

## YEARLY PLANNING DISCUSSION TEMPLATE

### General Questions

**Program Name:** Veteran Success Center (VSC)

**Academic Year:** 2024-25

**1. Has your program's mission or primary function changed in the last year?**

No, our mission has remained the same.

*Our mission is to empower military-affiliated students and their families by providing comprehensive resources and support to assist with transition to civilian education. We aim to ensure all military-affiliated students have access to the education and training they need to succeed in the workforce, as well as access to healthcare, housing, and other essential services. We are committed to helping students learn, grow, and thrive in their post-military lives through our program's community partnerships.*

**2. Were there any noteworthy changes to the program over the past year? (eg, new courses, degrees, certificates, articulation agreements)**

There have been several noteworthy changes to the VSC program over the past year that have significantly increased our team's ability to serve students, collaborate with other departments, and store documentation. We have recently implemented the use of Xtender to store and access confidential student documentation securely. With the help of the ITS department, we transitioned from physical storage of documents and the use of various digital storage services (e.g., OneDrive, network storage, SharePoint, and Teams) to primarily using Xtender as a means of shared access to documents. This transition was a program goal for many months. It became an urgent necessity when our team received notification of an upcoming audit. Xtender is unique in its ability to offer ample storage space, easy access to authorized users, and secure imaging and storage of digital documents. Access to Xtender is only possible when an authorized user is logged into the Hancock network on campus or with VPN access off-site. This is a benefit that OneDrive, SharePoint, and Teams do not have. Xtender also allows employees from Admissions and Records, Auxiliary Accounting (i.e., Cashiering), and Financial Aid access to VSC files to provide support to military-affiliated students. Xtender is commonly used by many other departments at Allan Hancock College, so training in the software is not necessary.

Additionally, the VSC has experienced a steady increase in certifications of students utilizing Veterans Affairs (VA) educational benefits. This improvement is important because it has the most direct impact on the VSC's annual funding. In previous years, VSC was incorporated into the Financial Aid Program Review and Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs). 2024-2025 will be the first year VSC has independently reviewed the efficacy of the program. This will allow for a more in-depth analysis of data to determine the underlying causes of the program's successes and areas needing improvement.

## Learning Outcomes Assessment

- a. Please summarize key results from this year's assessment.

***PLO1 - Students will understand how to access their Veterans Affairs (VA) Educational Benefits to achieve their academic goals.***

***Activity 1 - Students will be aware of how to access and utilize their earned VA educational benefits.***

The primary goal of the VSC for the 2024-25 school year is to ensure that students are aware of how to access and utilize their earned VA educational benefits. The best data currently available to assess progress in this area is contained in the Argos report, *SGASTDN: Veteran Certification Info*. This report provides the number of certifications per semester. Students who have been certified in each semester can reasonably be assumed to understand how to access and utilize their benefits because certification indicates that they have successfully done so.

**Argos VSC Certifications Data (2023-2025)**

Term	Certifications	Term	Certifications
Spring 24	145	Spring 25	164
Winter 24	26	Winter 25	24
Fall 23	114	Fall 24	182
Summer 23	40	Summer 24	71

***Argos VSC Certifications Data (2023-2025)*** (above) is arranged to directly compare the annual changes in the number of certifications each semester. Spring 2024 shows an increase of 19 certifications in comparison to Spring 2023. Winter 2024 shows a decrease of 2 certifications in comparison to Winter 2023. Fall 2024 shows an increase of 68 certifications in comparison to Fall 2023. Summer 2024 shows an increase of 31 certifications in comparison to Summer 2023. Data for certifications is available as far back as the Summer of 2010. Additional information from previous semesters has also been included (below) for comparison.

Term	Certifications
Spring 23	85
Winter 23	9
Fall 22	90
Summer 22	21
Spring 22	76
Winter 22	7
Fall 21	95
Summer 21	39
Spring 21	106

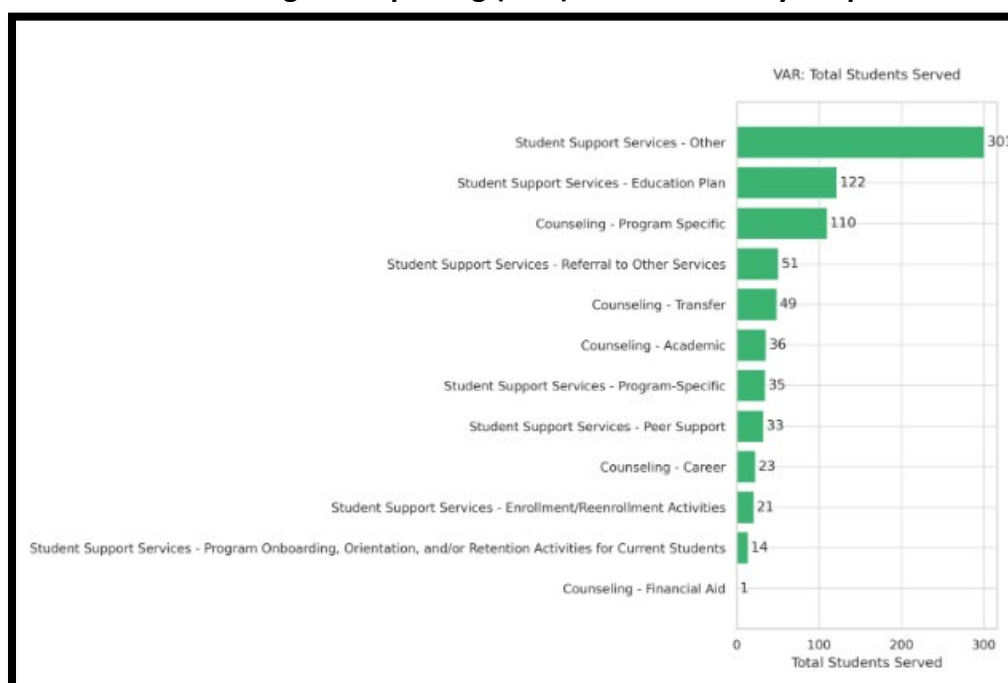
Term	Certifications
Winter 21	3
Fall 20	96
Summer 20	30
Spring 20	128
Winter 20	3
Fall 19	134
Summer 19	53
Spring 19	149
Winter 19	6

AHC All Headcount | Time Period: 4 Academic Years

Institutional Effectiveness provides headcount data for students who are verified as veterans as well. A significant increase can be seen in students who identify and verify themselves as veterans with the VSC in the 2024-2025 school year. It should be noted that not all these students choose to use their VA educational benefits, or possibly are no longer qualified to use them.

The data submitted for Vision Aligned Reporting (VAR) can also provide important insight into how students are utilizing VSC services, accessing their VA education benefits, and using other resources provided by the VSC.

#### Vision Aligned Reporting (VAR) - Data Summary Graph



The *Vision Aligned Reporting (VAR) – Data Summary Graph* (above) shows how military-affiliated students utilize the services offered by the VSC. The graph provides the total number of unique students (headcount) who utilized each service. Multiple types of services are generalized into each category. For example, the *Counseling Academic* category is comprised of

36 unique students who met with a VSC Counselor to discuss academic renewal, applying for an AHC degree/certificate, AHC degree/certificate evaluation, external transcript evaluation, probation status/grades, quick counseling question, reinstatement contract/plan of action. In contrast, the *Student Support Services – Other* category is comprised of data regarding prospective and current VSC students who met with a VSC employee to utilize VA educational benefits or use free services offered by the VSC.

The current Argos and VAR data show a clear improvement in the VSC's stated goal to help students become aware of how to access and utilize their earned VA educational benefits. Using VA educational benefits can be very complex. Therefore, the VSC's goal for students to be aware of how to access and utilize their earned VA educational benefits does not necessarily mean they understand every step of the process. The most important aspect is that they can choose to utilize their educational benefits with the help of the VSC staff and faculty.

To utilize VA educational benefits, a student must qualify for benefits based on specific criteria determined by the VA. Educational benefits are categorized as Chapter 30 - Montgomery GI Bill (Active Duty), Chapter 31 - Vocational Rehabilitation Benefits, Chapter 33 - Post-9/11 GI Bill, Chapter 35 - Survivors and Dependents Assistance, and Chapter 1606 - Reserve GI Bill. Military-connected students may qualify for multiple Chapters in the same semester.

After applying to Allan Hancock College, military-affiliated students will contact the VSC to utilize VA educational benefits. They will be connected with an employee from the VSC team. The students will be informed about the specific documentation required to begin the process. After submission, they will meet with the VSC Coordinator/School Certifying Official (SCO) to discuss how to best utilize benefits for their unique circumstances. The student will also typically meet with a VSC Counselor to create a Student Education Plan (SEP). Once students complete these steps, they will have a better understanding of how to access and utilize their benefits in future semesters.

**b. Please summarize your reflections, analysis, and interpretation of the learning outcome assessment and data.**

**Argos VSC Certifications Data (2023-2025):**

Every semester (except for the Winter semester) shows a significant increase in certifications. This shows a healthy increase in the number of students who are willing to attend AHC, identify themselves as military-affiliated students, and visit the VSC for services. The increase indicates that more students are becoming aware of how to access and utilize their earned VA educational benefits.

A noticeable decrease in certifications occurred between the beginning of 2020 and early 2023. These years are consistent with the COVID-19 pandemic, which is very likely the cause of the noticeable change. Allan Hancock College experienced significant changes in enrollment during these years as well. Certifications have increased to resemble the years prior to the pandemic. However, there is a lot of room for growth. The record high certifications within a given semester were as follows: Summer 2010 had 159 certifications, Spring 2014 had 228 certifications, Fall 2010 had 215 certifications, and Winter 2023 had 26 certifications. Of

course, many factors determine the number of certifications that are possible within a specific timeframe, which acts as a limiting factor for qualified military-connected AHC students. The VSC cannot control world events, support of the United States Armed Forces, veterans who choose to live in the district, or many other factors. However, the VSC can engage in inreach and outreach efforts to welcome military-affiliated students in the region to enroll in classes at the college.

Outreach will play an important role in future certification numbers. The VSC now has a director and dean in place to oversee the program. A streamlined process for hiring multiple student workers through the VA work-study program was created and implemented in July 2025. This will lead to more qualified student workers who are veterans assisting military-affiliated students as their first point of contact. Additionally, a short-term Program Assistant III position is currently filled by a U.S. Army Veteran with years of experience as a former VSC student employee. The former VSC Specialist/School Certifying Official position has now been officially reclassified into a VSC Coordinator/School Certifying Official position. It is planned to be permanently filled by September 2025. The VSC currently has an interim Coordinator with several years' experience as a VSC Program Assistant III. This combined knowledge and experience of the current VSC team creates a great opportunity to engage in inreach and outreach events. VSC team members have confirmed participation for upcoming events, such as a student ambassador training, Hancock Hello, the Santa Barbara County Veterans Stand Down 2025, and more. This type of engagement will likely be the most significant factor in increasing the interest of military-affiliated students in utilizing benefits over the next year.

### **Vision Aligned Reporting (VAR) - Data Summary Graph**

VAR data will play an important role in determining how to best allocate the limited financial resources of the VSC. The VAR data largely correlates with the expected use of services available to military-affiliated students. For example, there were 301 unique students who utilized services within the *Student Support Services – Other* category. This includes services, such as a scheduled or drop-in appointment with a VSC counselor, submission of paperwork to the VSC office, free printing or snacks, and studying at the VSC. It also includes current and prospective students who meet with a VSC team member to discuss VSC - Chapter 1606 (MGIB-SR), Chapter 30 (MGIB-Active Duty), Chapter 31 (VR&E), Chapter 33 Post 9/11 GI Bill, Chapter 35 (Dependents), or other educational benefits. Virtually all military-affiliated students are included in this category because it incorporates the most common services.

In contrast, only one student went to the VSC to meet with a VSC counselor to discuss their financial aid. This category includes meetings with a VSC counselor to discuss their FAFSA or Dream Act status. It makes sense that it was the least-used service because most students would go to the Financial Aid department to discuss these topics.

The VAR data indicates the VSC should allocate the clear majority of resources to three general VAR categories: *Student Support Services – Other*, *Student Support Services - Education Plan*, and *Counseling – Program Specific*. The *Student Support Services – Other* category means VSC should prioritize supporting students in utilizing VA educational benefits and accessing the free services at the VSC office. VSC student workers, short-term, classified staff, faculty

counselors, and administrators must understand how to create a welcoming environment for students to visit the VSC to receive services and connect with an expert for their needs.

The *Student Support Services - Education Plan* category is comprised of students meeting with a VSC counselor to create an abbreviated Student Education Plan (SEP), a comprehensive SEP, or update an SEP. An SEP is a requirement of utilizing VA educational benefits, so it makes sense that the VSC should prioritize offering access to a VSC counselor with special knowledge of the needs of military-affiliated students.

The *Counseling – Program Specific* category describes VSC students meeting with a VSC counselor for topics related to their needs as a military-connected student. 110 unique VSC students likely chose to meet with a VSC counselor rather than a general academic counselor, or a counselor from another program, because they desire a counselor who can provide expertise on how their academic choices might be affected by their military-affiliated status. This is an area where the VSC can improve. VSC students do not always understand how their educational choices can have a substantial impact on their ability to use VA educational benefits. For example, the decision to only take online classes, enroll in classes not in their SEP, drop a class, enroll in a fast-track or non-standard term, or a plethora of other choices can have a monumental effect on their use of benefits. Students often depend on their benefits to pay for housing, textbooks, tuition, fees, and other costs. Payment for these costs can be placed in jeopardy or significantly postponed when a VSC student makes decisions without first seeking the expertise of VSC staff or faculty. The VSC team must continue to prioritize efforts to emphasize the importance of reaching out to the VSC office before students make any changes to their educational path.

**c. Please summarize recommendations and/or accolades that were made within the program/department.**

One recent achievement of the VSC was having no significant findings in the audit conducted on June 11, 2025. The auditors advised corrections to certifications that the team was able to promptly resolve. However, the auditors also provided helpful advice on how to improve certifications going forward. For example, our primary School Certifying Official (SCO) will now certify tuition and fees earlier in the semester. This will enable the VSC to avoid conflicts with the VA approval process. The VSC team will also implement internal auditing procedures between their primary SCO and secondary SCOs. The VSC team now has a firsthand understanding of the entire audit process. This allows the team to adapt their processes to be fully prepared for future audits.

Another achievement was the implementation of Xtender. As discussed previously, this will allow the VSC team to use the web-based platform to store, organize, share, and access information efficiently. There are also several updates being planned to better utilize the use of Xtender by increasing the types of documents that will be stored and delegating responsibilities for verifying each student has all the necessary documentation on file.

The successful implementation of Microsoft Teams is another achievement. Teams has allowed for better communication and document sharing with the VSC staff. In the upcoming year, student workers will be trained on the use of Teams during a newly developed

orientation. A streamlined approach to training will be essential in teaching student workers how to best assist military-affiliated students to maximize their benefits and utilize all the free services at the VSC office.

Lastly, the VSC team has made progress in the effort to utilize Mapping Articulated Pathways (MAP) in conjunction with the Joint Services Transcript (JST). The VSC and the Admissions and Records department are working together to obtain JSTs from military-affiliated students to award Credit for Prior Learning (CPL). This will shorten the time it takes VSC students to graduate from Hancock and transfer to a university by decreasing the number of units they need to complete their academic goals.

**d. Please review and attach any changes to planning documentation, including PLO rubrics, associations, and cycle planning.**

No changes were made to PLO rubrics.

**3. Were there any staffing changes?**

Yes, our *Veteran Service Center Specialist* moved out of state after serving as our primary School Certifying Official (SCO) for several years. The interim position was then filled by the VSC Program Assistant III, who had several years of experience working in the program as both a student worker and a short-term employee. The VSC Program Assistant III position was filled by a student worker who previously worked in the VSC as a recipient of Veterans work-study. Several new VA work-study students will also join the VSC team in August. Interviews have already begun. A new training process has also been created for onboarding new employees when they begin work.

The former Veteran Service Center Specialist position has been reclassified to a Coordinator position. The change from a Specialist to a Veteran Success Center Coordinator/School Certifying Official is expected to improve the quality of services to military-connected students. The VSC Coordinator will act as the primary School Certifying Official (SCO). The Director of the VSC will oversee the day-to-day VSC operations and assist the primary SCO with certifying. The Program Assistant III will act as a read-only SCO who prepares certifications for final approval.

The new coordinator will be better connected with coordinators and administrators from other departments due to the monthly meetings that already take place at AHC. The VSC Coordinator will also have increased responsibilities and oversight of the VSC office. This will make the daily office operation more efficient. The essential functions of the Veteran Service Center Specialist job description limited the VSC office in maximizing inreach and community outreach, but this will no longer be an issue. Hiring a permanent VSC Coordinator will begin in July 2025. The goal is to hire a permanent classified employee to begin work prior to September of 2025.

With these staffing changes, the program aims to improve compliance with the Recommended Best Practices of the [California Community Colleges Veterans Resource Center Minimum Qualifications](#):

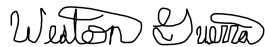
**STAFFING & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**- VRCs should consider the local needs and size of the veteran and military-affiliated student population when determining staffing needs.

Required Minimum Standard	Recommended Best Practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">School Certifying Official (SCO)</a></li> <li>• VRC Coordinator and/or Director - separate from the School Certifying Official (SCO) to oversee the day-to-day VRC operations.</li> <li>• Academic Counselor - with VA education benefit training.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">School Certifying Official (SCO)</a> - 1 full-time SCO for every <b>125</b> GI Bill students and/or dependents enrolled in the educational institution (per VA recommendations).</li> <li>• VA work study students to provide support in the VRC and obtain civilian job experience.</li> <li>• Staff engagement in Veterans Regional Meetings, <a href="#">contact your regional representative</a> for meeting schedule.</li> </ul>

#### 4. What were your program successes in your area of focus last year?

NA – This is the first year the VSC has created an independent Program Review and developed PLOs separate from the Financial Aid department.

Program Review Signature Page:



Program Review Lead

Date

07/07/2025



[Johnnie Owens \(Jul 18, 2025 10:19 PDT\)](#)

Program Dean

Date

07/18/2025



[Genevieve Siwabessy \(Sep 30, 2025 10:27:13 PDT\)](#)

Vice President, Student Services

Date

09/30/2025













# Veteran Success Center (VSC) Program Review (SS Yearly Planning Update)


Final Audit Report

2025-09-30


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