



UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE, KNOXVILLE

Veteran Reconnect Grant Program

Jayetta Rogers

University of Tennessee
Knoxville, Tennessee 37996
Veterans Coordinator

865-974-1500

Jrogers4@utk.edu

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\$100,000



Jonee Lindstrom
Associate Vice Chancellor, F&A



Jayetta Rogers
Project Director

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Section 1: Statement of need

Campus specific data demonstrating the need for action

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville (UTK) is proud to be recognized as a high quality veteran-friendly campus. *U. S. News and World Report* ranked The University of Tennessee among the top fifteen national universities in the inaugural listing of “Best Colleges for Veterans” to use their Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits to complete their degree.¹

Enrollment data for our campus shows a recent increase in the number of students with a military affiliation (see Table 1). Approximately 86% are undergraduate students, and demographic data indicates roughly 60% are 25 years old or younger.

Table 1
Enrollment Data for UTK Students with Military Affiliation

Semester	Undergraduate	Graduate	Total
Spring 2014	502	95	597
Fall 2014	560	91	651
Spring 2015	660	141	801

We anticipated increased enrollment trends several years ago and commissioned a Task Force in Support of Student Veterans (TFSSV) to coordinate campus resources and “establish interdepartmental support networks for student veterans.”² Members of the TFSSV represented various offices with direct responsibility for student services on campus. We also established a Student Veterans Advisory Board (SVAB) composed of graduate and undergraduate student veterans to serve in an advisory capacity to the TFSSV.

¹ For a list of institutions in the national universities and other categories see “Best Colleges for Veterans” <http://colleges.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-colleges/rankings/national-universities/veterans> Among other requirements, an institution had to be listed among the “2014 U.S. News Best Colleges” and be a member of the Servicemembers’ Opportunity College (SOC) Consortium. See “Best Colleges for Veterans Methodology” at <http://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2013/11/11/best-colleges-for-veterans-methodology>

² See http://seecenter.utk.edu/veterans_about.php

In 2014, the SVAB completed an evaluation of the campus program of support for student veterans at UTK. While the evaluation found our program of support satisfied minimum requirements to qualify for veteran-friendly status, the evaluation revealed several opportunities for program improvement. The most significant need identified was the need for increased staffing to (a) increase the level of services within the framework of the existing program of support and (b) expand the program of support to meet new requirements³ and standards of excellence⁴ aimed at helping service members, veterans, and their family members transition from life in the military to life in the classroom. Emphasis should be added to the fact this recommendation originated with members of the SVAB who represent our student veterans on campus.

Students' actions at UTK contribute to this statement of need in other important ways. First, our student veterans organized two new student organizations this year, VOLF (Vol Fighters), a UTK Chapter of Student Veterans of America (SVA), and a UTK Chapter of the SALUTE National Honor Society for Veterans. Secondly, with the support of nonveteran students at UTK, the Graduate Student Senate (GSS) and the Undergraduate Student Senate unanimously passed a resolution to support the establishment of a designated space for student veterans at UTK.

In summary, enrollments of service members, veterans, and their dependents have grown at UTK. Our needs and support for increased services are well documented in the program evaluation conducted by the SVAB and in the GSS resolution that supported

³ See DoD Memorandum of Understanding (DoDI 1322.25) at <http://www.dodmou.com/Documents/DODI132225%20July%207,%202014.pdf> and Tennessee Veterans Education Transition Support Act <https://trackbill.com/s3/bills/TN/108/HB/1372/texts/enrolled.pdf>

⁴ See *8 Keys to Success: Supporting Veterans, Military and Military Families on Campus* (Executive Order 13607) <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2013/08/13/8-keys-success-supporting-veterans-military-and-military-families-campus>

establishing a designated veterans' space at UTK. Funding will be dedicated and used exclusively for increasing our capacity for work on the following goals and objectives.

Outline of program/intervention

The following goals and objectives are aligned with the needs identified for our campus and represent the scope of work to be performed under this grant during the upcoming academic year, 2015-2016.

Goal 1: Accelerate the success of student veterans already enrolled at UTK

- Identify and cultivate opportunities to award credits for specialized military training and occupational experience – Granting credit for military training and education helps offset the disadvantages associated with delays and interruptions in postsecondary education caused by alerts, deployments, reassignments, and transfers required of those in military service. Priority for 2015-2016 will be to accelerate the matriculation of currently enrolled student veterans, beginning with undergraduates in their junior year, then student veterans in their sophomore year. Using degree plans, military transcripts, and the *ACE Guide to the Evaluation of Educational Experiences in the Armed Services*,⁵ recommendations for transfer credits will be made in accordance with the UTK transfer credit policy.⁶

Goal 2: Create favorable conditions to recruit new student veterans

- Develop a vision and plan for establishing and staffing a Veterans Resource Center (VRC) at UTK – A Veterans Resource Centers on campus serves important needs for student veterans. A space for student veterans facilitates connectedness within the student

⁵ Access the ACE *Guide to the Evaluation of Educational Experiences in the Armed Services* online at <http://www.acenet.edu/news-room/Pages/Military-Guide-Online.aspx>

⁶ See http://catalog.utk.edu/content.php?catoid=16&navoid=1630#Transfer_Credit and <http://registrar.tennessee.edu/transfer/equiv-policy.shtml>

veteran community and promotes a sense of support from the institution. A vision for our VRC should be developed with input from student veterans at UTK. A vision for our VRC should also be developed using contemporary standards. We will use focus groups and surveys to generate and collect student veterans' input, and we will survey and assimilate best practices from several VRCs established and operated at other institutions of higher education. There are at least five modern VRCs that should serve as examples for best practices in helping us develop a vision for our space at UTK: University of Alabama, University of Central Florida, Mississippi State University, University of Missouri, and University of Utah.

- Develop a First Year Studies (FYS) course or program for student veterans at UTK – Whether they are true freshmen or transfer students, many student veterans need a FYS course to be successful in the UTK campus environment. However, the traditional content and delivery method for an FYS course is not likely to resonate with most nontraditional student veterans. Here again, we will use focus groups and surveys to generate and collect student veterans' input in a needs assessment for a FYS course or program for student veterans.

Section 2: Program Plan

Detailed project timeline and overview

As previously stated, our capacity for this work hinges on receiving funds required for additional staff dedicated to the goals and objectives outlined above. We propose and request funding for two people to work in part time, temporary capacity during the upcoming academic year – one Student Veteran Advocate and one Graduate Assistant. Table 2 provides a month-by-month overview of activities and events for each position.

Table 2
Project timeline showing activities and events for Student Veteran Advocate and Graduate Assistants

Academic year 2015-2016	Student Veteran Advocate	Graduate Assistant
August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification/administration • Orientation with Project Director/Administration • Develop orientation and guidance for Graduate Assistant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification/administration • Project orientation and guidance
September October November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit/develop recommendations for improving identification and reporting student enrollments with military affiliation • Audit/develop transfer credit recommendations for student veterans in their junior year (est. = 70) • Contact/visit contemporary VRCs at other institutions to identify best practices • Advise/guide Graduate Assistant 	Develop needs assessment strategy and action plan for VRC vision development and FYS course/program for student veterans
December	Assemble/report information from contacts/visits with contemporary VRCs	Final draft, presentations, and coordination of needs assessment strategies and action plans
January	Provide a midyear update/interim recommendations to Project Director/Administration	Implement needs assessment plans <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surveys • Focus groups
February	Conference presentation at 2016 NASPA Veterans Conference	Poster presentations at 2016 NASPA Veterans Conference
March	Provide input/assistance for VRC in 2016-2017 annual budget proposal	Continue needs assessment plans <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surveys • Focus groups
April	Audit/develop transfer credit recommendations for student veterans in their sophomore year (est. = 68)	Complete needs assessments, analyze data, and write final reports
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consolidate findings, observations, and recommendations • Debrief with Project Director/Administration 	
June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate/coordinate outcomes with appropriate administrators/staff 	

Measurable objectives for each phase of the project

Goal 1: Our data indicates we expect to have approximately 70 student veterans in the junior year and 68 in the sophomore year. (Note: the numbers may increase if the process to identify student veteran enrollments is improved.) We will track success by (a) the number of student veterans' records reviewed and (b) the number of credit hour recommendations supported by the *ACE Guide to the Evaluation of Educational Experiences in the Armed Services*.

Goal 2 (VRC): Project success will be defined by (a) a needs assessment that includes student veteran input as well as best practices from other successful institutions and (b) a VRC vision included in the UTK budget proposal for 2016-2017.

Goal 2 (FYS): Project success will be defined by (a) a needs assessment that includes student veteran input and (b) funding for a FYS project included in the UTK budget for 2016-2017.

Project governance and accountability plan

The Student Veteran Advocate will be contracted to serve in a special advisory capacity at the Provost level. We have a PhD student (ABD) in the Higher Education Administration (HEAM) degree program available to work an average of 18 hours per week. This person has expertise from past work experience, education and training that is directly related and specifically suited to all aspects of this plan.

A Graduate Assistant will be selected from the Graduate Certificate in Evaluation, Statistics and Measurement (ESM) Program at UTK. S/he will work under advice and guidance of the Student Veteran Advocate and UTK faculty of the Institute for Assessment and Evaluation, Educational Psychology and Counseling Department.

Section 3: Budget Plan

Table 3 addresses alignment between the grant budget and the timeline of people, activities and events outlined in Table 2. See Appendix for Grant Budget and Line Item Details.

Table 3
Alignment between grant funds and grant funded people, activities, and events are estimated to be:

Person	Funding explanation	Amount
Student Veteran Advocate	Contract fee of \$50/hourly at a maximum of 800 hours	\$40,000
	Travel to VRCs (transportation, meals, lodging, per diem, parking, etc.)	\$7,000
	NASPA Conference and meetings (including travel x 5 days and conference fee)	\$2,500
Graduate Assistant	Stipend, healthcare, and tuition	\$27,007
	Participant incentive costs (gift cards given to student veterans by random drawing after surveys)	\$500
	Funds for promoting participation in focus groups (pizza, snacks, drinks, cups, napkins, catering fees, etc.)	\$4,500
	NASPA Conference (including travel x 3 days and conference registration)	\$1,500
Project Director	Salary and Benefits	\$3,950
Indirect Costs	F&A based on 15% TDC	\$13,043
Total		\$100,000

Section 4: Sustainability

The outcomes of these projects will help move our program of support forward. The benefactors of – student veterans, service members, and their dependents – will better recognize the commitment we have made to their success. The work invested to award credits for specialized military training and occupational experience will help us identify ways to improve our protocol in ways that will help student veterans matriculate as quickly as possible in their degree program. A modern Veterans Resource Center will give us a central location, a focal

point, for expanding the community support network for student veterans. And, a FYS course or program will help insure our student veterans have the orientation they need to be successful in our campus environment. Additionally, the data collected and the FYS course development could be shared statewide to assist other institutions of higher education in their efforts to serve veterans.

GRANT BUDGET LINE-ITEM DETAIL:

PROFESSIONAL FEE, GRANT & AWARD	AMOUNT
Student Veteran Advocate - Contract fee of \$50/hourly at a maximum of 800 hours	\$40,000
TOTAL	\$40,000

INTEREST	AMOUNT
Specific, Descriptive, Detail (Repeat Row As Necessary)	Amount
TOTAL	Amount

DEPRECIATION	AMOUNT
Specific, Descriptive, Detail (Repeat Row As Necessary)	Amount
TOTAL	Amount

OTHER NON-PERSONNEL	AMOUNT
Specific, Descriptive, Detail (Repeat Row As Necessary)	Amount
TOTAL	Amount

CAPITAL PURCHASE	AMOUNT
Specific, Descriptive, Detail (Repeat Row As Necessary)	Amount
TOTAL	Amount

APPENDIX A - BUDGET

GRANT BUDGET LINE-ITEM DETAIL

Line 1 Salaries And Wages

On this line, enter compensation, fees, salaries, and wages paid to grant program staff.

Line 2 Employee Benefits & Payroll Taxes

Enter (a) the organization's contributions to pension plans and programs such as health, life, and disability insurance; and (b) the organization's portion of payroll taxes such as social security and Medicare taxes and unemployment and workers' compensation insurance.

Line 3 Total Personnel Expenses

Add lines 1 and 2.

Line 4 Professional Fees

Enter the organization's fees to outside professionals, consultants, and personal-service contractors. (A detailed description is required in the Grant Budget Line-Item Detail if this line-item is funded.)

Line 7 Postage And Shipping

Enter the organization's expenses for postage, messenger services, and overnight delivery.

Line 10 Printing And Publications

Enter the organization's expenses for producing printed materials, purchasing books and publications, and buying subscriptions to publications.

Line 11 Travel

Enter the organization's expenses for travel, including transportation, meals and lodging, and per diem payments.

Line 12 Conferences And Meetings

Enter the organization's expenses for conducting or attending meetings, conferences, and conventions.

Line 15 Grants And Awards

Enter the organization's awards, grants, subsidies, and other pass-through expenditures to individuals and to other organizations, including travel and equipment allowances. (A detailed description is required in the Grant Budget Line-Item Detail if this line-item is funded.)

Line 22 Administrative Expenses

This amount is intended to cover costs associated with administrative functions including providing the required project reports, financial information, and information to support project evaluation.

Line 25 Total Expenses

The sum of Line 23, Total Direct and Administrative Expenses, and Line 24, In-kind Expenses, goes on this line.