

Veterans Service Office (VSO)

STUDENT FEES ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SFAC)

FY2015 PROGRAM QUESTIONNAIRE

October 23, 2013

Executive Summary

The mission of the Veterans Services Office (VSO) is to foster student veteran success by facilitating the transition of veterans from military to University life. The office assists veterans, guardsmen, reservists, spouses, an, dependents in receiving their military education benefits. The office accomplishes this by:

- peer to peer counseling
- referrals for counseling in financial, vocational, and academic problems
- providing information on University procedures and changes in legislative regulations that affect veterans.
- fostering student engagement through a safe and familiar veterans community center, including a computer lab, within the UH campus.

Below is summary data for veteran students attending the University of Houston a more comprehensive profile is included as part of item #6.

Fall 2012 Certified Reporting Numbers		Veterans (n = 1,530)	
		n	%
Benefits	VA Benefits	1,037	67.8%
	Hazelwood	173	11.3%
	Both Hazelwood and VA	148	9.7%
	No Veteran Related Benefits	172	11.2%

3. List your unit's strategic initiatives and action steps identified for the 2012-2013 academic year and cite the specific Division of Student Affairs Strategic Initiatives (http://www.uh.edu/dsa/about_student_affairs/strategic_plan.html) and University of Houston Strategic Goals (<http://www.uh.edu/president/vision-priorities/>) to which they relate. 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.

2012-2013 Initiatives

1. Support broad student access and institutional excellence through an expanded peer mentoring initiative. At the core of this initiative is a training program designed to prepare student peer mentors to accurately answer federal and state benefit questions as well as provide guidance regarding the University of Houston procedures. In addition, the program will prepare peer mentors to support and effectively refer veteran students and family members to University and regional services. Growing and evolving the peer mentoring program has been very successful. While our VSO service numbers are slightly reduced this year- the peer mentors have made visiting the VSO a valuable experience and minimized the obvious challenges presented by the extensive renovation of the University Center.

2. Support broad student access by developing and implementing a set of programs to meet the needs of women veterans. The University is experiencing an increase in the number of female veterans. This growth is in alignment with national trends that reflect the significant growth of women in military service. Women returning from service often have a set of unique needs that require focused programming. This initiative also includes the development of peer mentoring training content to meet the needs of both men and women veterans. The peer mentoring program has expanded access to women's resource referrals. The VSO presented, in partnership with UH's Women's Resource Center, the 2012 documentary *The Invisible War* about

sexual assault in the United States military. The event included a panel discussion which included campus and Houston referral resources.

3. Support broad student access by expanding the communication tools used to inform students and grow veteran student engagement. This initiative includes the development of content as well as refined communication practices that target veteran students at critical stages of their entry and return to the University. The VSO website has been updated and work continues with Enrollment Service Communication partners on targeted outbound communication.

4. Support the effective use of University of Houston resources to foster student success by completing a thorough needs assessment of the VSO. The VSO is committed to delivering services that increases student engagement and foster student success. Veteran students often have a unique set of needs that change during their time at the University. The VSO will continue to evaluate its programming through the lens of both student engagement and success. The VSO continues to focus on improved services and is launching a benchmarking initiative in 2013-2014.

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 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.

Currently the VSO evaluates the delivery of its services based on student usage and participation. The VSO collects data for student usage via a *myUH* id check in system. Prospect and applicant data is currently collected manually. This year the VSO experienced a slight decrease in student participation and requests for service. Ongoing

renovation (now almost complete- for the VSO) has presented a challenge for the office- with particular impact on the Veteran's computer lab.

The VSO has approximately 330 student "visits" per week. The VSO 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. 67% of visits to the VSO are students who visit 3 or more times in a semester, 9% of the visits are students who visit 1-2 times in a term, and 24% of the visits are from prospects and applicants seeking guidance regarding the University of Houston's certification and Hazelwood procedures.

5. Please discuss any budget or organizational changes experienced since your last (FY2014) 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. In addition, if your unit concluded FY2013 with a Fund 3 addition to Fund Equity, please describe the conditions which caused the addition.

The VSO had fund equity due to the lapsed salary dollars for the VSO Director position.

6. Please list your 2014-2015 strategic initiatives and action steps in priority order and cite the specific Division of Student Affairs 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.

Overview of Veterans and Dependents using V.A./Hazelwood benefits.

Fall 2012		Veterans (n = 1,530)		Dependents using Benefits (n = 380)		Non-Veterans (n = 38,837)	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
Benefits	VA Benefits	1,037	67.8%	0	0.0%	0	
	Hazelwood	173	11.3%	349	91.8%	0	
	Both Hazelwood and VA	148	9.7%	31	8.2%	0	
	No Veteran Related Benefits	172	11.2%	0	0.0%	0	
Gender	Female	321	21.0%	215	56.6%	19,623	50.5%
	Male	1,209	79.0%	165	43.4%	19,214	49.5%
Ethnicity	White	695	45.4%	137	36.1%	12,274	31.6%
	African American	241	15.8%	110	28.9%	4,247	10.9%
	Hispanic	385	25.2%	104	27.4%	9,644	24.8%
	Asian American	100	6.5%	4	1.1%	7,642	19.7%
	Native American	6	0.4%	1	0.3%	75	0.2%
	International	2	0.1%	0	0.0%	3,612	9.3%
	Unknown	17	1.1%	1	0.3%	273	0.7%
	Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	4	0.3%	1	0.3%	91	0.2%
Multiracial	80	5.2%	22	5.8%	979	2.5%	

	Fall 2012	Veterans (n = 1,530)		Dependents using Benefits (n = 380)		Non-Veterans (n = 38,837)	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
	New Student - PostBac	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
	New Student -Graduate	50	3.3%	10	2.6%	1,981	5.1%
	New Student - Special Professional	10	0.7%	3	0.8%	429	1.1%
	Transfer - Undergrad	242	15.8%	59	15.5%	3,993	10.3%
	Transfer - PostBac	18	1.2%	0	0.0%	297	0.8%
	Transfer - Graduate	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	
	Transfer - Special Professional	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	
	Continuing Student - Undergrad	970	63.4%	237	62.4%	22,471	57.9%
	Continuing Student -PostBac	50	3.3%	1	0.3%	1,027	2.6%
	Continuing Student - Graduate	119	7.8%	9	2.4%	4,218	10.9%
	Continuing Student - Spec. Prof'l	37	2.4%	7	1.8%	1,114	2.9%
	Freshman	96	6.3%	80	21.1%	5,127	13.2%
Classification	Sophomore	196	12.8%	101	26.6%	6,500	16.7%
	Junior	362	23.7%	91	23.9%	7,840	20.2%
	Senior	592	38.7%	78	20.5%	10,304	26.5%
	Post Bac	68	4.4%	1	0.3%	1,324	3.4%
	Masters	142	9.3%	18	4.7%	4,230	10.9%
	Doctoral	27	1.8%	1	0.3%	1,969	5.1%
	Special Professional	47	3.1%	10	2.6%	1,543	4.0%
Full-Time/Part-Time	Full-Time	1,071	70.0%	315	82.9%	27,786	71.5%
	Part-Time	459	30.0%	65	17.1%	11,051	28.5%

1. Leverage Veterans Success on Campus (VSOC) Site at UH

Strategic Initiatives

Create and engage in strategic partnerships.

Create new opportunities for student success through learning, engagement and discovery.

Starting in the fall of 2013, the University of Houston was chosen as a site for expansion of the national Veterans Success on Campus (VSOC) program. This program provides an on-site Veteran Affairs rehabilitation/occupational counselor for UH students. VSOC counselors will provide V.A. resources to help UH Veterans achieve their academic goals and find meaningful careers. The counselors collaborate with internal University of Houston resources & certifying officials, perform outreach, and communicate with student Veterans. They make sure Veterans' health, educational, and benefit needs are met, helping them reach their education and career goals.

2. Expand Peer Mentoring Program

Strategic Initiatives

Create new opportunities for student success through learning, engagement and discovery.

Create and engage in strategic partnerships.

The VSO will continue to expand Veterans Work-study (VWS) Peer Mentoring Initiative by adding additional V.A. funded student positions. Develop and implement a train-the-trainer model using VWS student employees. Provide formal training updates to cover new V.A. or Hazelwood policies- such as Texas' Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) requirement. Train peer mentors to make effective and timely referrals to VSOC counselor. Continue to prepare peer mentors to support and effectively refer veteran students and family members to University and regional services.

3. Develop Pre-New Student Conference Veterans Benefits Workshops

Strategic Initiatives

- Create new opportunities for student success through learning, engagement and discovery.
- Actualize and leverage the fiscal, human, technological, and facility resources that enhance the student experience.

Starting in the fall 2014 orientation cycle (May), the VSO will offer VA/Hazelwood benefits workshops to admitted undergraduate and graduate applicants. These evening and Saturday events will support Veterans and their dependents in getting answers to critical questions

associated with starting at the University of Houston. The sessions will be designed to provide general information and opportunities for one-on-one peer conversations.

4. Conduct UH outreach to feeder community colleges.

Strategic Initiatives

- Create new opportunities for student success through learning, engagement and discovery.
- Actualize and leverage the fiscal, human, technological, and facility resources that enhance the student experience.

Starting in spring 2014 the VSO is working in conjunction with Admissions and the Transfer Assistance Program, to both conduct strategic recruitment of UH student veterans and support transfer student success. The VSO's participation will continue to brand UH as a "veteran friendly" university and support new students with a clear path of access for both VA/Hazelwood benefits and academic progress.

5. Benchmarking & Needs Assessment

Strategic Initiatives

- Create and engage in strategic partnerships.
- Develop a culture of innovation and accountability in the redesign of Division policies, processes and procedures.

The VSO will continue to explore, through a needs assessment process, the changing needs of veterans at the University of Houston. Starting in 2013-2014, the VSO will work in partnership with DSA&ES partners to implement the use of EBI Map-Works Assessment tools to more effectively assess VSO programming and at the same time to bench mark our progress against national institutions. This initiative will support the growth of a continuous improvement culture within the VSO.

7. 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.

For the academic year 2013-2014, the Division of Academic Affairs & Enrollment Services has set a fundraising goal of \$10,000.

8. 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.

The Veterans Certification unit within Registration & Records 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 essential to the office's success.

NOTE: *The totality of your responses to these questions should give the members of the Committee a comprehensive understanding of the role and function of your unit(s). To the extent that your responses do not accomplish this, please revise them accordingly.*

Please send electronic responses ONLY (PDF format) to: Chair, SFAC
% Dean of Students Office
wmunson@uh.edu 9/2013