



*** Special Data Analysis ***

2011 SDBOR Survey of Veteran Students

Background and Executive Summary

Regental campuses provide a number of student services and resources – such as academic support, career planning, and counseling services – to their students. Some of these activities are offered to all students, but some – like veteran student clubs and outreach services – are designed especially for veteran students. While the specific palette of student services varies from campus to campus, all Regental institutions attempt to provide both veterans and non-veterans with the resources necessary for academic and personal well-being. Especially in light of the current influx of post-9/11 veterans into higher education, US colleges and universities have begun to give new attention to the scope and quality of veteran student services.

During the Fall 2011 semester, SDBOR undertook a survey-based assessment of veteran students' impressions of student service effectiveness. The survey instrument was designed by SDBOR research staff following a review of recent empirical literature.¹ The survey asked participants to rate the availability and quality of student services on Regental campuses, and also to offer open-ended comments on the strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement among these services. The instrument was deployed statewide in November 2011 via *Qualtrics*, an online survey hosting service.² In total, usable responses were collected from 207 participants across all six Regental campuses.³

As described in the main body of the report (Attachment II), analysis of survey data produced several key observations:

- **Campus staff members recognize the challenges facing veteran students.** More than eight in ten respondents (act. 82.9%) indicated that campus faculty and staff are either *somewhat sensitive* or *highly sensitive* to the unique needs of veteran students. Further, the personal dedication of veterans' affairs-related staff members was identified by respondents as a leading strength in campuses' efforts to support veteran students.
- **Students' use of services and resources varies widely by Regental campus.** For example, the proportion of students reporting involvement in *veteran student clubs* ranged from 64% at SDSMT to 0% at DSU and NSU. Such findings suggest that equivalent services, facilities, and resources may not be offered (or equally marketed) on all Regental campuses.

¹ See, for example, American Council on Education (2009). *From soldier to student: Easing the transition of service members on campus*. Independent research report. Washington, DC: ACE; US Department of Education (2011). *Military service members and veterans: A profile of those enrolled in undergraduate and graduate education in 2007-08*. NCES 2011-163. Washington, DC: NCES.

² Respondent solicitation was managed directly by SDBOR staff. Potential respondents (veteran students as identified by RIS) were invited and reminded to participate through email distributions coordinated through the *Qualtrics* platform. Access to the survey was provided through a hyperlink embedded in these email distributions.

³ A gross yield of $n=239$ responses was recorded. A total of $n=32$ records were filtered from the dataset due to persistent item nonresponse or rigid response. Overall, the sample's net yield of $n=207$ respondents produced a generalized margin of error of ± 6.1 (at the 95% confidence level).

- **Ratings of student services tend to be favorable.** On a five-point scale, students tended to rate individual campus services in the upper 3s and low 4s on average. On a closing summary item, *B* was the most common letter grade assigned by students to veteran student services in general. Veteran services and resources tended to receive the highest average ratings at SDSMT and lowest average ratings at NSU.
- **Students who fail to utilize student services do so for a variety of reasons.** For many queried items, respondents tended to be split in their reasons for not utilizing particular services. “Not interested,” typically was the most-cited explanation, with “not offered by my campus” usually receiving the fewest responses. For some queried items, however, responses in these categories were nearly even.
- **Students’ wish-lists center on veteran-related resources and facilities.** *Special academic advising personnel for veterans, veterans’ resource center, veterans’ webpage, and visits by speakers who discuss veteran-related issues* topped participants’ wish-lists for future student services.
- **Students are not without complaint with respect to current services.** In open-ended feedback, students frequently reported having inadequate information about the availability of campus services for veteran students. Students also cited considerable difficulty or/and dissatisfaction with universities’ processes for awarding academic credit for military training or experience.

The remainder of this report explores the data collected through the above surveying effort. After a concise presentation of demographic data describing the survey sample, the report will move to an examination of substantive findings. The report is organized along five main areas of questioning: 1) prevalence of student services use, 2) ratings of student services, 3) reasons for student services disuse, 4) interest in currently-unavailable student services, and 5) evaluations of the overall performance of the student services system.

It should be pointed out that data collected from the *Survey of Veteran Students* was intended for use primarily by campus-level officials. Because of campus-to-campus variation in veteran populations and survey response figures, side-by-side comparisons of institutions should be undertaken judiciously. In addition to this written report, campus-level data will be shared with veterans’ affairs personnel at each campus to aid in self-review and planning activities.

Full Report

Respondent Characteristics

This section provides a series of data tables that describe the demographic and institutional characteristics of the study's participant sample.⁴ Several of the group characteristics presented in these tables will serve as bases for cross-tabulations used throughout the remainder of the survey report.

The survey instrument was distributed to $n=1,015$ students across the Regental system. The sampling frame consisted of all Regental students with an active *veteran type* code in Colleague (as assigned by on-campus VACO personnel).⁵ Altogether, the survey generated a total of $n=207$ usable responses, amounting to a net response rate of 20.4%. Response rates were highest at SDSMT (23.4%) and lowest at SDSU (14.4%). Table 1 (below) provides n -values and response rates by Regental institution.⁶

Table 1
Response Rates

	<i>N</i>	<i>n</i>	%
Total	1015	207	20.4%
By Institution			
<i>BHSU</i>	238	41	17.2%
<i>DSU</i>	57	12	21.1%
<i>NSU</i>	51	11	21.6%
<i>SDSMT</i>	94	22	23.4%
<i>SDSU</i>	209	30	14.4%
<i>USD</i>	366	75	20.5%

Additional demographic breakouts are shown in Table 2 (next page). Two quick observations are noteworthy here. First, roughly 60.0% of responses were generated by BHSU and USD alone. This result should not be surprising, however, given that these campuses account for nearly 60.0% of all veterans. Second, pluralities of responses were collected from males (67.4%), full-time students (85.9%), upperclassmen and graduate students (67.7%), students studying primarily at main campus locations (73.3%), and students over the age of 22 (77.0%). These proportions are consistent with population parameters identified in other research and/or Regental enrollment trends.

⁴ In all tables, integer totals may not add to $n=207$ due to item nonresponse; percentage column totals may not add to 100.0% due to rounding.

⁵ The proportional distribution of veteran students is not uniform across all Regental campuses. Veterans constitute 5.4% of all students at BHSU, 1.8% at DSU, 1.4% at NSU, 4.1% at SDSMT, 1.6% at SDSU, and 3.7% at USD. These figures are in line the national rate of 3.1% as reported by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES 2011-163).

⁶ In this table, " N " refers to the number of students in the original sampling frame while " n " refers to the number of students submitting a usable response.

Table 2
Demographic Characteristics

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Total	207	100.0%
By Institution	191	100.0%
<i>BHSU</i>	41	21.5%
<i>DSU</i>	12	6.3%
<i>NSU</i>	11	5.8%
<i>SDSMT</i>	22	11.5%
<i>SDSU</i>	30	15.7%
<i>USD</i>	75	39.3%
By Location	187	100.0%
<i>Main Campus</i>	137	73.3%
<i>University Center</i>	31	16.6%
<i>Distance</i>	19	10.2%
Class Level	189	100.0%
<i>Freshman</i>	21	11.1%
<i>Sophomore</i>	40	21.2%
<i>Junior</i>	58	30.7%
<i>Senior</i>	41	21.7%
<i>Graduate</i>	29	15.3%
Enrollment Type	191	100.0%
<i>Full-Time</i>	164	85.9%
<i>Part-Time</i>	27	14.1%
Age	191	100.0%
<i><23</i>	44	23.0%
<i>23-29</i>	72	37.7%
<i>30-39</i>	45	23.6%
<i>40-59</i>	30	15.7%
<i>60+</i>	0	0.0%
Gender	190	100.0%
<i>Male</i>	128	67.4%
<i>Female</i>	62	32.6%
Marital Status	191	100.0%
<i>Married</i>	78	40.8%
<i>Prev. Married</i>	16	8.4%
<i>Never Married</i>	97	50.8%

Substantive Sections – Survey Flow

The bulk of the *Survey of Veteran Students* invited veteran students to rate the effectiveness of student services across three main service categories:

- 1) Services for all students
- 2) Services for veteran students
- 3) Facilities/resources for veteran students

For each of these categories, respondents were presented with a list of 5-10 student services, facilities, or resources. Within each list of services, facilities, or resources, participants then were asked to respond to the following item blocks:

- 1) *Please select all those with which you have had direct experience during your time at your university.*

Response options: *Yes*
 No

- 2) *[For those services with which you have had direct experience] please rate your satisfaction with each service.*

Response options: *Not at all satisfied*
 Slightly satisfied
 Somewhat satisfied
 Quite satisfied
 Extremely satisfied

- 3) *[For those services with which you have not had direct experience] please select the response that best describes the reason for this.*

Response options: *I'm not interested in this*
 Not provided/allowed by my campus
 Other reason

- 4) *[For those services not offered by your campus] select those that – if provided/allowed – you would be interested in receiving or participating in.*

Response options: *Yes, I would be interested*
 No, I would not be interested

Substantive Sections: 1) Use of Student Services

Table 3 (next page) summarizes data regarding the prevalence of service use among survey respondents. It can be seen in this table that only three of the queried services (academic advising, financial aid assistance/counseling, and the transferring of military credit) were selected by 50% or more of the sample.⁷ Other services (such as mental health services, child care services, campus outreach to deployed students, and special mental health personnel for veterans) were selected by 5% or less of the sample. As might be expected, responses varied considerably by campus, no doubt due in part to variation in service availability. For example, 64% of respondents from SDSMT indicated having had experience with veteran student clubs, whereas no respondents at DSU or NSU indicated the same. Note again that *n*-values vary a great deal by institution.⁸

⁷ This section refers to items which asked participants to select (from a list) all services, facilities, or resources in which they had *ever* participated as a student. Consequently, this data should not be construed to imply *frequency* of use.

⁸ The *n*-values listed under the institutional column headers do not sum to *n*=207 because a number of respondents opted not to report their institutional placements. Institutional placements were reported by *n*=191 participants.

Table 3

Service Use – System-wide and by Campus

	Overall (n)	Overall (%)	BHSU (n=41)	DSU (n=12)	NSU (n=11)	SDSMT (n=22)	SDSU (n=30)	USD (n=75)
Services for All Students								
<i>Academic advising</i>	169	82%	66%	75%	100%	86%	87%	85%
<i>Financial aid assistance/counseling</i>	117	57%	61%	42%	55%	68%	53%	56%
<i>Flexible course offerings</i>	89	43%	46%	75%	36%	9%	53%	39%
<i>Academic support services</i>	83	40%	37%	50%	55%	50%	37%	39%
<i>Career center services</i>	38	18%	17%	17%	36%	23%	20%	13%
<i>Disability services</i>	19	9%	7%	8%	0%	14%	7%	11%
<i>Off-campus housing services</i>	12	6%	5%	0%	0%	0%	3%	7%
<i>Mental health / counseling services</i>	10	5%	0%	0%	0%	14%	3%	7%
<i>Child care services</i>	7	3%	2%	0%	9%	14%	0%	3%
Services for Veteran Students								
<i>Allowing students to transfer in credits earned through the military</i>	104	50%	51%	58%	45%	68%	63%	45%
<i>Veteran student clubs/organizations</i>	58	28%	29%	0%	0%	64%	20%	32%
<i>Veterans-only orientation sessions</i>	24	12%	12%	8%	0%	50%	0%	8%
<i>Veteran social networking events</i>	24	12%	7%	0%	0%	27%	0%	19%
<i>Visits by speakers who discuss veteran-related issues</i>	22	11%	10%	8%	0%	32%	0%	12%
<i>Support groups specifically for veterans</i>	16	8%	2%	0%	0%	27%	0%	11%
<i>Campus outreach to deployed students</i>	11	5%	2%	0%	0%	18%	0%	8%
Facilities/Resources for Veteran Students								
<i>Special financial aid personnel for veterans</i>	73	35%	44%	58%	45%	45%	27%	31%
<i>Veterans Resource Center (stand-alone office)</i>	41	20%	10%	17%	0%	73%	17%	16%
<i>Special admissions personnel for veterans</i>	37	18%	15%	8%	27%	50%	0%	19%
<i>Veterans' webpage (within university website)</i>	29	14%	15%	8%	9%	23%	7%	17%
<i>ROTC program</i>	28	14%	12%	17%	0%	9%	27%	12%
<i>Special student affairs personnel for veterans</i>	22	11%	10%	17%	0%	23%	7%	11%
<i>Special academic advising personnel for veterans</i>	15	7%	5%	17%	9%	9%	0%	9%
<i>Special mental health / counseling personnel for veterans</i>	3	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	4%

Table 4
Service Ratings – System-wide and by Campus

	Overall (n)	Overall (Rating)	BHSU	DSU	NSU	SDSMT	SDSU	USD
Services for All Students								
<i>Mental health / counseling services</i>	10	4.3	-	-	-	4.3	3.0	4.8
<i>Financial aid assistance/counseling</i>	117	3.9	4.0	4.8	4.0	3.9	3.5	3.8
<i>Flexible course offerings</i>	89	3.8	3.8	4.1	4.3	5.0	3.6	3.8
<i>Disability services</i>	19	3.8	4.0	4.0	-	3.3	3.0	4.3
<i>Academic support services</i>	83	3.7	4.2	4.0	3.5	3.9	3.4	3.8
<i>Academic advising</i>	168	3.7	4.0	4.2	4.4	3.4	3.3	3.8
<i>Child care services</i>	7	3.7	5.0	-	5.0	3.3	-	3.0
<i>Career center services</i>	38	3.5	3.0	4.0	4.0	4.2	3.3	3.3
<i>Off-campus housing services</i>	11	3.0	3.0	-	-	-	2.0	3.2
<i>Average</i>	-	3.7	3.9	4.2	4.2	3.9	3.1	3.7
Services for Veteran Students								
<i>Support groups specifically for veterans</i>	16	4.3	4.0	-	-	4.7	-	4.0
<i>Visits by speakers who discuss veteran-related issues</i>	22	4.0	3.8	4.0	-	4.1	-	3.9
<i>Veterans-only orientation sessions</i>	24	3.9	3.2	4.0	-	4.3	-	3.5
<i>Veteran social networking events</i>	24	3.8	4.3	-	-	4.0	-	3.6
<i>Veteran student clubs/organizations</i>	57	3.7	3.8	-	-	3.6	3.7	3.7
<i>Campus outreach to deployed students</i>	11	3.5	4.0	-	-	4.3	-	3.0
<i>Allowing students to transfer in credits earned through the military</i>	104	3.2	4.0	3.9	3.2	2.7	2.9	3.0
<i>Average</i>	-	3.8	3.9	4.0	3.2	4.0	3.3	3.5
Facilities/Resources for Veteran Students								
<i>Special mental health / counseling personnel for veterans</i>	3	4.7	-	-	-	-	-	4.7
<i>Veterans Resource Center (stand-alone office)</i>	41	4.1	4.3	4.0	-	4.6	3.0	3.8
<i>Special student affairs personnel for veterans</i>	22	4.0	4.5	4.0	-	4.4	4.0	3.5
<i>Special financial aid personnel for veterans</i>	73	3.9	4.2	4.3	3.0	4.7	3.5	3.7
<i>Special academic advising personnel for veterans</i>	15	3.9	4.5	4.5	2.0	4.5	-	3.6
<i>Special admissions personnel for veterans</i>	37	3.8	3.3	5.0	3.3	4.6	-	3.5
<i>Veterans' webpage (within university website)</i>	29	3.6	4.0	3.0	3.0	3.8	2.5	3.5
<i>ROTC program</i>	28	3.2	2.2	4.5	-	5.0	3.4	2.9
<i>Average</i>	-	3.9	3.9	4.2	2.8	4.5	3.3	3.6

Note: Ratings in italics indicate three or fewer responses.

Substantive Sections: 2) Ratings of Student Services

Survey participants were asked to rate their satisfaction with each of the services/facilities/resources with which they indicated having had experience. Table 4 (above) displays service ratings data generated by the survey sample. Ratings values range from 1.0 to 5.0, and reflect the mean rating provided by all respondents within a given demographic. Data from this table indicate that several services, facilities, and resources garnered system-wide mean values of 4.0 or higher, suggesting a high degree of satisfaction with those particular rated items. DSU and SDSMT tended to receive the highest mean ratings across all rated items. Caution is warranted in interpreting campus-level ratings of individual items due to the occurrence of low *n*-values.

Substantive Sections: 3) Reasons for Not Participating in Services

Participants also were asked to provide – for those services/facilities/resources with which they indicated having had no experience – the reason that best explains this lack of experience. Table 5 (below) displays data collected from this block of survey items. It can be seen that among the *Services for All Students* matrix, “No Interest” was the dominant reason indicated by participants. However, among the *Services for Veteran Students* and *Facilities/Resources for Veteran Students* matrices, “Not Offered/Allowed” was much more commonly cited.⁹ Figure 1 (next page) presents additional data for participants responding with “Not Offered/Allowed” on the current block of items.

Table 5
Reasons for Not Participating - System-wide

<i>Services for All Students</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>No Interest</i>	<i>Not Offered/Allowed</i>	<i>Other Reason</i>
<i>Child care services</i>	198	71%	7%	22%
<i>Mental health / counseling services</i>	194	68%	6%	26%
<i>Off-campus housing services</i>	193	64%	9%	26%
<i>Disability services</i>	185	72%	2%	26%
<i>Career center services</i>	164	40%	6%	54%
<i>Academic support services</i>	122	59%	4%	37%
<i>Flexible course offerings</i>	116	49%	10%	41%
<i>Financial aid assistance/counseling</i>	89	57%	6%	37%
<i>Academic advising</i>	38	37%	8%	55%
<i>Average</i>	-	57%	6%	36%
<i>Services for Veteran Students</i>				
<i>Campus outreach to deployed students</i>	186	46%	21%	33%
<i>Support groups specifically for veterans</i>	181	41%	21%	38%
<i>Visits by speakers who discuss veteran-related issues</i>	174	36%	25%	39%
<i>Veterans-only orientation sessions</i>	173	38%	26%	36%
<i>Veteran social networking events</i>	173	41%	24%	35%
<i>Veteran student clubs/organizations</i>	140	41%	17%	41%
<i>Allowing students to transfer in credits earned through the military</i>	94	43%	16%	42%
<i>Average</i>	-	41%	21%	38%
<i>Facilities/Resources for Veteran Students</i>				
<i>Special mental health / counseling personnel for veterans</i>	191	45%	24%	31%
<i>Special academic advising personnel for veterans</i>	177	34%	33%	33%
<i>Special student affairs personnel for veterans</i>	172	41%	27%	32%
<i>Veterans' webpage (within university website)</i>	165	36%	29%	35%
<i>ROTC program</i>	164	69%	12%	19%
<i>Special admissions personnel for veterans</i>	157	38%	29%	33%
<i>Veterans Resource Center (stand-alone office)</i>	152	34%	34%	32%
<i>Special financial aid personnel for veterans</i>	121	32%	32%	36%
<i>Average</i>	-	41%	27%	31%

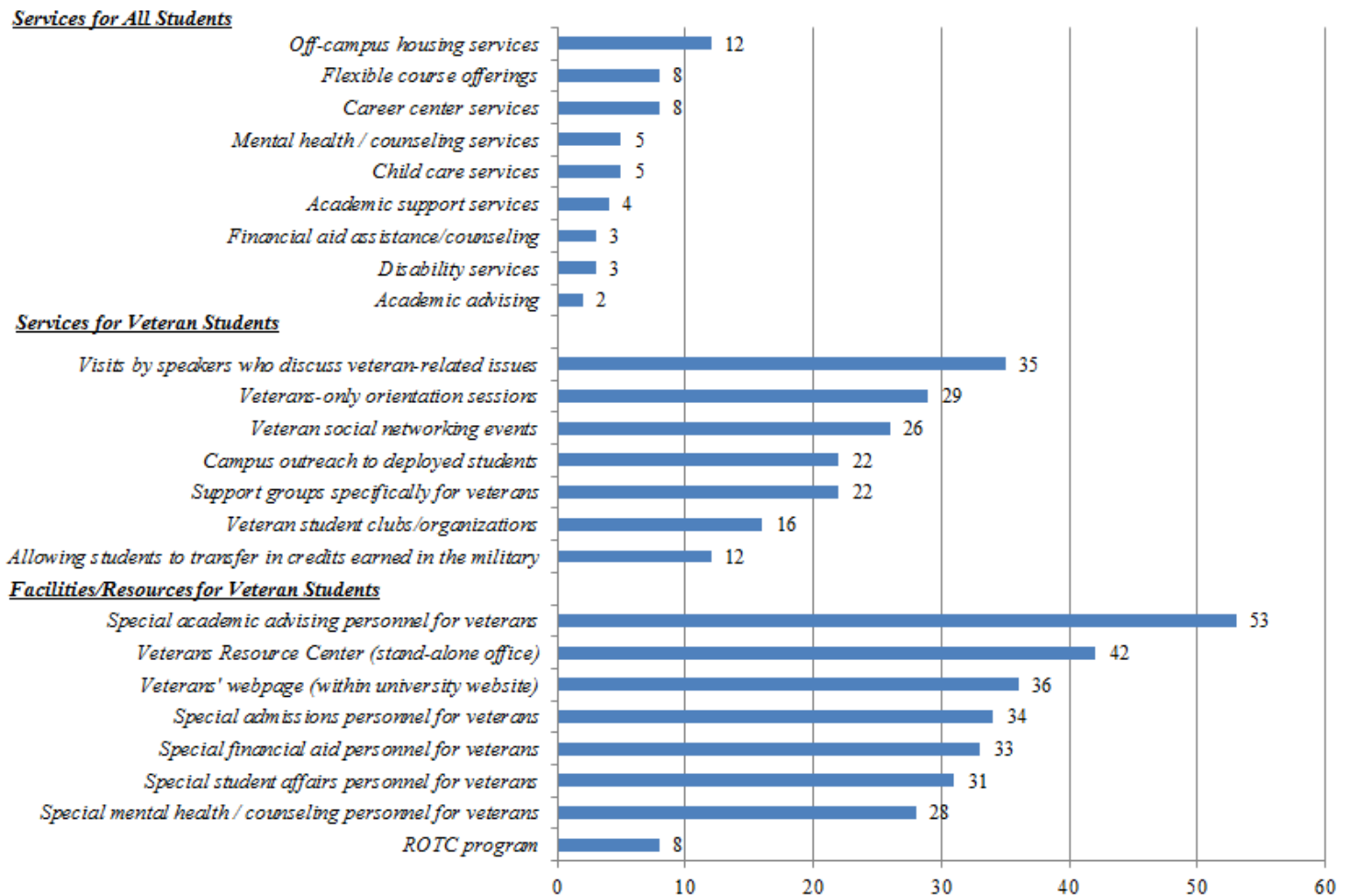
Note: Institution-level results not presented due to widespread low *n*-values.

⁹ Whether or not such services *actually* are offered on these campuses is perhaps less important to respondent feedback than whether or not respondents are *aware* of service availability.

Substantive Sections: 4) Interest in Services Not Currently Offered

The final item matrix asked participants to indicate – for all those items cited as “Not Offered/ Available” – the extent to which they are interested in receiving such services, facilities, or resources. As suggested by Figure 1 (below), survey respondents expressed considerably more interest in veteran-specific opportunities. In particular, special academic advising personnel for veterans ($n=53$), veterans’ resource center ($n=42$), veteran’s webpage ($n=36$), and visits by speakers who discuss veteran-related issues ($n=35$) each attracted a minimum of thirty-five interested participants. Keeping in mind that the total sample size for the survey was only $n=207$, the above response frequencies seem suggestive of modest interest for the provision of such services.

Figure 1
Participants Indicating Interest - System-wide

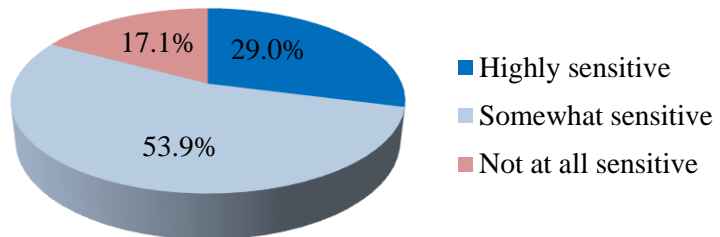


Overall Evaluation of Student Services

The substantive portion of the survey closed with a brief series of items that asked participants to reflect on the overall performance of their campuses in providing support to veteran students. In large part, these items were designed to gauge participants' general impressions of organizational climate rather than their views on specific services. Figures 2-4 (below) present output for these items. Supplemental (i.e., institutional) cross-tabulations are provided in Appendix B.

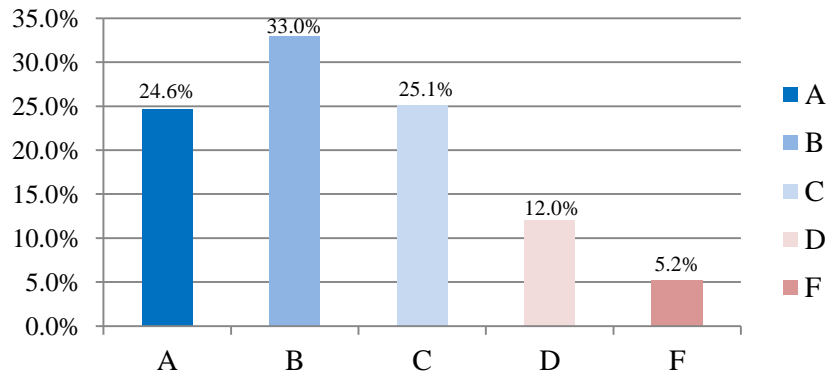
To what extent do you feel that staff and faculty on your campus are sensitive to the needs of veteran students? (n=193)

Figure 2
Faculty/Staff Sensitivity



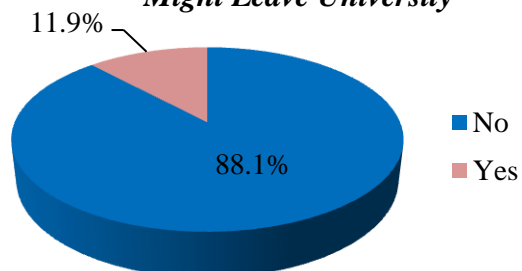
Overall, what letter grade would you give to the veteran student services provided by your university? (n=191)

Figure 3
Letter Grade for Student Services



Are you currently experiencing any difficulties directly related to the veteran student services provided by your campus that may cause you to leave your university? (n=193)

Figure 4
Might Leave University



Appendix A: Qualitative Statements

Three survey items invited participants to offer free-response comments, descriptors, or other feedback. This appendix provides a basic summary of the statements generated from these items. Full data from these items will be shared with institutional personnel for programmatic review and improvement purposes.¹⁰

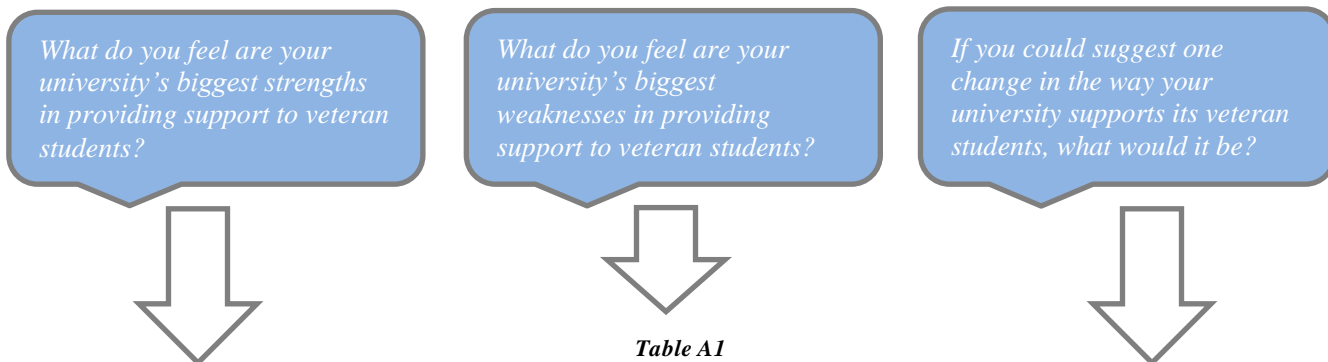


Table A1
Free-Response Data: Strengths, Weaknesses, and Areas for Improvement

Strengths	n	Weaknesses	n	Areas of Improvement	n
Faculty/Staff		Faculty/Staff		Faculty/Staff	
Available	9	Available	6	Available	3
Knowledgeable	7	Knowledgeable	6	Knowledgeable	11
Specific (Named)	8	Responsive	2	Responsive	1
Understanding/Dedicated	11	Specific (Named)	1	Specific (Named)	1
(General)	9	Staff Turnover	4	Understanding/Dedicated	4
non-Military Students	2	Understanding/Dedicated	9	(General)	8
Personal Attention	5	non-Military Students	2	non_Military Students	1
Services		(Other)	5	Services	
Advising	2	Personal Attention	5	Admissions	1
Clubs	12	Services		Advising	1
Disability Services	1	Admissions	1	Child Care	1
Financial Aid	13	Advising	4	Clubs	7
Information on Services	2	Career Services	1	Counseling	2
Outreach	1	Clubs	3	Credit Transfer	11
ROTC	1	Credit Transfer	16	Disability Services	1
Veterans' Center	11	Disability Services	1	Financial Aid	9
Support During Leave	3	Financial Aid	12	Flex Courses	3
Total	97	Flex Courses	1	General	1
		General	4	Information on Services	19
		Housing	1	Orientation	3
		Information on Services	22	Other	4
		Orientation	1	ROTC	2
		ROTC	2	Scheduling	1
		Scheduling	6	University Centers	6
		Veterans' Center	2	Veterans' Center	5
		Support During Leave	2	Veterans' Day	1
		Total	119	Support During Leave	1
				Total	108

¹⁰ For each of these three items, individual comments were read and assigned a category label followed by one or more subcategory labels. This procedure concatenated ideas that were articulated by multiple participants into a number of thematic bins. The top three categories under each item header are highlighted.

Sample Statements

