INSTRUCTIONS: *Please respond to all the questions.* ***An electronic copy of your responses in PDF format should be sent to the SFAC Committee via the Dean of the Students Office at*** *dlyoung4@central.uh.edu* ***at 1:00 p.m., Friday, October 18, 2024. Notably, only electronic submissions are considered.*** <u>***Only those requests submitted by 1:00 p.m., October 18, 2024, will be guaranteed full consideration.***</u>

1. **Please provide a one-page executive summary of your responses. In brief, this summary should include your unit's mission, goals that support your mission, and justification of your unit's student fee allocation in terms of benefits for students.**

Unit Mission:
Veteran Services is committed to providing comprehensive support to military-affiliated students, including veterans, active-duty service members, reservists, National Guard members, and their dependents. Our mission is to facilitate academic success, personal development, and career readiness through tailored programs, services, and resources.

Goals to Support Our Mission

1. **Enhancing Academic Success.**
   We aim to assist military-affiliated students in achieving academic excellence by providing resources such as tutoring, academic advising, and scholarship information. Our programs are designed to ensure that students transition smoothly from military to academic life.
2. **Fostering Personal Development and Well-being.**
   We focus on offering holistic support that addresses the personal, emotional, and mental health needs of our students. Programs like peer mentorship, the AIMS program, and access to counseling services help students develop the skills they need to succeed both inside and outside the classroom.
3. **Promoting Career Readiness:**
   We work to ensure that our students are well-prepared for their professional careers. Through partnerships with local employers, career workshops, and networking opportunities, we provide pathways to internships and employment that are tailored to veterans' unique skill sets and experiences.
4. **Creating an Inclusive Community:**
   Our center has grown to become a welcoming space not only for veterans but also for their dependents. By marketing our services more inclusively, we've significantly increased engagement and created a supportive community for all military-affiliated students.

Justification for Student Fee Allocation:

The allocation of student fees to Veteran Services is essential for maintaining and expanding the programs that directly benefit military-affiliated students. Our center has seen a significant rise in users due to our inclusive approach, which now encompasses veteran dependents as well as veterans themselves. The funding helps us maintain quality services, including the successful launch of the AIMS program and the upcoming hiring of a case manager, which will further enhance our capacity to provide individualized support.

In summary, the student fee allocation is critical for ensuring that we continue to provide high-quality, tailored services that promote the academic, personal, and professional success of military-affiliated students. This investment not only improves the lives of these students but also strengthens the overall student body by fostering a more inclusive and supportive university community.

2. **Please discuss the means that you are utilizing to evaluate both your success in achieving the DSA strategic initiatives and/or action steps and their importance as compared to others that you might pursue. Where data exists, discuss any assessment measures and/or learning outcomes used to evaluate program success. Please provide the method for collecting this data.**

To evaluate our success in achieving the Division of Student Affairs (DSA) strategic initiatives and action steps, Veteran Services employs a variety of assessment tools and methods. These measures help us ensure that our programs are effectively meeting the needs of our military-affiliated students and contributing to their academic, personal, and career success. Below is an overview of the means we are utilizing for evaluation, the importance of these initiatives, and the methods used to collect data and measure success.

Evaluation Methods:

1. **Student Satisfaction Surveys:**
   We regularly conduct surveys among our military-affiliated students to gauge their satisfaction with our services, programs, and events. These surveys provide direct feedback on the relevance and effectiveness of our programs in supporting their transition to civilian and academic life. By collecting quantitative and qualitative data, we can assess overall satisfaction, identify areas for improvement, and adjust our programming accordingly.
2. **Learning Outcomes Assessments:**
   Specific programs, such as our AIMS program (focused on Integration, personal development and academic success) and career readiness workshops, are evaluated based on clearly defined learning outcomes. For example, participants in career workshops are expected to demonstrate improved resume-writing skills and interview techniques. We assess these outcomes through pre- and post-program surveys,

reviewing participant progress and learning retention. This helps us measure the impact of our initiatives on student success.

3. **Utilization Data:**
   Tracking the usage of our services, including the number of students attending events, using our resource center, and seeking advising or counseling, allows us to measure the reach and engagement of our programs. A significant increase in service usage, especially after we expanded our marketing to include dependent students, has provided clear evidence of our growing impact. This data is tracked through event sign-ins, appointment logs, and student information systems.

4. **Case Management Outcomes:**
   As we finalize the hiring of a case manager, we will implement case tracking to measure the effectiveness of individualized support for students facing unique challenges, such as financial difficulties, academic barriers, or mental health concerns. Success will be measured through case resolutions, student follow-ups, and goal achievement as outlined during the initial consultation. Additionally, we can track student retention, GPA, and other data important to evaluating our success.

5. **Focus Groups and Feedback Sessions:**
   In addition to surveys, we hold focus group discussions with student veterans and their dependents to gather more detailed, qualitative feedback. These sessions allow for open conversations about the challenges students face and provide insights into how we can better serve our community. Feedback from these sessions informs strategic adjustments to our programs and services.

Importance of Initiatives and Action Steps:

The strategic initiatives and action steps that align with the DSA goals are prioritized based on their direct impact on student success and engagement. For example, our focus on academic success, personal well-being, and career readiness directly correlates with DSA's commitment to promoting holistic student development. The following priorities are of particular importance:

1. **Academic and Career Readiness:**
   Ensuring that military-affiliated students succeed academically and are prepared for post-graduation careers is one of our top priorities. The successful launch of the AIMS program and career readiness workshops directly support this goal and are closely monitored through participant assessments and satisfaction surveys.

2. **Inclusive Community Development:**
   Expanding our services to include dependent students and creating a welcoming environment for all military-affiliated students has been a major strategic focus. Our evaluation of the increased number of users and event attendees serves as a key metric in determining the success of this inclusivity initiative.

3. **Mental Health and Well-being:**
   As part of the DSA's broader focus on student well-being, we provide resources for mental health, including counseling referrals and peer support groups. The addition of a case manager will further enhance our ability to support students' emotional and

mental well-being, and we will assess the success of these efforts through outcome tracking and student feedback.

Data Collection Methods:

- **Surveys and Evaluations:** Conducted through online platforms (such as Qualtrics or Google Forms) and distributed after events, workshops, and counseling sessions.
- **Utilization Logs:** Tracked using our student information system and event sign-in sheets.
- **Learning Outcome Assessments:** Implemented through pre- and post-surveys, reviewed after participation in any of our programs
- **Focus Groups:** Organized at key intervals throughout the academic year, with notes and themes analyzed to inform strategic decisions.

Through these comprehensive evaluation methods, we continually assess our alignment with DSA strategic initiatives, ensuring that our programs are effective and responsive to the needs of military-affiliated students. The data collected allows us to prioritize initiatives that have the most significant impact on student success and to refine or adjust those that need improvement. These evaluations ensure that we are meeting our mission to provide essential support and resources to veterans, active-duty members, and their dependents.

3. **Please discuss any budget or organizational changes experienced since your last (FY2024) SFAC request, their impact on your programs, and your reason for implementing them. SFAC recognizes that some programs did not receive the funds that they requested, that some programs were impacted by additional expenses after the conclusion of the budget cycle, and that some programs may be ahead of or behind their self-generated income projections.**

Since the last FY2024 SFAC request, Veteran Services has undergone several budgetary and organizational changes that have impacted our operations and programs. These changes were driven by a combination of staffing challenges, budget constraints, and the need to adjust to increased demand for services. Below is an overview of these changes, their impact on our programs, and the reasons for implementing them.

Organizational Changes:

1. **Staffing Turnover:** We have experienced significant turnover in the Program Coordinator position, primarily due to the relatively low salary of $42,000. This salary level has made it difficult to retain qualified candidates in this vital role, leading to disruptions in program continuity and additional onboarding costs. To address this issue and stabilize the position, we are requesting an increase in the salary range for the Program Coordinator to $55,000-$60,000. This increase will enable us to attract and retain skilled professionals who can manage the growing demands of the department and provide consistent support to our students.

2. **Staff Adjustments:** In response to the ongoing staffing challenges, we merged two positions into a new Assistant Director role. This was done to streamline responsibilities, ensure better oversight of programs, and improve management efficiency. The new role has helped mitigate some of the impact caused by staffing shortages and has allowed for better program execution.
3. **Case Manager Hiring:** We are in the final stages of hiring a Case Manager, a critical role that will enhance our ability to provide individualized support to military-affiliated students. This addition is part of our strategic response to the growing complexity of student needs, especially as we expand our services to include dependent students.

Budget Changes:

1. **Salary Budget Reductions:** Budget constraints, including a $6,736 reduction in exempt salaries, have placed pressure on our overall operational capacity. This reduction required us to implement cost-saving measures, such as consolidating positions and reducing non-essential expenditures. Despite these cuts, we have worked to ensure that the core services and support we offer to students remain uninterrupted.
2. **Cost-Saving Initiatives:** Considering the budget shortfalls, we introduced several cost-saving strategies, including the purchase of reusable event materials. These efforts were aimed at maintaining the quality of our events and services without incurring additional expenses. While the reduced budget limited our ability to expand certain initiatives, these measures have allowed us to continue offering key programs to students.

Program Impact:

1. **Increased Demand for Services:** Veteran Services has seen a significant increase in the number of students utilizing our programs and services. This growth can be directly attributed to our efforts to become a more inclusive center by welcoming and marketing to dependent students, in addition to veterans. As a result, the number of students attending events, accessing advising services, and seeking academic support has risen substantially. This increase in demand has stretched our existing resources, making the need for additional staffing and budgetary support more critical.
2. **Launch of the AIMS Program:** Despite budgetary challenges, we successfully launched the AIMS program, which focuses on academic, Integration and personal development for military-affiliated students. The program has received positive feedback and will contribute to the academic success of participants. The hiring of a Case Manager will further enhance this program by providing more direct, personalized support for students facing unique challenges.

The budget and organizational changes since the FY2024 SFAC request have been necessary to adapt to staffing challenges, budget reductions, and increased demand for services. While these changes have placed some strain on our department, we have implemented strategic measures to ensure that we continue to provide high-quality support to our growing student population. The requested increase in the Program Coordinator salary, the addition of a Case Manager, and cost-saving initiatives are all steps toward ensuring that Veteran Services remains

a vital resource for veterans, active-duty members, and their dependents. These adjustments are essential for sustaining and expanding the impact of our programs in the years to come.

4. **Recognizing that the potential to generate additional Student Service Fee income for FY2025 base funding is extremely limited and recognizing that it is likely that some units will not be allocated the new base budget and/or one-time funds requested. Please provide a narrative of how your unit would accommodate a reduction of 5.0% in your total FY2025 base Student Service Fee budget request and provide a line-item explanation of where budgetary cuts would be made.**

If Veteran Services were to experience a 5.0% reduction in our total FY2025 base Student Service Fee budget, totaling $17,032, we would need to make strategic cuts to minimize the impact on essential services and ensure the continuation of our most critical programs. Given the current demand for our services and the importance of supporting military-affiliated students, these cuts would be carefully considered to preserve key functions while still adjusting to the reduced budget.

Proposed Adjustments:

1. **Staffing Adjustments:**
   - **Impact:** Staffing is one of the largest expenditures in our budget. In the event of a 5.0% reduction, we would need to consider leaving the Program Coordinator position unfilled for a longer period or reducing the hours of temporary staff, such as interns. This would help reduce payroll expenses but could lead to slower response times and reduced support for students in administrative areas.
   - **Line-Item Cut:** Delay in filling the Program Coordinator position, saving approximately **$9,500** over several months.
2. **Event Programming and Supplies:**
   - **Impact:** We would scale back on some non-essential programming and reduce event-related costs, such as catering, printed materials, and promotional items. Instead, we would focus on holding fewer but more impactful events, ensuring that critical programs like career readiness workshops and the AIMS program remain fully supported. We would also continue using reusable event materials to cut down on recurring supply expenses.
   - **Line-Item Cut:** Reduction in event supplies and promotional materials, saving approximately **$3,500**.
3. **Professional Development and Travel:**
   - **Impact:** We would reduce funding for staff professional development and travel. While we consider ongoing training and networking to be important for maintaining a high standard of service, these cuts would be necessary to protect

direct services to students. We would focus on utilizing low-cost or virtual professional development opportunities where possible.

- o **Line-Item Cut:** Reduction in professional development and travel costs, saving approximately **$2,800**.

4. **Technology and Equipment:**
    - o **Impact:** Any planned upgrades to technology or equipment would be postponed unless absolutely necessary for daily operations. While we do not foresee any major immediate needs, this could impact our ability to improve or update our systems in the future, possibly leading to inefficiencies over time. With that said, previous upgrades to our computer lab were covered by Corporate Donations.
    - o **Line-Item Cut:** Delay in technology purchases, saving approximately **$2,232**.

5. **Outreach and Marketing:**
    - o **Impact:** We would scale back on some aspects of our outreach and marketing budget, particularly in areas related to printed marketing materials or external advertising. However, we would continue focusing on cost-effective digital marketing and leveraging partnerships with other departments to spread awareness of our programs and services.
    - o **Line-Item Cut:** Reduction in marketing expenses, saving approximately **$1,000**.

Line-Item Explanation of Cuts (5.0% Total Reduction):

Expense Category	Budget Reduction
Delay in filling Program Coordinator position	$9,500
Reduction in event supplies and promotional materials	$3,500
Reduction in professional development and travel	$2,800
Postponement of technology and equipment upgrades	$2,232
Reduction in printed outreach/marketing materials	$1,000
Total Budget Cut (5.0%)	**$17,032**

By making these strategic cuts, we would ensure that essential services like the AIMS program, student engagement programs and student support services remain prioritized. While the overall capacity of Veteran Services would be impacted, particularly in the areas of event programming and administrative support, we would strive to maintain the quality of our core programs for military-affiliated students.

5. What are the other possible sources of funding available to your unit and what efforts are being made to access them (e.g. grants, donations, etc.)? If you receive funds from other sources, please briefly describe the source, purpose, and duration of the funding and report the amounts received in the appropriate rows/columns on the SFAC Spreadsheet.

In addition to Student Service Fee (SSF) funding, Veteran Services actively explores alternative sources of funding to supplement our budget and support the growth and sustainability of our programs. While we rely heavily on SSF funding to maintain core services, we have also made efforts to access other funding streams, such as grants and donations. Below is an overview of these potential sources of funding and our ongoing efforts to secure them:

1. **Department of Veterans Affairs Student Work Study Program:**

- **Description:** Veteran Services leverages the **Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Student Work Study Program** to help fund the wages of our student workers. This program allows eligible student veterans and dependents to work in VA-related roles, such as assisting in our office, while earning a tax-free hourly wage. By utilizing this program, we significantly reduce the need to allocate funds from our base budget for student worker salaries.
- **Impact:** The VA Student Work Study Program enables us to support our student workforce without impacting our SSF budget, allowing those funds to be redirected toward other programmatic needs. The program provides valuable work experience for student veterans while ensuring they remain engaged in supporting their peers.
  - o **Effort:** We actively recruit eligible student veterans for these positions and work closely with the VA to manage this funding stream.

2. **Donatations and Funding**

- **Alumni and Community Support:** Veteran Services has begun outreach efforts to local veteran organizations, military-friendly businesses, and alumni groups to explore potential donations and sponsorship opportunities. These funds could be used for specific events, scholarships for student veterans, or program enhancements such as guest speakers and workshops.
  - o **Effort:** We are developing a targeted fundraising strategy to approach potential donors, focusing on alumni who have benefitted from our services and local businesses with a vested interest in supporting veterans.

3. **University and Campus Partnerships:**

- **Collaboration with Other Campus Departments:** We continue to partner with other university departments, such as the Career Services and Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), to share resources and co-host events. These partnerships help reduce costs for programming by sharing expenses for events, workshops, and student support

services. While these partnerships do not directly result in additional funding, they significantly reduce our out-of-pocket costs and maximize the impact of our programs.

- o **Effort:** Ongoing collaboration with campus departments to share resources and reduce costs for programming.
- **University Development Office:** We have engaged with the university's development office to explore potential philanthropic funding and endowment opportunities targeted specifically at veteran services. Although no formal donations have been secured yet, we are continuing these discussions and hope to leverage the university's existing donor network to support our mission.
  - o **Effort:** Continued collaboration with the university's development office to identify potential major donors.

Veteran Services continues to actively pursue multiple funding streams beyond Student Service Fees, including grants, donations, and partnerships. These efforts are critical to supporting our programs and expanding our reach to more students. However, we remain reliant on SSF funding for the core operations of our unit, and the pursuit of alternative funding will complement, rather than replace, this essential support. Any secured funds will be reported on the SFAC Spreadsheet once confirmed.

1. Please use the following file naming conventions when submitting your pdf files to the Dean of Students:

FY26Q_DepartmentName	Questionnaire
FY26AOT25a_DepartmentName	Add'l One time request - change "a" to "b", "c", etc for additional one-time requests
FY26WS_DepartmentName	Excel worksheet
FY26BA_DepartmentName	Base Augmentation request
FY26OTa_DepartmentName	One time request - change "a" to "b", "c", etc for multiple one-time requests
FY25PRES_DepartmentName	Presentation

NOTE: *The totality of your responses to these questions should give the members of the Committee a comprehensive understanding of the role and function of your unit(s). To the extent that your responses do not accomplish this, please revise them accordingly.*

Questionnaire completed by Celina A. Dugas, Program Director, University of Houston Veteran Services