



Budget Request Form FY2015

Department should complete one form for each individual request

Department: Veteran Resource & Support Center

Program, Service, or Operation Requested

Student Development Specialist II Position (Fulltime – 12 Month)

SAFAB Use Only	
YES	NO

General Description:

Funding for an SDS II position will provide the VRSC with the minimum staff depth and continuity that is required to meet a significantly increased demand for military-affiliated student programs and outreach.

Request Type: Full Increase One-Time Partial/Matching

Type of Funds Requested UAF Other

General Questions:

Why is this important to your department? How does this increase impact students, and what motivated this request?

In the first year, the VRSC initiated numerous partnerships, programs, and events (see Attachment A) in an effort to ensure that Texas A&M provided basic student veteran support that is consistent with both nationally recognized and Texas A&M University System “best practices.” During the first 6-8 months, the workload was reasonably manageable; the staff could meet both the daily student demand and initial program development requirements. In the past 4-6 months, as the VRSC became a “known resource,” daily student contact requirements/demand increased significantly. The ability to initiate new programs (or even maintain current programming) while also meeting daily student needs cannot be met with the current staffing. This new position must be filled for the VRSC to meet its stated mission and serve well those Aggies who have served.

Is it part of your strategic plan? What will be the impact if it is not funded?

As a new office, the VRSC is still attempting to develop a strategic plan. Much of the first year focused on meeting the easily identifiable immediate student veteran needs. Without additional staff, the VRSC will be forced to remain focused on “short term” requirements to the detriment of strategic planning that is required to make Texas A&M truly “veteran friendly.” In a recent formal assessment focus group (Spring 2013), one student veteran stated, “Most faculty, students and people in the community think that A&M is veteran friendly, but it is really just Corps friendly.” **Bottom Line: If unfunded, adequate support for a growing**

student veteran population will remain a myth at Texas A&M. Given our Aggie military legacy and heritage, we can, and should be, better than this!

How do other sources of funding (fundraising, sponsorship, reserves, etc.) been considered? Please explain.
The VRSC has resourcefully maximized other sources of funding, resources, and support to meet the increasing student requirements. The office opened with only two staff; the Director and an assistant. These two positions remain as the only Division of Student Affairs funded positions. The following (externally funded/sponsored positions) have been incorporated into the VRSC staffing structure to meet student demand:

- **Military Admissions Liaison:** Funded by the Office of Admissions but co-located in the VRSC (as of Jan '13) to enhance and streamline student veteran support. A second Military Admissions Advisor was recently approved by Admissions and will be added later this year to support the 130+ new prospective student veteran contacts per month.
- **Vet Success on Campus (VSOC) Counselor:** Funded by the VA and works in both the VRSC and the Scholarships & Financial Aid Veteran Services Office to connect student veterans and dependents with VA resources.
- **Student Internships:** Two unfunded interns supported VRSC programs during the spring '13 semester. A Texas State University Master's in Social Work intern focused on program development, student support, and event coordination. The second Master's intern from the TAMU Agrilife Communications Department focused on social media and web page development.
- **VA Student Work Study Program:** With VA approval, the VRSC hired two VA funded Work Study positions (maximum of 20 hours per week each). They started in late May and effectively replaced the interns. During the summer, their combined 35 - 40 hours per week helped the VRSC meet increasing requirements. However, when fall classes started, they were forced to reduce their hours. The VRSC is now approved to hire a third Work Study position to fill the gap.
- **Graduate Assistant:** The Performing Arts Department has sponsored a Graduate Assistant for 10 hours per week for two semesters (through May '14) to assist the VRSC with a significant event called "Telling Aggieland."

While these positions continue to help the VRSC, they are specifically focused on a narrow part of the overall VRSC mission. Additionally, their "part time" status and high turnover rate do not provide the continuity required to meet the increasing student demand and program requirements.

The VRSC was successful in obtaining \$57,000 in donations (or pledges for future financial support) in the first year; this amount is nearly twice the initial operating budget of the VRSC. However, the nature of "donor wishes" typically directs these funds to direct support of student veterans (i.e., scholarships, text book loans, Aggie Rings, recognition, etc.). Very little of this money can be used at the discretion of the VRSC.

As a new office, the VRSC is still building a cash reserve to meet minimum levels.

What sort of input did you receive (student, faculty, staff, other) to determine this need?

Student Government has been instrumental in identifying needs of student veterans. In May 2012, the TAMU Student Government Veterans' Affairs Task Force Report was published. This report made numerous recommendations regarding Academic Services, Student Services, Strategic Planning and Long Term Programs.

While many of the easier recommendations have been accomplished, additional VRSC staffing is required to work on the remaining items. In March 2013, the Student Senate passed S.B. 65-56, "The Veteran Resource and Support Center Bill." This bill stated that "...an allotment of \$58,000, through the University Advancement Fee, should be apportioned to the Veteran Resource and Support Center to add immediate support in the form of student workers, additional permanent or part time staffing, additional supplies and programming and recruiting funds..."

Other sources that have been used to identify programming (and ultimately VRSC staffing) requirements include: Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education pertaining to "the Role of Veterans and Military Programs and Services;" Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (SOC) Standards; and the Texas A&M University System "Best Practices for Military and Veterans Support Services."

What actions have you implemented internally to address the identified need?

As mentioned above, the VRSC continues to resourcefully cultivate opportunities by finding additional support from other sources. The accomplishments of the VRSC in the first year were only possible through these additional 7 (soon to be 9) externally provided resources. In the near term, the VRSC has most likely maximized these opportunities; future success will mandate one additional full time position to provide sufficient depth in the staff and continuity.

Generally, what assessment tools will you use to evaluate this program/service?

The VRSC Director chairs the Troops to College Data & Assessment Subcommittee. This committee is responsible for conducting, developing and analyzing on-going assessment of military-affiliated student needs. In the first year, the VRSC partnered with Student Life Studies to conduct an initial student veteran needs assessment. This assessment (and follow-on focus groups) provided baseline data that will be used as a benchmark for future assessments. Future efforts will expand to include assessment of faculty/staff student veteran issues awareness and more specific needs assessment of military dependents and veteran spouses/families.

While these large survey type assessments provide useful data to increase overall effectiveness, the VRSC must begin to assess programs and events with short, simple surveys on a routine basis. Of the 25 programs and 41 events initiated or supported by the VRSC last year, only 2-3 were directly assessed. Quite simply, these types of assessments are currently beyond the VRSC staff's ability to conduct. The addition of this SDS II position will allow the VRSC to enhance assessment efforts to better support our students.

Funding Description:

	Dollar Amount
Total Estimated Cost	\$47,500.00
<i>Less Estimated Partial/Matching Funds (if applicable)</i>	
TOTAL UAF INCREASE REQUEST	\$47,500.00

SAFAB Comments/Notes: