

Student Veterans Scholar Program Veterans Resource Center, Cal State LA

2017-18 Funding Proposal for Associated Students, Inc.

April 5, 2017

Program Overview

The Cal State LA Veterans Resource Center (VRC) opened its doors in the Fall of 2013 because of the drawdown of two of the longest wars in U.S. history: Operation Iraqi Freedom (Iraq) and Operation Enduring Freedom (Afghanistan). According to the U.S. Government Accountability Office, roughly 5 million service members from the post-9/11 era will transition out of the military by the year 2020. Currently, over 2.6 million post-9/11 service members have left the military and several million more are projected to voluntarily and involuntarily separate in the next few years.

Because of the drawdown of the wars in the Middle East and the decrease in military operational needs, there is an expectation that military veterans will continue to enter higher education in numbers not seen since the end of World War II. The Cal State LA VRC was created to help those transitioning service members seamlessly enter our growing campus. The VRC has continued to serve ever more military-connected individuals – active duty, National Guard, reservists, veterans, and dependents. In fact, the latest Fall cohort in 2016 numbered over 800 military-affiliated students, a record number of individuals seeking a Cal State LA higher education.

In order to meet the needs of our student veterans and their family members, the VRC offers a host of workshops, events, programs, and services to advance their success before, during, and after they arrive to our campus. Our Mission Statement is as follows:

The Veterans Resource Center (VRC) at Cal State LA is committed to enhancing the higher education access and success for our nation's military-connected individuals.

The VRC meets its mission by providing programs and services that holistically support the academic and personal enrichment of prospective and current military-affiliated students.

A short list of services and programs we offer include, pre-admission information, education benefits certification, priority course registration, computer workstations with free printing, social spaces, study spaces, and campus and community referrals. These services are focused on retaining and graduating student veterans that call Cal State LA home. We understand the many challenges that our nation's military-connected students face when seeking to enter higher education and find meaningful employment after graduation. At the center of what we do, we strive to create a seamless transition to Cal State LA, support their retention with the right resources, and remove any barriers to college completion. Our Center also understands the importance of finding meaningful careers that help support the current and future labor market needs. Our nation's veterans have the ability to harness their teamwork, dedication, and integrity into their academic aspirations and the workforce.

Funding Request

For many of our student veterans, there remains obstacles to their college retention and completion. For instance, a nationally recognized report by the Director of the VRC at Cal State LA (Molina & Morse, 2015¹) found that military-connected individuals, and in particular our nation's veterans, continue to face life circumstances that increase their risk of not completing college. The findings illustrated that the vast majority of military-connected undergraduates, who may otherwise possess the strengths and aspirations to persist until completion, must tend to multiple responsibilities that may pose substantial challenges to their educational pursuits. These responsibilities included delaying college enrollment, having dependents to support, working full-time while in college, and being financially independent, to name a few.

The academic and financial resources that the VRC can offer is now even more important than ever. Far too many veterans take on loan debt while in college and must work to

¹ Molina, Dani, and Andrew Morse. 2015. *Military-Connected Undergraduates: Exploring Differences Between National Guard, Reserve, Active Duty, and Veterans in Higher Education*. Washington, DC: American Council on Education and NASPA – Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education.

support themselves and their dependents or families. For example, the same study found that nearly one-third (31 percent) of veterans incurred loan debt as part of their financial aid packages. Supporting our campus veterans with much-needed financial aid in the form of scholarships would help increase the likelihood that student veterans will succeed and become the next great generation of leaders and innovators.

Because of our student veteran needs, we seek to offer the first ever *Student Veterans Scholar Program*, designed to financially support our campus student veterans. This program will help support military veterans who are actively enrolled at Cal State LA and who exemplify academic promise and high financial need. We would like to award 10 student veterans with a \$1,000 scholarship award for the next academic year (2017-2018). In addition, we seek an additional \$1,700 for services and programs that will help expand our mission of offering a welcoming and inclusive space for our military-connected individuals.

Total Funding Request: \$11,700

Measurable Outcomes

Our office plans on following up with student veterans to examine the impact on their retention and graduation. Our goals for this program are to ensure that we retain, graduate, and employ student veterans. We plan to provide a comprehensive report – highlighting key information about awardees, illustrating how the program has helped support our Strategic Mission.

Opportunity	Amount
<p>Student Veterans Scholars Program 10 actively enrolled student veterans with high academic promise and financial need.</p>	<p>\$10,000</p>
<p>Service Support To support the collection and analyses expected from reporting and for other services needed to ensure their retention and persistence.</p>	<p>\$1,700</p>
<p>Total</p>	<p>\$11,700</p>

We hope ASI will join us with the support of \$11,700, which will set a precedent for the VRC and will, most importantly, ensure that our student veterans have an opportunity to focus on their academic pursuits and make immediate contributions to our communities in the Los Angeles area and across the globe.