

Program Title:  
**Aggie Vet Connect Program**  
Organization Name:

**Texas A&M University Veteran Resource & Support Center (TAMU VRSC)**

**Program Description:** Due to a lack of communication and programming, many of our 600+ student veterans are dis-connected from the available university and local resources. Aggie Vet Connect is one of our first major initiatives. It will become a full range of programs developed and organized by the VRSC in partnership with other offices and organizations. It is designed to proactively facilitate the engagement of student veterans to help identify those in need of additional academic or mental well-being assistance. Specific programs include:

- New Student Conference and sponsorship programs that:
  - o Connect current veteran students with new veteran students to facilitate transition to TAMU.
  - o Enables early identification of wounded warriors and facilitates student veteran data collection.
- Peer-to-peer veteran student mentoring program (which includes formal mentor training).
- Faculty/Staff connections with student veterans to facilitate:
  - o Faculty/Staff awareness of unique needs of student veterans/wounded warriors, signs/symptoms of PTSD/TBI, and military-to-student transition issues.
  - o Faculty/Staff sensitivity to student veteran experiences.
  - o Faculty/Staff “ATM Veteran Mentor” participation.
  - o Student veteran awareness of, and interaction with, veteran faculty/staff members.
- Increase overall campus awareness of student veteran/wounded warrior experiences.

**Program Goals:** Our overall goal is to improve the TAMU student veteran/wounded warrior success rates. Measurement of this goal is elusive; there is very little existing data on previous/current success rates. Sub goals include:

1. Develop TAMU’s first proactive student veteran transition support program that meets the critical needs of student veterans/wounded warriors as they enter Texas A&M.
2. Better identify the TAMU student veteran population (beyond benefit certification data) to facilitate on-going student needs and program assessments to improve student and program success rates.
3. Facilitate early contact (prior to 1<sup>st</sup> class day) with student veterans better connect them with additional existing on-campus resources as needed.
4. In partnership with the TAMU Academic Success Center, develop TAMU’s first proactive student veteran peer-to-peer mentoring program to improve academic performance.
5. Expand our (currently limited) faculty/staff programs to meet the critical needs of returning service members (i.e., early identification of student veteran transitional problems or PTSD/TBI).
6. Develop a systematic program to improve faculty/staff (focused on academic advisors) engagement with student veterans/wounded warriors.
7. Develop new programs and facilitate unique opportunities that connect student veterans with the greater student body.

## PROGRAM COMPONENTS

The Aggie Vet Connect Program is comprised of seven sub-programs.

### 1. New/Transfer Student Conference Student Veteran Program

**Participants:** All new/transfer undergraduate TAMU student veterans and wounded warriors.

**Mandatory Student Veteran Information Session:** All veterans must attend (military dependent attendance is highly encouraged) to receive information on benefits and VRSC military affiliated programs/opportunities.

**Vet Connect Event:** At the end of Day 1 of the conference, new student veterans and dependents are invited to meet with current veteran students, dependents, and selected faculty/staff for a “1-on-1 engagement” social event to facilitate transition into the university environment and learn more about student veteran/wounded warrior programs.

**2. Vet Camp** - This is a 1-day orientation program conducted prior to the 1<sup>st</sup> day of class. It is designed to get student veterans ready for their classes and to facilitate their transition to Texas A&M.

**Participants:** Vet Camp will be open to all new student veterans (it is mandatory for some specified veteran co-enrollment students when the new VETS Program is approved by TAMU).

**Vet Connect Event:** As one part of this program participants will select and meet their student veteran peer mentor and their faculty/staff mentor. They will also connect with other campus veteran/wounded warrior support offices to include representatives from Student Counseling Services, Academic Success Center, and Academic Advisors.

**3. Vet Connect Breakfasts/Lunches** - These events will be used to facilitate a recurring opportunity to improve and expand faculty/staff/advisor engagement with student veterans.

**Participants:** This event will be open to all TAMU student veterans.

**Vet Connect Event:** At each breakfast/lunch, one or more university faculty, staff or advisors will be invited by student veterans as their “Guest(s) of Honor.” Although the agenda will be informal, the guest will be asked to provide a brief background on their role at TAMU, their military experience (if applicable), and their advice on student success. Student veteran participants will be asked to share their background/military experiences and ask questions of the guest.

**4. Recreational Sports Veteran/Wounded Warrior Engagement Activities** – In partnership with TAMU Recreational Sports, the Aggie Adaptive Sports Club and the Student Veterans Association, the VRSC will assist in coordinating participant sports events that draw student veterans/wounded warriors and other non-veteran students together.

**Participants:** This event will be open to all TAMU student veterans/wounded warriors. The leadership of the Aggie Adaptive Sports Club and the Student Veteran Association will be asked to identify students from other TAMU student organizations to participate with the student veterans/wounded warriors.

**Sports Activities:** The specific activity may include adaptive sports or other sport/event already programmed by TAMU Recreational Sports during the semester.

**Vet Connect Event:** These events are designed to facilitate unique opportunities that connect student veterans/wounded warriors with the greater student body.

**5. Faculty/Staff Veteran Awareness/Training Sessions** – These sessions are designed to expand faculty/staff programs to meet the critical needs of returning service members. Topics will vary but

may include PTSD/TBI awareness, student veteran needs, veteran scholarship opportunities/financial aid, Wounded Warrior Higher Education Program, and veteran career counseling trends/information.

**Participants:** Faculty, staff and advisors along with student veterans.

**Vet Connect Event:** The student veteran panel will serve as the “Capstone Event” to improve faculty, staff and advisor engagement with student veterans/wounded warriors.

**6. Student Veteran Peer-to-Peer Mentor Training Classes** – These sessions will be a mandatory requirement for all student veterans that want to participate in the peer-to-peer mentoring program.

**Participants:** Any student veteran who has been at TAMU for at least one semester and meets academic requirements.

**Vet Connect Event:** At the conclusion of each semester, the VRSC will conduct a peer-to-peer mentoring program assessment event. All participants will be asked to meet and provide input and discuss the value of the program and ways to improve student veteran peer mentoring efforts.

**7. Special Events** – These events will be identified as opportunities become available. They may include special veteran workshops, conferences, meetings or events and will be used to expand other programs to meet the critical needs of returning service members and to increase veteran awareness and connections across campus.

**Participants:** To be determined by the nature of the event.

**Vet Connect Event:** To be determined by the nature of the event.