



2021
NASPA
VIRTUAL SYMPOSIUM ON
MILITARY-CONNECTED
STUDENTS

Making Moves: Strategies to Increase Student Veteran Engagement

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Our Presenters



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Learning Outcomes

- **Share** information about student veteran programming at Texas A&M University
- **Discuss** strategies for engaging and improving student veteran engagement on campuses of higher education
- **Describe** challenges brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic
- **Outline** a hypothetical program for student veteran engagement and involvement



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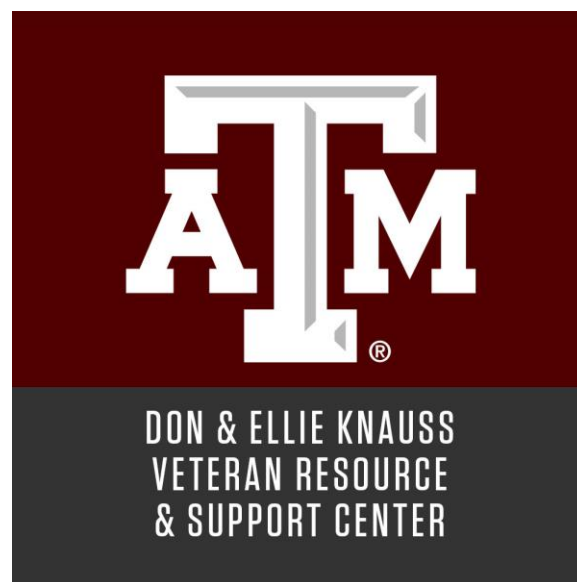
Background

- Texas A&M opens in 1876
 - Mandatory Participation in Corps of Cadets
 - Originally named Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas
- Corps of Cadets "Keepers of Spirit"
 - Response to World War II
 - Fightin' Texas Aggie Band
- Texas A&M reformation in the 1960's
 - Admittance expanded
 - Traditions continue



Background

- ~300 student veterans enroll at Texas A&M University each academic year
- Currently, 1,274 student veterans are enrolled at TAMU
- The Don & Ellie Knauss Veteran Resource & Support Center opened in 2012
 - VetCamp
 - VALOR
 - Aggie Shields



Vet Camp

A 1-Day Extended Orientation Program for New Student Veterans

In-Person (Pre-Covid-19)

- Hosted in student union building
- Gallery walk of campus/local resources
- Keynote speaker from TAMU Veteran Community
- Provided free dinner to guests
- Fall Vet Camp 2019: 55
- Spring Vet Camp 2020: 45

Remote (Post-Covid-19)

- Hosted on Zoom
- Distributed PDF document with information from campus/local resources
- Various speakers identified from across campus & community
- Breakout Interest Sessions
- Fall Vet Camp 2020: 85
- Spring Vet Camp 2021: 58



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VALOR

Veteran Aggie Leaders for Outreach & Resources

- Est. Fall 2019 - Graduate Assistant Role
- Student Development Theory:
 - Student Veteran Identity Development
 - Schlossberg's Transition Theory
 - Tinto's Model of Student Departure
- Texas A&M Transfer Student Peer Mentors
- Challenge & Support model + Facilitator Model
- Staff – Military-Affiliated Students
- Focused on the transition into the first year at Texas A&M University (Spring 2021)



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Student Veteran Engagement -Activity-

Serve Well Those Who Have Served



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The Questions

- How do we define student veteran engagement?
- How do we improve student veteran engagement?
- How do we support student veterans in their transition to our campuses?
- How do we improve our services to encourage student veteran retention and academic success?
- Are we doing all we can do to support our student veterans?



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The Charge

Develop a peer-advising program for newly enrolled new student veterans; similar to a first-year experience

- Focus on creating an engaging and informative environment for new student veterans and their transition onto campus
- Create a program that encourages student leader autonomy and development
- Program must lend itself to continuity and flexible for growth
- Elements of the program must focus on the 4 pillars of the office: Academic Success, Financial Literacy, Career Readiness, and Social Well-Being
- Previous iterations of peer advising programs have not been successful on your campus



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Create a Program Outline

Activity



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VALOR Data

Pre-Fall 2019: VALOR Predecessor

- Vet Camp RSVP-Attended rate:
<50%
- Engagement (outreach:interaction):
<8%
- Declining attendance at
programmatic efforts

Fall 2019-Present: VALOR

- Vet Camp RSVP-Attended rate:
 - Spring 2020: 73.77%
 - Fall 2020: 96.60%
 - Spring 2021: 91.07%
- Engagement (outreach: interaction):
~11% - 12%
- CHALLENGE: Covid-19 Pandemic

Challenges

General Challenges

- Implementing a low-commitment curriculum that does not deter student veterans
- Reframing opportunities to attract student veteran engagement
- Graduate Assistant Transition – short-term supervisor role
- Proactively meeting the needs of the students EX: Providing social networks for student veterans before they feel isolated from campus community

Challenges

Covid-19 Challenges

- Low student engagement across the board
- Students and Zoom Fatigue
- Transition of Graduate Assistant/Supervisor during Covid-19 Pandemic
- How do we build community when in-person programming is unable to happen?
- Is there such a thing as too much online programming during Covid-19?

Future Plans

- Implement hybrid programming – Zoom and in-person
- Partner with other veteran programs, student organizations, and faculty
- Connecting with other campuses and learning best practices



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Additional Involvement

- Student Veterans Association (SVA)
- Team Red White and Blue (Team RWB)
- Community Partners (ex: Brazos Valley Cares and American Legion)
- Aggie Women Veterans Program

Questions?

Visit us at <https://aggieveterans.tamu.edu/>



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