SAFAB
Student Affairs Fee Advisory Board

Budget Request Form FY2018
Department should complete one form for each individual request

Department: Veteran Resource & Support Center

SAFAB Use Only	
YES	NO

Program, Service, or Operation Requested
Student Development Specialist II (Full Time – 12 Month)
Campus Partnership & Assessment Coordinator

General Description:
Funding for an SDS II position will provide the VRSC with the capability to build and enhance campus partnerships that will be required to meet a significantly increased demand for military-affiliated student programs and outreach. The assessment component is critical in truly transforming the TAMU VRSC into a preeminent higher education veteran support office.

Request Type: **X** Full   ☐ Increase   ☐ One-Time   ☐ Partial/Matching

Type of Funds Requested   **X** UAF   ☐ Other

General Questions:
How does this address an important need and positively impact students?
In the first four years (with the smallest staff in the Division), the VRSC has been able to begin collecting limited data on student veteran success. While this data has demonstrated small glimpses of "what we know" about Aggie student veterans, dependents and survivors; it has really demonstrated "what we don't know" and "what we need to know" in order to take the VRSC to the next level of expertise. Despite our VRSC success, we are much like most campuses across the country – The detailed understanding of the population we are trying to serve is inadequate due to a gross lack of a targeted assessment capability (more on this topic in the "data and evidence" paragraph below).

The ability to obtain data and complete formal, long-term assessment of programs and our student population is the greatest VRSC strategic challenge! Detailed data to support VRSC programming decisions was rarely available in our first four years. However, it wasn't required; the decisions were intuitively obvious. This "decision by intuition" process will become increasingly ineffective as the VRSC matures and attempts to build more effective campus partnerships. Better data and long-term comparative assessment that focuses on student veteran success metrics will be required to modify more robust programming.

The VRSC also must meet the following assessment related requirements: The Division of Student Affairs new (data intensive) Annual Report and a Comprehensive Program Review (a 5 year requirement). Ideally, these

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would be tied to the university assessment requirement (WEAVE). The combination of these requirements is beyond the capability of a small VRSC staff. The solution to this challenge will require additional resources to develop and implement a comprehensive and complimentary assessment plan to fulfill the VRSC Strategic Plan.

What department/Division Strategic Plan item does this support? What is the impact if not funded?
The Campus Partnership & Assessment Coordinator will be instrumental in the accomplishment of all five of the VRSC Strategic Goals. Each of these goals has specific objectives that rely on increased/improved campus partnerships and assessment; this position is the key to enhancing the VRSC core "resource & support" mission!

- Strategic Goal #1: Develop, Refine, Integrate, and Assess programs and resources to facilitate successful student veteran transitions.
- Strategic Goal #2: Enhance and "Export" the Campus Veteran Services Effort
- Strategic Goal #3: Expand the VRSC Development Program to facilitate financial stability for student veterans/spouses and to support the VRSC of the future.
- Strategic Goal #4: Expand and refine the assessment from "application to vocation" for graduate and undergraduate student veterans.
- Strategic Goal #5: Increase proactive student veteran recruiting to support TAMU enrollment goals.

Additionally, by adding this position, the VRSC will be ideally suited to provide unique contributions to all six of the DSA Strategic Goals, the university mission, Vision 2020, and the TAMU Foundation's "Lead by Example" development campaign.

If not funded:
- TAMU will continue to be a part of the vast majority of campuses that don't understand their student veteran population successes and failures.
- VRSC programming decisions will continue to be based on intuition vice assessment; the potential impact of programming will not be realized.
- The VRSC cannot meet the DSA Comprehensive Program Review requirement.
- The VRSC will only be able to provide minimal annual assessment (WEAVE) documentation.
- The VRSC Annual Report will only be able to articulate some of the "good news success" based on limited data.
- VRSC development efforts will be negatively impacted.
- The VRSC Strategic Plan will have to be modified to pursue lesser objectives at a much slower pace.

Please provide any data, evidence, input (student faculty, staff, other) you gathered to help you determine the need for additional resources.
To illustrate the need for additional resources, a little benchmarking is helpful. The University of South Florida only has a slightly larger (~10-15%) student veteran population than Texas A&M and they provide comparable programs and resources. They have six full time staff to perform their resource and support mission. At TAMU, we only have three full time staff. In the 2016 "Best for Vets" National Ranking, USF rose to #2 (from #8) while TAMU fell to #23 (from #7). Quite simply, the VRSC current staffing is insufficient to remain as a national leader in this area.

The VRSC's ability to improve programs and build assessment efforts will continue to be challenged as our student veteran populations grows exponentially. Student veteran enrollment increased over 38% between

Updated 8/24/16

calendar year 2015 and 2016. Since 2013, the student veteran enrollment growth rate is 84%. Initial indications (based on current applications) suggest that TAMU will see double-digit student veteran growth again in 2017.

National organizations are also reporting about the lack of student veteran assessment:

> NASPA, in partnership with InsideTrack, documented the following in the 2013 report, *Measuring Success of Student Veterans and Active Duty Military Students:* "Institutional efforts to support active duty and student veterans are likely to be most effective when guided by timely and accurate data. However, results of our survey indicate that few institutions are disaggregating retention and completion data in ways that allow for unique tracking of active duty and student veteran populations…Specific to student veterans, 33% of responding institutions indicated that they track student veteran retention and/or completion rates separately from the overall population. Twenty-six percent of institutions track both retention and degree completion, 6% track degree completion only, and 1% track only retention. *Despite increasingly dedicating fiscal and human resources to support active duty and student veterans, only 25% of responding institutions indicate having a detailed understanding of the causes of stop-out or dropout among their active duty military and student veteran populations…"*

Bottom Line: At TAMU, we currently remain as part of the national problem. While we have dedicated additional resources to support student veterans, we need to work smarter (based on better assessment) rather than just throwing resources at a student population.

What actions have you implemented internally to address the identified need?
Campus Partnerships: When the VRSC opened in 2012, there we no campus partnerships to support student veterans. Currently, the VRSC now has Military Admissions and a VA Vet Success on Campus (VSOC) counselor working in the center. In the near future, the Academic Success Center will provide a coach that was specifically hired to assist student veterans. The VRSC is also in discussion with the Career Center to obtain a dedicated Veteran Career Coordinator assigned to the VRSC. The growth of campus partnerships has exceeded any expectation in just a few short years. The VRSC has attempted to use student workers to help manage the coordination of these staff members and the partner events; this works poorly at best. The only viable option is to continue to have the Director and the Program & Outreach Coordinator manage these relationships as part of their overall duties. As these partnerships grow, this option will no longer work!

The VRSC Program & Outreach Coordinator will be subject to the new FLSA rules in December 2016. In August, the VRSC started tracking staff hours to determine FLSA impact. The Director and the Program & Outreach Coordinator are averaging over 55 hours per week. We must still find a way to reduce the Coordinator's hours by 15 hours per week prior to December.

Assessment: In the past three years, the VRSC Director has put together a "patchwork" of resources to obtain the basic and limited data that can support the greatest impact. This includes:

- Using the TAMU Troops to College Committee (the campus veteran advisory committee), we have formed the "Data & Assessment Subcommittee" to periodically address specific assessment deficiencies.

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- The VRSC has used Student Life Studies for assistance in surveys, questionnaires and campus (WEAVE) assessment requirements.
- The Veteran Services Office in Scholarships & Financial Aid provides some assessment metrics, but their focus in only on veterans using benefits (this excludes about 35% of our student veteran population.
- The PAVE Program Office at the University of Michigan has provided some assistance with surveys but, again, this only addresses undergraduates using the Post 9/11 GI Bill.
- Other campus offices that provide data or assessment assistance include Disability Services, the Career Center, Admissions, and the Office of the Registrar.

While these resources have provided the VRSC with data to enhance programs, the "patchwork approach" is too time consuming for a small staff and is no longer sufficient to meet current or future requirements.

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

Over the next 12-24 months, the VRSC will reduce the overall number of programs by linking several existing complimentary programs into a comprehensive Transition Toolkit that provides a full continuum of proactive student veteran support from 'application to vocation.' This effort will include: An Individualized student assessment prior to beginning classes; detailed checklists and resource links to support admissions, academic success, student life, financial wellbeing, social/health, and career readiness. The primary role for this new position will be to link assessment with program refinement.

By enhancing campus partnerships and student veteran assessment, we will continue to improve the Aggie Veteran Network, PAVE, MAPIT, VSOC, VA Work Study as well as increase student veteran awareness and use of services provided by Disability Services, Student Health, Student Counseling, Academic Advisors, Academic Success Center, Scholarships & Financial Aid, and the Career Center.

How have other sources of funding (fundraising, sponsorship, reserves, etc.) been considered?
Please explain.
The long-term goal is to support several VRSC positions (possibly this position) through the recently established VRSC Enrichment Endowment Fund. While recent development efforts have been very successful, this fund is lower on the development priority list than veteran and veteran spouse scholarships. Once the immediate scholarship need is filled, the VRSC development priority will shift to the Enrichment Fund and support positions like this one.

Funding Description:

	Dollar Amount
Total Estimated Cost	$50,000.00
Less Estimated Partial/Matching Funds (if applicable)	
TOTAL INCREASE REQUESTED	$50,000.00

SAFAB Comments/Notes:

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