeks of events at Texas State
5. Support culturally diverse student veterans including race/ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, gender expression and ability

Major Trends/Obstacles for 2016-2017

1. Addressing issues related to intersections of identity (race/ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, gender expression and ability), benefits, employment, and educational opportunities
2. Increase representation, visibility and experiences of female/women student veterans and veterans of color
3. Student veterans are experiencing issues related to housing lease contracts
4. Student veterans have an opportunity to participate in San Marcos Veterans Court to adjudicate legal cases; San Marcos Veterans Court has experienced a substantial increase in number of cases they are assisting with
5. Texas State faculty are increasing solicitation of grant funding that specifically serves student veterans have increased; work with Provost to inform faculty of VAC in order to promote collaborative efforts to request and implement grant.