

## Services & Activities Fee Annual Program Review

Program Name: Veterans Center

Program Manager: Ruben Cardenas

Fiscal Year: FY2024

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

We serve are student veterans, service members, and their families. Our programs and events are intended to support this population with a focus on 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?

This year, we continued our Veteran Book Club Event Series in partnership with CWU Libraries, Advising, and a former English Faculty member. Our student veterans decided to choose *Battle Born: Lapis Lazuli* by Maximilian Uriarte. Participating students received a copy of the book. We continued to invite our staff, faculty, and community members to participate as we finished utilizing a microgrant from the Libraries and National Forum. This microgrant also helped us purchase books for non-student participants. We held two in-person/zoom events during the winter quarter to discuss the book, which was well attended, and participants were highly engaged. Max visited campus during the spring quarter to speak to our campus community and was hosted by our department with a special session for our Film, Art, and any student interested in learning about his artistic process.

This year we were able to continue our partnership with Career Services to offer a Translating Military Experience workshop for our student veterans and service members. This assists students with the military section of their resume so they can maximize their experience for non-veterans to be able to understand what their accomplishments were without the military jargon.

We were able to host our Annual Graduation/SALUTE Induction Ceremony which occurs during the spring quarter. This program involves 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 and Veteran Graduation Cord. We invite our SALUTE Inductees and Graduating students to this event which traditionally includes a dinner. We also allow our students being recognized to bring a guest.

Our staff also attended the Westside Graduation Awards Ceremony presenting graduating student veterans with the Veteran Alumni Coin and Veteran Graduation Cords.

Our continued goal is to support our students directly and indirectly with the highlighted programming/events by creating veteran awareness on campus. We hope that these efforts result in a welcoming/supportive environment for our students. Our student population hovers in the 500-550 students per quarter.

3. What is the overall purpose of your program and what service(s) does your program provide?
- a. 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 also serve as resource for student veterans to understand their transition and build a post military identity. 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. We also recurrently partner most often within our Student Engagement and Success (SES) Division as we have intersectional goals with programming initiatives. 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 Veterans Week programming.

Some events or programs would be considered co-curricular. Examples of these would be our Veterans Week-related events, 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/>)

**Vision:** *Central Washington University will be a model learning community of equity and belonging.*

**Mission:** *In order to build a community of equity and belonging, Central Washington University nurtures culturally sustaining practices that expand access and success to all students. We are committed to fostering high impact practices, sustainability, and authentic community partnerships that are grounded in meaningful relationships.*

Alignment with CWU's Vision:

· Equity and Belonging: The Veterans Center builds a sense of community by focusing on the unique needs and experiences of veterans and their families. Through advocacy and exemplary services, it creates an inclusive environment where our students feel supported and valued.

Alignment with CWU's Mission:

· Culturally Sustaining Practices: By offering targeted programs, outreach, and awareness efforts, the Veterans Center ensures that the unique cultural and life experiences of veterans, service members, and their families are acknowledged and celebrated, supporting their educational success.

· Expanding Access and Success: The Center provides resources and assistance, such as guidance on funding options and programming tailored to the military-connected community, helping to remove barriers to education and ensure their success.

· High-Impact Practices: Through innovative support services and outreach efforts, the Veterans Center engages students in meaningful activities that contribute to their academic and personal growth.

· Authentic Community Partnerships: The Center collaborates with local and national organizations to provide additional resources and opportunities, strengthening the connection between CWU and the broader veteran community.

In essence, the Veterans Center embodies CWU's commitment to creating a learning community where every student can thrive by addressing the specific needs of veterans and their families. Through targeted support and innovative programming, it enhances the university's mission of equity, belonging, and sustainable success.

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 members. Student demographics fluctuate quarterly with a mix of first-year, transfer, traditional, non-traditional, online, ages, and class standing. Faculty, staff, and community members also attend many of our events/programs. We also serve a similar demographic of students at all CWU University Centers.

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 **562** unique students for fall 2024. Our CWU Student Information System is our tool for managing this data. We utilize student groups and can identify various attributes about our students (i.e., veterans, spouses of veterans, children of veterans, active duty, and a specific breakdown of each).

We also track individual students at events by having them check in at our events. Some of our events require an RSVP which gives us an exact count of who attended the event.

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

Not currently.

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. Partnering within SES has helped us maximize our funding and promotions of our programming.

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

None

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

Like our colleagues across campus, we strive for high levels of engagement at all our events. To grow our student population, we are continuing our efforts to recruit within the region, specifically targeting counties with dense veteran and military populations. Since 2012, these efforts have resulted in consistent year-over-year growth, with only one year of decline before the pandemic. Despite the enrollment challenges of the past four years, we have continued to grow and sustain our population. We remain optimistic about regaining recruitment momentum and building on this success to better serve our community.

We are seeking a dedicated location equipped with updated furniture, modern technology, and windows to create an inviting and functional space for students. Maintaining and promoting our visual identity is also a priority, as it strengthens our connection with the student population and attracts military-connected students.

Additionally, we aim to foster intentional partnerships initiated by the campus leadership team. This could include financial support for veteran cultural competency training, workshops, conferences, or recognition initiatives.

Advocating for a tuition waiver or reduction for student veterans is another key goal. Furthermore, we would like access to a simplified process to receive donations to our foundation fund, such as a "give" button, to help supplement our S&A funding.