

Veterans Resource Center (VRC)

Reflection Questions

- 1. Overview: Assess program, services, division during the 2019-20 year. Describe accomplishments, challenges and how challenges were addressed. Include evidence that illustrates accomplishments and challenges.**

In the last five years, the Veterans Resource Center (VRC) program has grown its population exponentially from just 49 students in 2016. In 2019-20, the Veterans Resource Center (VRC) served more than 330 students. Main services offered are GI Bill benefits and certification, career, personal and educational counseling, as well as student matriculation assistance. 2019 VRC accomplishments include:

- Using grant funding to establish a Veteran Services Office (VRC) thereby establishing a space specifically for our student veterans.
- The addition of a full-time VRC Counselor to the VRC team and the continued funding of a part-time faculty position.
 - <https://www.deanza.edu/veterans/our-counselors.html>
- Celebrating the Veteran Student Journey
 - The Veteran Scholars' Journeys Project
 - <https://www.deanza.edu/veterans-journeys/index.html>
 - Hosting the Year End Celebration/Graduation of Veteran Scholars
- Increasing campus and community awareness for student veteran issues
 - Hosting a professional development workshop for faculty and staff at the Foothill-De Anza District Opening Day
- Student outreach and in-reach
 - Offering the VRC Virtual Lab (Drop-in Hours) via Zoom
 - <https://www.deanza.edu/veterans/index.html>
 - Offering a probation workshop for Veteran students
 - <https://www.deanza.edu/veterans/our-counselors.html>
 - Student scholarship workshops and Financial Aid resources
 - <http://deanza.edu/veterans/scholarships.html>

The VRC program challenges included:

- Meeting federal VRC reporting and grant reporting requirements with limited staff resources
- Ordering and receiving student resources (laptops, etc.) as well as fixtures and furniture for the VRC Office during the pandemic closure.
- Building and maintaining a student veteran community during the pandemic.

- Ensure faculty support for students who were required to withdrawal from their courses because they activated during a term.
- Ensure student veteran financial support for both educational and non-educational expenses.

Source 1: (Based on De Anza's VRC report)

Source 2: <https://www.deanza.edu/ir/deanza-research-projects/enrollment/DA%20F16%20and%20F17%20memo.pdf>

Source 3: <https://www.deanza.edu/ir/deanza-research-projects/enrollment/DA%20F16%20and%20F17%20memo.pdf>

2. Describe how program plans were met, including evidence that illustrate how these program plans were met.

The VRC serves over three hundred veteran students who need full support, services, and dedicated personnel in addition to the space. The goal of these services is to assist veteran students along their educational and career pathways--from matriculation to graduation and transfer--so to achieve their goals. The VRC provides specialized programs and services to Veterans, service members, reservists and their dependents or spouse. One area that we want to highlight is our campus's welcoming environment by raising awareness for our student services programs. These student services areas provide student support in areas such as educational planning, counseling, career advising, retention workshops, Financial Aid and Scholarship Literacy workshops, tutoring, and priority registration. Moreover, the VRC provides a dedicated space for students with similar backgrounds and experiences to build community. Students have a space to study and have access to computers and a printer. The unique needs of the student veteran population mandate a dedicated space as well as specialized and targeted support in order to help students succeed academically.

Below are student reflections which illustrate our program's achievements:

"Luckily, De Anza offers a Veteran Services office, and this small addition has made a big impact on my college experience. The staff are wonderful, as are the veterans, and for all my friends returning to school, I would recommend that they explore this community as they are great for helping you find your bearings in a foreign place"
(*Drew Moore, spring 2020*).

"There are many factors that have helped me succeed in college. My mentors, teachers, counselors and especially our Veteran Services Center in school"
(*Traciemarie Sanjuan, spring 2020*).

"The Veteran Services office on campus, and the other veterans I have met there, have definitely been what has helped me through my college career"
(*Lance Carmichael, spring 2020*).

3. Describe your experience related to transition of remote work, including online services, instruction, and supporting students offsite during the pandemic.

During the pandemic closure, the VRC transitioned to online services by offering a biweekly **drop-in desk** where prospective, new and continuing students could meet with a VRC staff or counselor. In addition, the VRC counselor offered counseling sessions via Zoom. The VRC continues to plan to offer workshops and events in the online environment. VRC staff and faculty demonstrated commitment and flexibility when learning to use new technologies, software and applications.

4. Describe how Student Equity goals were met and any improvements that were made. Include evidence that illustrate how goals were met using institutional data.

The VRC has made major physical structure and programmatic improvements in 2019-20 by establishing a center on campus specifically for student veterans. These changes were made for the purposes of improving services for all veteran students. The [2019-22 Student Equity Plan](#) identified veterans as a disproportionately served population in the following ways:

- Veteran, female was identified as a disproportionately served population in Access-Enrollment (college goal to increase from 36% to 50%)
- Veteran, male was identified as a disproportionately served population in Retention (college goal to increase from 66% to 75%)

The VRC will continue to review the needs of these populations so to better understand what the center can do to support the students on their pathway toward achieving their educational goals.

5. Describe the impact of the 2020 pandemic and all of the associated events have had on the students served by the program. Share what the program review data reveals about the corresponding impacts of the current circumstances.

It is anticipated that VRC student enrollment will decrease in 2020-2021 because of the COVID-19 related closure effective March 2020. Students shared that the pandemic impacted them in the following ways:

- Inability to fully commitment to their coursework because of uncertainty about course offerings and schedules
- Increased need for VRC counselor support and advocacy when dealing with instructors who lacked flexibility when students received their active-duty assignment or move orders.
- Inability to recreate the campus environment online (collaborating with other students, accessing resources, etc.)
- Non-education related responsibilities which were interrupted by COVID-19.

Online VRC drop-in services will be assessed in 2020-2021 to determine if offerings increased productivity and student accessibility.

6. Describe resource needs based on current programs and services to effectively and efficiently serve students.

To effectively and efficiently serve students, VRC resource needs include:

- continued funding for an adjunct counseling position; and
- A program coordinator position to oversee VRC federal reporting, grant expenditures, donor outreach and event planning, and daily programmatic and coordination needs to support our students.

7. Other Relevant Information, including future anticipated goals.

Future VRC goals include:

- Meeting outreach and in-reach needs by creating and offering workshops such as: potential student meet and greets, how to transfer to a four-year institution, and new student onboarding (welcome sessions, orientation)
- Developing and offerings of Navigating College and College Success courses
- Establishing and planning for the sustainable development of a retention program to include a mentoring program (student to student and/or student to faculty or community member)
- Cultivating new and continued partnerships with local, state and federal organizations and donors to ensure access to the resources that our veteran students need to be successful
- Providing financial support and resources for student educational and non-educational commitments
- Augmentation of professional development workshops to increase college awareness to VRC student issues
- Creating an outdoor space dedicated to VRC students and their service animals
- Planning for and securing funding for an on-campus mural or public art project which publicly celebrates our veteran students