



## A Deeper Look at Our Innovative Pilot to Serve Student Veterans

### A Primer on SVA's Disability in Education Program

SVA's Disability in Education Program:

- Promotes accessibility and inclusion in higher education.
- Partners with institutions of higher learning to improve educational opportunities for student veterans with disabilities.
- Works with student veterans and higher education professionals to foster peer networks and create access to resources.

### What is the Disability Services Liaison (DSL) Program?

- Funded by the Department of Veterans Affairs' Work Study Program, DSL is an effective, no-cost, veteran outreach program.
- DSL uses peer leadership to normalize the help-seeking behavior that is commonly unfamiliar to veterans. DSL student workers serve as role models to veterans navigating higher education. The program marshals the power of education and employment as tools to improve mental wellness among the veteran student community.
- DSL, a servant leadership opportunity, offers student veterans the chance to positively shape the public narrative of what it means to be both a veteran and a student.
- Currently, 15 college campuses across the country house DSL programs.

### Fundamental Strengths of DSL

The Disability Services Liaison program is uniquely positioned to support the student veteran community on 15 college campuses across the country. Our work relies on three core strengths:

- **Cultural Awareness:** DSL aims to shift cultural norms in the student veteran community by normalizing positive, healthy help-seeking behaviors.
- **Trust:** DSL student veteran workers serve as trusted leaders and role models who share information with their peers.
- **Accuracy:** SVA, serving as a credible and valid authority, can correct misperceptions and misinformation among the student veteran community.

### DSL Student Story

Katherine Simpson  
University of Texas at Arlington



"I want my peers to have a place where they can seek the help they need, but more importantly I want to give them the support, understanding and camaraderie that we have grown accustomed to. My hope, in short, is that we serve those who have served our country as best as we can."

### Key Statistics

In 2016, the Student Veterans of America conducted their Census Survey to more deeply understand the student veteran community. Results found that:

- More than one in two student veterans, 57% of student veterans, attending college have a VA disability rating, are waiting for the VA to make a disability determination, or are in an appeal with the VA for their rating.
- Of those student veterans with a disability rating, the majority have a rating of 50% or higher.
- When asked to rate the level of stress student veterans feel their disability has had on school, 80% of respondents indicated that they experienced varying levels of stress.