

# **Veteran Resource and Support Center**

## **Vet Camp**

### **Spring 2018**

#### **Background**

The Veteran Resource and Support Center (VRSC) was formally dedicated as a department in the Division of Student Affairs in October 2012. According to its website (<http://aggieveterans.tamu.edu/>), its “mission, as a component of Texas A&M University, is to provide:

- Referrals to helpful resources on campus and in the community
- Help in navigating the campus and answering any questions
- Workshops and social events throughout the year
- Opportunities to connect with other student veterans on campus
- Assistance with the transition from military to student life at Texas A&M”

VRSC sponsors Vet Camp, an orientation specifically for veterans held in the fall and spring prior to the first day of classes. Per the VRSC website (<http://aggieveterans.tamu.edu/student-veteran-programs>) Vet Camp “is designed to prepare new student veterans for academic success by identifying resources and networking connections. It provides student veterans with over 35 academic, campus, and local resources to facilitate a successful transition to TAMU.”

This is the first time Student Life Studies has worked with the VRSC on conducting an assessment of veteran student experiences with the spring Vet Camp, held on January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018. Two surveys were developed; one to assess the student veterans’ experience at Vet Camp, and another post-camp survey to assess the student veterans’ use of resources presented at Vet Camp and the overall effectiveness of Vet Camp in easing their transition to college.

#### **Method and Sample**

The paper survey distributed at Vet Camp was produced using Teleform<sup>®</sup>, a software program that creates scannable paper surveys and databases. It included 11 quantitative questions and one qualitative question. Sixty Vet Camp attendees received the survey, and 57 completed the surveys, for a 95% response rate.

The post-camp survey was developed using Qualtrics<sup>®</sup>, survey design software used for creating web-based forms and databases. The five question survey contained two quantitative questions and three qualitative questions. Due to branching technology, not all respondents saw all the questions. The survey link was sent to email addresses of student veterans who had attended Vet Camp. The invitation to take the survey was sent on March 26, 2018, with non-respondents receiving up to three reminders before the survey closed on April 6, 2018. Sixty Vet Camp student veterans were set up to receive the survey, however six emails bounced as the email addresses were invalid and could not be found. Therefore, 54 successfully received the survey and 15 responded, yielding a 28% response rate.

The data resulting from both assessments was analyzed using SPSS<sup>®</sup>, a statistical software package, Microsoft Excel<sup>®</sup> and Microsoft Word<sup>®</sup>. Additionally, Vet Camp student veteran attendee demographics were gathered through the university student database.

#### **Results**

Results are reported as means, standard deviations (sd), and frequency percentages for the number of people (n) who responded to the question. For ease of reading, frequency percentages have been rounded

to the nearest whole percent, so totals may not add up to exactly 100%. Tables are in descending mean or frequency order unless otherwise stated. Summary themes from the qualitative questions are contained in this report; the entire list can be found in a separate document.

The survey handed out to the student veterans at Vet Camp listed six resources available to students at Texas A&M University and asked respondents to match one of six statements describing each resource to the name of that resource. Table 1, illustrates the majority of respondents could correctly match the name of all the resources with their corresponding description. The University Writing Center was most frequently identified correctly, and Vet Success on Campus-VA was least frequently correctly matched to its descriptor.

<b>Match the service or services to its resource.</b>	<b>Academic Success Center</b>	<b>Veterans Service Office</b>	<b>Aggie Shields</b>	<b>Vet Success On Campus-VA</b>	<b>Career Center</b>	<b>University Writing Center</b>
<b>Located in the Pavillion, this service offers benefits, scholarships and financial aid services to student veterans</b>	2%	*77%	--	18%	4%	--
<b>Located in Rudder Tower, this service offers tutoring &amp; supplemental instruction to all students, including student veterans</b>	*88%	2%	2%	4%	4%	2%
<b>Located within the Veteran Resource &amp; Support Center (VRSC), it provides Certificates of Eligibility for veteran benefits.</b>	5%	21%	7%	*65%	2%	--
<b>Located on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor in the Koldus Building, this service provides career advising and preparation</b>	7%	--	--	2%	*91%	--
<b>Located on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the Evans Library, this service provides writing &amp; speaking assistance to all students</b>	2%	--	2%	--	--	*96%
<b>Located within the Veteran Resource &amp; Support Center (VRSC) this service provides a book lending library for veterans on campus</b>	4%	--	*91%	5%	--	--

Table 1: Resource Name to Service Match (n=57)

\*Denotes Correct Service Selection

Next, the student veterans attending Vet Camp were asked to rate on a five-point scale how confident they felt in applying the information presented during Vet Camp. Of the 57 who responded, 56% indicated they were confident, 32% indicated they were very confident and 12% reported themselves somewhat confident. No one indicated they were a little confident or not confident (mean=4.19, sd=.64).

Table 2, on the next page, shows the responses of student veterans when asked to rate how prepared they felt about beginning classes at Texas A&M before and after they attended Vet Camp, in a post-then question

format. One-fifth of the student veterans reported feeling unprepared or very unprepared before attending Vet Camp and none indicated feeling unprepared or very unprepared after attending Vet Camp.

<b>How prepared do you feel about beginning classes at Texas A&amp;M?</b>	<b>Very Prepared (5)</b>	<b>Prepared (4)</b>	<b>Somewhat Prepared (3)</b>	<b>Unprepared (2)</b>	<b>Very Unprepared (1)</b>	<b>Mean (sd)</b>
<b>Before attending Vet Camp today</b>	5%	40%	35%	18%	2%	3.30 (.88)
<b>After attending Vet Camp</b>	42%	46%	12%	--	--	4.30 (.68)

Table 2: Feeling Prepared for Beginning Classes (n=57)

Undergraduate student veterans attending Vet Camp were asked if they met and spoke with their PAVE mentor at Vet Camp. Of the 56 respondents, 86% indicated yes, 7% said no and 7% reported being unsure. Next, these same attendees were asked if they felt comfortable reaching out to their PAVE mentor, and 89% of the 56 respondents said yes. Seven percent (7%) indicated they were unsure if they felt comfortable reaching out to their PAVE mentor and 4% indicated no.

Finally, all respondents were asked what changes and improvements they would recommend for future Vet Camps. Many of the 33 respondents were complimentary about Vet Camp, stated N/A and everything was great. Quite a few suggested more time at the stations or resource tables to meet and greet others and connect with other veterans. Others indicated they really liked the panel.

The post-camp survey sent to Vet Camp attendees opened with informing respondents that they had the opportunity to learn about various resources on campus while at Vet Camp. Using a check-all-that-apply format, student veterans were asked to report which resources they used as a result of their participation in Vet Camp. Table 3, indicates that the Veterans Service Office and Aggie Shields were used most frequently during the student veterans first half of their first semester at Texas A&M. Those who selected "other" could provide their responses, which included the Lone Survivor Foundation, Anki app, VRSC and an indication that a student had received the wrong application due date at Vet Camp for using Aggie Shields.

<b>From the list below, which resource have you used as a result of your participation in Vet Camp? (Please select all that apply)</b>	<b>Frequency Percentage</b>
<b>Veterans Service Office</b>	86%
<b>Aggie Shields</b>	71%
<b>Academic Success Center</b>	36%
<b>Other</b>	36%
<b>I am aware of the resources above that I did not select, but have had no need to utilize these resources</b>	36%
<b>Career Center</b>	29%
<b>Vet Success on Campus-VA</b>	21%
<b>University Writing Center</b>	7%
<b>I am not familiar with those resources above that I did not select, and am unsure of what they can offer me</b>	7%

Table 3: Campus Services (n=13)

Respondents were asked now that they have been at Texas A&M for half a semester, what topics did they feel should be covered at Vet Camp or covered in greater depth. Ten responded, and suggested more information about Hazelwood benefits, scholarships, disability services, and veteran student groups on

campus. Others indicated there was already quite a bit covered in such a short time, or there was no need for improvement.

When asked whether they had been in contact with their PAVE mentor since Vet Camp, 79% of the 14 respondents said yes and 21% said no. Those who answered no were asked why there had been no contact between them and their PAVE mentor, and the responses included that they were unaware of who their PAVE mentor was, but indicated that they were a graduate student and may not have one. Another said they showed up too late to be introduced to their PAVE mentor and the third respondent said that their PAVE mentor had tried to reach them, but the respondent had no need to reach out for information.

Lastly, respondents were requested to identify what part of Vet Camp had been most useful or helpful to them. There were a variety of responses from the 10 students, including learning pro-active study strategies, learning about the resources available, putting a face to a name regarding contacts within financial aid, book rental programs, understanding what the Veteran Services Office has to offer, and being at the round tables which enabled discussion with other vets. One respondent also mentioned Adventure Camp as well.

Demographic information for the post camp survey respondents and the participants of Vet Camp is included in Table 4, on the following page, in descending frequency order by participants' demographics. A higher percentage of students who were female, white, classified as juniors and masters students, from the college of Liberal Arts and Nursing and first generation answered the survey than were represented among the overall Vet Camp participants.

<b>Demographic Category</b>	<b>Vet Camp Participants [n=57]</b>	<b>Post Camp Respondents [n=15]</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	84%	62%
Female	16%	39%
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
White	77%	92%
Hispanic or Latino of any Race	14%	8%
Black	4%	--
Asian	4%	--
Multiracial excluding Black	2%	--
<b>Classification</b>		
Sophomore	40%	23%
Junior	26%	31%
Freshman	19%	15%
Senior	5%	8%
Post bac	5%	8%
Masters Students	4%	15%
<b>College</b>		
Liberal Arts	28%	39%
Agriculture and Life Sciences	26%	15%
Engineering	23%	23%
Education and Human Development	9%	8%
Geosciences	5%	8%
Nursing,	2%	8%
Architecture	2%	--
Mays Business School	2%	--
Science	2%	--
Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Science	2%	--
<b>First Generation</b>		
First Generation	53%	69%
Continuing Generation	47%	31%

Table 4: Student Demographics

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Student veterans who attended Vet Camp found it helped them feel more prepared for attending classes at Texas A&M University. They found the resources presented a Vet Camp useful, generally understood what those resources could provide them and reported using those resources, like veteran specific services (Aggie Shield and Veteran Support Services) and academic support services, during their first semester. During Vet Camp, students may not be completely clear regarding the different services offered by the Veteran’s Services Office and Vet Success on Campus-VA, so further clarification may be warranted.

The networking opportunities between student veterans and Texas A&M University staff at the resource tables and roundtable discussions, and among student veterans themselves, was a valued feature of Vet Camp per the participants’ report. Vet Camp organizers may want to increase or lengthen the time of those opportunities at Vet Camp or immediately following the formal program, if possible. Otherwise, providing

additional networking opportunities may also be well received by student veterans, although they may not feel they have time to commit to attending many additional social events throughout the semester. Perhaps mixing these opportunities with academic skill based programs would enhance the perceived value to the student veterans and entice them to attend.

The VRSC staff is encouraged to read all the qualitative comments to gain a deeper understanding of student veterans' feedback. Additionally, it is highly suggested that VRSC share information from this survey with other staff and departments within the university, especially those who work with student veterans and those who participated in Vet Camp.

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