Student Veterans Association

January 24, 2014

Student Services Fee Request for the 2014 - 2015 Academic Year

B-18 Johnston Hall 101 Pleasant St. SE Minneapolis, MN 55455

Address

612-624-2913 n/a fried509@umn.edu
Phone Fax Email

“We acknowledge that the Fee Committee does not award actual dollars, but rather a penny fee that earns dollars based upon student enrollment levels. Any differences between anticipated and actual income resulting from changes in enrollment are the responsibility of the student organization, not of the Fee Committee.”

Andrew Friedrichs Tommy Andrs
Preparer’s Name Co-Preparer’s Name
fried509@umn.edu andrs003@umn.edu
Preparer’s Email Co-Preparer’s Email

Is your organization an IRS 501 (c)(3) not-for-profit? Yes X No
If yes, please provide proof of your organization’s 501(c)(3) status.

Funds are being requested for (check all that apply):

General Operating Support: X Start-Up Costs: Capital:

Project / Program Support: X Technical Assistance: Other (List):

Budget

- SSF Dollar Amount Requested $ 17,975.00
- Total Annual Organization Budget $ 21,920.83
- Total Program Budget (apart from General Operating) $ 12,310.00
Important Note: All Student Services Fee applications will be evaluated using the Guidelines for Decision-Making found on pages 20-21 of the Student Services Fee Handbook. It is critical for your application to address these guidelines in your written application. Please reference/describe how your organization meets particular/applicable guidelines in Section 1, Section 3 and/or Section 5 of the written portion of your application and in your program breakdown included in the SSF budget worksheet.

Section 1: Narrative
On September 16, 2005, the University of Minnesota announced that it would sponsor Comfort for Courage’s proposed Veterans Transition Center (VTC) on the University’s campus. During the fall semester of 2005, Comfort for Courage and the University worked to establish the new transition center in Eddy Hall. Volunteers, most of whom were student veterans, staffed the VTC to welcome new members and answer any inquiries.

Comfort for Courage and the VTC officially separated in January of 2006, with both organizations continuing a close working relationship. Comfort for Courage, founded by University students Andy Davis and Tony Richter, is a student-led, non-profit, non-partisan effort to support the nation’s armed service members. Since its inception in 2004, Comfort for Courage has shipped more than seven tons of comfort items to service men and women serving overseas. Co-founder Andy Davis is a former Army Ranger who served three combat tours in Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. Tony Richter graduated from the University's Carlson School of Management in 2007. The VTC has focused on assisting student veterans in the transition from combat mentality to classroom learning.

The VTC moved from 15 Eddy Hall to 302 Wesbrook Hall on January 18, 2008. The larger space allowed the VTC to accommodate the large influx of veterans, especially after the post-9/11 GI Bill went into effect in 2009, and also to expand its involvement with other University organizations. The VTC teamed with the Warrior to Citizen Campaign operated through the University of Minnesota’s Humphrey Institute and hosted several meetings focusing on veteran reintegration into the successful student, citizen, and working professional environments. In addition, a series of focused study circles were hosted with the same organization at the VTC. These study circles brought student veterans together to discuss issues affecting their university experiences such as trouble accessing Veterans Affairs (V.A.) healthcare and problems surrounding local university housing. An action plan was generated to address issues group members raised. Notable outcomes include the creation of a student veterans’ reintegration guide and a list of contacts for V.A. medical insurance assistance. These study circles remain a key function of the Student Veterans Association (SVA) and cannot be underemphasized.

The official name of the VTC changed January 16, 2009 to the Student Veterans Association (SVA). The SVA continued to operate out of the Veterans Transition Center located in Wesbrook Hall.

During the summer of 2011, the VTC was moved to B-18 Johnston Hall due to the demolition of Wesbrook Hall. The smaller space led to a more confined existence for the SVA. Nonetheless, the group continued to grow, focusing on its core programs.

During the summer of 2010 the SVA participated in fundraising for the American Heart Association and its Minneapolis Heart Walk. Working through their own National Guard and Marine Corps Reserve Training Schedules along with summer academic commitments, the SVA and its members were able to raise over $1100.00 towards heart disease research. Reaching out to the Minneapolis community, who have so generously supported us while we are deployed, maintains our strong connections to the citizens of Minneapolis and the University.
As student veterans are considered non-traditional students the SVA hosted a luncheon during non-traditional student week in the fall of 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011. The luncheon provided opportunities for non-traditional students who were not veterans to forge additional support networks and enabled the SVA to disseminate information regarding benefits available to those students.

The SVA co-hosts the annual Student Veterans Appreciation Day on the University of Minnesota campus during the fall semesters each year. The event is meant to bring to light the importance and contributions of student veterans on campus. In conjunction with OneStop and the ROTC, the SVA planned, secured outside funding for, and provided keynote speakers for the event in 2008 and 2009. In 2010 we adjusted our event planning commensurate to the economic climate and were still able to provide funding for an open event at Northrup Auditorium. In 2011 we were able to host the Veterans Appreciation Day event in the McNamara Alumni Center.

Organizations such as the Career Services Center and veteran’s assistance personnel at OneStop continue to utilize the SVA to aid them in providing information on benefits, services and aid available to student veterans.

During the Spring Semester of 2008, the SVA contacted Operation Homefront seeking fundraising. They informed the SVA that they qualified for a $40,000 grant from the telephone company AT&T. Following correspondence with Operation Homefront and AT&T the SVA was awarded the grant. Administered over a two-year period, it provides funding for veterans specific events and capitol enhancement. Several desktop computers were purchased for rooms 302 and 305 of Wesbrook Hall. Existing programs such the Veterans Mentorship Program were expanded and new programs such as the Winter Break Veterans Retreat were initiated. In addition, two new programs are in the planning stages to incorporate resources for PTSD treatment and counseling, both of which are in high demand during the current climate. This funding has been spent as required and is no longer available for use by the SVA.

The current mission of SVA focuses on keeping student veterans in college in an effort to lower the disturbingly high 70% nationwide student veteran dropout rate. SVA strongly believes that in order to lower the dropout rate, a peer support structure must be established and available for new student veterans. The support structure the SVA has been establishing and expanding includes student veterans, professionals who are veterans, university faculty, and the general student populace. SVA measures progress not only through the number of students active in the association, but also through increased awareness of veteran’s positive impacts on campus and in the greater community. Ultimately, the SVA hopes to lower the 70% nationwide student veteran dropout rate to one on par with the national freshman dropout rate through our programs.

The VTC is a place for student veterans and the general student populace to talk about past personal events in a non-threatening, non-partisan, relaxed environment. Diverse socialization is vital to any successful college experience. Student veterans report difficulty in being able to connect with “normal” college students. The VTC provides a social network of peers who can relate to each other through shared combat experience and military service. As the number of returning Iraqi and Afghanistan veterans continued to increase, the presence of veteran’s on-campus has increased and will continue to do so. These individuals need a place where they can feel comfortable voicing opinions while discussing methods and techniques on how to get our presence known on-campus in a productive manner. A group run by veterans for veterans best enables the application of knowledge on how to represent and connect towards the greater student community.

Events hosted by the VTC are veteran-specific geared towards raising awareness throughout campus. The general student populace is encouraged to attend all events to broaden their knowledge about student veterans and the positive impact they exert. The student group is non-partisan which illustrates and invites students of all political backgrounds the opportunity to socialize and meet veterans thus enabling the breakdown of stereotypes.
Students run all facets of the SVA. The group does not have an advisor nor does it fall under any campus department. It is literally a student group run by students for students. All events are geared towards students with secondary goals of greater community involvement and positive image feedback for the University of Minnesota. To this end the SVA attempts to promote greater involvement from non-veteran students. This will ensure that community cooperation and communication are emphasized over a wide range of student interests and hopefully forge new support systems within the student community.

The member manifest as outlined in the official student group constitution on file at SAO, includes approximately 400 members. Weekly visitors to the center are composed of student veterans, students, faculty, and the greater community, with many coming numerous times per week. Whether they visit over their lunch break or between classes to study, the services such as free printing, Internet access, the weekly Pizza Friday event and the information table outlining veterans’ programs and benefits bring the campus community together to accomplish the SVA mission-keeping student veterans in school and reintegrating them into the community.

Section 2: Organizational Chart
Section 3: Performance Report

The Student Veterans Association hosts several events throughout the academic year in addition to daily general operating procedures to help spread veteran awareness throughout campus. Veterans bring a unique set of skills and perspectives to the University. Events are geared to recognize these skills while providing the general student populace, faculty, and the greater community an open forum to obtain a greater understanding of the common veteran environment and mentality. As the group grows in numbers the events will become larger in scale, more complex, and more numerous. The student group measures success as a whole by the constantly increasing demand for more official veteran-oriented events in addition to expanded day-to-day services offered at the SVA. Individual event evaluations are designed to collect data in differing methods depending on the event. Tally records the number of people using day-to-day services. The student group has hosted or will host four major events geared towards student veterans and the general student populace during the 2013 – 2014 academic year. Daily services offered at the center include free printing, internet, quiet study space, and the availability of informational pamphlets.

For major events, excepting Veterans Appreciation Day, the student group assigns two people who monitor the entrance to the event. They count the number of people entering and what their affiliations; student veterans, student, faculty, or community member. These are recorded in the event notes and kept on file by the organization president. The breakdown for past, current, and the projected years are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>2010-2011</th>
<th>2011-2012</th>
<th>Projected for 2012-2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Veterans Appreciation Day</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pizza Friday</td>
<td>55 per week</td>
<td>65 per week</td>
<td>70 per week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter Retreat</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer BBQ</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Veterans Appreciation Day event utilizes the same tallying method along with the quality of speakers and the amount of media coverage. The 5th Annual Veterans Appreciation Day hosted this past semester had an attendance of more than 300 people. The formal ceremony featured two keynote speakers, Dr Eric Kaler, president of the University and David Larson, Vietnam vet and vice chair of the Board of Regents. Also giving remarks were Julie Selander, director of One Stop Student Services, Micah Ternet, student veteran, and Amelious Whyte, chief of staff for the Office of Student Affairs. Articles discussing the event were printed in the Minnesota Daily and Star Tribune.

Each year, the Veterans Service Office located at Onestop, emails a survey to all university veterans asking if veterans related services are needed and were being carried out effectively. An overwhelming majority state that they are needed and those services in place were very successful. This provides documentation for funding for the Veterans Resource Coordinator who directs students to the SVA for social integration into the student populace after they satisfy MGIB requirements.

The SVA offers day-to-day services in the VTC. The member manifesto as outlined in the official group constitution on file at SAO, includes approximately 260 members. On average, weekly visitors to the center composed of student veterans, common students, faculty, and the greater community average between 110-130 people tallied in the official logbook by the on-duty volunteers who man the center.

Our criteria for success is to reach the highest number of veterans possible. Our short term goals include reaching a broader percentage of the University’s student veteran population. Of more 800 student veterans, only 400 receive services through the SVA. Long term goals are to lower the 70% nationwide student veteran’s dropout rate to a rate on par with the national freshman dropout rate. We will accomplish these goals by increasing services and programs offered. Attendance figures will determine if they have been met. Volunteers, Veterans Resource Office, and other groups provide constant feedback to the organizing. Meetings held with these organizations to discuss group progress and effectiveness will be continued.
Collected evaluation results will be kept “in-house” in order to write future grants and student service fees proposals. Data will be released to the general public when requested by an organization for appropriate reasons. The SVA follows the phrase quality over quantity when planning events for the general student populace; this operating principle has been proven time and again through past events.

**Section 4: Reserve Accounts**

The SVA currently does not have a reserve account.

**Section 5: Fees Request**

The Veterans Transition Center is requesting $17,975.00 from the Student Service Fees, which is a decrease from last year’s request of $21,045.00. The inception of the post-9/11 GI Bill has seen student veteran populations at campuses across the nation increase by over 50%. In addition, with the Iraq War now at an end, the student veteran population is expected to grow once more. Through finding more efficient and cost effective ways of utilizing our resources, we were able to fund all our core programs after decreasing our request for the 2013-2014 fiscal year. Though we are projecting growth in the near future, we anticipate that we will be able to meet our needs for the 2014-2015 fiscal year at the same level of funding.

Other than providing support for new student orientations, the SVA will operate at 0% during the summer of 2014.

**Section 6: Description of Impact of a 10 Percent Reduction in Fees Request**

A 10% reduction of funding will cause the SVA to cut programs, specifically the Intramural Sports program, the National SVA Conference trip, Welcome Back BBQ, and outreach programs. We would seek outside funding for these programs. If none is available, the National Conference trip would be canceled, while the Intramural Sports program and the Welcome Back BBQ would either be cancelled or be entirely funded by the participants.
Message about Form 990-N (e-Postcard)

Your organization may be required to file a Form 990-N

What you must do immediately

If your organization already filed its annual information return (Form 990, 990-PF, or 990-EZ) or e-Postcard, you don’t need to do anything right now. You should continue to file a return or e-Postcard every year.

If your organization hasn’t filed its annual information return or e-Postcard, it must file as soon as possible.

The annual information return or e-Postcard is due by the 15th day of the fifth month after the close of your tax period. For example, if your tax period ends December 31 and you are filing Form 990-N, your due date is May 15.

Who can file the e-Postcard Form 990-N?

- A tax-exempt organization other than a private foundation or political or foreign organization whose gross receipts are normally $50,000 or less
- A Section 509(a)(3) supporting organization of a religious organization whose gross receipts are normally $5,000 or less

All other supporting organizations generally must file Forms 990 or 990-EZ, even if gross receipts are normally $50,000 or less.

To e-file your organization’s e-Postcard:

- Go to irs.gov/charities.
- Type 990-N in the search box.
- Click on the link for the Form 990-N.
Please be aware that the complete Student Services Fee application, including budget pages (Excel spreadsheets) should be downloaded from the Fee website:

http://www.studentservicesfees.umn.edu/