UNIVERSITY of HOUSTON

VETERAN SERVICES

Student Fee
Advisory
Committee
(SFAC)
Program Questionnaire

FY2021

1. Please provide a one-page executive summary of your questionnaire responses. This summary should include, in brief terms: your unit's mission, how you accomplish your unit's mission, and a justification of your unit's student fee allocation in terms of benefits for students.

Executive Summary

MISSION

The University of Houston recognizes that our military and veteran population is a very diverse group that brings to our campus vast experiences and knowledge. The Mission of UH Veteran Services is to acknowledge these experiences and accomplishments by supporting the interests of our Nation's current and former military service members and their families. We recognize the importance of providing our unwavering support and advocacy to our Student Veterans, to help foster success in their academic, personal, and career goals. UH Veteran Services will accomplish this mission through education, collaboration, and outreach utilizing all available resources within and outside of the University of Houston.

VISION

UH Veteran Services (VS) will provide student veterans with the highest level of support and dedication, fostering personal growth and academic success through graduation and rewarding careers. In doing so, we will strive to be a benchmark institute and a leader in veteran support and advocacy.
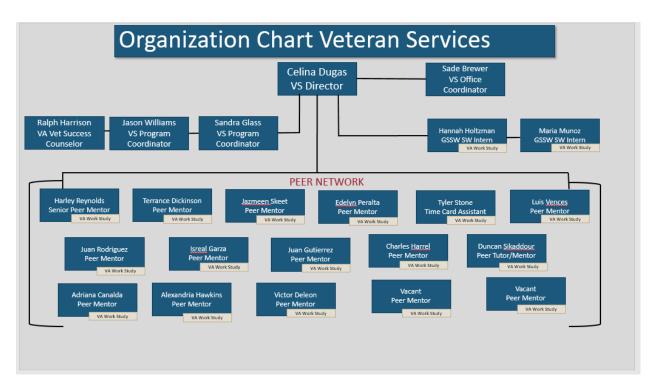Veteran Services serves prospective and current veterans, military personnel, and their dependents by providing services that include:

- professional and student staff with a wealth of knowledge and experience in using military benefits and transitioning from service to higher education;
- •supportive services for academic, psychological, financial, vocational, and academic challenges
- information on University policies and procedures, federal and state education benefits, and changes in legislative regulations that affect veterans;
- camaraderie and peer to peer mentoring;

- student engagement through a safe, casual, and familiar space for students to study, relax, and network, including a computer lab, within the UH campus;
- referrals to the Veterans Administration, other University departments, and community agencies;
- Educate the campus community on Veteran Issues

VS fosters a "military friendly" campus community by engaging in strategic partnerships with University departments and community agencies to increase awareness of student veterans' issues. These partnerships encourage a sense of belonging, community and well-being for all student veterans on campus. With 2995 veterans and their dependents enrolled for fall 2019, VS provides resources to meet their unique needs. The Fall 2018 numbers represent a 60% increase over fall 2013 (1,856 veterans and

2. Provide an organization chart of your unit. Large units may need to have an overview chart and then more specific charts for each program. Where you have multiple staff in the same position (e.g. counselor, advisor, etc.), note this on your chart. Student employees should be cited on the chart and identified as students.

Organization Chart Veteran Services

Celina Dugas — VS Director

Sade Brewer — VS Office Coordinator

Ralph Harrison — VA Vet Success Counselor

Jason Williams — VS Program Coordinator

Sandra Glass — VS Program Coordinator

Hannah Holtzman — GSSW SW Intern — VA Work Study

Maria Munoz — GSSW SW Intern — VA Work Study

PEER NETWORK

Name	Title	
Harley Reynolds	Senior Peer Mentor	VA Work Study
Terrance Dickinson	Peer Mentor	VA Work Study
Jazmeen Skeet	Peer Mentor	VA Work Study
Edelyn Peralta	Peer Mentor	VA Work Study
Tyler Stone	Time Card Assistant	VA Work Study
Luis Vences	Peer Mentor	VA Work Study
Juan Rodriguez	Peer Mentor	VA Work Study
Isreal Garza	Peer Mentor	VA Work Study
Juan Gutierrez	Peer Mentor	VA Work Study
Charles Harrel	Peer Mentor	VA Work Study
Duncan Sikaddour	Peer Tutor/Mentor	VA Work Study
Adriana Canalda	Peer Mentor	VA Work Study
Alexandria Hawkins	Peer Mentor	VA Work Study
Victor Deleon	Peer Mentor	VA Work Study
Vacant	Peer Mentor	VA Work Study
Vacant	Peer Mentor	VA Work Study

3. List your unit's strategic initiatives and action steps identified for the 2018-2019 academic year and cite the specific Division of Student Affairs and Enrollment Services (DSAES) Strategic Initiatives and University of Houston Strategic Goals to which they relate (links below). Please comment on your success in achieving these strategic initiatives/action steps. If a strategic initiative/action step changed during

the year, please note this and explain. Also, list any new strategic initiatives/action steps, the rationale for the addition, and comment on your success in achieving these items.

DSAES Plan: (http://www.uh.edu/dsaes/about/strategic_plan.html)
UH Goals: (http://www.uh.edu/about/mission/)

Goal 1 Increase Military Cultural Competency among Faculty and Staff. (UH Core Value: Diversity and Inclusion, DSAES Strategic Plan: Partnerships)

Plan, develop and Implement a Military Cultural Competency Training for Staff and Faculty to improve the cultural competence across campus.

Action Steps:

1. VS will learn the current level of Military Cultural Awareness prior to implementing the Military Cultural Competency Course.

2. Research current programs used at Benchmark Institution.

   Status: Achieved

   Veteran Services, after extensive research into other benchmark institutions, and advise from previous SFA committee, is proud to report that we have partnered with The PyschArmor Institute to provide Education to our Staff and Faculty through our newly implemented training program Called UH Green Zone Training. In addition, to staff and faculty we were able to extend the program to student leaders, peers, and graduate students. The program expansion will allow the UH Community to grow the number of Military and Veteran Culture Competent persons on campus. To date, after only, approximately 60 days after implementation VS, has approximately 70 staff, faculty, and student leaders registered and in process of becoming Green Zone Trained. It is our goal to continue you to grow that number and grow the program into a Robust Program other institutions can model after.

Goal 2 Improve Certification Processes for Military-Connected Students: (Uh Value: Innovation, DSAES Strategic Plan: Resources)

Working with Student Business Services, ensure that benefit eligible military connected students are placed in a student group to prevent being dropped from Classes. This will ensure improved transition. Working with the Office of the Registrar create a more user friendly process for certification requests. Removing barriers to certification such as: Forms and unnecessary signatures.

Action Steps:

1. VS will review the current process for Certification and payment of classes in order to prevent the dropping of classes for those military connected students that are pending Federal or State payments.

2. Working with the office of the registrar, VS will assist in helping to streamline current processes to ensure timely certification and payment to our military connected students.

   Status: Achieved

   Currently, there is no clear path to placing a hold on veteran's files before drop dates, according to the Bursar there are too many factors that could cause problems. In order to prevent students being dropped, we have upped our communication during the drop dates. Through a partnership with Academic Affairs, we can now Text notifications to all undergraduate students, so that they can deferment before the drop dates. This process as allowed us greater access to our students so that reminders can be sent sooner and more often, until we can identify a method to make the deferment automatic.

   Veteran Services along with the Registrar's office successfully streamlined the process of GI Bill Certification, by removing an archaic process, that required all Students using benefits to fill out hard copy forms and get a signature from an academic advisor before certifying. The process was moved to an online request form and did away with the need to get an advisor's signature every semester. The Veteran now only has to get a signature the first time they submit a degree plan. Beneficiaries expressed immense satisfaction with the new streamlined process. This method ensures beneficiaries can receive their tuition and fee payments quickly from the VA. In addition, to the streamlined GI Bill Process, the Hazelwood process is also being streamlined to make the process easier for students applying for the exemption.

Goal 3 Department Staff Re-organization: (UH Core Value: Team Work, DSAES Strategic Plan: Division Cohesion)

Review Current Department Organization and develop and reorganization strategy to assist Veteran Services to work more efficiently to provide services to our military population.
Action Steps:

1. Review Current Staffing and job descriptions as recommended by External Review Team and hire necessary staff to take VS to the Next Level.

2. Fill Additional Program Coordinator Position

3. Review empty positions to determine feasibility in job description and update as

Status: Achieved

Veteran Services worked very diligently to ensure that we are staffed in a way that will allow us continued success and future growth. We changed our Secretary position to an office coordinator position. We promoted our long time Secretary Sandra Glass to a Program Coordinator. While we took our time to hire a good program coordinator, we found out after a short time that he was not a good fit and he resigned the position in March of 2019. With the assistance of two hard charging Social Work Interns, we were able to keep up the pace and increase our presence all over campus and the community. In Summer, we again focused on filling the open Program Coordinator. We found a very well-known Veteran Service Officer in the community, Jason Williams had applied to the position and after a very rigorous interview process Jason was offered and accepted the position. Jason, a Veteran of both the Army and the Navy joined our team in July of 2019 and has been a great addition to our team.

4. **Please discuss the means that you are utilizing to evaluate both your success in achieving the aforementioned strategic initiatives and/or action steps and their importance as compared to others that you might pursue. Where data exist, discuss the number of persons and/or unique students served by each of your programs and any assessment measures and/or learning outcomes used to evaluate program success. Please provide the method for collecting these data. If available, please provide program benchmarking data from comparable institutions.**

Means to Evaluate Success

Currently, VS evaluates the delivery of its services based on student usage and participation. Developing and implementing a more effective evaluation methodology is a key deliverable from the current program evaluation.

VS collects data for student usage via a MyUH id check- in system. Prospect and applicant data is currently collected manually. This year the VSO has demonstrated that we have stabilized our office capacity at approximately 10,000 sign-ins a year. We anticipate that we will continue at this level. VS experiences a significant increase in student traffic associated with the opening of each term's enrollment cycle as well as the start of a new term. While our office utilization has balanced, our Student programming saw a slight decrease, due to not doing 2 large scale conferences that were done in the previous year. We attribute this to our ramped up marketing efforts, we will continue to strive to increase in our program attendance, engagement, and services utilization. Also, it was our time to complete an external review and Veteran Services welcomed 3 benchmark institutions to review our department staff, processes and programs. This external was extremely important in assisting VS in recognizing the steps needed to take the department to the next level. We have focused on 19-20 on accomplishing some of the recommendations from these benchmark institutions so that we can move ahead Veteran   Progress   Card

Veteran's Services Progress Card
Division of Student Affairs and Enrollment Services

		FY15	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19
Operational Data						
Visits:	**Total Office Visits**	12,157	11,842	10,401	10,742	16,731
	fall counts	4,554	5,123	4,625	3,937	3,042
	spring counts	5,126	4,337	4,576	3,780	8,556
	summer counts	2,477	2,382	1,200	2,955	5,133
	Total Community Engangement	**1,117**	**2,411**	**6,395**	**5,694**	**7,448**
	fall counts	1,117		2,150	2,772	2,482
	spring counts		1,523	2,639	2,280	3,100
	summer counts		888	1,606	642	1,866
	Unique Student Engagement		**1,046**	**2,907**	**1,236**	**1,953**
	fall counts		422	1,197	605	651
	spring counts		624	1,261	426	814
	summer counts			448	205	488
Programs:	**Total number of communicty engagement opportunities**		**27**	**28**	**32**	**38**
	internal prgrams		19	22	29	32
	outreach		8	6	3	6
Student Success Data (on unique students)						
based on unique:	**Persistance**					
	Fall to Fall Persistence		81.86%	80.86%	88.95%	
	Graduation Rate (FTIC)					
	Number of FTIC Students		48	27	103	
	4-year		1/1 = 100%	9/17=52.9%	11/19=57.9%	
	6-year		1/2 = 50.00%	0/2=0%	0/1=0%	
	GPA					
	Average GPA		2.87	2.85	2.91	

Veteran Office Utilization Report

Dates:	First time in Office:	Return to Office	Total:
9/1 to 12/31/2018	373	2669	3082
1/01/2019- 8/31/2019	380	13309	13689
Totals:	753	15978	16731 (56% increase from 17-18)

Veteran Services Program Attendance/ Engagement 2018-2019:

Event	Attendance and Participation
Spring Orientation and Resource Fairs	253
VA Tutoring assistance (2 tutors)	445
Welcome Breakfast Spring	106
Cert Fest Spring	120
Self-Check Day	450
Veteran's Day Celebration	288
Fall Graduation Cording Ceremony	80
Take Back the Night Fall	75
September 11 Memorial Ceremony	52
Katy VFW Outreach Event	250
Dean and College Outreach	20
Work Study Training/ Development	40
Social Media Action Lab (Natcon 2019)	150
Welcome Back Outreach w/ Combined Arms	45
Resume Work Shop	35
Martin Luther King Community Event	350
Pride Week Collaboration with LGBTQ	250
Marine Mom chili cook-off Outreach	150
Spring Graduation Ceremony	126
Sexual Assault awareness events	120
Fall 2018 VS Advocacy	272
VS Collaborative Outreach (VA, City, County Campus)	110
Summer Orientation and Resource Fairs	545
Cougar First Impression	100
Fall Welcome Back Breakfast	185
Fall Campus Prowl	100
VSOC Annual	577
Scarlet Night Academic Resource Fair	600
Summer Assessment Symposium Poster Presentation	80
VS Spring Tutoring (2 Tutors)	340
VS Individual Advocacy	375
Green Zone Training	20
Student Leadership Spring Training	17
Mind and Body Work Shop	14
Student Worker Appreciation	100
LGBTQ Awareness Staff training	8
College Work Study Job Fair	200
Graduate/ Professional Resource Fair	400
	7448 % increase from 17-18)

5. Please discuss any budget or organizational changes experienced since your last (FY2020) SFAC request, their impact on your programs, and your reason for implementing them. SFAC recognizes that some programs did not receive the funds that they requested, that some programs were impacted by additional expenses after the conclusion of the budget cycle, and that some programs may be ahead of or behind their self-generated income projections. SFAC Q, p.2.

Budget and Organizational Changes

VS continues to employ a team of Student Workers, who make up are Peer Support Mentors. Research done by Syracuse University's IVMF (Institute for Veterans and Military Families) tells us that Peer support contributes to academic support for veterans. In addition, Veterans want to have a sense of belonging and purpose. It is our desire to continue to operate with a high number of student peers, but recognize the addition strain on budget to train and support these student staff. In addition, our efforts, to do more, to be better, and to engage our students at the highest level is proving to be successful and as a result we are seeing increased demand for services, and as such an impact on our budget.

Semester	Total Number of VA Work-Study Contracts	Total Number of Hours Contracted	Total Dollars Paid By VA
Fall 2018	17	6630	$48,068
Spring 2019	15	6210	$45,023
Summer	7	1260	$9,135
Total:	39	14100	$102,226

Since Fall of 2017, VS has been under staff and have stretched ourselves thin. In Fall of 2018, VS when through the process of filling open positions, we hired an additional program coordinator after promoting Sandra Glass to Program Coordinator. We changed our secretary position to an office coordinator and filled that position with Sade Brewer. In Fall we were finally fully staffed. In March of 2019, our program coordinator resigned and leaving the position open again. The position was left open, and duties were completed by two interns Matthew Detwiler and Carmen Stewart. In July of 2019 after completing another round of interviews Jason Williams was hired in the Program Coordinator role. Shortly after, our two Interns left Veteran Services for other placements. The loss of those interns significantly impacted the office as they were definitely hard chargers that filled any gaps given to them to fill.

In terms of budget changes, in 2020, VS was notified that HEB Central Market could no longer support our Veteran's Day event. They were encouraged to spread their generosity to other organizations that could benefit from their services. While VS, was thankful for

the generosity of HEB Central Market for four years straight we will definitely feel the impact of the loss of this generous gift. We estimate that VS will need to spend $3000-4000 to host a Veterans Day Event our Student, Staff, and Faculty that have served our country deserve.

Lastly, VS had hoped that our computer lab computers would be upgraded as part of a DSAES rotational replacement plan, unfortunately, when it was our turn in the rotation only three of the computers on Staff Desks were replaced. As a result, VS must replace the computer lab computers to ensure our student veterans will have a computer lab to use. The current equipment is estimated to be about 6+ years old and despite updating software, are old, slow and outdated. We must replace them.

6. if your unit concluded FY2019 with a Fund 3 addition to Fund Equity in excess of $5,000, please describe the conditions which caused the addition and provide a line-item identification of the budgetary source(s) of the addition (i.e. lapsed salary, conference travel, etc.).

At the conclusion of 2019, Veteran Services returned a Fund Equity of $44, 708.

	FY 2019	FY 2019	FY 2019	FY 2019	FY 2019
	Base Budget 201-2019	Final Budget 2018-2019	Actual Expenses + Commitments 2018-2019	Approved Equity Carryforward	Funds to be Returned to Reserve
Salary/Wage/Fringe	228,974	231,450	187,742		43,708
Maintenance&Operations/Travel	26,593	63,311	62,131		1,180
Utilities	-	-	-		0
Fund Transfers for Maintenance					0
SFAC Totals	255,567	294,761	249,873	0	44,888

Funds to be Returned to Reserve	44,888

As shown the spread sheet above, the majority of this fund equity is due to lapse salary, incurred during the hiring process in late 2018 and summer of 2019, As mention before, Veteran services endured 7 months with inadequate staffing. $1, 180 in M&O is accounted for the by the 6% Admin charge on salary, not paid. If given the opportunity and time to spend those funds, VS could have purchased much need supplies and equipment for the office.

7. Please list your 2020-2021 strategic initiatives and action steps in priority order and cite the specific Division of Student Affairs and Enrollment Services Strategic Initiatives and University of Houston Strategic Goals to which they relate. Larger units may wish to group responses by subprogram. Under each strategic initiative, please state the specific action steps (programs, activities, services, policies/procedures, etc.) that you intend to implement to accomplish your stated initiative.

> Goal 1: Review Current Student Programs: VS has 3 Student led programs that need to be reviewed, revamped, and relaunched. VS Orientation, Peer Mentoring, Peer Tutoring

Action Step:
1. Conduct a needs assessment among student users to determine programmatic needs.
2. Conduct a focus group of current student leaders leading the programs to determine feasibility of these students leading these programs and how to ensure successful turn over.
3. Implement Changes.

Goal 2 Enhance Veteran Services culture of Diversity and Inclusion: Enhance culture of diversity and inclusion by bolstering training and education with division partners

Action Steps:
1. Conduct D&I Audit of Veteran Services as a Department
2. Increase Trainings offered to staff: LGBTQ, CAPS, WOMEN & GENDER, D&I, Others
3. Explore and plan department IDI training for department

Goal 3: Increase Veteran Recruitment Efforts: Explore Moving the needle in the Military Connected Student Population on Campus
Action Steps
1. Build relationships with feeder schools.
2. Build relationships with nearby Active Duty Bases
3. Increase outreach to Active Duty Populations through all avenues. Ex: Education Fairs, advertisements

8. **Recognizing that the potential to generate additional Student Service Fee income for FY2021 base funding is extremely limited and recognizing that it is likely that some units will not be allocated the new base budget and/or one-time funds requested. Please provide a narrative of how your unit would accommodate a reduction of 5% in your total FY2021 base Student Service Fee budget request and provide a line-item explanation of where budgetary cuts would be made.**

In implementing a 5% Cut, Veteran Services would cut $13075 dollars from its base budget. In doing so, we looked at cutting the majority of Travel and Professional Development for our VS staff. While there are always different ways of developing ourselves professionally than to travel, the ability to travel to National Conferences allows us to stay globally competitive amongst our peers across the Nation. In the last 3 years, Veteran Services has submitted multiple proposals to present various veteran centric topics at National and regional conferences and we have been selected 6 times. In addition,   each time that Veteran services has presented at a National Conference, we have also afforded our Student Leaders the opportunity to take part in the process of submitting proposals, and presenting alongside VS Staff. These opportunities are a valuable learning experience for

our Military-Connected   Students. In 2019, VS presented nationally at the Student Veterans of America Conference in Orlando to over 150 people during one presentation. This Conference continues to allow UH VS to   present ourselves as leaders in the area of serving student veterans.

In addition, Veteran Services would be required to cut funding allocated for business meals. Business   meals occur 2-3 times a year during vital and mandatory staff trainings. As our student staff changes   and we are charged with providing excellent customer service standard it is imperative that we keep   our staff trained. We have also have added a goal to add more trainings on Diversity and Inclusion and many others. While the student staff is paid during training we have valued being able to provide them a nice meal during the 4-6 hour trainings. Lastly, printing is a very nice benefit that we have been able to offer our military connected students. Through a very generous contract provided by the owner of Laser Printing, a military father, we have been able to offer free printing from our center, however with a 5% Cut we may not be able to continue at the rate we are going. We would have to make some cuts.

Base Budget: $261, 518	Proposed Cut 5% $13,075
Awards	$1100
Business Meals	$1500
Office Supplies	$1600
Professional Development	$1000
Travel	$4200
Uniforms	$2000
Printing for Students	$1675
Total:	$13075

9. What are the other possible sources of funding available to your unit and what efforts are being made to access them (e.g. grants, donations, etc.)? If you receive funds from other sources, please briefly describe the source, purpose, and duration of the funding and report the amounts received in the appropriate rows/columns on the SFAC Spreadsheet.

IN FY 18-19, VS received both corporate gifts and private gifts from donors. We have continued to receive small corporate gifts from Bechtel and Chevron Phillips Chemical Company. In addition, we receive small donations from private donors who have donated one time donations through giving campaigns. We work with DSAES, development officer to ensure that VS is fostering relationships that could turn into a donation for VS Projects.

2018-2019 Gift Funding	
Corporate Gifts	$1500
Private	$170
Total:	$1670

10. Please describe any services that are similar to yours and/or any overlap between your unit and any other unit(s) providing services to students and the rationale for the overlap.

Similar Services

The Veterans Certification unit within the Office of the University Registrar processes VA benefits for students. This unit processes certification and ensures that veteran students are making progress towards their degree as required by law. This unit is a much like financial aid- in that they are responsible for timely and accurate processing and the disbursement of federal dollars. The VSO works closely with the Certification unit and is most often the initial point of entry for veteran students who need to know next steps at the University.

Making effective referrals as well as fostering a supportive path to University services is a critical component to the VSO's mission. Veterans start at the VSO because they have a significant comfort level discussing their issues and identifying their needs with other veterans. Helping veterans take advantage of the services available both at the University and in the community is key to the office's success.