# Veterans Services Summary Report

The National Conference on Citizenship's 2017 report on veterans civic health[1] showed that contributions veterans make to their respective communities are significant. In general, veterans were found to be more engaged than non-veterans in volunteerism, community service, political processes, and charitable giving. Along with military service to the country, the lifelong impacts veterans continue to have on society make this nation a better place.

Institutions in the Utah System of Higher Education are committed to serving veterans and helping them succeed in achieving their postsecondary educational goals. Additionally, assisting veterans is an important element in increasing the number of adults in Utah earning college certificates and degrees. Providing specialized support services to veterans while they engage in higher educational programs recognizes their sacrifices, contributions, and the value they provide to society. Providing services to veterans is part of the commitment USHE institutions have to provide opportunities and access for those who desire a postsecondary credential.

This report documents progress made by each USHE institution since 2014 when the Utah System of Higher Education completed a benchmarking survey on the current state of veterans support services[2] at Utah public colleges and universities. It also identifies opportunities for improvement and provides recommendations.

**Background**

To better understand services provided to veterans among USHE institutions, the 2014 Utah Legislature, via S.B. 68, *Veterans Centers*[3], required the USHE Board of Regents to:

- Study the feasibility of providing a veterans center or veterans services at each state institution of higher education
- Develop a plan for implementing centers or services
- Prepare a report of the study and plan with recommendations for implementation

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[1] National Conference on Citizenship, *2017 Veterans Civic Health Index, https://ncoc.org/national-reports-typ/2017-veterans-civic-health-index/*
[2] Utah System of Higher Education, *Walk-in Centers and Services for Veterans Recommendations to the Utah State Board of Regents*, https://ushe.edu/wp-content/uploads/pdf/reports/VeteransServicesStudy.pdf
[3] Utah State Legislature, *S.B. 69, Veterans Centers,* https://le.utah.gov/~2014/bills/static/SB0068.html

In response to this legislation, the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education conducted a survey among USHE institutions to assess the status of veterans services in 2014[4]. After compiling the survey results, a summary report with recommendations was provided to the USHE Board of Regents.

The report provided to the Board in 2014 was used as a basis by the Utah Department of Veterans and Military Affairs to request and receive legislative funding that has been used to augment veterans services among Utah's postsecondary institutions. Funding for this purpose became available FY 2016-17 and, based on proposals received from institutions, was distributed to institutions each of the last three fiscal years.

In an effort to assess progress made at USHE institutions since the initial veterans services survey was conducted in 2014, the Utah Department of Veterans and Military Affairs and the Commissioner's Office conducted a follow-up survey in 2019. This document provides an analysis and summary of the 2019 survey. As with the 2014 survey, the 2019 survey examined the following information:

- The levels of service provided to veterans
- Specific services provided to veterans
- Identification of gaps in service
- Criteria to assess levels of service
- Criteria to assess when a walk-in veterans center would be appropriate for an institution to provide
- Estimated costs associated with service enhancement

In addition, the 2019 survey included a section on metrics that was not part of the 2014 survey. Each institution's survey was completed under the direction of the respective institution's chief student affairs officer.

**Summary of Main Findings**

The following points highlight findings of the 2019 survey:

1.  Services to veterans at USHE institutions have become more visible and pronounced. Seven institutions now offer walk-in veterans centers, compared to three institutions in 2014. This is a significant accomplishment on the part of the institutions and reflects an increased priority given to veterans services.

2.  Seven of the eight USHE institutions reported providing services in 2019 that they did not provide in 2014. There were 20 instances where a service was not provided by an institution in 2014, but

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[4] Utah System of Higher Education, *Walk-in Centers and Services for Veterans Recommendations to the Utah State Board of Regents*, https://ushe.edu/wp-content/uploads/pdf/reports/VeteransServicesStudy.pdf

was provided in 2019. There were 17 instances where a service was provided in 2014 but was reported as not provided in 2019.

3. Six out of 23 services that were examined in the survey were identified as the highest concentration of services not currently provided by USHE institutions. These services constitute the most significant opportunity for improvement on a statewide basis.

4. Developing a comprehensive set of metrics that measure success of veteran students is a work in progress. While some measures of success have been realized, much work remains to be done to develop metrics that provide meaningful indicators of success for veterans' achievements in higher education programs.

**Criteria to Determine Levels of Service to Veterans, Including Walk-in Veterans Centers**

While all institutions within USHE are responsive in providing services for veterans, the services provided vary from one institution to another. In assessing services, it was helpful to consider services by level. In doing so, the following definitions were used:

- **Level 1—Veterans Support Staff:** Institution assigns full-time staff member(s) whose responsibility is to provide services to veterans. These staff members have other responsibilities assigned to them outside of their responsibilities to veterans.

- **Level 2—Dedicated Veterans Support Office:** Institution has at least one position assigned to provide services to veterans on a full-time basis.

- **Level 3—Veterans Services Center:** Institution has at least one position assigned to provide services to veterans on a full-time basis and offers exclusive services to veterans beyond services that are available to all students.

- **Level 4—Veterans Services with Walk-in Veterans Center:** Institution has at least one position assigned to provide services to veterans on a full-time basis, offers exclusive services to veterans beyond services that are available to all students, and provides dedicated space for use by veterans.

Respondents were asked to assess the level at which their institutions provide services to veterans. They were also asked to specify a range of veteran enrollment they believed was reasonable to justify providing each level of service identified above.

Predominately, responses suggested that once an institution enrolls more than 50 students, it should provide services to veterans at Level 4 and that Level 1 was appropriate for institutions enrolling 50 or fewer veterans. Responses showed complete consistency between the level of service at which institutions

reported they operate and the recommended service level at which they believed they should be operating. In the 2014 study, there was a greater range of disparity between actual and recommended levels of service, and at what enrollment a given level of service should be provided. Survey responses show that institutions have made considerable progress increasing levels of service to veterans over the last five years with seven institutions now offering walk-in veterans centers, up from three institutions in 2014.

See Table 1 below.

**Table 1. Current and Recommended Service Levels for Veterans**

| Institution | 2014 Survey | | | 2019 Survey | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Estimated Veterans Enrolled Fall 2013* | Self-identified Service Level | Recommended Service Level | Estimated Veterans Enrolled Fall 2019* | Self-identified Service Level | Recommended Service Level |
| University of Utah | 915 | 4 | 4 | 1150 | 4 | 4 |
| Utah State University | 525 | 4 | 4 | 659 | 4 | 4 |
| Weber State University | 913 | 4 | 4 | 642 | 4 | 4 |
| Southern Utah University | 450 | 1 | 4 | 500 | 4 | 4 |
| Snow College | 46 | 1 | 1 | 15 | 1 | 1 |
| Dixie State University | 209 | 2 | 2 | 152 | 4 | 4 |
| Utah Valley University | 900 | 2 | 4 | 935 | 4 | 4 |
| Salt Lake Community College | 1300 | 4 | 4 | 851 | 4 | 4 |

**Services for Veterans**

To further understand veterans services on USHE campuses, respondents were asked to consider not only the level of service their respective institutions provide, but also the breadth of services. The latter refers to the number of actual services provided to veterans.

A list of services was developed for the 2014 survey[5] that included 26 services. This same list was used as a basis for the 2019 survey but was updated to reflect current conditions. The updated list contained 23 of the original 26 services. The services listed in the survey were derived from:

- Conversations and feedback from USHE institutional personnel who work with veterans
- Conversations with executive officers of the Utah Department of Veterans and Military Affairs[6]
- Members of the Utah Legislative Veterans Reintegration Task Force (now known as the Veterans and Military Affairs Commission[7])
- Personnel on the Utah Veterans Education and Training Working Group
- Information gathered from national bodies including the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and American Council on Education

For each of the 23 services, respondents were asked to identify which services their respective institutions currently provide to veterans. Additionally, for services that were not currently offered, they were asked to identify which services could be provided without additional costs, which services could be provided with additional funding, and which services would not be feasible to provide even if additional funding were available.

Table 2, below, provides a breakdown of the responses to this inquiry. Results demonstrated that to varying degrees all institutions have opportunities to increase services to veterans. Service items identified in the survey were grouped into two service levels, Service Level 1 and Service Level 4 (since these are the service levels that apply to USHE institutions).

**Table 2. Recommended Services for Veterans by Service Level and Institutions**

Key to Table 2:

■ = Currently provided by institution

■ = Currently not provided by institution but could be provided without additional funding

■ = Currently not provided by institution but could be provided with additional funding

■ = Currently not provided by institution, and is not feasible to provide service even if additional funds were available

*A color indicated in parentheses denotes the status of the service as reported in the 2014 survey. Where no color is specified in parentheses, there was no change between the 2014 and 2019 surveys.

5 Utah System of Higher Education, *Walk-in Centers and Services for Veterans Recommendations to the Utah State Board of Regents*, https://ushe.edu/wp-content/uploads/pdf/reports/VeteransServicesStudy.pdf
6 Utah Department of Veterans and Military Affairs, https://veterans.utah.gov/
7 Utah State Legislature, *2019 Veterans and Military Affairs Commission*, https://le.utah.gov/asp/interim/Commit.asp?Year=2019&Com=SPEVMA

## Table 2: Service Level 1- Recommended to be provided by all USHE institutions

| Facilitate certification of United States Department of Veterans Affairs educational benefits[8] | U of U | USU | WSU | SUU | Snow | DSU | UVU | SLCC |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Provide guidance to help veterans complete the application for United States Department of Veterans Affairs educational benefits[9] | U of U | USU | WSU | SUU | Snow | DSU | UVU | SLCC |
| Commit to practice the principles of excellence established by Executive Order 13607- Establishing Principles of Excellence for Educational Institutions Serving Service Members, Veterans, Spouses, and Other Family Members[10] | U of U | USU | WSU | SUU | Snow | DSU | UVU | SLCC |
| Include statement of veterans preference[11] in institutional employee recruitment and hiring documents | U of U | WSU | SUU | Snow | DSU | UVU | SLCC | USU (Blue) |
| Award credit to veterans for learning demonstrated through prior military experience and training in accordance with Utah Code 53B-16-107[12] | U of U | WSU | SUU | Snow | DSU | UVU | SLCC | USU (Blue) |
| Provide guidance to help veterans obtain Utah residency status | U of U | USU | WSU | SUU | DSU | UVU | SLCC | Snow (Blue) |

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8 U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, *VA education and training benefits,* https://www.va.gov/education/
9 U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, *How to apply for the GI Bill and related benefits*, https://www.va.gov/education/how-to-apply/
10 The White House, *Executive Order -- Establishing Principles of Excellence for Educational Institutions Serving Service Members, Veterans, Spouses, and Other Family Members*, https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2012/04/27/executive-order-establishing-principles-excellence-educational-instituti
11 U.S. Department of Labor, *Veterans' Preference Information*, https://www.dol.gov/agencies/vets/programs/vetspref
12 Utah State Legislature, *Utah Code 53B-16-107, Credit for military service training –Notification – Transferability – Reporting*, https://le.utah.gov/xcode/Title53B/Chapter16/53B-16-S107.html

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| to qualify for in-state tuition | | | | | | | | |
| Advocate for veterans with campus entities and personnel | U of U | USU | WSU | SUU | DSU | UVU | SLCC | Snow (Blue) |
| Utilize the resources, counsel, and guidance available in the American Council on Education's Toolkit for Veteran Friendly Institutions[13] | U of U | USU (Green) | WSU (Green) | SUU (Green) | DSU | UVU | SLCC | Snow (Blue) |
| Work with veterans and academic personnel to assist in resolving enrollment and program entry requirement issues | USU | WSU | Snow | DSU | UVU | SLCC | U of U | SUU |
| Develop tracking system to identify all enrolled veterans each semester including those using VA benefits and those not using VA benefits | U of U | USU (Yellow) | WSU (Green) | DSU (Yellow) | UVU | SLCC | SUU | Snow |
| Provide guidance to support veterans with admission into educational programs at the institution | WSU | Snow | DSU | UVU | SLCC | U of U (Blue) | USU (Yellow) | SUU |

**Table 2: Service Level 4- Recommended to be provided by UU, USU, WSU, DSU, UVU, and SLCC- Service items included in Service Level 1 above plus the following:**

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Participate in the United States Department of Veterans Affairs work study program[14] | U of U | USU | WSU | SUU | DSU | UVU (Yellow) | SLCC | Snow |
| Establish an office that serves as a central point of service for veterans | U of U | WSU | WSU | SUU (Green) | DSU | UVU | SLCC | Snow (Green) |
| Upon admission, identify and contact veterans to make them aware of veterans services at the institution | U of U (Yellow) | USU | SUU (Green) | DSU (Yellow) | UVU | SLCC | WSU (Yellow) | Snow (Yellow) |

13 American Council on Education, *Toolkit for Veteran Friendly Institutions*, https://www.acenet.edu/Documents/Veterans-Toolkit-2018.pdf
14 U.S. Department of Education, *Work study*, *https://www.va.gov/education/about-gi-bill-benefits/how-to-use-benefits/work-study/*

| Contact enrolled veterans each semester and invite them to take advantage of services available to them | U of U | USU (Green) | SUU | DSU (Yellow) | UVU | SLCC | WSU | Snow |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Support professional development of veterans service personnel at annual out-of-state meetings such as WAVES[15] or NAVPA[16] | U of U | USU | SUU | DSU | UVU (Green) | SLCC | WSU (Green) | Snow (Blue) |
| Provide a formal process for veterans issues to be represented or heard within student government or student body organizations | WSU | SUU | UVU (Yellow) | SLCC | U of U | USU | Snow (Grey) | DSU (Blue) |
| Provide orientation services for veterans who have been recently admitted to the institution | SUU (Green) | UVU | SLCC | U of U (Blue) | USU (Blue) | WSU (Blue) | Snow | DSU (Blue) |
| Develop and implement outreach training and/or materials designed to help members of the campus community better understand needs and issues of veterans | U of U | SUU (Green) | DSU (Green) | UVU | USU | WSU | SLCC (Blue) | Snow (Green) |
| Assist veterans to transition from school to the workplace | U of U | SUU (Yellow) | UVU | USU (Yellow) | WSU | DSU | SLCC (Blue) | Snow (Blue) |
| Contact enrolled veterans each semester to assist them with retention and completion | UVU | SLCC (Green) | U of U (Blue) | USU | WSU | SUU (Yellow) | Snow | DSU |
| Provide an academic outreach program to help underprepared veterans achieve success in college courses | UVU | SLCC | U of U | USU | WSU | SUU | Snow | DSU |
| Establish a standing committee composed of academic and | WSU | U of U | USU | DSU | UVU (Blue) | SLCC (Blue) | SUU (Yellow) | Snow (Yellow) |

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15 WAVES, *Western Association of Veterans Education Specialists*, https://www.uswaves.org/
16 NAVPA, *National Association of Veterans' Program Administrators*, https://www.navpa.org/

| student services personnel to discuss common veterans' issues and make recommendations to appropriate individuals and groups for improvement | | | | | | | | |
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## Metrics

The 2019 survey added a section on veteran success metrics. Institutions were asked to provide 11 metrics centered on veteran enrollment, retention, completion, and employment. The ability for institutions to report on all 11 metrics was mixed. Generally, institutions were able to identify veteran enrollment and have made progress in the ability to identify veterans upon enrollment. Likewise, some aspects of retention from one year to the next did not appear to present significant barriers for institutions to measure; however, deeper analysis of non-retained veterans (i.e., transfer to different institutions and employment data) presented challenges in data gathering. For example, not all survey respondents were familiar with or had ready access to Utah unemployment insurance wage records or the National Student Clearinghouse[17], where employment and student transfer data are available.

Obtaining meaningful completion data was also met with challenges. Year-to-year completion data were generally available, although this data does not address cohort completion rates, a metric that is a more meaningful measure of completion. Determining an eight-year cohort completion rate presented challenges for several institutions.

Institutional research offices are often over-taxed with existing workloads. New data requests that add to these workloads without commensurate resources can stress the ability of an institution to respond regularly and systematically to on-going data needs.

## Estimated Costs

Institutions were asked to identify costs associated with providing services identified in the blue category of Table 2. While cost information was not provided by all institutions, information that was provided is summarized in Tables 3 and 4 below. Cost information reflects salaries and benefits that are in addition to federal Veterans Administration work-study funds.

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**Table 3. One-time Costs: Enhancement of services for veterans and increase in service levels**

| Cost Item | U of U | USU | WSU | SUU | Snow | DSU | UVU | SLCC | USHE Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Acquisition of Space | | | | | | | | | |
| Remodeling | | | | 10,000 | | 20,000 | | | 30,000 |
| Furnishings | | 5,000 | | 5,000 | | 7,000 | | | 17,000 |
| Full-time Salaries | | | | 38,000 | | | | | 38,000 |
| Full-time Benefits | | | | 5,700 | | | | | 5,700 |
| Part-time staff wages beyond veterans work-study positions | | | | | | | | | |
| Part-time staff benefits beyond veterans work-study positions | | | | | | | | | |
| Operations and Maintenance | | | | | | | | | |
| Current Expense | | | | | | | | | |
| Travel, out-of-state | | | | | | | | | |
| Travel, in-state | | | | | | | | | |
| Other costs (specify) DSU-tutoring/counseling; SUU-Marketing publications, veteran orientation, student mentors | | | | | | | | | |
| Subtract costs associated with existing or potential funds that could be used to off-set costs identified above | | -30,000 | | | | | | | |
| **Total Costs** | | **-25,000** | | **58,700** | | **27,000** | | | **90,700** |

**Table 4. On-going Costs: Enhancement of services for veterans and increase in service levels**

| Cost Item | U of U | USU | WSU | SUU | Snow | DSU | UVU | SLCC | USHE Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Acquisition of Space | | | | | | | | | |
| Remodeling | | | | 3,000 | | | | | 3,000 |
| Furnishings | | | 1,000 | 300 | | | | | 1,300 |
| Full-time Salaries | 98,000 | 51,000 | 40,000 | 38,000 | | | | | 227,000 |
| Full-time Benefits | 39,200 | 23,460 | 18,000 | 5,700 | | | | | 86,360 |
| Part-time staff wages beyond veterans work-study positions | | 17,160 | | | | 22,360 | | | 39,520 |
| Part-time staff benefits beyond veterans work-study positions | | 1,373 | | | | | | | 1,373 |
| Operations and Maintenance | 900 | 18,638 | | | | 3,900 | | | 23,438 |
| Current Expense | | 5,000 | 2,500 | | | | | | 7,500 |
| Travel, out-of-state | 4,000 | 5,000 | 12,000 | | | 6,500 | | | 27,500 |
| Travel, in-state | 1,000 | 2,000 | | | | 1,000 | | | 4,000 |
| Other costs | 45,000 | 21,938 | | | | 21,000 | | | 87938 |
| Subtract costs associated with existing or potential funds that could be used to off-set costs identified above | | | | | | -3,900 | | | 3,900 |
| **Total Costs** | **188,100** | **145,569** | **73,500** | **47,000** | | **50,860** | | | **505,029** |

Notes to on-going costs table (above):

- U of U Salaries and Benefits: Veterans Services Center Assistant Director ($52K) Veterans Admissions Coordinator ($46K). These positions would improve staffing in order to increase outreach and support and to provide deliberate support of veteran admissions.
- U of U Travel: Professional development for assistant director and veteran admissions coordinator

- U of U Operations and Maintenance: Cost of a monthly veteran orientation program offered in conjunction with the general transfer orientation. Approximately $75/month to cover space, parking for speakers, and materials.
- U of U Other: Host Warrior Scholar Program
- USU Other: Academic Bridge Program
- DSU Other: Tutoring Assistance
- DSU Other: Veteran Outreach

**Findings**

1. Seven institutions now offer walk-in veterans centers, compared to three institutions in 2014.

2. Tabulating the change in responses from the 2014 survey, seven of the eight USHE institutions reported providing services in 2019 that they did not provide in 2014. Twenty instances were reported where a service was not provided by an institution in 2014, but was provided in 2019. There were 17 instances where a service was provided in 2014 but reported as not provided in 2019.

3. From the list of services measured in the survey, Southern Utah University reported the greatest number of new services offered between 2014 and 2019, with six new services provided to veterans.

4. Areas of highest concentration of services not currently provided include (services are not provided by five of the eight institutions):
   - Provide orientation services for veterans who have been recently admitted to the institution
   - Develop and implement outreach training and/or materials designed to help members of the campus community better understand needs and issues of veterans
   - Assist veterans to transition from school to the workplace
   - Contact enrolled veterans each semester to assist them with retention and completion
   - Provide an academic outreach program to help underprepared veterans achieve success in college courses
   - Establish a standing committee composed of academic and student services personnel to discuss common veterans' issues and make recommendations to appropriate individuals and groups for improvement

5. Institutions generally were able to identify the veteran success metrics related to veteran enrollment and year-to-year retention and completion, although providing deeper analysis pertaining to transfer, employment, and cohort completion rates presented challenges.

6.  Combined responses from institutions that provided cost information suggest that $90,700 of one-time funds and $505,029 of on-going funds are needed to address service gaps identified by this survey.

**Recommendations**

1.  Where items are coded in Table 2 as yellow (not currently offered, but could be offered without additional funding), institutions should examine why these services are not offered and develop strategies to provide them.

2.  Where items are coded in Table 2 as green (not currently offered, but could be offered with additional funding), institutions should work with the State Department of Veterans and Military Affairs to identify funding from institutional and state sources aimed at reducing the gaps in service, especially in those cases where a service is associated with a Service Level recommended for the institution.

3.  Where services were provided in 2014 but were not reported as being provided in 2019, institutions should examine why these services were no longer provided and determine strategies to offer these services, as per recommendations one or two above.

4.  For each item having the highest concentration of not being provided (identified in item four of the Findings section above), institutions not providing these services should pay particular attention to developing strategies and approaches to implementing them so as to increase the breadth of services to veterans across the state.

5.  Training and resources are needed to assist institutions to gather veteran success metrics, particularly obtaining cohort completion rates and information from Utah's unemployment insurance wage records and the National Student Clearinghouse[18] and then matching this information with institutional data. It is recommended that veteran services stakeholders discuss data needs with institutional research offices to better understand the metrics that are needed—those that can be obtained with existing resources and what additional resources would be needed to address gaps that currently exist in providing veteran success metrics.

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[18] National Student Clearinghouse, https://www.studentclearinghouse.org/