

FY 2027 STUDENT FEES ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SFAC) QUESTIONNAIRE

University of Houston – Veteran Services

Questionnaire completed by:

Celina A. Dugas, Director, Veteran Services

University of Houston | cadugas@uh.edu | 832-842-6108

1. Unit Mission, Goals, and Student Fee Justification

Mission:

The University of Houston Veteran Services is committed to supporting the success of our military-connected students and their families. We honor the diverse experiences and contributions of veterans, active duty, guard, reserve, and dependents by providing advocacy, resources, and guidance. Through education, collaboration, and outreach, we foster academic achievement, personal growth, and career readiness, ensuring our student veterans thrive during their time at UH and beyond. (Updated: 8/20/2025)

Core Goals:

- 1. Student Success:** Advance academic achievement, retention, and timely graduation of military-affiliated students through targeted advising, case management, and peer engagement.
- 2. Inclusive Student Experiences:** Create a connected community through events, mentoring, and co-curricular engagement that promote belonging and well-being.
- 3. Workforce and Career Readiness:** Equip students with professional skills and connections through internships and partnerships with UH Career Services and external partnerships with organizations such as NextOp and Four Block.
- 4. Continuous Improvement and Assessment:** Utilize data-driven assessment to strengthen services, optimize resource allocation, and align with DSA strategic priorities.

Justification for Student Fee Allocation:

Student fees directly support the infrastructure that enables VS to deliver over 30 programs annually and reach more than 10,000 participants. Funding supports professional staff, graduate interns, and student employees who provide direct case

management, certification navigation, academic coaching, and engagement programming. These services measurably improve student retention and satisfaction while enhancing UH's commitment to serving an underserved, federally recognized student population.

On October 15, Student Centers installed a people counter at our main door; one year later, it recorded **1,258,105 people entering the office**. (data collected 10/16/2025 @1pm)

2. Evaluation and Contribution to DSA Strategic Initiatives

Veteran Services aligns all assessment and planning processes with the DSA Strategic Plan pillars: Student Success, Inclusive Student Experiences, and Assessment & Continuous Improvement, and employs mixed-method evaluation to monitor progress. We use Qualtrics surveys, continuous focus groups, and student feedback to assess our programs and services.

Assessment Activity 1 – AIMS Program (Academic Integration for Military-Affiliated Scholars):

Outcome: Increase GPA, retention, and academic belonging among military-affiliated students.

Method: Pre/post surveys, GPA tracking, and focus groups each semester.

Highlights FY26–FY27: First cohort served 25 students with individualized case management. Preliminary data show improved persistence among participants. The AIMS model, anchored in Tinto's Theory of Integration, was validated by the External Review as a high-impact practice.

Assessment Activity 2 – Engagement Events and Community Building:

Outcome: Strengthen sense of belonging and connection to UH.

Results: Across 2025, UH VS hosted more than 20 events reaching nearly 3,000 participants, including resource fairs, mixers, and wellness initiatives. Student feedback indicated heightened awareness of campus resources and increased social connection.

Assessment Activity 3 – Communication and Outreach Effectiveness:

Outcome: Improve awareness and access to resources through email, social media, and onboarding materials.

Results: Facebook followers grew to 1,300. Post-event surveys showed increased clarity of communications and student confidence in navigating benefits.

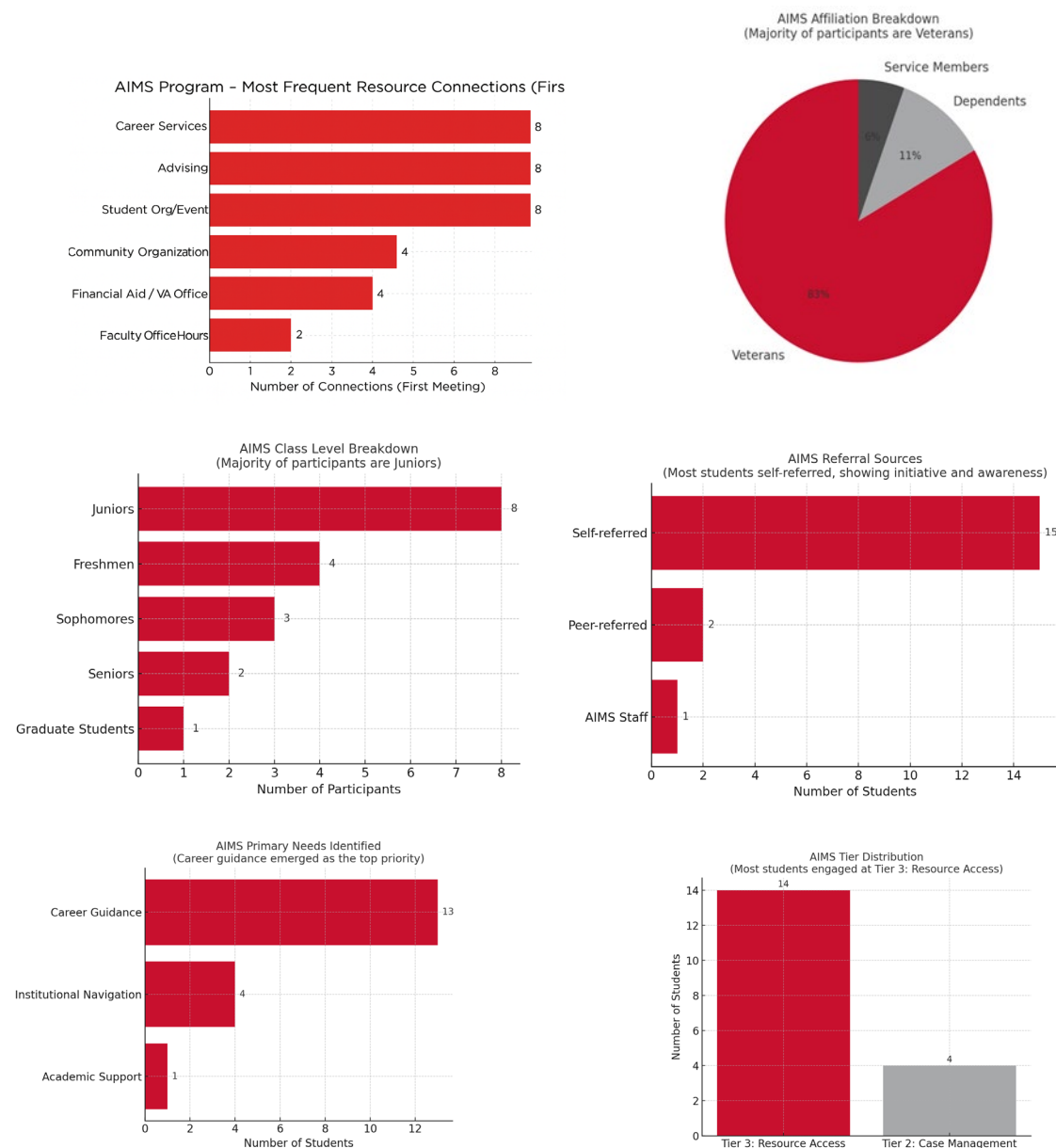
Contribution to Retention and Student Success:

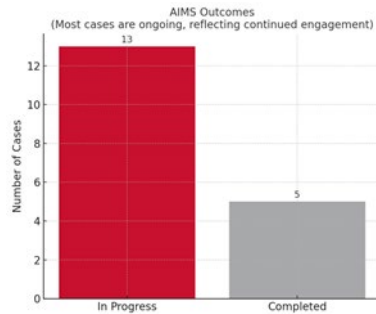
- 20,400+ student work hours provided in FY2025. With 100% Student retention for our Student Staff
- 13 student volunteers contributed 65 service hours.
- \$3,000 per term invested in the Food Shelf Project addressing food insecurity.

Method of Data Collection:

Quantitative data from attendance logs, People Counter analytics, and surveys:
qualitative data from focus groups to inform planning and improvement.

Data Visuals for AIMS Program:





Data for AIMS:

Affiliation Breakdown

- Veterans: **15**
- Dependents: **2**
- Service Members: **1**

Context: The majority of respondents are student veterans themselves, which shows that the questionnaire primarily captures veteran voices. A small number of dependents and one service member also participated, highlighting that outreach is extending beyond just veterans but remains veteran-centric.

Class Level Breakdown

- Juniors: **8**
- Freshmen: **4**
- Sophomores: **3**
- Seniors: **2**
- Graduate Students: **1**

Context: Most participants are upperclassmen (Juniors), which suggests students often engage with AIMS or SVA programming after they have settled into UH. Freshmen and sophomores are represented, but in smaller numbers, suggesting an opportunity for earlier outreach.

Referral Sources

- Self-referred: **15**
- Peer-referred: **2**
- AIMS staff: **1**

Context: The majority of students sought out services on their own, indicating high student initiative and awareness of available support. Peer referrals also played a role, which shows word-of-mouth networks are working. The direct staff referral rate appears low, suggesting that AIMS outreach could encourage a more structured intake.

Primary Needs Identified

- Career Guidance: **13**
- Institutional Navigation: **4**

- Academic Support: **1**
Context: Career development emerges as the top priority, aligning with common veteran concerns around post-military employment. Institutional navigation (e.g., understanding systems and resources) is the second most common need, while academic support appears less frequent but still relevant for targeted cases.

AIMS Tier Distribution

- Tier 3: Resource Access – **14**
- Tier 2: Case Management – **4**
Context: Most students are engaged at the Tier 3 level (general resource access), which means they are seeking targeted information and referrals rather than ongoing, intensive case management. The smaller Tier 2 group represents students with higher-touch support needs.

Reason Codes for Engagement

- Career/Internship: **13**
- Benefits Certification: **1**
- Time Management: **1**
- Social Support Guide: **1**
- Registration/Advising: **1**
- Tutoring Needed: **1**
Context: Again, career concerns dominate. The remaining codes are spread across diverse areas, showing the breadth of student needs — from navigating benefits to academic time management to social connection.

Modality of Interaction

- In-person: **17**
- Video: **1**
Context: Almost all interactions took place face-to-face, which underscores that veterans and dependents value direct, personal advising. The low video engagement could reflect either student preference for in-person contact or limited virtual outreach options.

Outcomes

- In Progress: **13**
- Completed: **5**
Context: Most cases are still ongoing, meaning students are engaged in multi-step support processes. The smaller number of completed cases shows some successful closures but also highlights the importance of ongoing follow-up.

Targeted Outreach for AIMS

Targeted Emails: 8617

Primary GPA Outreach ($1.67 \leq \text{GPA} < 2.669$) 9/5/2025 N=787

GPA Outreach ($\text{GPA} < 1.67$) 9/12/2025 N= 39

Results = 18 Apts Booked via Navigate

AIMS Events Outreach:

Learning Abroad Outreach (All): 10/13/2025 N=2717

Career Workshop Promotions (Vet Target) 9/12/2025 N=1192

HP Event & OBTT & Workshop 9/4/2025 (All) N = 3134

Powell Site visit (STEM Target) N = 748

Budget and Organizational Changes Since FY 2026

Organizational Changes:

- Staffing: UH VS now includes a Director, Assistant Director, two Program Managers, and three Graduate Social Work Interns. This structure enhances case management capacity and program coverage across campuses.
- AIMS Expansion: Following SFAC approval in FY 2026, the AIMS Case Manager role was implemented and scaled to full-time.
- Internship Pipeline: Partnership with the Graduate College of Social Work expanded, strengthening service and assessment capacity.

Budgetary Context:

- Department operates on a base budget of approximately \$284,454. Salary realignments and temporary deficits charged to gift accounts reduced available discretionary funds. Efforts continue to stabilize funding and correct budget transfers.

Programming funds are Annual One-time Requests.

- Supplemental funding through Chevron (\$4,500) and Brookshire Foundation cultivation for a proposed multi-million-dollar Veteran Success Center.

Impact on Programs:

Despite constraints, program delivery remained robust, maintaining student employment and external partnerships (NextOp, Wounded Warrior Project, Houston Texans). Virtual services supported ~40 students across Sugar Land and Katy campuses.

FY2026 Additional One-time Request / FY27 One-time Request: Summer Student Worker Funding

Overview:

The University of Houston Veteran Services Office respectfully requests one-time funding of \$19,271 to support summer student worker staffing for Fiscal Year 2026. This funding is essential to ensure continuous and high-quality support for the

university's nearly 3,000 military-affiliated students, including veterans, dependents, and active-duty personnel.

Justification and Need:

The summer semester represents a critical operational period for the Veteran Services Office. During these months, the team handles intensive onboarding and transition support for new and transfer student veterans, many of whom begin their academic journey in the summer. Additionally, staff manage heightened activity related to orientation coverage, VA and Hazlewood benefits processing, and pre-fall programming that prepares students for academic success.

Due to lean permanent staffing, student workers play a vital operational role. They assist in daily front-line services such as intake, case management support, and event coordination, ensuring that all military-affiliated students receive timely and accurate assistance. Without this funding, service delivery and student response times would be significantly delayed, creating potential barriers for students navigating complex benefit and enrollment systems.

Budget Summary:

- 5 student workers at 30 hours per week
- 12-week summer term (150 hours per student)
- Hourly rate: \$10 per hour
- Total direct wages: \$18,000
- Fringe (1%): \$180
- Administrative overhead (6%): \$1,091
- Total Request: \$19,271

Impact and Outcomes:

Funding this request will:

- Maintain consistent service coverage during the summer term.
- Support timely benefits certification and enrollment assistance for new students.
- Provide employment opportunities that build leadership and professional experience for student veterans.
- Advance the office's mission of fostering academic, personal, and career success among military-affiliated students.

This one-time funding ensures that the University of Houston continues to uphold its commitment to student veteran success, equity, and operational excellence through uninterrupted, high-touch support services.

FY27 One-Time Program Funding Request

Overview:

To sustain the University of Houston's high-level support for its growing military-connected student population, the Veteran Services Office requests one-time funding of \$65,000 for FY27 to support core programming, engagement initiatives, and collaborative student success events. This request reflects the continued expansion of programming needs driven by UH's increasing visibility as a top destination for veterans, active-duty service members, and their dependents.

Justification and Need:

As the University of Houston continues to attract more military-connected students, the demand for transition, success, and community-building programs has risen steadily. The Veteran Services Office now serves over 3,000 military-affiliated students each year, offering comprehensive support, including academic integration, career development, and wellness programming.

This funding ensures the office can continue delivering mission-critical programs that directly impact student persistence and belonging, including orientation and transition support, career-readiness initiatives, mental health awareness, and annual recognition ceremonies. With limited baseline operational funds, one-time support remains essential to sustain the quality and breadth of programming that our students rely on.

Budget Summary:

- One-Time Request: \$61,320
- 6% Administrative Charge: \$3,680
- Total Request: \$65,000

Breakdown of Program Areas Supported (Estimated):

- Student Success & Transition Programming – \$12,000
AIMS Program supplies, outreach, orientation materials, and transition-focused events.
- Recruitment & Campus Engagement – \$10,000
Weeks of Welcome, Family Weekend, and collaborative events with DOS, ISSSO, and Student Centers.
- Career and Professional Development – \$8,000
Career Lunch & Learns, employer panels, and veteran career-readiness programming.
- Cultural Competency & Training – \$6,000
Green Zone Training, sexual assault prevention, mental health awareness, and diversity-focused initiatives.
- Recognition & Leadership Events – \$10,500
Veterans Day Luncheon, 9/11 Memorial, Spring and Fall Cording Ceremonies (including dependents).

- Student Leadership Development & Conferences – \$11,000
Travel and participation for student veterans and staff at national leadership and professional development conferences.
- Student Services & Supplies – \$4,000
Printing, technology, and materials that sustain student use areas (VS lounge, study space, and outreach).

Impact and Outcomes:

This funding will allow UH Veteran Services to:

- Maintain high-impact, veteran-centered programs that support academic and personal success.
- Strengthen student engagement and belonging through community-based programming.
- Provide career and leadership development opportunities for student veterans and dependents.
- Reinforce UH's standing as a military- and veteran-supportive institution recognized for excellence in student success and inclusion.

The FY27 one-time funding request of \$65,000 represents a strategic and fiscally responsible investment in sustaining the essential programming that directly benefits the University's military-connected population. By supporting these initiatives, UH affirms its continued commitment to academic excellence, inclusion, and the success of those who have served our nation and their families.

VS Continuous Improvement:

The August 2025 Staff Retreat launched the External Review Action Plan to formalize assessment cycles and departmental rubrics. FY27 priorities include:

- Implementing the AIMS dashboard for real-time tracking.
- Restoring gift account balances.
- Expanding Green Zone Training and career readiness programming.

Summary

UH Veteran Services continues to demonstrate innovation, accountability, and impact through assessment-driven practice. The unit transitioned from reactive service delivery to a proactive, data-informed model. Despite staffing and fiscal challenges, VS maintained high program output, strengthened partnerships, and expanded its contribution to student success and retention. FY27 funding will ensure continued progress toward equity, access, and excellence for UH's military-affiliated community.