

Services & Activities Fee Annual Program Review

Program Name: Veterans Center

Program Manager: Ruben Cardenas

Fiscal Year: FY22

1. In what ways does your program support CWU students? Please be specific, yet concise.

The students we serve consist of student veterans, service members, and their families. Our programs and events are intended to support this population to create veteran awareness across campus. Traditionally, this has happened passively, directly, and in collaboration with other departments. In addition, we also have programs that include the greater campus community, like our Veterans Book Club, Veterans Day Flag Display, or guest speakers.

2. What are your specific program goals or learning/operational objectives? How are you assessing the effectiveness of your program in achieving those targets?

Due to COVID-19, we were not able to host our Annual Graduation/SALUTE Induction Ceremony which was scheduled for May 19, 2020. This program consists of inducting students into the SALUTE Veterans Honor Society. In addition, we recognize our graduating student veterans by presenting them with a CWU Veteran Alumni Coin. Through the pandemic we were able to adjust, and mailed out the Veteran Alumni Coins, Veteran Graduation Cords, and other swag as part of graduation packages that were sent to students. This allowed us to continue the coin tradition and continued recognition to our successful student veterans.

We also attended via zoom the Westside Graduation Awards Ceremony presenting graduating student veterans with the Veteran Alumni Coin on various occasions. Other CWU University Center(s) events we supported include New Student Orientations (NSO's) on a quarterly basis.

Other events included annually in the fall timeframe is the Veterans Welcome Event and Remember Everyone Deployed (RED) Week, which is programming that takes place through the week of Veterans Day.

We partner with Career Services to offer a Translating Military Experience Workshop. This assists our student veterans translate their military experience so that they can maximize their experience and marketability as they transition to the workforce.

Our continued goal is to support our students directly and indirectly with the highlighted programming/events by creating veteran awareness on campus. This results in a welcoming/supportive environment for our students. We send out a Qualtrics survey to students who attend our events to gather feedback and assess if the feedback aligns with our goals. We use the information to adjust for the following year. We also send out an annual survey to gather information on student experience.

Our Kognito - Veterans on Campus for Faculty & Staff training was originally purchased with S&A funding. This training provides our faculty/staff a cultural competency training in relation

to student veterans. The original license expired in March of 2020, but luckily our Wellness Center was able to renew the license with alternate funding. This allows us to continue an option for important training for our faculty and staff. Kognito also provides CWU with a survey assessment of the trainee feedback. When this license expires, we anticipate renewing the license so that our faculty & staff have this resource to better support our student veterans.

3. What is the overall purpose of your program and what service(s) does your program provide?
- Are there overlaps or intersections with other university programs who have a similar purpose or service?

The Veterans Center is dedicated to supporting student veterans, service members, and their families through their educational journey at CWU. We provide outreach to prospective students, assistance in navigating funding options, and programming that builds support and awareness for our community. We do not believe there are overlaps of our services as we are the dedicated department to support our military connected students; and sole school certifying officials for VA Education Benefits.

We do our best to partner with our colleagues across campus when leading events or programs. For example, our Veterans Book Club has representation from the Library, Advising, ROTC, and a faculty member. All our programs have a veteran or military student focus. If there is another group or department on campus leading a veteran related event we are usually involved to help plan or coordinate the event.

4. How does your program align with the purpose of S&A funding? *“Supporting cocurricular and extracurricular activities and programs participated in by students in the furtherance of their education.”*

We offer many extracurricular programs throughout the year. Examples of these would be our Veterans Welcome Event, Annual Graduation/SALUTE Induction Ceremony, and RED week programming.

Some events or programs would be considered co-curricular. Examples of these would be our Veterans Book Club, guest speakers that have a veteran focus, and our Translating Military Experience Workshop. These programs can easily relate to a student's coursework in some way. In addition, capstone courses cover best practices for resumes and applying to industry positions, so the Translating Military Experience Workshop relates to this type of course.

5. How does your program support CWU's mission and goals? (<https://www.cwu.edu/mission/>)

The mission of Central Washington University is to prepare students for enlightened, responsible, and productive lives; to produce research, scholarship, and creative expression in the public interest; and to serve as a resource to the region and the state through effective stewardship of university resources.

Strategic Plan:

Objective 2.1: Create and sustain a diverse and inclusive community.

Outcome 2.1.1: Increase the percentage of faculty, staff, and students from groups traditionally underrepresented in higher education who are recruited, hired or enrolled, and retained at CWU.

We believe recruiting military connected students helps work towards creating and sustaining a diverse and inclusive community. Veterans are underrepresented/marginalized in our country and in higher education. Research on this student population has shown the need for unique support and programming to increase their academic satisfaction and success. Our efforts are to bring these students to CWU and to retain them as they progress through their education. Although we do not “teach” our students, the university mission resonates with our department, and we feel a sense of satisfaction when our students graduate by offering tailored support and guidance. Our staff has been actively involved in the Vision and Mission events held by President Wohlpart; to advocate for greater inclusion of the students we serve.

6. Please provide detailed information regarding who utilizes your program? (*Students, faculty, staff, community? Specific demographic information? Class standing, gender, ethnicity, transfer, campus location, etc.*)

Most of our program utilization consists of students who are student veterans, service members, and their family member who are students. Student demographics fluctuate quarterly with a mix of first year, transfer, traditional, non-traditional, online, age and class standing. Faculty, staff, and community members also attend many of our events/programs.

We also serve this same demographic of students at all CWU University Centers. The pandemic has streamlined our outreach to these campuses as most of our programs now have a virtual component.

7. How many unique CWU students utilize your program or services?
- How do you gather these metrics?
 - If you do not, what is preventing you from getting that data and how are you determining usage by CWU students?

Overall, we are tracking **573** unique students for winter 22.

Our CWU Student Information System is our tool on managing this data. We utilize student groups and can identify various attributes in relation to our students (i.e., veterans, spouse of veteran, child of veteran, active duty, and a specific breakdown of each).

We also track individual students at events by having them swipe their ID card as they attend. Some of our events require an RSVP so that would give us an exact count of who attended the event.

8. Are there any current vacant positions in your program?

No

Through our participation in the Vet Corps program, we were able to employ a student throughout the year (September-June) saving costs in the student employee allocation.

9. Given the budget reductions taking place and continuing for the remainder of the funding cycle, please tell us what specific impacts those reductions have had on your program compared to what was originally planned and including in your initial base funding request.

We believe that we have been fiscally conservative and good stewards of our funds throughout our funding cycles. After a brief meeting with the S&A Financial Manager, we are already in compliance with the current required reduction. If future reductions are required, we anticipate this would reduce the amount we have available to bring a veteran focused speaker to campus.

10. Are there any circumstances or challenges that are currently impacting your ability to use your base funding allocation this year?

For the past two years, the pandemic has prevented us from spending a significant amount of our funding. Outside of one of our professional staff members being partially compensated, not much was spent from the budget throughout the pandemic in comparison to pre-pandemic times. The constraint of in-person events essentially restricted how we could utilize our funding. We hope that we can return to most of our in-person programming or events as we transition out of the pandemic.

11. What growth or increases would you like to see in your program in the future?

Much like our colleagues across campus, we hope to have high engagement at all our events. Once we transition out of the pandemic, we hope to increase our student population by actively recruiting students throughout the state by sending one of our professional staff members to attend college fair related events. Since 2012, we have grown our population with these efforts year-to-year with only one year decline pre-pandemic. We are optimistic that we can return to our recruitment success and continue to grow the population we serve. This in turn would ideally increase the attendance at our events.