



# CHAPTER GUIDE

STUDENT VETERANS OF AMERICA | 1012 14TH ST NW, 12TH FLOOR, WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005

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Student Veterans of America  
Chapter Guide

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[studentveterans.org](http://studentveterans.org)

Dear Chapter Leaders,

Since the founding of Student Veterans of America (SVA), our community of Chapter Leaders has consistently sought to increase accessibility to higher education and positive outcomes for those following in their footsteps. This Chapter Guide is a culmination of more than a decade of feedback and insight on the tools, techniques, and tactics to manage a successful and sustainable student veteran organization, what we call an SVA Chapter, at your campus. This guide is designed to elevate the experience of veterans and military-affiliated students in higher education and enhance the long-term outcomes of being engaged with SVA. Chapters are the heart of SVA, and we hope to see you excel in your service to your fellow students and your campus community.

With strong leadership and the proper tools, we have seen new Chapters become prevalent on campus and existing Chapters enhance their commitment to excellence. The task of a Chapter Leader is no small challenge, but your reward will be immense. It is impossible to reference all that encompasses your leadership role in this guide, but we hope it will aid you as you build a foundation for success.

Here are a couple notes to help you understand this Chapter Guide:

- When we say “university,” we mean any higher education institution. You may also notice that we say “college,” “school,” or “institution.” We use all of these interchangeably.
- This guide provides many recommendations but no prescriptive actions. How you operate your SVA Chapter is your decision, so long as you are following the rules and guidance for registered student organizations set by your university.

It is our sincere hope that you feel more prepared to be an effective leader for your chapter after reading this guide and implementing best practices therein. Your dedication to serving the student veterans, military-affiliated students, families, and allies who make up SVA is inspiring.

As your knowledge of our organization and your responsibilities grow, we hope you will provide us with feedback for those who are just beginning on this journey. Thank you for your commitment and service as a leader in this global organization, and as an engaged leader in your community.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Abby Kinch', with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Dr. Abby Kinch, PhD  
Vice President of Programs and Services  
Student Veterans of America National Headquarters

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# Chapter Guide

## Introduction

### *Who We Are*

Student Veterans of America (SVA) is the premier organization leading service, research, programs, and advocacy for veterans in higher education. Our mission is to act as a catalyst for student veteran success by providing resources, network support and advocacy to, through, and beyond higher education.

Through a dedicated network of more than 1,500 on-campus chapters in all 50 states and three countries overseas representing more than 750,000 student veterans, SVA inspires yesterday's warriors by connecting student veterans with a community of like-minded Chapter Leaders. Every day these passionate leaders work to provide the necessary resources, network support, and advocacy to ensure student veterans and military-affiliated students can effectively connect, expand their skills, and ultimately achieve their greatest potential.

SVA National Headquarters, located only a few blocks from the White House in Washington, DC, oversees the provision of programs and services that empower student veterans to succeed to, through, and beyond higher education by focusing on the unique life cycle of student veterans. These include Regional Summits, the Leadership Institute, the National Conference ("NatCon"), Washington Week, Veterans of Foreign Wars-SVA Legislative Fellows, scholarships, and other annual offerings.

In order to reduce barriers to success, SVA's team of legislative and policy experts oversee advocacy efforts including preserving the integrity and evolution of the GI Bill. As a data-driven organization, SVA's research arm collects, analyzes, and interprets data from national partners as well as institutions and chapters, and then tells the story of our nation's most talented group of college students: today's student veterans.

### *Our History*

The history of student veteran organizations on college campuses began long before SVA's founding in 2008. A helpful place to start in recounting this story is near the end of World War II when President Franklin Roosevelt signed into law the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, otherwise known as the G.I. Bill of Rights.

After demobilizing, returning veterans of WWII flooded colleges and universities around the country like never before in American history. Not only did these student veterans face basic challenges associated with reintegrating into civilian life, but schools were unprepared for this influx of students, which led to additional problems for student veterans such as severe housing shortages and a lack of transitional assistance. Student veterans banded together, forming peer-to-peer support networks to overcome these challenges, build community, and earn their college degrees.

But did you know that this 'GI Bill idea' almost never made it out of Congress? In fact, there were some who said this new program would be 'the ruin of the veterans of World War II' as they returned home to the United States after the guns of Europe and the Pacific fell silent.

The President of Harvard famously penned at the time, "We may find the *least* capable among the war generation, instead of the most capable, flooding the facilities for advanced education in the United States." Further, the then President of the University of Chicago—a World War I veteran himself—argued, "Colleges and universities will find themselves converted into educational hobo jungles."

By 1947, just a few years after that original opposition, there were many retractions; for example, Benjamin Fine of *The New York Times* wrote that "The G.I.s are hogging the honor rolls and the Dean's

lists; [student veterans] are walking away with the top marks in all of their courses. Far from being an educational problem, the veteran has become an asset to higher education.” Even the President of Harvard eventually stated, “for seriousness, perceptiveness, steadiness, and all other undergraduate virtues,” the student veterans of World War II were ‘the best in Harvard’s history.’”

This was just the beginning of a long, continuing legacy of exceeding expectations. Throughout the 1970s, 80s, and 90s, veterans continued to transition to campus following their military service, albeit in smaller numbers. The revised Montgomery G.I. Bill was offered as a recruitment incentive for the all-volunteer force. Some of the local student veteran groups that formed on campuses after conflicts in Korea and Vietnam, like those at Northern Illinois University and the University of Wisconsin-Madison, still exist today.

Following the attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, the United States declared the global war on terror and a new generation of Americans was called to arms during a time of war. As veterans of the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) returned home to pursue their education using GI Bill benefits, they found that their campuses did not provide adequate support services to assist student veterans as they worked towards their educational goals. As adult learners, many of these student veterans found campus turned to each other through on campus student veteran organizations and clubs to find solutions to the challenges they encountered.

The advent of social media made it possible for these initial leaders to assemble on their own campuses and across the country for the first time. They began to share best practices and success stories, providing support to one another to strengthen their community. Members from 20 independent student veteran organizations formalized this grassroots movement and Student Veterans of America was officially born on January 23, 2008 following our first National Conference in Chicago, Illinois.

Concurrently in 2008, SVA and a number of Veteran Service Organizations were tirelessly advocating for an overhaul of the Montgomery G.I. Bill to address the needs of 21st Century student veterans. Six months after SVA’s founding, President George W. Bush the Post 9/11 G.I. Bill into law. Since then, our mission has remained focused on providing programs, resources, and advocacy to the ever-evolving network of local student veteran organizations that we call SVA Chapters.

One common thread throughout this mission is inclusivity. While military status often plays a pivotal role in a student’s experiences, it is not an exclusive identity. As veterans transition back to civilian life, their identity tends to shift to that of a student first and foremost, along with the wide variety of individual experiences very student brings to the classroom. SVA has consistently sought to expand its role in national and global conversations impacting first-generation students, minority students, adult learners, non-traditional students, students with disabilities, and many other identity groups. We strive to be one of the most inclusive student organizations in the world.

In the years since the founding, SVA has grown its membership from our 20 Founding Chapters in 2008 supported by a small volunteer staff to over 1,500 Chapters representing over three-quarters of a million student veterans in 2020 with a National Board of Directors, Executive Team, and full-time staff. The primary functions of your National Headquarters include our departments focused on supporting you as a Chapter Leader, including Programs & Services, Research, Government Affairs, Communications & Marketing, and Development. Today, SVA is the premier organization for veterans in higher education, inspiring tomorrow’s leaders to achieve their greatest potential.

## *What We Do*

When SVA was founded in 2008, we were primarily an online community for advocacy and sharing best practices. We spent over a decade developing our expertise within the veteran and higher education nonprofit space with a long-standing dedication to advocacy at all levels of government. We conducted first-of-its-kind research to tell the story of veterans in higher education and produced high caliber, data-driven programs and services to empower student veterans who participate in their Chapter. Below is more detail about each of these focus areas.

### **Government Affairs**

The mission of the Government Affairs Department is to shape policy and regulations on behalf of veterans in pursuit of career advancement through higher education. The team works closely with Congress and the federal government to promote forward-looking policies and to help veterans attain the education needed to thrive in their careers and communities. Our robust policy work focuses on a myriad of issues and preparation of analyses for a wide variety of matters that impact veterans in higher education.

As subject matter experts on higher education and veterans' policy, Congress and senior government officials frequently call on SVA to deliver testimony. SVA achieves a high level of influence through consistent interaction with Congress, relevant organizations and associations, industry leaders, and others concerned with proposed and pending policies. As a result, SVA representatives are regularly called upon to testify before Congress. The team frequently provides testimony regarding topics such as the GI Bill, the Transition Assistance Program, student debt, the Veteran Success on Campus program (VSOC), predatory higher education practices and institutions, and many others.

The team provides cabinet-level advice and influence on the creation and improvement of the GI Bill Comparison tool, economic opportunity, VA work-study, childcare for student veterans, agreements with the Federal Trade Commission, and numerous proposals affecting the Post-9/11 GI Bill. We remain connected closely with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Department of Education (ED), Department of Labor (DoL), Department of Defense (DoD), Small Business Administration (SBA), and other federal agencies to affect change impacting the lives of student veterans across the country.

Strong ties with relevant committees in the House and Senate emphasize SVA's bipartisan agenda. The team works at every level within the Executive Branch, from the on-the-ground program manager through cabinet-level decision-makers. Beyond this, issues that arise at the state and campus level are supported by your National Headquarters, and Chapter Leaders are encouraged to engage with our Government Affairs team for support regarding any policy issue.

A great example of this work was showcased through the team's efforts on the Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act, more commonly known as the "Forever GI Bill," legislation that was signed into law with unanimous bipartisan support in 2017. SVA lead a coalition of more than 60 organizations to secure the largest expansion in VA education benefits in nearly a decade. The Forever GI Bill included major reforms such as removal of the 15-year limit on GI Bill benefits for those who separated on or after January 1, 2013, expanded benefits for Purple Heart recipients, included the Edith Nourse Rogers STEM scholarship, and additional access to high-tech certification programs.

More recently, SVA advocated for the passage of the Ryan Kules and Paul Benne Specially Adaptive Housing Improvement Act of 2019, which expanded Specially Adapted Housing (SAH) eligibility for blind and seriously injured veterans. SVA has also closely monitored the impacts of COVID-19 on student veterans since March 2020. Immediately following campus decisions to move to a virtual setting, the team led advocacy on the passage of several pieces of emergency legislation to protect GI Bill benefits during the shift to virtual instruction. Our ability to directly respond to needs and concerns like these is often directly informed by Chapter Leaders, formally through our Policy Liaison Program.

The **Policy Liaison Program (PLP)**, an open network of dedicated, policy-focused student veterans and allies who engage in advocacy campaigns. The team seeks to educate and inform student veterans on the many ways available to them to pursue policy goals at the campus, local, state, regional, and federal levels. More importantly, the team values feedback and input from this network of student veterans. As a result of this, SVA has been successful in fighting for dozens of proposed policy improvements submitted from student veterans who participate in the program.

## Research

The Research Department works to inform the public, stakeholders, policy makers, and others on the topics and concerns of student veteran and military-connected students through empirical research. In 2014, in partnership with the National Student Clearing house (NSC) and the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs (VA), SVA published the Million Records Project (MRP), a groundbreaking report conveying the postsecondary academic outcomes for one million Post 9/11 student veterans to use GI Bill benefits. In the spring of 2017, SVA leveraged the same partnerships and published the National Veteran Education Success Tracker (NVEST). Focused on the first 854,000 student veterans to use the Post 9/11 Gi Bill, NVEST demonstrated definitively that this generation of student veterans succeed in college at rates above their traditional college peers.

SVA employs surveys and program evaluations for data collection and service improvement. The team conducts a census web survey annually and the Veterans Opinion Survey during election years. The team also works closely to develop success metrics and measure outcomes for our Programs and Services and ensures the results of this work are available and accessible to Chapter Leaders

SVA enjoys a multi-year grant from the PwC Charitable Foundation, Inc. in support of the Life Cycle Atlas. This three-year research initiative explores the decision-making process for separating service members, with the intent of identifying potential opportunities and barriers to a successful transition from military service through college and into the workforce. The ongoing outcomes of this project are available on [studentveterans.org](http://studentveterans.org), a continuously updated collection of data visuals that enumerate the unique paths of thousands of veterans as they separated from the military, pursued higher education, and entered new careers post-graduation.

## Programs and Services

The Programs and Services Department provides tangible Chapter-building and veteran-empowering experiences for Chapter Leaders and Chapter Members that reflect the mission of SVA. While the programs and services offered by SVA have continually evolved due to direct feedback from students, the basis of these programs is rooted in what is referred to as “the lifecycle of the student veteran.” This lifecycle begins with the decision to separate from military service and continues through success in a meaningful and impactful career, where a connection is maintained with SVA as a member of our Alumni Network.

SVA Programs and Services include a wide variety of training events and opportunities focused on effective management and outcomes. Our programs, or Chapter training events, are intentional in their design to impact Chapter development as well as the personal leadership development of Chapter Leaders. We focus on professional development, leadership training, networking opportunities, scholarship funding, and opportunities to form genuine and meaningful relationships with other Chapters to strengthen the ties of our global network.

The SVA calendar begins in early January with the **National Conference (NatCon)**, the largest annual gathering of Post-9/11 veterans in the world and an exceptional opportunity to learn from academic, policy, industry, and peer experts. The purpose of NatCon is to reframe the possible for veterans, to train on topics salient to our chapters, and to convene student veterans, military-connected students, and their allies as well as SVA stakeholders. Attendees navigate breakout sessions, keynote presentations, and exhibitions alongside thousands of their peers. Additionally, SVA’s corporate partners and other



professionals connect with student veteran attendees on our SVA Campus, or exhibit hall, to provide guidance on internships, research, graduate education, and careers.

**Washington Week**, held for one week each spring, is an invitation from your National Headquarters to Chapter Leaders to join SVA executives and staff in an experiential learning program designed around veteran education policy. Attendees join SVA in their annual testimony to the Joint House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committees, advocate to members of Congress, participate in policy symposiums, and influence decision-makers.

**Regional Summits**, held every summer, are the definitive experience for planning and building a world-class SVA Chapter. They provide Chapter Leaders with the tools, techniques, and tactics to manage a successful and sustainable student organization. The curriculum for the Summits has been designed to deliver strategic planning and role-specific training. The regional design of this program intentionally allows attendees to connect directly with others within the same region for coalition building, organic network building, and peer-support.

**The Leadership Institute** is an immersive leadership program that prepares students to affect change stretching beyond their SVA chapter and campus. Each fall, the top 100 Chapter Leaders are invited to your National Headquarters in Washington, D.C. to participate. This is the premier student foundational leadership experience in the country, where participants are identified through a highly competitive application and selection process. It is a four-day, personal core values-based leadership immersion program with intentional and innovative curriculum. Many of the nation's top leaders provide mentorship to attendees throughout this experience, including members of the press, Congress, White House officials, and others.

**Chapter Consultations** are provided throughout the year. Whether Chapter Leaders are facing difficult decisions, seeking guidance on steps to build a better Chapter, are experiencing difficulties in navigating university administration, or even want to share a success stories, Chapter Consultations are an opportunity to engage one-on-one with SVA staff.

Finally, several select SVA partners have created financial assistance packages in the form of **scholarships** to assist student veterans in meeting the financial requirements of post-secondary education. Many student veterans bring responsibilities traditional students don't experience with them to school, and often have financial needs beyond the supports of the GI Bill. These scholarships alleviate stressors associated with that financial need to allow student veterans to focus on their education.

The list of programs and services continues to grow and evolve as data, feedback, and impacts are collected and analyzed. The strategic direction of the Programs and Services Department is intended to accommodate the lifecycle of the student veteran and the Chapter, where design and implementation of new curriculum is modeled in alignment with our mission.

### *Why It Matters*

The more than 1,500 Student Veterans of America Chapters represent over three-quarters of a million student veterans currently earning a degree or certificate in post-secondary education. These student veterans and military-affiliated students are tomorrow's leaders. The transition to, through, and beyond higher education is, without a doubt, within the capabilities of these highly trained and qualified students who have been instilled with the core values of the military. SVA's role in this transition is to reduce barriers, provide opportunities, build community and empower student veterans to achieve their greatest potential.

Student veterans can be successful in college even if they dawn blinders leading straight from admissions to graduation, especially if the only metric for success is graduation. By removing those blinders, building community, and engaging with a Chapter that is matured through SVA programs and services, supported by SVA advocacy, and backed by SVA research, student veterans can exceed their assumed potential to

take part in a transformative experience like none other, tailored to their lived circumstances and curated to their individual needs.

Of the 45 Presidents of the United States, 26 have served in the U.S. Military, and 96 veterans are currently serving in the U.S. Congress. About eight percent of Fortune 500 CEOs served in the military. Veteran households in the U.S. are economically better off than non-veteran households. Finally, student veterans graduate at higher rates and with higher GPAs than their peers. These facts make it abundantly clear that veterans are not the broken, as often depicted in the media. While there are many with greater needs because of the scars borne from battle, SVA has recognizes the abilities, talents, and brilliance that are natural to veterans, because they are vetted through one of the most stringent qualifying processes in the world.

SVA's mission has been one of elevation and empowerment, where great women and men returning from service are civic assets. The veterans who are currently experiencing the transformative power of higher education will soon be leading top governmental agencies, non-governmental organizations, and companies, including you. SVA's impact from the support of Chapter engagement through individual leadership development will be felt in the innovation, passion, and brilliance of their leadership.

## Chapter Onboarding

SVA is made up of Chapters on campuses around the country and world. While the staff at the National Headquarters office, located in Washington, D.C., is responsible for network-wide programming and services, advocacy, and research, the Chapters create the “boots on the ground” impact that is so crucial to the enhanced experiences of veterans in higher education. National Headquarters welcomes potential chapters to apply to join the national network and contribute to the mission of SVA. This section describes the benefits, the minimum standards, and the application for participation. The focus thereafter is on the roles within the Chapter. Chapter Leaders provide effective management for their Chapter, and advisors are a vital asset to a Chapter for university support. These leadership roles are important to the success of your Chapter, allowing for continuity and long-term success. Just like any other student organization, Chapters require support from the university administration and faculty to meet the potential impact a Chapter can bring.

### Benefits

The Chapter network grows relationships like none other. Built on a camaraderie established through military service, the connections made through the Chapter network are rich and meaningful and they have positively impacted a generation of student veterans already. Chapter membership offers a unique access to this global network of like-minded student veterans, families, supporters, and allies in programming, advocacy, research, and more. Chapters are also uniquely positioned to benefit from guidance from the nation’s top individuals in various industries.

Through affiliation, Chapters and their members have access to the following resources, opportunities, and programming:

- The use of the SVA name, seal, logo, and branding in accordance with usage policies to demonstrate the Chapter’s affiliation with a global network of student veteran success.
- Access to the opportunities provided to Chapters via strategic partnerships, including programming, internships, events, certificate programs, webinars, scholarships, and careers.
- Access to leadership and professional development curricula and programs, including Washington Week, Regional Summits, the Leadership Institute, NatCon, and other programs developed with SVA partners, such as the VFW-SVA Legislative Fellowship.
- Engagement in online networking and support forums, including the Chapter Leader Forum (Facebook) and the Student Veterans Professional Development Community (LinkedIn).
- Advocacy support related to student veteran issues on campus and at the campus, local, state, and national level. Campus support includes connecting Chapters with local networks, working with campus administrators, and providing resources that support working with student government. On a national level, support includes direct policy advocacy for various relevant legislative issues.
- Access to the Chapter Toolkit to be used as a guide when applying best practices for managing your Chapter.

The founders of SVA believed student veterans already paid their dues through their sacrifices of serving in our nation’s military, and this continues to guide the SVA philosophy to this day. *There are no dues or fees associated with SVA membership.* Individual Chapters may enact due or fee policies on their own but are encouraged to avoid any policies financially inhibiting any student veteran from membership and participation. Chapters should check with their institution of higher learning before implementing any dues or fees to ensure practices consistent with the rules of their university.

### Chapter Requirements

As a student group that is tied to both the university (or college, or school) as well as your National Headquarters, Chapters must meet four (4) criteria for inclusion:

- Be a registered student organization
- Have a set of governing documents
- Have a set of (at least one) elected student leaders
- Have a faculty/staff member serving as Chapter Advisor

### Registered Student Organization

A prospective Chapter must be a registered student organization (RSO) at their accredited institution in accordance with that institution's policies, regulations, and procedures. The process of becoming a registered student organization may vary on each campus, so Chapter Leaders are encouraged to contact their university's Student Life or Student Affairs office for more information.

Becoming an RSO ensures that a potential Chapter has a structured and public relationship with their accredited institution as well as institutionalized connections with other student organizations on their campus. It also formalizes the Chapter's rules and responsibilities in accordance with their university's regulations. Official student organizations also often have access to unique resources, including funding, which might not otherwise be available.

### Governing Documents

Chapters are required to have a governing document (e.g. bylaws, constitution) that provides official guidelines on what the Chapter is, how it is managed, and more. As an RSO, institution policies often guide how this document is crafted and what is required to be enumerated within. It is recommended that, during the Chapter Leader turnover process, an annual review and revision of the governing document is also done to make amendments and ensure all Chapter Leaders are familiar with the foundation of the organization. It is also recommended that governing documents include at minimum:

- Chapter mission statement
- Membership eligibility requirements
- Chapter Officer positions and position descriptions
- Election procedures
- Meeting requirements and procedures

Of particular note, while membership eligibility is often laid out by the institution, National Headquarters has found through experience and research that the highest performing Chapters are the most inclusive. It may feel natural that a student veteran organization be exclusive to student veterans, but this practice takes away from the growth and impact that the Chapter may have on its members as well as the school on the whole. Inclusion of nonveterans in leadership positions can at first be an uncomfortable thought, but nonveteran students have their own, individual set of skills that can prove necessary in a Chapter Leader or Officer. Diversity and inclusion have shown to lead to a truly world-class chapter.

Governing documents should be crafted under the guidance of the accredited institution and should meet all requirements laid out by said institution.

### Chapter Leaders

At minimum, the Chapter must have an elected President, but your institution may require additional leadership roles or may have another name for this position. Leadership responsibilities include, but are not limited to, the following areas:

- Ensuring that the Chapter is properly reporting membership and Chapter information to National Headquarters.
- Coordinating membership recruitment, Chapter Officer installation/transition, and Chapter meetings.
- Being familiar with the Chapter's constitution and/or bylaws, membership requirements and Chapter reporting procedures.

- Planning Chapter events and promoting SVA on campus.
- Encouraging the Chapter's attendance at university functions.
- Communicating effectively with the active membership, the university, community partners, and National Headquarters.
- Setting and evaluating Chapter goals annually.

The exact organizational structure, definition of roles, and responsibility of Chapter Leaders will depend on a variety of factors, including the size of the Chapter and the scope of its mission, any relevant school or campus policies, and individual Chapter preferences and individual skills. The suggested leadership positions described in detail below are designed to mirror the executive leadership roles at National Headquarters for ease of guidance and assistance. Position descriptions are described in the Chapter Leaders section below, and success themes for the suggested positions are described in **Appendix A**.

### Chapter Advisor

Chapters are required to have at least one school staff or faculty member who has agreed to serve as the Chapter Advisor. While some Chapters operate with minimal input from their Chapter Advisor, these Chapters are missing out on one of the most impactful relationships the Chapter can have. Chapter Advisors are the link between the Chapter and the school administration. Suggested Chapter Advisor responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Facilitating communications between Chapter Leaders and university administration.
- Being available to assist Chapter Officers in membership recruitment, Chapter Officer installation/transition and Chapter meetings.
- Assisting with Chapter events and communications.
- Assisting the Chapter in setting and evaluating goals annually.

The most effective Chapters cultivate excellent relationships with their Chapter Advisors. To maintain this relationship, it is important to communicate with your Chapter Advisor clearly, effectively, and consistently.

*Selecting a Chapter Advisor.* Chapter Leaders should consider a faculty or staff member who has or is willing to acquire knowledge of the institution's student veteran and military-connected population. When selecting an advisor, adhere to the requirements of the institution as some may stipulate specific expectations for who may fill that role or what that role entails. It is also possible that the Chapter will have multiple staff or faculty advisors – a university advisor appointed to student organizations by the school and a Chapter Advisor selected by the Chapter Leaders.

*The Role of a Chapter Advisor.* Oftentimes, the role of the Chapter Advisor is established by the accredited institution to which the Chapter belongs. Where not explicitly outlined, this role should be designed under the guidance of applicable university policies. The first meeting between the Chapter Leaders and a Chapter Advisor is to establish clear and mutually-agreed-upon expectations and prioritize regular and clear communication. Chapter Advisors maintain continuity where Chapter Leaders turnover generally every year by overseeing the Chapter Leadership turnover process discussed below. The role of the Chapter Advisor can be as involved as much or as little as the Chapter Leaders desire.

The selected advisor is recommended to act as a mentor and connect the Chapter within the institution, providing guidance within the Chapter as well. The advisor is also recommended to maintain contact with National Headquarters and be available to attend events such as NatCon and Regional Summits. A Chapter Advisor is invited into the role by the Chapter and serves at its discretion. Apart from the authority conferred by their professional position as school employees, Chapter Advisors hold no authority or executive power over any aspect of Chapter operations, programs, or membership.

Chapter Advisors who also serve as Veterans Resource Center staff, VA work-study managers, or other military- or veteran-related capacities brings a wealth of expertise and institutional knowledge to the role. In such cases, Chapter Advisors should make every effort to keep their roles distinct, and this distinction

should be communicated to student veterans, Chapter Leaders, and as appropriate, other school staff or faculty.

*Alumni Advisors.* Many Chapters have alumni advisory committees or boards. These positions are created to support the Chapter through mentorship, continuity, and leadership guidance. The person invited to this position aids in Chapter advisement but does not replace the requirement for a staff/faculty advisor. These positions should not be considered active members of the Chapter.

## Chapter Application

A prospective SVA Chapter must first [establish the group](#) with SVA National Headquarters on the SVA website. The information below will help facilitate the group in getting started on the path to establishing a student veteran organization, and sustainable success. Once these steps are completed, groups will be ready to apply for Chapter membership.

*Step 1: Identify Your “Why”.* To establish a healthy organization, it is important to understand the purpose of your chapter along with the key elements of creating a student veteran organization, and the best practices for managing a Chapter. SVA’s summer program, the Regional Summit, holds curriculum created to serve as a guide for these initial steps. It contains guidance on establishing a mission statement, creating a strategic plan and budget, as well as helpful advice from our National Headquarters executive team.

*Step 2: Connect with the Community.* Chapters connect student veterans, administrators, community organizations, and other student groups. Connecting with these stakeholders will help gauge interest and gain support for Chapter mission. Tap into existing networks on campus to raise awareness of the student veteran experience and the group. Forming a healthy relationship with school administrators can also help in the long run. Chapters are also required to identify a Chapter Advisor. This role is described in detail above.

*Step 3: Establish a Network.* National Headquarters requests two points of contact: the “Chapter Leader” (generally the Chapter’s president) and the “Chapter Advisor.” These are the points of communication between National Headquarters and the individual members of the chapter.

Although SVA only asks for these contacts, we like to connect with any in officer positions or those seeking an officer position. The programs offered at the national level are designed to elevate the management of chapters from each position of leadership. Internally to the chapter, we recommend organizing a roster or contact list for all chapter members, as well as contacts on campus and neighborhood communities who have expressed interest in supporting the group. Creating these channels to facilitate a network will help streamline communications within the student veteran organization.

Also, during this phase, the group should be applying for recognition as an official student organization on campus. All SVA Chapters must be recognized as an official student organization on their respective campus. Every institution is different, so connect with Student Life administration—or other office, appropriate for the institution—for specific details on how to complete this process.

*Step 4: Set the Standard.* To further streamline organization activities, it is important to create a governing document, such as a constitution or set of bylaws. This is a prerequisite to becoming an official Chapter and will also establish the structure within which the student veteran organization will function. The governing document should include information on the scope of the organization’s mission, as well as details on membership requirements and meeting frequency. The content of governing documents will vary by campus but reviewing these bylaws will be useful in drafting the organization’s own unique document.

*Step 5: Apply for SVA Membership.* The application will be reviewed by an SVA team member and a decision sent within one-to-two business days. Upon approval, a welcome email will be sent to all points of contact with some useful information and resources. Applications are available on the SVA website at <https://studentveterans.org/chapters/>.

### Delay in assigning Chapter status

Certain circumstances may delay or preclude the registration, such as:

- The institution’s accreditation is suspended or unstable.

- There are numerous or repeated cautionary flags on the institution listed with the Department of Veterans Affairs.
- The student veteran(s) seeking to register is/are also, and primarily, staff of the institution where they are seeking to register a Chapter.
- There are already existing Chapters at the institution/the particular campus.
- Application forms are incomplete or inaccurate.

### *Maintaining Active Chapter Status*

To maintain active status, an SVA Chapter must abide by registration requirements and remain in good standing with SVA as well as its accredited institution. Chapters are requested to complete and submit an annual update form reflecting any changes to leadership and contact information on the SVA website at <https://studentveterans.org/chapters/> as well as update SVA National Headquarters annually on their RSO status and newly elected leadership.



## Chapter Officers

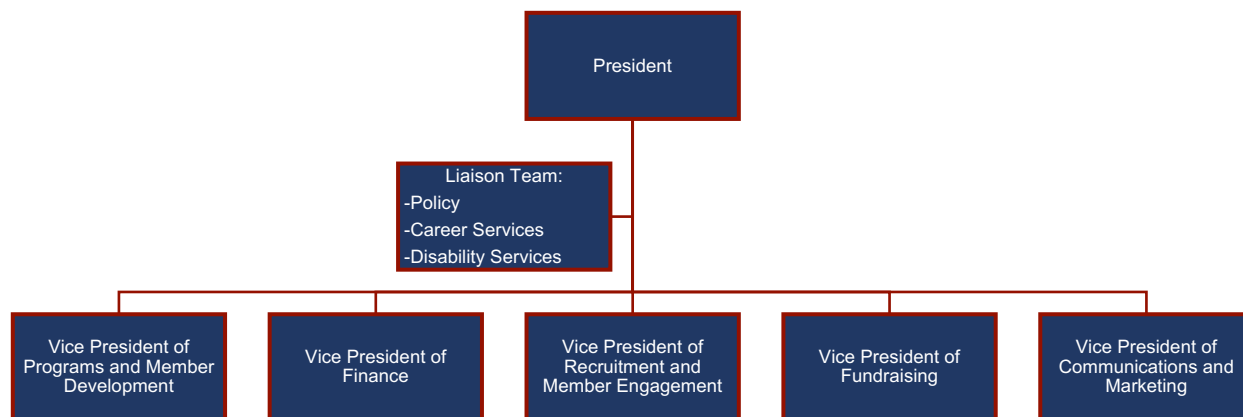
Maintaining a set of elected students to serve as Chapter Officers is essential to Chapter success. Many Chapters are well established, but continual growth and development of officer roles is crucial in managing a chapter. This section provides a reminder of suggested chapter officer positions and outlines the prescribed duties of each. These are recommendations, however, and officer positions should be created to fit the needs of the school and the chapter.

### *Recap from Previous Section*

At minimum, the Chapter must have a President, but the institution may require additional leadership roles. Leadership responsibilities include, but are not limited to, the following areas:

- Ensuring that the Chapter is properly reporting membership and Chapter information to National Headquarters.
- Coordinate membership recruitment, Chapter Officer installation/transition, and Chapter meetings.
- Be familiar with the Chapter's constitution and/or bylaws, membership requirements and Chapter reporting procedures.
- Planning Chapter events and promoting SVA on campus.
- Encouraging the Chapter's attendance at university functions.
- Communicating effectively with the active membership, the university, community partners, and National Headquarters.
- Setting and evaluating Chapter goals annually.

The following diagram represents a suggested Chapter Leader structure.



The exact organizational structure, definition of roles, and responsibility of Chapter Officers will depend on a variety of factors, including the size of the Chapter and the scope of its mission, any relevant school or campus policies, and individual Chapter preferences and individual skills. The suggested leadership positions are designed to mirror the executive leadership roles at National Headquarters for ease of guidance and assistance. Position descriptions for the suggested positions are described in the Chapter Leaders section below, and success themes for each of these positions are outlined in **Appendix A**.

### *Chapter Officer Roles*

#### President

The President is the most senior leader in a Chapter and holds overall accountability for all aspects of the organization's operations, finances, development, recruitment, and engagement with National Headquarters and external parties. The President is the primary student contact for the student organization and the "external spokesperson" of the group who regularly interacts with other student organizations and University officials. They are the liaison between the student organization and the advisor and other University or community contacts. The duties for this position should be tailored as the student organization deems necessary. The responsibilities of the president include, but are not limited to:

- Overall accountability and ownership of the creation of the Chapter strategic plan and the success of the Chapter.
- Direct overall Chapter operations in accordance with governing documents, delegate appropriate responsibilities to Chapter Leaders as needed and oversee the execution of the strategic plan.
- Represent and promote the Chapter at events on campus and in the community.
- Serve as the primary point of contact between the Chapter and National Headquarters, school administration, student government, other student organizations, and community entities.
- Conduct general body and leadership meetings.

### Vice President of Programs and Member Development

The Vice President of Programs and Member Development is responsible for all facets of Chapter programming and ensuring all Chapter Members have a clear path toward Chapter Leader and/or liaison positions, if desired. This person manages the "so what" of the organization, and so is often considered the "second in command." They should create events and services in alignment with the Chapter mission and that appeal to Chapter Members. This may require polling or a survey at the beginning of every term or year in order to understand fully the wants and needs of the Chapter. The Vice President of Programs and Member Development will work closely and collaborate fully with each of the other Chapter Officers in order to do their job. The responsibilities of this role include, but are not limited to:

- Use the strategic plan to set goals for programming and member development goals.
- Build and execute the programming calendar in coordination with other important calendars (i.e., university's calendar, community calendar, holidays, etc.).
- Work with the Vice President of Communications and Marketing to ensure each event on the calendar is adequately publicized.
- Delegate event preparation responsibilities to Chapter Members based on individual skillsets.
- Track and report attendance outcomes for all events and lead the after-action review to discuss ways to improve the event.
- Track and report on the impacts from programming (i.e., graduation rates, engagement, Chapter status).
- Assess the skill level of Chapter Members and advise them on ways they can support the Chapter and assume leadership positions in the Chapter.
- Advise and encourage Chapter Members on professional development opportunities such as the LinkedIn Professional Development Community, the SVA Regional Summits, and the SVA Leadership Institute.
- Serve as the official second-in-charge of the Chapter in the event the President is unable to fulfill their responsibilities.

### Vice President of Finance

The Vice President of Finance is responsible for managing all incoming and outgoing Chapter funds. They should be fiscally minded, detail-oriented, and very responsible. This person will hold the financial keys to the Chapter. Oftentimes, universities will require specific training for the student responsible for the finances of a student organization. Chapter Presidents and those intended to take on this role should check with the University for guidelines on banking, training, and other requirements. The Vice President of Finance will also work closely with the other vice presidents to provide and receive funding for all operations of the Chapter. The responsibilities of this role include, but are not limited to:

- Use the strategic plan to set an operations budget, and guide financial planning and decision making.
- Establish, improve, and/or maintain best practices for sound financial management.
- Manage the Chapter budget and prepare detailed financial reports for the Chapter president, Chapter Advisor and the college or university, if required.
- Identify the most affordable vendors and seek additional ways to save money for the Chapter.
- Create and/or manage a record keeping system for the filing of receipts, bills, invoices, and financial reports.
- Work closely with the Vice President of Fundraising to identify potential funding sources including institutional funding, grant funding, and private donors.
- Ensure the Chapter complies with all financial regulations set by the college or university.

### Vice President of Recruitment and Member Engagement

The Vice President of Recruitment and Engagement is responsible for recruiting Chapter Members and encouraging their engagement in all Chapter events, meetings, community outreach, and other Chapter initiatives. They are essential to the survival of a Chapter. With their primary responsibilities focused on coordinating the recruitment efforts of the chapter, they can have a significant impact on an organization's future. The responsibilities of the role include, but are not limited to:

- Use the strategic plan to set recruitment and attendance goals to guide engagement objectives and strategies.
- Work with the Vice President of Programs and Member Development to develop programming that encourages an active and engaged membership, and that are aimed attracting, selecting, identifying, and recruiting new members.
- Work with the Vice President of Communications and Marketing to represent and promote the Chapter and recruit new members.
- Work with the leadership team in creating, developing, and reviewing membership guidelines and requirements.
- Maintain relationships with the office of admissions, Dean of Students, the School Certifying Official (SCO) to welcome incoming student veterans and military-connected students.

### Vice President of Fundraising

The Vice President of Fundraising is responsible for establishing and cultivating relationships with potential donors, raising funds for the Chapter, and assisting the Vice President of Finance in accounting for donations and income. This person should be familiar with the school's rules and regulations on fundraising and explore innovative methods with which to solicit and process donations, in accordance with university policy. The responsibilities of this role include, but are not limited to:

- Use the strategic plan to set a fundraising goal.
- Establish, improve, and/or maintain best practices for relationship building with donors and potential donors.
- Identify potential funding sources including institutional funding, grant funding, and private donors.
- Ensure the Chapter complies with all donation regulations set by the college or university.

### Vice President of Communications and Marketing

The Vice President of Communications and Marketing is responsible for all internal and external communications of the Chapter as well as promoting Chapter events to student veterans, their families, allies, and the greater campus community. The responsibilities of this role include, but are not limited to:

- Use the strategic plan to create a communications and social media strategy.
- Maintain communication with National Headquarters and ensure Chapter information is updated every semester.
- Manage and update all social media accounts and the Chapter website (as applicable).

- Take pictures during events and collect pictures taken by Chapter Members.
- Maintain an accurate distribution/contact list of all Chapter Members, family members, allies, partners, vendors, and all other important parties.
- Maintain meeting minutes and distribute to Chapter Leaders and/or members.
- Manage all outwardly facing communications including event promotion and press releases.
- Create a newsletter or publication that highlights Chapter events, accomplishments, and milestones to circulate around campus and throughout the SVA network.

### SVA Campus Liaison Program

The CLP ensures that veterans are included in relevant spaces and conversations around campus. The ideal operations for these liaisons include position-specific curriculum and training from SVA National Headquarters, collaboration with campus personnel within each respective department, and strategic planning for outreach to and the provision of services for student veterans. Liaisons can shift cultural norms in the student veteran community and on campus in order to cultivate cultural awareness in both spaces. They can also serve as trusted leaders and role models, who share information across groups. The liaison positions include the Policy Liaison, the Career Services Liaison, the Disability Services Liaison.

#### *Policy Liaison.*

The Policy Liaisons are a community of self-identified students that are interested in developing policy or advocacy skills. The overarching goal of this liaison role is to equip student veterans with the tools and skills necessary to self-advocate, whether it be at the campus, local, state, or federal level. Currently, the network of Policy Liaisons meets monthly for a conference call that includes SVA National Headquarters and facilitates an open floor discussion of students' individual goals and progress, with an emphasis on fostering a positive and constructive atmosphere. Policy Liaisons are broadly diverse and located across the entire country. The responsibilities of this role include, but are not limited to:

- Join the Policy Liaison Program (PLP) and participate in regularly scheduled calls with the Government Affairs team and fellow Policy Liaisons.
- Identify policy issues negatively or positively affecting student veterans on campus.
- Meet with university leadership and elected officials to share policy needs of the Chapter, campus, and community.
- Leverage your National Headquarters Government Affairs department for assistance with advocacy for student veterans on campus.
- 
- Leverage your National Headquarters Research department to gather data that can assist with a policy initiative.
- Assist with representing and promoting the Chapter on campus and in the community.
- 

#### *Career Services Liaison*

The Career Services Liaisons (CSL) are chapter leaders who take responsibility for engaging student veterans in the career-focused aspects of their education, including employment and internships during college as well as career opportunities near graduation. They accomplish this by connecting to their campus career services office in order to better translate the knowledge and skills that are acquired during military experiences, as well as improve the knowledge about how military-acquired skills might apply to employment post-graduation. The CSL conducts outreach to and on behalf of career services offices on campuses, which may otherwise lack connections to student veterans, particularly as most student veterans are nontraditional students and may have different needs for career and internship services than their traditional student peers. The CSL also acts as a bridge to student veterans on behalf of SVA National Headquarters and its connected network of business and industry partners. This crucial connection shares networking, career preparedness, and mentorship opportunities. The responsibilities of this role include, but are not limited to:

- Work closely with the Vice President of Programs and Member Development on all career and professional development events and programs.
- Use the Chapter strategic plan to identify potential programs, resources, and opportunities related to career readiness and professional development.
- Develop and maintain a functional relationship with college/university Career Services Office and National Headquarters.
- Raise awareness of Career Services and related resources and services that are available to student veterans and encourage student veterans to use respective resources and services.
- Plan, coordinate, and execute all Chapter programming and events related to career readiness and professional development in partnership with the Vice President of Programs and Member Development.
- Track and report attendance and/or performance outcomes and engagement for student veterans utilizing the Career Services Office.
- Maintain success stories in career placement after graduation to help tell the important story of your Chapter.
- Assess and build cultural competency training related to job seeker interests and skillsets of student veterans through their transition from the military, through education, and into the workforce.
- Expose Chapter Members to professional development and career opportunities available through Career Services Office, National Headquarters, and their partners, and with companies and organizations that are committed to hiring and developing student veteran talent.

#### *Disability Services Liaison*

The Disability Services Liaison connects student veterans with services on campus for students with disabilities. Almost 60 percent of student veterans identified as having a service-connected disability, but that utilization of campus resources, such as disability services offices, was near zero even though 80 percent of these students experience academic stress because of their disability. While traditional students with chronic disabilities have become accustomed to seeking interventions and accommodations to lessen the impact of their disability on the higher education experience, those with newer disabilities, including student veterans with service-connected disabilities, are unaware of the benefits of requesting accommodations, if they are aware that disability services exist on campus. Beyond that, there exists a stigma with the admission of having a disability within the student veteran population. Disability Services Liaisons connect student veterans with accommodations for physical, emotional, and cognitive disabilities that are service-connected or that manifested after service. These accommodations lower barriers to academic success and enhanced the college experience for these student veterans. Further these liaisons use peer leadership to normalize the help-seeking behavior that is commonly unfamiliar to veterans. The responsibilities of the Disability Services Liaison include, but are not limited to:

- Maintain regular contact with all disability services administrators on campus and familiarize yourself with the various services that exist on campus.
- Create and maintain a list of all disability services and personnel on campus and disseminate to all student veterans on campus with a service-connected disability.
- .
- Promote help-seeking behavior among student veterans with disabilities and encourage them to utilize services when needed.
- 
- Work with the Dean of Students to increase awareness of disability services during transfer student orientation

Advocate for the hiring of a school psychologist with a background in treating PTSD and military service-connected disabilities if your school does not have one

#### *Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Liaison*

The Diversity and Inclusion Liaison stems from conversation trends with chapters over the past three years, where many chapter leaders ask (1) how they can make their chapters more inclusive and (2) how they can be a part of the diversity and inclusion conversations on campus, as a representative of an underrepresented population on campus. More recently, following the death of George Floyd in May

2020, many chapter leaders turned to SVA National Headquarters seeking advice. They were unsure of their role in the national conversation or of their role on campus and with their membership. Diversity and inclusion have always been on the forefront of SVA's mission. Student veterans represent an incredibly diverse population in both demographics and experience, but also are a singularly diverse population within the student body due to unique experiences and perspectives. As such, student veteran participation in discussing and shaping diversity and inclusion on campuses across the country requires student veteran representation. The Diversity and Inclusion Liaison would represent veterans in campus discussions on diversity and inclusion, presenting salient, well-research data from SVA National Headquarters to help inform a campus culture inclusive to veterans. Additionally, they would work with the other chapter leaders on campus to ensure that the chapter meets with and exemplifies the ideals of inclusion within and across student organizations. The responsibilities of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Liaison include, but are not limited to:

- Acts as the official representative on DEI to the university and other student organizations on behalf of student veterans,
- Develops, directs, and implements programs and activities to improve relationships with other underrepresented student organizations.
- Meets with community groups and leaders regarding community relations.
- Advises, and assists Chapter in a variety of DEI matters
- Coordinates and participates in the activities of various committees and boards; provides professional advice and direction Chapter President and other officers.
- Establishes, collects, and analyzes data to measure DEI progress and success of the Chapter.
- Functions as liaison to established DEI committees.

## Chapter Operations

Chapter operations must be strategic, organized, and integrative for the effective and successful management of a Chapter.

### *Strategic Planning*

Strategic planning refers to the process of articulating and formalizing the mission, goals, objectives, and strategies of the chapter. All Chapters will be engaged in strategic planning at some point and on some level. Some institutions require all student organizations to develop a strategic plan. Additionally, the periodic reassessment of the strategic plan's aspects as circumstances, priorities, or capabilities shift is a critical step to growing, not just maintaining, a Chapter. Chapter Leaders are encouraged to attend Regional Summits for tailored and curated training on strategic planning.

Collaboration among chapter leaders, members, faculty and staff is necessary when defining the chapter's strategic plan. Even shorter strategic plans are intended to address many aspects of the Chapter over relatively long periods of time. The first step of strategic planning is to evaluate the current standing of the chapter. Understand where the chapter is currently and where you want the chapter to be so ambitious, yet reasonable goals can be defined for the strategic plan.

### Steering Committee

A steering committee is an invited group of stakeholders that decide on the priorities or order of business of the Chapter and manages the general course of its operations. This is generally created for new Chapters and may not be appropriate for Chapters with established priorities and operations.

The members of a Chapter steering committee should include Chapter Leaders, certainly, but also university administration, faculty, and staff, community members, etc.

### Campus Culture

There are over 4,000 institutions of higher learning (IHLs) in the United States with unique campus cultures, communities, opportunities, and logistical challenges associated with each. Understanding your campus is critical to managing a Chapter that meets the needs of student veterans and the type of programming the Chapter should pursue.

Campus culture is affected by the student and student veteran populations, campus location (rural or urban setting), campus setting (residential or commuter school), and student life. Once these factors are understood, it is helpful to further explore campus culture by answering the following questions as it relates to student veterans.

1. What do new student veterans on campus say about their first impressions of the institution? What did they notice first and what sense did they make of what they saw or heard?
2. How do community members talk about the campus? Do those views match up with what experienced members of the campus community or newcomers or students say about the institution?
3. What does the institution value most and how is that expressed?
4. Are Chapter Leaders' core values and expectations aligned with the main elements of the campus culture? If not, what might Chapter Leaders do to describe the Chapter in ways that fit that culture?

## Mission Statement

The Chapter mission statement clearly defines the Chapter's purpose, who the Chapter represents, and the value added for its members and community. Mission statements reflect the identity of the individual Chapter, as well as the role the Chapter is playing or is striving to play on campus. Accordingly, the mission statement will typically be reviewed and revised by each new leadership team.

As an example, SVA's mission statement is, "*Act as a catalyst for student veteran success by providing resources, network support and advocacy to, through, and beyond higher education.*" By examining the SVA mission statement, the following questions can easily be answered:

- What is the organization's purpose or why does the Chapter exist? *SVA exists to put into motion all factors that will lead to student veteran success.*
- What services does the organization seek to provide? *SVA offers resources in research, programming, and services as well as policy advocacy.*
- What does the organization hope to achieve? *SVA hopes to see the successful transition of servicemembers, their families, and allies into college, through graduation, and onto a successful career.*

Mission statements are a strategic tool and a part of an organization's "brand." This guide discusses the concept of developing a brand at length below, and it is important to recognize the mission statement's role in showing the world three key elements: who your organization is, what you are doing, and why it matters.

## Goals

Goals should be clear action statements identifying what Chapter Leaders seek to accomplish. They are a direct extension of the Chapter mission and should be re-evaluated often to ensure they are keeping up with the Chapter mission statement, campus culture, and strengths of leadership. As with any other strategic tool, goals will guide the Chapter's decisions and define its priorities. A timeline should be established for each set goal, but can be short-term, lasting only a semester or long-term feeding into the legacy of the Chapter.

It needs to be said again because it is important—collaborate to define your Chapter's goals. One tried-and-true, highly effective starting place for evaluating the Chapter and beginning to define goals for the next strategic plan is an analysis of the Chapter's strengths, challenges, opportunities, and vulnerabilities (SCOV). This analysis should include Chapter Leaders, members, and advisors. This process is more commonly referred to as *SWOT*, but *SCOV* conveys a more constructive framework and tone.

The people involved in the various aspects of the Chapter's work will each have different and valuable considerations for each category, but they may include:

**Strengths.** What aspects of the Chapter's operations, structure, and team have been responsible for the most significant recent successes? Perhaps there were particularly successful programs, a well-connected board, enthusiastic volunteers, or a generous and loyal base of supporters. Perhaps the Chapter has all these strengths and seeks to expand them.

**Challenges.** Just as the Chapter undoubtedly has unique strengths, it is likely to have encountered some recurring challenges in Chapter operations. Identifying these can help in setting some early goals for the strategic plan to make the Chapter even better than it already is. Member retention, a lack of new faces in Chapter Leadership, and flat fundraising might be challenges affecting the Chapter.

**Opportunities.** Building on current strengths, brainstorm opportunities for the Chapter that can transform into concrete goals. Are there ways to improve communications among Chapter Leaders, for instance, or



areas of the campus or community that could benefit from the Chapter’s work? How can impact be expanded? Membership refreshed? Fundraising increased?

*Vulnerabilities.* Not all the challenges that the Chapter may have to face are connected to its operations or structure. If there are external reasons causing trouble connecting with the campus or reaching fundraising goals, for instance, these should be addressed in the strategic plan.

Everyone who plays a role in furthering the Chapter’s mission should be involved in this initial assessment process and in turning those findings into potential goals to include in the strategic plan.

Examples: “To connect Chapter Members with on-campus resources needed for personal and academic success.” “Raise visibility of student veterans on campus.” “Create camaraderie among student veterans.”

### Objectives

A Chapter’s objectives are the actions the Chapter will take to achieve its goals. Objectives are goal-specific, meaning they align with one, goal, and define exactly what the Chapter will do, how it will be measured, and the timeline required for success.

The strategic planning process is a collaborative effort involving Chapter Leaders, members, the advisor, and other stakeholders that will require continuous year after year with each leadership change. **Prioritizing the objectives contained within the strategic plan ensures that Chapter Leaders work efficiently and make more progress toward achieving the identified goals.**

When it comes to prioritizing objectives, every Chapter’s needs are different, but anyone can benefit from categorizing these objectives to better understand how they fit together within the Chapter’s operations and overall strategic plan. To help with organizing and prioritizing objectives, think of them in categories of objectives such as:

- **Leadership.** These objectives serve to elevate the role or the person in the role. Ensure that Chapter Leaders communicate frequently to stay updated on their progress.
- **Operations.** Carried out in large part by Chapter Members, operations objectives could include improvements to the Chapter’s internal processes, for example, or more effective means of carrying out the work done for or on behalf of student veterans.
- **Fundraising.** The Chapter’s leadership, advisory committee, members, and any partnered fundraising consultants (e.g., a university’s development office) will all play important roles in creating and meeting fundraising objectives. These may include finding ways to encourage recurring contributions, increasing annual giving, or offering supporters new giving methods.

Regardless of category, strategic objectives should be “**SMART**”:

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| <b>Specific</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What exactly is going to be accomplished?</li> <li>• What will change and for whom?</li> </ul>                              |
| <b>Measurable</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can the actions be quantified, measured, tracked, reported on?</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Attainable</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is this possible considering the skills of Chapter Members and leaders, political climate, campus culture, etc.?</li> </ul> |
| <b>Relevant</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the action make sense, given goals and mission?</li> <li>• Will it impact the target audience?</li> </ul>              |
| <b>Timely</b>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the deadline?</li> <li>• Is the action appropriate for current calendar?</li> </ul>                                 |

Examples:

- “Compile a list of veterans’ services available on campus and make it available in print and online by October 15.”
- “Create and submit a student veterans orientation slide deck for approval by Student Affairs before Winter Break.”
- “Have at least 12 people at each Chapter Community Service event this semester.”

Failing to meet an objective does not mean that a Chapter has failed. It only means that the Chapter should re-evaluate its objectives and alter one of the SMART elements of the strategic objective.

### Strategies

Strategies are the definitive, item-by-item to-do list for accomplishing an objective. They specifically describe what the Chapter will do with at least one strategy supporting each objective. Thus, strategies have a direct connection to the objective.

Example: if the objective is to “add 15 new email addresses to the contact list by the end of September,” the following strategies might be used:

- “Put an email sign-up sheet in the Veterans Resource Center.”
- “Ask the SCO to send a blast email to all new student veterans with the Chapter sign-up link.”
- “Table in the dining hall with a sign up and snacks on Thursday lunches in September.”

### Strategic Review

As the Chapter continues serving student veterans on campus over time, conditions in these communities and at the Chapter are bound to shift and change. The work itself will be responsible for some of these effects, as will external circumstances beyond the Chapter’s control. Capacity building is important because it leaves the Chapter with an improved structure and tools that make Chapter Leaders capable of maintaining positive impact even when the details of the strategic plan must change.

While no one can predict all possible changes as the strategic plan is created, steps can be taken throughout the strategic planning process to help ensure that the plan will be flexible enough to handle unexpected shifts. These steps include:

*Developing a theory of change.* Especially in the earliest stages of the Chapter’s strategic planning process, envisioning and discussing a theory of change—beginning with mission-based goals and working backward to identify potential paths toward reaching them—is an effective approach to the process. It helps ensure that everyone involved in the planning process has a clear understanding of the overarching goals, even if the paths must change.

*Communicating regularly with everyone involved.* Nonprofit strategic planning is a team effort, as is realizing the objectives and goals outlined in the plan. Effective communication among all the various participants and components of the Chapter is essential to keeping the plan updated as circumstances change.

*Revise the plan as needed.* The need for revisions does not mean that the original strategic plan was flawed or lacking—it simply indicates aspects of the organization, or of the student veterans, families, or allies being served have changed over time and their needs can be best met in new ways.

*Plan for leadership turnover.* Chapter Leaders generally only lead for one term, or one academic year, and each incoming Chapter Leader has their own vision for where they want to see the Chapter at the end of their term. The purpose of the Chapter will generally remain the same through these turnovers, but goals and objectives should be revisited and revised as the talent in Chapter Leadership changes.

## Chapter Operations

The big ideas associated with strategic planning can propel a Chapter's engagement and success. However, without the appropriate approach to business operations, a Chapter's success will be limited significantly. Creating Chapter rules and guidelines through a constitution or set of bylaws, establishing and spending according to a budget, and instituting a Chapter Leader transition plan, will allow a Chapter to run smoothly, and set it up for a legacy of success.

A common issue for Chapters is the concentration of information in a single individual's hands. *Silos* can be a major barrier to building Chapter continuity. Clear, accurate, and thorough records are essential to maintaining Chapters. Records also promote transparency, reduce conflict, and tend to increase engagement. All Chapters should maintain the following documents and forms in a secure, accessible online platform:

- Founding Documents (By-laws, Mission, Constitutions, etc.)
- Strategic Plan
- Budgets (Proposed & Operating)
- Inventory
- Meeting Agendas and Minutes
- Membership Rolls and Contact Lists
- Events Calendar
- All grant or funding applications
- Any letters of support or recognition
- All significant external correspondence

Chapters should audit their member rolls and contact lists each term. Chapter Leaders may also want to keep a continuous list of important school and community contacts, including what role they serve and any notable past interactions. It is important to keep track of any major events, including:

- Agendas and minutes for planning meetings
- Budgets
- Event planning timelines
- Vendor lists
- Publicity efforts
- Attendance
- After-action reports

There are several cloud-enabled programs that facilitate the maintenance and security of Chapter records, such as Microsoft OneDrive, Google Drive, Dropbox, and others. When choosing a platform, consider the school's policies, the platform's security, the ease of use, and how files are accessed on mobile devices.

In most Chapters, the primary responsibility for record maintenance will fall to the Vice President of Communications, or equivalent. However, it is ultimately the responsibility of the elected Chapter President and the entire leadership team to review Chapter records and agree on internal expectations and divisions of labor for ensuring they are kept accurate and up to date.

## Founding Documents

Founding documents are the documents required to form a student organization. These can include a Statement of Purpose, which explains, "This is what we're doing for *someone else*" and describes the Chapter's "philosophical heartbeat;" a Petition for Recognition, which can be a simple sheet listing the name and Statement of Purpose and a required number of signatures for organizational legitimacy; as well as a Constitution and Bylaws, described below; other RSO application documents; and branding documents.

*Constitution.* A constitution is a founding document that provides a clear outline of the structure and mission of the organization and provides a basic set of rules that will govern the group. The foundational documents of a Chapter should be guided by the policies of the college or university. Its intent is to provide consistent leadership for the organization as it will be passed on to future Chapter Officers. Creating a constitution for the Chapter can be challenging, but an effective Chapter constitution should reflect the purpose and goals of the organization. A Chapter constitution should be simple and concise.

Outside of our student veteran law students, members are generally going to avoid reading exhaustive documents unrelated to daily life or operations of the Chapter. They should be created by several members of the organization. A constitution created by a single person, whether the founding member or Chapter advisor, is not going to best serve the Chapter. Input from a diverse group will bring a collection of perspectives to ensure the language is inclusive and effective.

Finally, it should include appropriate guidelines to govern the organization in concise and effective language that enumerates all aspects of the Chapter.

*Bylaws.* Bylaws, alternative to a constitution, are principles that govern the internal affairs of a Chapter. They describe in detail the procedures and steps the organization must follow to conduct business effectively and efficiently. Chapters are not required to have bylaws, specifically, though they may be required by the education institution. However, Chapter Leaders may find them helpful to the Chapter's operations.

The following are some standard articles that commonly appear in Chapter bylaws:

- **Membership Sections:** discuss and detail the various aspects of membership that may be applicable: membership selection process, types of membership, and procedures for disciplining and/or removing members.
- **Officers Sections:** discuss the officer selection process, duties, powers, and responsibilities of each officer, and procedures for removal from office and filling vacant officer positions.
- **Committees Sections:** discuss and detail standing and special committees (formation, selection, powers, and duties) and the executive committee (membership, powers, and duties), along with the roles and responsibilities of committee chairs.
- **Meetings Sections:** discuss types of meetings, how and when they are to occur, requirements for notice, attendance, and quorum (number of members needed present to transact business), meeting format, and parliamentary rules of order (usually Robert's Rules of Order).
- **Financial Procedures Sections:** discuss and detail (as applicable) dues, fees, and products, collection procedures, and other financial procedures (budgets, expenditures, etc.).
- **Amendment Procedures Sections:** discuss the procedure for amending the bylaws (means of proposals, notice required, voting requirements).
- **Other specific policies and procedures unique to the Chapter that may be necessary for its operation.**

Before crafting Chapter Bylaws, Chapter Leaders should thoroughly understand the guiding policies set forth by the college or university. Remember the reasons for having a constitution and/or bylaws; these documents articulate the purpose of the Chapter and spell out the procedures to be followed for its orderly functioning. Constitutions usually require a two-thirds vote of the membership for adoption, while bylaws only require a simple majority for passage, though this is defined by the school, generally. Once the constitution and bylaws have been developed according to the guiding policies of the college or university, review them often. The needs of the Chapter will change over time and it is important that the constitution and bylaws are kept up to date to reflect the current situation.

Make sure every new member of the organization has a copy of governing documents. This will help to unify Chapter Members by informing them about the opportunities that exist for participation and the procedures they should follow to be an active, contributing member. A thorough study of the constitution and bylaws should be a part of Chapter Leader training and transition, discussed below. Chapter Leaders should also provide a copy of the constitution and/or bylaws to the Chapter Advisor.

*Registered student organization application.* Most institutions require an application to be identified as a recognized student organization. This application generally requires renewal annually, and so it is prudent to keep a copy of the previous year's application on hand to ease completion of new applications. The same is true for *university grant applications* and *funding requests*.

*Branding documents.* The Chapter brand is more easily understood as the Chapter's *identity*. While brand is discussed fully below, branding documents, to include the Chapter's logo, style guide, and branding policies should all be included and maintained with the founding documents.

## Budget

A budget is a strategic tool used for planning and controlling within a Chapter. It is a formal written guideline for a plan of action, expressed in financial terms within a set time. It can help refine goals that reflect realistic resources. It can compel members of the Chapter to use funds efficiently. It can provide accurate information to adjust, analyze, and evaluate programs and activities. It can aid in decision making. Finally, a budget can provide a historical reference to be used for future planning.

A budget is made up of several components including a statement of the organization's goals, objectives, and priorities. It considers what goals a Chapter wants to accomplish, how the Chapter will accomplish them, and how much they will cost to execute. It then identifies how each program, event, and service will be funded and a specified time to which the budget applies. The Chapter should have an outlined method of reviewing budget plans and procedures designated in their bylaws or constitution. To measure and track the financial stability, support, and success of the Chapter, a budgeted financial statement brings both an estimated detailed income breakdown as well as an estimated detailed expense breakdown.

To develop a budget, Chapter Leaders should begin preparations a month or more prior to the close of the current year. In many cases, this would be a summer practice in preparation for Chapter operations in the fall, but Chapter calendars are at the discretion of the Chapter. Chapter Leaders should consult their Chapter calendar to prepare an outline of the organization's planned activities for the upcoming year. Budget development involves careful studies, investigations, and research of funding, cost, and resources.

Budgets start with determining available funds, such as carry-over balance from previous year, cash on hand, and estimate expected income as well as the expectation of when the funds will be available from dues, T-shirt sales, donations etc. The budget also defines needed expenses for advertising, rentals, printing, supplies, etc. It is a good practice to gather price quotes on certain expenses and delegate some responsibilities to Chapter Members. Budget items or activities should be rank ordered by their relative importance and then chosen to make the wisest expenditures for a limited budget.

Chapter Leaders should consider how much funding is available to allocate to a program, negotiate as necessary, eliminate less-essential expenditures, or limit certain expenditures. The budgeting process, therefore, involves revision, coordination, cross-referencing, and assembling information into a final budget; the budget must be flexible to anticipate conditions which might have been overlooked during the planning process. Chapter budgets are often voted on either by the leadership team or at a full member meeting. School policies can also dictate how Chapter budgets are adopted.

Once approved, adopted and prepared, a budget should be closely managed. The Vice President of Finance should set and ensure maintenance of a minimum cash balance, formulate policies and procedures needed to achieve objectives, keep an accurate log of financial transactions (income and expenses) in Chapter record books available to the Chapter President, and set up internal control designed for safeguards and accurate accounting data. This encourages adherence to accountability.

To manage a budget, remember the most important cost control: allow only *approved* expenditures. The Vice President of Finance, Chapter President, or any other Chapter Leader should be available to assess

budget at any given point of time during the budgeted period. The bottom line is that the Chapter budget will dictate which plans Chapter Leaders can implement.

Beyond expenditures, budgets provide opportunities to fund sources of revenue. Revenue can come from institutional funding, where applications for institutional funding, if available, are often submitted every year and received via reimbursement or direct pay through a school account or debit card. Revenue can also include membership dues. Recall that the founders of SVA believed that student veterans paid their dues through military service, and so we do not collect dues at the National Headquarters.

Chapters, however, can set their own dues or fees schedules, but should consider the limitations this may place on recruitment goals. Many Chapters also market and sell their own branded merchandise. Entrepreneurial Chapter Leaders who wish to follow this revenue path should research school policy on selling merchandise, and ensure that all branding (i.e., SVA, school, etc.) are in line with branding policies. SVA branding policies are discussed below. Merchandise sales provide a source of revenue and expand visibility of the Chapter on campus.

Grants are another source of revenue. Some schools award grants and prizes to impactful student organizations. Additionally, non-profit organizations and veteran service organizations may offer grants to Chapters making an impact in the lives of veterans. Finally, many Chapters use fundraising to increase revenue. Chapters engaged in fundraising should know and understand the college's regulations pertaining to fundraising on campus. Fundraising is discussed extensively below.

| Expenses                          |  |               |              |                        |                       |
|-----------------------------------|--|---------------|--------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Line Item                         | Line Item Description (less than 300 characters) | Budget        | Actual       | Difference (\$)        |                       |
| <b>Meetings (7 per semester)</b>  | Pizza, soda, room rental fees                    | \$ 350.00     |              | -350.00                |                       |
| <b>Office Supplies</b>            | Printer ink, paper, staples, etc.                | \$ 150.00     |              | -150.00                |                       |
| <b>Social/Philanthropy Events</b> | Potluck and a War Movie                          | \$ 20.00      |              | -20.00                 |                       |
|                                   | First State Cup Veteran Tailgate                 | \$ 350.00     | \$ 290.00    | -60.00                 |                       |
|                                   | Homecoming Veteran Tailgate                      | \$ 200.00     |              | -200.00                |                       |
|                                   | Homecoming Gala                                  | \$ 1,000.00   |              | -1000.00               |                       |
|                                   | Veterans Day Flag Ceremony                       | \$ 20.00      |              | -20.00                 |                       |
|                                   | Face of America Bike Ride                        | \$ 5,500.00   |              | -5500.00               |                       |
| <b>Apparel</b>                    | T-Shirts (33)                                    | \$ 330.00     |              | -330.00                |                       |
|                                   | Challenge Coins (100)                            | \$450.00      | \$ 392.00    | -58.00                 |                       |
| <b>Office Improvement</b>         | Posters, flag, chairs, etc.                      | \$ 200.00     |              | -200.00                |                       |
| <b>Organizational Branding</b>    | Business Cards (500)                             | \$50.00       | \$20.00      | -30.00                 |                       |
|                                   | Pens (330)                                       | \$200.00      | \$126.30     | -73.70                 |                       |
|                                   | Laptop Stickers (30)                             | \$ 20.00      | \$ 12.00     | -8.00                  |                       |
| <b>New Student Orientation</b>    | Calendars (50)                                   | \$2,000.00    | \$ 1,520.00  | -480.00                |                       |
|                                   | Folder Materials                                 | \$500.00      | \$ 223.18    | -3276.82               |                       |
| <b>Semester Total</b>             |  | <b>Budget</b> |              | <b>Difference (\$)</b> | <b>Difference (%)</b> |
|                                   |  | \$ 11,340.00  | \$ 2,583.48  | -11756.52              | -103.7%               |
|                                   |  |               |              |                        |                       |
| Revenues                          |  |               |              |                        |                       |
| Line Item                         | Line Item Description (less than 300 characters) | Budget        | Actual       | Difference (\$)        |                       |
| <b>Flag Ceremony</b>              | Ribbons and Donations                            | \$ 500.00     |              | (500)                  |                       |
| <b>Fundraising</b>                | Raffles  | \$ 500.00     |              | (500)                  |                       |
|                                   | Silent Auction                                   | \$ 500.00     |              | (500)                  |                       |
|                                   | Tailgate   | \$ 500.00     | \$ 160.00    | (340)                  |                       |
|                                   | Fountain Coins                                   | \$ 3,000.00   |              | (3,000)                |                       |
|                                   | Donations  | \$ 500.00     |              | (500)                  |                       |
| <b>Grants</b>                     | SVA Chapter Grant                                |               |              | -                      |                       |
|                                   | First Step Award                                 | \$ 5,000.00   | \$ 5,000.00  | -                      |                       |
| <b>University of Delaware</b>     | Standard Budget Allocation                       | \$ 800.00     | \$ 800.00    | -                      |                       |
| <b>Carry-Over</b>                 | Money from 2015-2016 Year                        | \$ 190.95     | \$ 190.95    | -                      |                       |
| <b>VFW Funding</b>                | Local VFW Funding                                | \$ 750.00     | \$ 350.00    | (400)                  |                       |
| <b>Semester Total</b>             |  | <b>Budget</b> |              | <b>Difference (\$)</b> | <b>Difference (%)</b> |
|                                   |  | \$ 12,240.95  | \$ 6,500.95  | \$ (5,740)             | -46.9%                |
|                                   |  |               |              |                        |                       |
| BALANCE                           |  |               |              |                        |                       |
| BALANCE                           |  | Projected     | Cash on Hand | Difference (\$)        | Difference (%)        |
|                                   |  | \$ 900.95     | \$ 3,917.47  | \$ 3,017               | 334.8%                |

## Inventory

Having an up-to-date inventory helps guide planning for the current year and beyond. The organization and maintenance of inventory does not need to be stressful. Below are ten tips for inventory organization.

*Organize by type.* Group items by type. For example, the “shirt” section is organized by type (event shirts, shirts for sale, shirts free to students, etc.) and placed in a particular area of storage. Storage means something different to each Chapter – some may have a space in the student union or student life offices; some may have a storage unit off campus; some may have a closet in the Chapter president’s apartment – but each Chapter is recommended to keep their “swag” or materials in a singular place for ease of

access. All general multi-use items should also be in the same area including signs, tabling materials, flyers, etc.

*Organize by usage.* As in our own homes, frequently used items are easily accessible and infrequently used items are in a forgotten drawer. Some Chapters rotate their inventory according to semester (weather). Items that are going to be used for the upcoming event may be placed up front and are typically in collapsible, wheeled storage carts. Equipment that has just been used may be put away in the back or on shelves.

*Take notes.* Supplemental to the previous point, it is important to reflect upon the end of each semester regarding the Chapter experience, and in terms of inventory and materials. When putting away inventory that may not be used for a while, Chapter Leaders should make notes as to what may be needed soon, what needs ordering, and what needs repaired.

*Labeling.* Regardless of quality or expense, label all tubs, boxes, larger items, etc. to help you find what is needed when it is needed. Chapter Leaders may want to consider including the year items were received. The year helps to know how old an item is and indicates when an item may need replacing. It also shows if an item is holding up to expected use. If you bought something last year and it looks as if it has been used for 5 years, then you may want to consider a different vendor in the future.

*Think 'Portability.'* One of the biggest benefits of a storage room is the ability to easily transport many items at once. Collapsible carts are a good suggestion to easily transport bulky or heavy items and boxes.

*Storage Options.* Most Chapters are not provided with a complete storage system, so Chapter Leaders should always be on the lookout for good deals on storage items such as tubs, boxes, collapsible carts, wheeled carts, file systems, and utility hooks to hang things in storage. An important thing to keep in mind is where to organize, secure, and charge all devices. This can be a challenge if the storage room is not set up with a charging area.

*Electronic Inventory Record.* Chapter inventory records may be mandated by the office that oversees Registered Student Organizations. Regardless of required procedures, if not included, it is recommended that Chapter Leaders use an electronic inventory sheet (an Excel file or something more formal) to keep a detailed record of all inventory or materials. This should be updated with each leadership turnover. A template inventory management file is included in **Appendix C**.

## Meeting Agendas and Minutes

The heart of every Chapter is found during its meetings. Meetings range from a lighthearted, informational gathering of general members to a heated decision-making session of Chapter Leaders. Good meetings are always a result of careful preparation and planning. There are different ways to run a meeting. Whether parliamentary procedure or a more relaxed format is used, it is important to know what the purpose and goals are, have a plan to accomplish goals, and understand communications styles.

Preparing an agenda communicates to the Chapter what the meeting is about and invites Chapter Leaders to consider the information to include in the meeting before the meeting occurs. An agenda is an outline of the issues that a group will discuss during a meeting. The agenda is prepared by the Chapter Leaders, specifically the Vice President of Communications and Marketing, with assistance from the Chapter Advisor. Once prepared, the agenda should be distributed to members at least one day prior to the meeting either by email, in printed form, published to social media or a web site, etc. This allows members to come to the meeting prepared to discuss the agenda items, exchange information, and make decisions. A sample meeting agenda can be found in **Appendix D**.

*Using the Agenda.* Simply putting topics on a list will not make meetings more productive. There are some points that may help if considered during a meeting. Chapter Leaders should be realistic about the amount of time each topic will take. Avoid an over-crowded agenda. If choices must be made, leave more time for important issues. Chapter Leaders should take up the less complicated topics first, leaving time



at the end for more complex issues. The agenda should be a strict guide to respect the time of Chapter Members. Agenda topics should be introduced with a comment about the reason for its inclusion on the agenda. A full discussion of each topic should be allowed, while Chapter Leaders are mindful of the schedule. A good idea is to close discussion of each topic with plans for future action.

*Maintaining Meeting Minutes.* The agenda is a useful tool for the Vice President of Communications and Marketing to organize meeting minutes. Notes, particularly action items or decisions, are wise to note in minutes for historical records.

### Membership Rolls and Contact List

Chapters can develop membership rolls and contact lists by simply placing a sign-in sheet at the door during Chapter meetings. Chapters can also leverage relationships with university administrators to access student lists for sending out information.

Organizationally, it may be a good opportunity to tailor these lists to specific markets. Student veterans do not always require, nor are always interested in, the same messages as partners, administrators, and others. A separate list for each type of media is helpful, but subscribers should have a mechanism with which to disenroll or quit receiving messages.

### Event Calendar

Chapter event calendars often align with the academic year. Whether the university operates on a quarter or semester basis, calendar events are grouped by term and begin with the fall. They include scheduled federal and university holidays as well as important university dates, such as registration, drop dates, graduation application deadlines, and graduation.

Chapter-specific events and anniversaries are also included, such as meetings. These calendars can be distributed to Chapter Members every fall, posted on the Chapter website, and added to communications, such as the newsletter. Having an organized event calendar ensures that programming runs efficiently and effectively and allows Chapter Leaders to plan logistics for events well in advance.

### Grant or Funding Documents

Any documents associated with funding are often required to be kept on file for a specific amount of time according to university guidelines. These include grant applications, checks, invoices, and receipts. Chapter Leaders should check with the body responsible for registered student organizations for guidelines.

### Letters of Support, Awards, Recognition

Chapters are often recognized either by their university, the global network, partners, or other organizations. It is important to keep and maintain these forms of recognition to continue to add to the Chapter's story. Scanned copies of letters and certificates maintained on an online drive ensures they are not lost during transition or eroded over time.

### Chapter Leader Transitions

Leadership transition is a time-intensive process made smoother by beginning this handover well in advance, beginning soon after elections. The timing of elections is an important consideration in this process to maximize the transition period, the period between the election of a new leadership team and the formal handover of responsibilities.

*Full team meeting.* The goal of this meeting, which includes the entire incoming and outgoing executive boards, is to establish a timeline and agree on a structure for the rest of the leadership transition, as well

as for the incoming leadership to ask any pressing questions. This meeting may also identify for all parties any major shared deadlines or responsibilities.

For instance, many schools require that student organization status be renewed in the spring for the subsequent fall. Renewal may entail submitting a detailed budget, member records, and plans for the upcoming school year. Finally, if members of the incoming and outgoing leadership teams do not already know each other, this meeting can be an excellent way to begin building rapport and opening lines of communication.

*Individual meetings by role.* It is best for outgoing Chapter Leaders to meet with their incoming counterpart at least one additional time without the remainder of the group with the following goals:

- Familiarize the incoming Chapter Leader with any resources and records pertaining to the position
- Share best practices and lessons learned.
- Instruct the incoming Chapter Leader on any technical skills or other requirements necessary to perform their role.
- Introduce the incoming Chapter Leader to important school spaces, procedures or contacts.
- Answer any questions the incoming Chapter Leader may have.

*Introductory meetings.* Most Chapter Leaders will have a list of school or campus contacts with whom they work regularly. These relationships may be formal, such as that between the Chapter President and the Chapter Advisor or between the Vice President of Finance and the Student Affairs administrator responsible for managing student accounts. They may also be informal in cases where faculty members, administrators, or even other student leaders have been supporters and allies.

Part of a successful leadership handover entails, at a minimum, the introduction of an incoming Chapter Leader by the outgoing Chapter Leader, to all formal and informal contacts. These meetings may need to take place in person—such as during a handover of SVA debt accounts—or may be conducted via email or the appropriate social media, whatever is most appropriate for Chapter culture.

*Old business wrap-up.* Some outgoing leadership teams may have active programs going on despite their departure, so they may maintain continued responsibilities at the time of the elections. To the extent possible, all old business should be concluded during the leadership transition period and no later than the final handover meeting.

However, in situations where this proves impossible (for example, outstanding receivables for large events even late in the Spring semester, events with community partners in progress for summer, or graduation plans begun by the outgoing leadership team), there are three options:

1. The ongoing business can be handed over completely, with the incoming leadership team taking on the role or organizer/responsible party.
2. The ongoing business will remain in the hands of the outgoing leadership team with a plan for a delayed handover of any relevant resources
3. The incoming and outgoing leadership teams will divide the responsibility, either with the outgoing team continuing to finish out any remaining responsibilities but including an incoming Chapter Leader where appropriate or with an incoming Chapter Leader taking over primary responsibilities with the ongoing support and participation of the outgoing Chapter Leader.

*Documents and resources.* Most Chapters will have both material (keys, supplies, swag) and virtual resources (passwords, documents) to hand over. If a Chapter has maintained an ongoing inventory, the handover of materials will be relatively straightforward. Virtual resource inventories may need to be created for each Chapter Officer position. Depending on the quality and organization of existing records, it is highly likely that the outgoing leadership team will have to devote significant time to consolidating, organizing, indexing, and editing any virtual documents and records.

*Final team meeting.* The goals of this meeting will vary based on what was accomplished in individual meetings and during the handover process. The primary responsibility of the outgoing leadership team is to systematically confirm that they have handed over all necessary resources to the incoming leadership team. The secondary responsibility of the outgoing leadership team is to make themselves available for questions and to offer final words of advice.

The leadership team is highly encouraged to prepare for this meeting and execute it systematically, using a checklist, for instance. The responsibility of the incoming leadership team is to have reviewed all relevant documents and resources thoroughly prior to the meeting and to come prepared with any questions or final “to-dos.” Additionally, this meeting may be used to walk-through the year-at-a-glance with the incoming team, to discuss the logistics and planning timetable for any large-scale events, to test and confirm any passwords, and to establish parameters and expectations for future communications.

*Chapter Update.* The new Chapter Leadership Team should submit a Chapter update to National Headquarters within two weeks of the election results. This allows new Chapter Leaders to receive updates on the various opportunities for them and their members.

#### *Example Incoming Leadership Team Checklist.*

- Share contact information (all incoming Chapter Leaders, outgoing Chapter Leaders, Chapter advisor)
- Set up a minimum of two handover meetings:
  - Outgoing Chapter Leaders (all) with incoming Chapter Leaders (all)
  - Outgoing officer (by role) with incoming officer (by role)
- Assume control/verify control of all Chapter banking accounts and budgets
- Review all Chapter founding documents, student organization paperwork, and budgets.
- Review all role-specific documents
- Inform SVA of the change in leadership by completing the Chapter Update Form
- Test and confirm all passwords and accounts
- Inventory all Chapter keys, pass cards, supplies and other equipment
- Initiate contact or follow up (email or meeting) with the Chapter advisor, the appropriate student life contact, the veterans resource center and/or SCO, and any other significant school or community contacts
- Confirm student organization status or application procedure for upcoming year
- Send an introductory email to all relevant lists (member lists, student veterans)
- Update and review/clean all social media accounts
- Set up a minimum of two initial leadership planning meeting (typically one in the Spring, and one at the beginning of the academic year). These meetings should, at some point, include the following:
  - Discuss expectations for SVA meeting types, frequency, locations and possible schedules
  - Review and update the status of any old/ongoing business
  - Confirm individual officer handovers and introductions are complete
  - Confirm division of labor for general operations (minutes, emails, agendas)
  - Review and discuss Chapter Strategic Plan as a group (if revisions needed, make a plan to do so at a later date)
  - Review and discuss Chapter Mission as a group (if revisions needed, make a plan to do so later)
  - Review and discuss Chapter by-laws (if revisions needed, make a plan to do so later)
  - Discuss individual and group priorities for upcoming year/brainstorm
  - Update/create master calendar for upcoming academic year
  - Review existing budget information and funding status as a group (if revisions needed, make a plan to do so later)

## Chapter Relationships

A Chapter will maintain relationships with its members and potential members, university administrators, faculty and staff, community members, political leaders, and more. These relationships are incredibly important to the success of the Chapter, and should be cultivated strategically, understanding that growth and development occur because of relationships.

What underscores all relationships created by Chapters is inclusion. The benefits of diversity and inclusion in student organizations stretch far and wide — affecting academic and social experiences, as well as having a direct impact on the future of the organization. The positive effects of diversity and inclusion enable Chapters to work with people from other races, ethnicities, and cultural backgrounds and challenges the views they are accustomed to. This leads to greater awareness, understanding, and acceptance of differing beliefs and customs. While those who serve in the military have experienced greater than average diversity in their every-day experiences, emphasizing inclusion within a Chapter allows for a two-way exchange of the benefits explained above. Not only can Chapter members gain a better understanding of others unlike them, but also teach others more about student veterans.

### *Relationships with the School*

As a registered student organization, Chapters are most closely tied to the universities that support them. Because of this, Chapter Leaders should first develop relationships with those at their school that have a hand in either student life or the day-to-day of student veterans. When these personnel are on board the Chapter and its mission, both the identification and reach directly to student veterans on campus becomes easier, growing the pool of potential candidates through simple connections with the campus.

Chapter Leaders often run into the hurdle of accessing lists of student veterans due to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA, 20 U.S.C. § 1232(g)), which is a United States federal law that governs the access to educational information and records by public entities such as potential employers, publicly funded educational institutions, and foreign governments. This law prevents Chapter Leaders from simply requesting a list of student veterans on many campuses in the U.S. While a barrier, FERPA should not prevent Chapter Leaders from leveraging relationships on campus to gain access to these students.

Only a handful of potential relationships are listed below, but Chapter Leaders are encouraged to find relationships wherever they are on campus. Any relationship is a potential benefit in some way to the Chapter.

### School Certifying Official

The first obvious stop in developing these relationships is the School Certifying Official (SCO). These are the university staff members who know and understand the student veteran population the best because it is their job to ensure that a student veteran's GI Bill is processed correctly so that student veterans avoid the stress of that financial burden.

The SCO maintains, then, a list of active students currently using their GI Bill, including student veterans, reservists, National Guard members, and dependents. By solidifying a relationship with the SCO, Chapter Leaders can use that connection with active students to grow Chapter membership and convey important information.

### Student Veterans Center Staff

For the Chapters at schools that are lucky enough to have a designated space for student veterans, a relationship with the veterans' center staff is a must. These relationships provide space to post information about meetings and to hold meetings. They have connections with student veterans not using GI Bill—those with whom the SCO may not be familiar. While a member of the veterans' center may be

the Chapter Advisor, this is often not the case, and so a relationship with this group benefits by added support.

### Student Life Staff

Many Chapters are governed by a student life office or a student affairs office. The staff of these offices are an invaluable resource not simply for helping to recruit student veterans, their families, and allies into the Chapter, but in engaging in mission-driven and student-centric programming. For example, the Office of Student Life at Tallahassee Community College “provides opportunities for students to get involved, develop/enhance leadership skills, and provides support services to assist students with getting the most of their college experience.

We strive to engage students in meaningful experiences through campus activities and events, student clubs and organizations, Student Government Association (SGA), leadership retreats/trainings, and volunteer opportunities.” Relationships with these offices help in identifying potential members, but also allow the curated programming for Chapter Members, and members of that specific university’s student body.

### President/Chancellor

While not a relationship built for recruitment, having the understanding and support of the leader of your university can prove immensely beneficial. This kind of support can trickle down from the top office to other areas on campus so that student veterans are an integral part of the campus community instead of perhaps a separate group of adult learners. Additionally, the presence of the university President or Chancellor at a Chapter event may solidify the credibility and legitimacy of the Chapter to other groups on campus.

### Faculty Groups

Administrators are not the only professionals on campus with their fingers on the pulse of student life on campus. Faculty groups, particularly if a veteran faculty group exists, are an excellent place to tell the story of student veterans on campus and dispel any misinformation and stereotypes that may exist about the population. Engaging with faculty groups can open doors for honors work, study abroad opportunities, or research opportunities that may not have otherwise been promoted to student veterans. Additionally, faculty with veterans in their classrooms may point them to the campus Chapter if they have a better idea of what the Chapter is and does.

### *Member Engagement and Recruitment*

The success and stability of a Chapter relies almost entirely on its membership. The Chapter President could have a close relationship with the University President, but without a Chapter membership, without student veterans, their families, and allies participating in and benefiting from Chapter programming, there is no Chapter. Member engagement and recruitment is quite literally what sustains and grows the Chapter. Additionally, the social support that is provided by engagement with a Chapter is shown to increase graduation rates among student veterans.

### Member Engagement

There are many ways to engage with Chapter Members. No two Chapters are alike, so no two engagement strategies can be alike. Chapter Leaders must meet their membership where they are; that is, they must communicate to members to ensure relevant and effective programming as well as ensure that all members feel valued and encouraged to participate in Chapter programming and in Chapter Leadership opportunities as well.

Some Chapters have created a survey that is distributed every semester asking for suggestions or schedules or information on member families. This allows Chapter Leaders to create programming that meets the needs of their members and engages members on their terms to suit their needs. After events or at the end of each semester, some Chapters survey their membership regarding meetings, events, or engagement opportunities to get a feel for how they might be improved in the future. The programming section of this guide discusses those opportunities in further detail.

Chapter Leaders generally only serve in their positions for one term, and so member engagement and the encouragement of members to become Chapter Leaders are both crucial in the sustainability of your Chapter. From the beginning of their time on campus, student veterans should be exposed to leadership opportunities, from participation on committees to executive leadership positions within the Chapter. It may be appropriate for more robust Chapters to create a Chapter Leadership guide that describes each leadership position, including desired qualifications. This way, each candidate can complete necessary tasks and is ready to discuss their platforms with members when elections occur.

Member engagement does not end on campus. Your National Headquarters staff are available to work with, engage with, and support student veterans on every campus Chapter. While the most common avenue for engagement with National Headquarters are Chapter Consultations, members as well as leaders should be encouraged to participate in SVA's Leadership Continuum Programming, described above. This makes for a more empowered, engaged membership and a successful and sustainable organization overall.

### Member Recruitment

Without the continuous recruitment, a Chapter will fizzle and die. There are several ways to build a Chapter recruitment plan, and a solid start is to know and understand the enrollment path of student veterans to build relationships with those in the position of managing the steps involved. Many veterans are transfer students, having earned at least some college credit before or during their time in service. It may be simple, then, to leverage the relationship built with the transfer admissions office to have sent a welcome email or letter to every new student who has marked the "veteran" box on their admissions application.

Many Chapters have worked with their admission office, registrar, or student veterans center to establish a veteran-specific orientation. Whether a breakout session for veterans from a main orientation or a week-long, involved program that brings new student veterans together with current student veterans as well as allies and offices on campus, orientations are a great way to recruit student veterans. They also contribute significantly to the success of student veterans on campus.

Tabling or recruitment events are a great place to meet new student veterans and even those who had not engaged with the Chapter yet. To reiterate, though, recruitment plans should be live documents and are as different as each campus; they should be revised often and tailored to the campus culture.

*Creating a recruitment pitch.* Just like the value proposition, also known as an "elevator pitch," given to potential Chapter stakeholders, supporters, and donors, a recruitment pitch gives a compelling snapshot of the Chapter that draws interest in a short amount of time. It should be brief, candid, and authentic. Its focus should be on the benefits of belonging—perhaps there are career opportunities with Chapter alumni or social events only open to Chapter Members—and the highlights of what membership means.

This should create a personal connection between the one presenting and receiving the pitch. Still, Chapter Leaders should align this pitch with their brand, discussed later, so that Chapter Leaders and members alike are all giving the same sense of an organization to which everyone would want to belong, regardless of personal touch.

### *Relationships with the Community*

The Chapter should work to form relationships with organizations within the community. These relationships can take three forms: (1) programming relationships, where the Chapter participates or invites other organizations to participate in programming for members; (2) funding relationships, where the Chapter provides funds to or receives funds from another organization; and (3) advisory relationships, where the Chapter provides advisory services or receives advisory services from another organization. Obvious connections include Veteran Service Organizations, such as the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the American Legion, Team Red White and Blue, and Team Rubicon.

## Chapter Programming

Programming is the bread and butter of a Chapter. Programming is not simply hosting events, nor is it simply offering opportunities on campus. Programming is the “so what” of the Chapter. It is why members join and why Alumni contribute. For assistance with event planning for Chapters, there is a checklist located in **Appendix E**.

### *Programming Philosophy*

The philosophy of the Programs and Services Department at National Headquarters is one of experience and continual development. The Leadership Continuum begins when a student veteran joins a Chapter and continues through coursework, graduation, and as an alumna/us. We develop programs and write curriculum to deliver an impactful experience that enhances all participants, including student veterans, family members, allies, Chapter Leaders, Chapter Advisors, and others. The programming offered by National Headquarters is designed to build over the “lifecycle” of the student veteran, aligning with the organizational mission.

### *Strategic Programming*

SVA’s strategy is to “act as a catalyst for student veteran success by providing resources, network support, and advocacy to, through, and beyond higher education” and we develop programs with this in mind.

The Chapter’s strategic plan will lay the framework for the types of programming a Chapter will offer. When developing Chapter programming, it is important to keep the Chapter mission statement in mind. The “so what” of Chapter programming should support the Chapter mission; ideally, all monies spent by the Chapter should be in support of that mission. Programming should also be developed to grow with the Chapter. Events that support three-to-four people one year may not be sustainable four years down the road when a Chapter is boasting over 50 members.

Programming development begins with a strategic plan that recognizes campus culture as well as membership interests and needs. Effective programming comes from the solicitation of ideas for potential events from members. This programming may span a wide spectrum of topics, from philanthropic or service opportunities to a Joint Services Military Ball to a veteran career fair to tailgating to group trips to a local park. The variety of programming offered by a Chapter will ensure all members, their families, and allies maintain interest and feel included.

### *Types of Programming*

There is a myriad of programming opportunities for Chapters on campuses or online. The guide offers six separate categories for a starter list of ideas, however Chapter Leaders are encouraged to think beyond these lists, to engage with their members, and to create innovative solutions for engagement. Then, Chapter Leaders can bring those ideas to future SVA programs, such as the Regional Summits or NatCon to share their experiences and learn from one another.

### Social

Social programming is incredibly important. The social support offered through Chapter engagement has been shown to increase success outcomes as well as overall enjoyment of the college experience for student veterans.

- **Dinners.** Many Chapters have found local restaurants who are willing to offer a space for Chapter Members to come together and enjoy a meal. Some of these restaurants have offered in-kind



donations, such as food, drinks, meeting space rentals. It is important to develop relationships with community businesses when designing this type of recurring event.

- Tailgates and athletics. Many Chapters are active on campuses with a vibrant athletics community. Big football schools may be a great place to organize a Chapter tailgate. Again, building a relationship with the Athletics Department on campus or with the Alumni Association or Athletics Boosters organization may prove useful in this type of programming. Some Chapters have arranged “Military Appreciate Game” events.

## *Chapter Meetings*

There are three common types of meetings: regular Chapter meetings, ad hoc/planning meetings, and open meetings/town halls. For a successful meeting, set a date/time/space, announce the meeting through the member distribution list, circulate an agenda, and distribute a follow-up message.

Chapter Leaders should establish a regular meeting schedule at the beginning of each term to discuss Chapter business and plan Chapter activities, events, and programs. Records should be maintained for all meetings in the form of agendas and minutes. Most meetings will have similar components:

- Scheduling of meeting and reservation of meeting space.
- Initial announcement of the meeting day/time.
- Circulation of a draft agenda several days in advance of the meeting.
- Reminder announcement.
- Meeting, convened by Chapter Officer, following the approved agenda, recorded by note-taker or minute-taker; and
- Summary of edited minutes sent out to meeting attendees/members.

Meeting agendas will vary depending on the purpose of the meeting, however clear goals for the meeting are appropriate to set in place before the meeting begins, such as what needs to be discussed or accomplished and what is expected of each person in attendance.

## Regular Meetings

Usually more frequent, regular Chapter meetings will be convened by the Chapter President at a regular time and place, follow a standard format, and provide a venue for the group’s discussion of Chapter programs and ongoing business. All Chapter Officers are highly suggested to attend regular meetings. Regular meetings have an agenda created and shared in draft form in advance so that Chapter Officers can make additions or amendments.

During the meeting, minutes are taken then shared by the Vice President of Communications or another designee. Transparency suggests that minutes and/or a meeting summary be sent to the Chapter Member list and that, even if closed to Chapter Officers, agendas and minutes are available upon request. Finally, regular meetings have a clear start and end time. Other student leaders, special guests, or campus administrators may occasionally be invited to regular meetings.

## Ad-hoc and Planning Meetings

In addition to regular meetings, Chapter Officers will frequently call ad hoc or planning meetings. These meetings are called as needed and are typically coordinated based on the availability of attendees. Planning meetings that are held in a series for large events may use the agenda/minute format just as regular meetings do. These documents can then be used in regular meetings to report planning updates.

## Open Meetings and Town Halls

Many Chapters will incorporate open meetings or town hall-style events into their calendar. Town hall style meetings typically address one topic, though the topic may be broad. For example, new Chapter Officers may host a town-hall style event in the fall aimed to introduce themselves and their plans for the Chapter to members, student veterans and other students, or to solicit feedback and ideas. Town hall meetings may also be called in response to an emergent national, local or campus issue—such as new policies for military students or an on-campus incident—when the Chapter believes student veterans would benefit from group discussion.

Veteran Resource Center personnel and administrators involved in veteran or military affairs may occasionally offer to give a presentation about educational resources and benefits. This may be effectively done in a town hall style format when and if Chapter Officers are convening and the session is designed around feedback and interaction, otherwise it might be considered a separate kind of event. A sample meeting agenda and meeting announcement can be found in **Appendix D**.

## *Event Planning*

In the lifecycle of a student veteran, many create a charted path from their admissions letter to the graduation stage. In some cases, this path neglects the importance of genuine engagement in the campus community. These students are successful in their classes, and with a higher graduation rate than their traditional peers, but often miss out on experiencing college and the value associated with building a peer network.

Often student veterans avoid engagement with their peers on campus because they are often older and carry more responsibilities. Student veterans are more likely to be married, have children, and hold a full- or part-time job while in school. It is up to Chapter Leaders to build the college experience for student veterans through programming that is accessible to them and that meets their needs. Sections above have already discussed programming as an overarching construct, explaining how to root programming in the Chapter's strategic plan and how to design programming around the Chapter and campus culture.

This guide outlines a wide variety of opportunities for programming that can be tailored to nearly any audience, no matter how diverse. However, it is important to understand the process of developing and executing these events. The four phases of this process include: Goals, Logistics, Communications, and After-Action. Each of these elements are critical and happen in this logical order.

## Goals

Every event has a purpose, which is communicated by the event goals, which include the who, what, why, when, and where.

*The Who.* The “who” of an event is the event's audience. Generally, this will be the Chapter's members, but can sometimes include partners, donors, university administration, other students or student leaders, and more. For example, the goal of the audience may be *to bring together a diverse student population to learn about minority roles in the history of conflict at an academic panel.*

*The What.* The “what” of an event is the event itself. Whether the event is a general body meeting, an officer meeting, a panel discussion, a memorial ceremony, or a joint-service student veteran ball, the event type, a goal for event type is important. For example, the goal of the type of a networking event may be to connect student veterans with industry professionals for *career placement.*

*The Why.* The “why” of an event is its purpose, and even a purpose should have a goal. If the purpose of the event is to increase Chapter brand, the goal may be *to have an increase in non-member/new member turnout.*

*The When.* The “when” of an event is the timing or rough placement on the academic calendar. This is general when setting goals and will be refined during the logistics setting. The goal may be *to impact new student veterans*, in which case, the beginning of the academic year may be appropriate.

*The Where.* The “where” of an event is its location. While the student veterans center may be appropriate for meetings, a more notable location might be more appropriate if the goal is *to draw community member attendance*.

Each of these goals contribute to the overall outcomes of an event and are important for consideration when beginning the event planning and before moving on to logistics.

## Logistics

The logistics of an event are what make it work; they are the pen to paper, nuts and bolts of success. There are many moving parts in event planning, and it is important to begin early with an event plan so that anyone who picks up the process can know what has been done, what is currently happening, and what is left to be done. An event plan is not appropriate for every event but is helpful for events that are larger in scope and have donors with expected outcomes.

Logistics include items such as setting a specific date (i.e., moving from “spring” to “March 15”), deciding if this is a weekend or weekday type of event, a specific time (i.e., professional event in the daytime beginning at 8am or a social event in the evening at 7pm), and a specific location (i.e., outside or inside, depending on weather and dress). More specifically, logistics include catering or food and beverage, invitations, music, speakers, place settings, equipment rentals, and so on. Each of these contribute to the event’s goals and so should be selected with intent.

Logistics are variable and at the discretion of the Chapter Leaders but are heavily reliant on the event budget – the difference between a sit-down dinner and open bar or buffet-style hors d’oeuvres and a cash bar. Campus culture should also be considered but can be dynamic. Changes in culture regarding alcohol or events should be monitored to ensure cultural appropriateness.

## Communications and Marketing

For major events, a communications and marketing plan is an important consideration. It is important to get the word out early, even prior to setting up logistics. “Save the dates” are excellent tools to use to ensure potential attendees do not schedule other events and thus cannot attend the Chapter event. Marketing for events is all about meeting people where they are, and a plan that includes social media, email outreach, posts in an office on campus, or word-of-mouth will connect with a wider reach.

These are common outlets for event marketing in the SVA network as well as on a single campus. In Chapter communications about events, Chapter Leaders can take the opportunity to tell the compelling story of why the event fits into the Chapter narrative, how it aligns with Chapter mission, and how it will benefit attendees.

## After-Action

As important as it is to plan an event, it is just as important to review the event after it is complete. Although this may be a Chapter President’s only time planning the larger events before stepping down from their leadership role, the success and sustainability of the Chapter and the events they put on are made possible by keeping a running list of best practices. For example, best practices can include lists of, locations that have worked with the Chapter and locations that are a bad idea to repeat, types of events that gain attendees and types that are a flop on with the campus.

It is an option to figure out the total cost to execute the event, then simply weigh that against other quantifiable elements to determine a black-and-white “score” of the return on investment. There is quite a

bit to consider when evaluating the overall effect of an event: brand recognition, networking, improving relationships, and more; are all factors that affect a successful event.

When it comes to determining whether an event hit the mark, Chapter Leaders can consider the goals of the event and then can look at whether they made the intended impact on participants. The following questions are a creative way to estimate impact:

*Did the event stimulate new discussion and/or thinking?* A great way to track this would be to create a few event hashtags and encourage attendees to use it in their social media posts. That way, a thread of easily searchable information is created.

*Did the event provide new knowledge?* Is membership or participation in other events, like general body meetings, increasing. Is it easier to have conversations because everyone seems to be on the same page in terms of student veterans on campus?

*Was there inclusiveness and diversity in event participants?* The best communities consist of all different kinds of people, across gender lines, age demographics, racial designations, and levels of physical ability. Establishing a culture of inclusion can have a huge impact on both brand and event success.

*Was there quality discussion influenced by the event?* Are people grasping the message and building on it to create new ideas?

*Did the event raise Chapter awareness and public profile?* Ideally, there will be a spike in site visits or at event participants as well as social media traffic right after an event.

*Was the event contextually aware and/or appropriate?* Did it live up to campus culture? Did it convey the message or story of the Chapter?

## *Delegation*

Delegation is a challenging skill to learn for many Chapter Leaders because ultimate ownership of a program, project, or event makes it difficult to hand over critical responsibilities. Many Chapter Leaders are so dedicated to a successful outcome, they have a difficult time turning some of these tasks over to others. If this sounds familiar, remind yourself that delegation is crucial to ensuring the best efforts are put into everything the Chapter does and prevents you from overloading your own duties. The below are guides to successful delegation.

*Delegate early.* Just as Chapter Leaders should start planning events early, they should delegate early. Making an effort to delegate tasks before any significant progress has been made avoids unnecessary pressure and allows for critical thought and creativity while planning an event.

*Select the right person.* Take into consideration the individual skillsets of your team and exploit their talents. Ensure that the person has the time to take on the responsibility and complete their respective task efficiently. Make sure the person has the resources, support and guidance to succeed.

*Communicate the rationale and benefit.* Identify the reason for the task and articulate how it will contribute to the overall success of the event. Whenever possible, explain how the task could benefit the person to whom the task has been assigned. For example, they'll develop a specific skill, network with incredible people, or progress on their chapter leadership path.

*Delegate the entire task to one person.* Assuming ownership of the entire task promotes responsibility, increases motivation, and avoids ambiguity in accountability.

*Set clear goals and expectations.* Be clear and specific on what is expected. Give information on what, why, when, who and where, but leave the "how" to them. Always confirm and verify the task goals and expectations and be prepared to accept input from other Chapter Members.

*Delegate responsibility and authority.* Ensure that the Chapter Member is given the relevant responsibility and authority to complete the task. Let them complete the task in the manner they choose, their expertise is at work here.

*Provide support, guidance and instructions.* Point delegates toward the resources they may need to complete the task or project. Resources may include people they need to coordinate with including Chapter Leaders, crucial information or financial resources.

*Request progress reports or updates.* Chapter Officers should request to be updated on the progress of the task or schedule routine meetings and provide assistance when necessary. When requesting updates, try not to be intrusive, as this can be perceived as a lack of trust. Open communication lines and regular meetings will allow for feedback to flow in both directions.

*Provide constructive criticism to correct poor performance. If progress is unsatisfactory, do not take the project back immediately.* Rather, Chapter Leaders can continue to work with the Chapter Member and ensure they understand the event and are taking full ownership of the task. Advice on ways to improve ensures accountability and dependability throughout the life of the engagement with the Chapter.

*Evaluate and recognize good performance.* Results should be evaluated more than methods. Chapter Leaders can analyze the cause of insufficient performance for improvements, but it is important to recognize successes as soon as possible. Chapter events are put on by volunteers—Chapter Members are volunteers—and so showing gratitude goes a very long way. Chapter Leaders can consider providing feedback on their assistance via a recommendation on LinkedIn or writing a formal thank-you note.

## Chapter Communications

Communication is a vital management component to any organization. Whether the purpose is to update Chapter Members on newly available resources, to prepare for an upcoming event, or to survey the interests of Chapter Members, effective communication is an integral issue in effective management.

Therefore, Chapters with policies and strategies for communicating with their members and stakeholders as well as with the community at large, are better prepared for success. The following communication topics are discussed in this section:

- The impact of communication on the Chapter and its members.
- Building an effective communication strategy.
- The constituencies affected by Chapter communications.
- Measuring results.
- Selecting the appropriate audience for each type of message.
- The types of communication methods used in Chapters.

Specifics to marketing activities and brand development and management are covered in the next section.

### *The Impact of Communication*

Effective communication may contribute to Chapter success in many ways. It can maintain engagement with Chapter Members, families, partners, and allies. It builds satisfaction and loyalty with the Chapter and encourages participation in programming and events. It educates the spectrum of those with whom the Chapter engages on the assets and capabilities present within student veterans. Communication offers the opportunity to check assumptions and lessens the chances for misunderstandings, reducing issues for the Chapter.

Communication makes for greater efficiencies and improves the effectiveness of your programming. There are many other benefits, but the bottom line is that effective communication is a key component to success. Ineffective communication may increase the chances for misunderstandings and damage relationships. It may stem from a poorly aligned strategy, a failure to execute the strategy, use of the wrong communication method, bad timing, or even nuances such as word choice or tone of voice.

### Two-Way Communication

Chapter Leaders may initially think of communication mainly in the context of delivering messages to Chapter Members regarding resources or events, to university administrators regarding issues facing student veterans, or to donors regarding opportunities to support the Chapter. However, *two-way communication* plays an essential role in a comprehensive communication strategy.

When constituencies provide feedback Chapter Leaders truly hear, Chapters are better aligned with members, families, partners, and allies for success. Chapter Leaders can learn through listening about potential issues or concerns before they become realized. Being able to provide feedback also encourages member participation throughout the Chapter.

### *Building a Communication Strategy*

To develop a communication strategy, Chapter Officers should begin by linking communication to the strategic plan, including the organization's mission and value; its strategic goals and objectives; and its brand, discussed below. Effective communication strategies are incredibly important in that they establish credibility, legitimacy, loyalty, and trust.

They maintain consistency to establish a strong Chapter brand. They incorporate feedback from Chapter Members and allies as much as Chapter Officers and partners. Finally, they assist Chapter Leaders in serving the Chapter by providing the tools to maintain open and effective communication.

A Chapter communication strategy is often aligned with both the college or university and National Headquarters. This ensures the weight of both are behind the Chapter. It includes a budget that allows for the use of various types of communication methods depending on the message to be delivered and any unique issues associated with it, a method for generating feedback and using it to shape follow-up messages, and a customized delivery approach unique to each Chapter with communication materials that are easy to understand and that meet constituencies where they are.

The Chapter President and other Chapter Officers have the ultimate responsibility for setting the tone and establishing organizational culture, while Chapter Members have a responsibility to voice concerns and issues, provide feedback, and listen effectively.

### External Media

External communications, including public and community relations, may also be a part of a Chapter's communication strategy.

### Measuring results

While measuring and quantifying results of communication plans are beneficial, this goal is difficult to accomplish. Given the elusive nature of communication data, determining a cost-benefit ratio, for example, may be challenging. Despite the difficulty of doing so, Chapters should brainstorm tactics for collecting information to evaluate communication efforts.

The Vice President of Communications and Marketing could collect anecdotal evidence that Chapter Members responded well to distributed information regarding a new campus resource. They may also collect attendance numbers for Chapter meetings to understand how various communications brought in membership.

### Audience

Identifying a message's audience is a key task in ensuring effective communication. What is the ideal audience for a particular communication? The audience may include everyone who influences or is influenced by the information being shared. For the most effective communication, audience size must also be appropriate given the information being shared and whether interaction will be permitted. If a Chapter anticipates that Chapter Members will have several questions regarding a new campus resource, for example, audience size should be limited so that questions can be adequately addressed.

*Communicating "up."* While much of a Chapter's communication strategy is focused on imparting Chapter information to Chapter Members, another central component is ensuring the Chapter has a voice on campus and with university administration.

*Geographically dispersed audience.* Many Chapters are members of satellite campuses or are integrated with other Chapters from the same university system. It is important to recognize these challenges and create opportunities for collaborative messaging while still understanding that certain communications should be tailored to one campus' Chapter.

*Diversity and global issues.* Chapter Members are often very intersectional in their identities, embodying many dimensions of diversity: age, disability, ethnicity/national origin, gender and race, for example. Although all are, understand, or support student veterans, these intersectional identities may bring different perceptions and expectations when giving or receiving information, and these differences should be considered when developing messages to a broad audience.

*Approaches and media.* One of the major challenges in developing and executing communication plans is to select the best medium for delivering messages both internally and externally. When selecting the best communication medium, Chapter Leaders may consider factors such as timing, location, and message. The timing of the information may be imperative, such as in emergency situations (i.e., issues on campus or immediate changes to resources or VA education benefits that directly impact members). Chapter Members' locations may affect this selection. Are all Chapter Members on one campus or at multiple sites? Message is driven by Chapter and campus culture.

Chapter Leaders have many options for communications mediums, including newsletters, town hall meetings, e-mails, surveys, stories, social media, messaging apps, a post on campus, and others. Newsletters are used to communicate new information about the Chapter, its events and services, and its members. Newsletters today are generally delivered electronically, though some are mailed, and may be published on a regular basis—whether weekly, monthly, quarterly—or whenever the Chapter has news to report.

Town hall meetings are an option to gather the Chapter together to share news, celebrate successes or communicate impactful information, that should be done in-person. These meetings are most effective when Chapter Members are physically located in one geographic area. Alternatively, town hall meetings may be held electronically via teleconferencing services for those whose members are geographically dispersed.

Electronic communication is a fast and easy way to reach many Chapter Members at once. It may be best used when information is important, such as in changes in VA Benefits. E-mail communication presents some difficulties because tone of voice and inflection are absent, making an ironic or sarcastic remark appear rude or harsh, which may not be the intended message.

Two-way communication is vital to any effective communication strategy and developing formal tactics to listen to Chapter Members is essential. Chapter Leaders can elicit fast feedback through surveys and polls about specific issues, such as event or programming ideas, or general concerns.

Storytelling creates a picture through words so that the message becomes memorable. Storytelling can be used as a powerful tool to impart Chapter culture, to create a Chapter brand, and to build trust and loyalty among Chapter Members and partners.

Social media platforms like Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Facebook have become ubiquitous on campus, for personal updates, and as an organizational communication tool. Social media can help spread news about the Chapter or capture new members by affiliating with the larger university social media account.

Messaging applications such as SMS texting, Facebook Messenger, GroupMe, and WhatsApp are excellent options to coordinate with one or more Chapter Members. Campuses with a centralized office for student veterans and military-connected students may have a place to post Chapter communications. If not managed by Chapter Leaders, permission should be granted before posting Chapter information.

*Types of messages.* The type of message sent is a major factor in choosing the appropriate communication channel. General Chapter updates may be communicated through newsletters, e-mails or town hall meetings or in small group huddles. Chapter Leaders should consider using several different means to announce and update Chapter Members when the Chapter is facing challenges or when impactful information needs to be communicated to everyone.

### *Talking Points*

Before Chapter Leaders tell the world about the Chapter, it is important to think about key messages. These talking points can help guide conversations with potential members, reporters, community partners, university administration, etc. All Chapter Officers—and even Chapter Leaders or Members—



should have these talking points for reference, as each reflects the Chapter's brand and can be a spokesperson for the Chapter at any time.

Chapter talking points can begin with the Chapter mission statement or value proposition and can be backed up by data from the Chapter's performance (e.g., number and types of events), member academics (i.e., average GPA, graduation rate, common majors), or even information from National Headquarters research, such as NVEST.

### *SVA on Social Media*

National Headquarters maintains a social media presence on behalf of the SVA network. This includes a Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/studentvets/>) as well as the Chapter Leader Forum Facebook group (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/SVAChapterLeaders/>), an Instagram account (<https://www.instagram.com/studentvets/>), a Twitter account (<https://twitter.com/studentvets>), and a LinkedIn organizational page (<https://www.linkedin.com/company/studentveterans/>) as well as the SVA Professional Development Community on LinkedIn (<https://www.linkedin.com/groups/58320/>).

Social media is a great way to market a Chapter, and Chapter Officers are encouraged to create a social media presence, if one does not already exist. Generally speaking, social media content performs better if it contains both graphic(s) and text. Candid photos of members in action, volunteering, trying new activities, etc. are often the most interesting ones to share. Tagging other student groups, partners, donors, the university, or others can amplify a message, gaining engagement.

#### Twitter Best Practices

Best practices for Twitter recommend at least one tweet per day, but more daily tweets and retweets are encouraged for higher engagement. Twitter only allows 280 characters to tell a full story and less if a photo or link is included. One to three hashtags at the end of each tweet is a good practice to track engagements on specific topics. One common tweet for Chapters, particularly during regional or national events, is #SVALeads. Tagging the university, partner organizations, or individuals increases engagement and impact. Retweets are a great way to spread the word about @studentvets updates in real time. Add a new piece of information to the retweet. The 'quote' retweet option is a great way to expand upon the story in a tweet, integrate hashtags and messaging that may have been left out.

#### Facebook Guidelines

Best practices for Facebook recommend posting three to four times per week. Hashtags integrated to posts increase engagement and create a thread that's easy to search. When posting articles from a public page, the link photo can be changed if it is inappropriate for the post. Changing the photo drastically increases the visual appeal of posts.

#### Instagram Guidelines

Instagram posts serve a direct purpose of sharing a Chapter's a narrative through images. Real photos of Chapter Members will lead to the most engagement. To contribute to the wider story of student veterans, Instagram posts can tag @studentvets. The text that accompanies Instagram posts is generally kept brief, but hashtags are used extensively to extend the reach of the post. Because Instagram focuses on images, higher quality photos are the standard.

### *Calendar Pulse Moments*

There are certain times of year that Chapters as well as National Headquarters are most likely to generate more attention and engagement with their communications efforts. Stronger messaging and communications efforts during these times are often picked up and shared more. These times include

Veterans Day, September 11, Memorial Day, graduation (including terms beyond spring), and back-to-school (generally reserved for the fall term).

### *Press Releases*

For big accomplishments, events, fundraisers, or milestones, issuing a press release may be an effective way to reach local reporters and communicate the student veteran story. A sample press release is available in **Appendix F**.

### *Sharing Content with National Headquarters*

National Headquarters is always looking for great content from Chapters and communities to share with our larger audience, including government officials and partners. SVA logos and t-shirts in Chapter photos with #SVALeads on social media, whenever possible. Chapter Leaders are encouraged to share success stories regarding the Chapter or individual members representing the Chapter. These stories can be sent to [media@studentveterans.org](mailto:media@studentveterans.org).

## Chapter Marketing and Branding

### *Marketing*

Chapter participation and integration is enhanced through effective marketing. Marketing includes the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large. In layman's terms, marketing is how Chapters should communicate "who you are, what you do, and why it matters" to encourage people to participate as members, partners, or allies. There are many actions a Chapter can take to implement an effective marketing strategy.

Many Chapters have acquired branded t-shirts. Branding will be discussed below, but t-shirts and other "swag" such as hats, bags, stickers, etc. turn Chapter Members, their families, partners, and allies into walking billboards. Seeing the Chapter repeatedly out and about on campus will prime others to better receive messaging from the Chapter.

Partnering with other student organizations helps diversify an audience. The partnership should be justified and aligned with the Chapter's goals. Partnering can increase turnout to the event and enable the sharing of financial and production responsibility with partners, not to mention new potential members and increased reach.

The concept of influencers is relatively new, but, as an influencer is an individual who has the power to affect decisions of others because of their authority, college campuses are stocked with them. An influencer can be anyone from a team captain, to a famous professor or alumna/us. Having an influencer to the event can bring a large crowd, and if the influencer enjoys working with the Chapter, it can create a long-term partnership.

Chapters are encouraged to grow their online presence. Many of this was outlined in the Chapter Communications section, but some out-of-the-box ideas include: opening a Snapchat or TikTok account for the Chapter and posting Chapter updates to these media. Create a Chapter playlist or Chapter event playlist—often for larger events—on Spotify. Chapters can create a website that showcases content, core values, and members using free and easy websites like Wix.com or Squarespace.

It is a good idea to create a specific hashtag for big, recurring events, so members and fans can post and share and follow updates through social media. For example, National Headquarters uses #SVALeads for our major programming and outreach as well others for specific events.

### *Chapter Branding*

Whether a Chapter is brand new or has an established presence on a campus, there are always opportunities to increase the reach of a Chapter. New Chapters face unique challenges when it comes to establishing themselves on campus while established Chapters can often leverage established practices to further their brand. Below are some helpful guides to branding.

Brands are nebulous and infinite. A brand can be the sum of brand experiences or interactions, but those experiences and interactions have infinite possibilities. Every touchpoint matters. Each moment counts. Although Chapters can work on creating structure for brands in the form of brand architecture (i.e., logo, messaging, social media presence), that architecture always accommodates for growth and change – so the brand can develop, expand, respond, and shift with the times.

At the foundation to the visual brand architecture, a true-to-mission logo makes a Chapter stand out. One of the most important factors needed to brand a Chapter is having a logo that serves the Chapter Members and partners well. In designing, enhancing, or redesigning a Chapter logo, Chapter Leaders can ask themselves the following: What does the Chapter mission say? What are the goals of the

Chapter? How can the Chapter reach groups of students on campus who have traditionally been marginalized and make their campus experience better? Chapter Leaders are encouraged to use your National Headquarters logo and branding guides, while ensuring compliance with university branding guidelines. This includes color schemes, fonts, and ways in which logos are used on campus.

Brands are impactful because of their effects on people's emotions. When people are asked why they love certain brands, it is often hard for them to pin down. They might provide a list of rational and logical reasons, but in the end, it often comes down to a feeling. How does that brand really make them feel? And why do they come back for more of that feeling? Why does that feeling mean something to them? Successful brands today are always emotionally infused. They hold great emotional meaning for people and that's what makes that brand loved and respected.

Chapter Leaders can spread brand awareness and reach by attending other student organization meetings and events. This creates a sense of awareness of the members, mission, and goals of the Chapter as well as how you fit in to your campus culture. Students who are at these events will be able to recognize the Chapter Members outside of the event and create face-to-face relationships. Furthermore, supporting other student organizations is crucial to extending a sense of belonging for all students, especially those who are not typically included.

Chapter Officers can create a leadership position that is solely dedicated to marketing and branding, either the Vice President of Communications and Marketing or a committee leader supported by them. This avoids the "create-content-by-committee" way of thinking where there are several voices that are creating content. When only one dedicated person oversees all social media, the Chapter has a better shot at having a clear and consistent voice.

Chapter Leaders should talk about the Chapter often. This seems like a small act, but word-of-mouth communication about how the Chapter impacts the bigger picture, the campus, the community, and those who live on/in both, can impact the overall success of a Chapter.

Chapters can also spread their reach by co-sponsoring and collaborating with other organizations. All events benefit from collaboration with other organizations or groups. Budgets can often be tight, especially for smaller organizations or smaller institutions. Pooling resources can help multiple organizations reach their goals and create spaces on campus that are welcoming and inclusive, and there are community organizations that also want to collaborate.

Fostering great relationships with the community create better opportunities for success within the Chapter, and it also builds a link for members to have opportunities after graduation. Internships and jobs can come from collaborations. This furthers the Chapter's credibility and presence on campus in a natural and beneficial way.

## Chapter Development

### *Fundraising*

Chapter development, more commonly known as “fundraising,” is essential to a Chapter’s sustainability. Active fundraising can supplement funding which may be insufficient and limit Chapter programming through either direct funds (i.e., money) or in-kind donations (i.e., equipment or services at no cost). Chapters should thoroughly investigate institutional policies and procedures before fundraising. Use the Resources below to learn more about fundraising.

### *Fundraising 101*

Finding money and resources to reach or enhance a Chapter’s mission begins with being prepared. That starts with the Chapter’s strategic plan, including a mission and goals as well as foundational documents outlining the Chapter’s structure. This is all used to inform and build the Chapter fundraising plan and goals as a subset of the Chapter strategic plan. Chapter Leaders will not be effective in engaging individuals and organizations in why they should support the Chapter without the Chapter’s goals—the reason for donor support.

Prior to being able to raise funds or gather resources for a Chapter, the Vice President of Fundraising should coordinate with the Vice President of Finance, or equivalents positions, to ensure financial infrastructure is in place to receive funds. Just as the university guidelines should be consulted in creating the strategic plan, university guidelines also dictate how funds for organizations affiliated with the university can be raised.

Being prepared includes knowing, understanding, and following these guidelines. The Chapter should also have a bank account, a budget, a method of record keeping, and associated Chapter documents. Donations, even to a student organization, are important to track and account for reporting purposes both to the university, but also to donors for potential tax implications.

Fundraising also requires research. Most processes are already in place in the university, and so Chapters will not need to reinvent these. Donation processing systems available include Go Fund Me or Donorbox. Vice Presidents of Fundraising should understand which of these processing systems work within the existing university structure. It is also important to understand the budgeting system in use, the tracking systems required by the university, and the support offered by the university.

For example, many colleges and universities have a foundation or development office that supports all fundraising on campus. Chapters may have contacts within the university already establish who can connect the Chapter with possible donors based on shared goals and interests. Chapter Officers should work together to identify resources for fundraising, be open to using an internet search for answers, and ask National Headquarters for assistance.

### *Common Misconceptions and Mistakes*

It is important for Chapter Officers to know that there is no one-size-fits-all solution to fundraising and that fundraising solutions or methods vary from Chapter to Chapter and event to event. It is an incredibly dynamic function, and so diversifying is key, like investing in the stock market.

Many Chapters are eager to raise money for the entire academic year through a one-time donation drive. The trouble with one-time donation drives is that they are a risk of investment because it is difficult to balance between how much is spent and outcomes. One-time events often require repeating. Chapters do not necessarily build relationships or capture donor data, and there is no guarantee that it will work every time and an almost certain guarantee that it will not work the same way every time. It is tougher to reach a strategic goal with one-time fundraising events, and it does not contribute to essential relationship building and follow-up.

## *Cultivating Donors*

Cultivating donors is about much more than donations. Chapters may consider inviting supporters to own and engage with the Chapter. After a donor has contributed, Chapter Officers should follow-up with “thank you” notes, success stories, and organizational updates. This continues to grow the relationship and secure future partnerships and funding. Donors may also provide resources outside of funds or in-kind donations, such as opportunities to mentor, talk to, or otherwise engage with Chapter Members. Chapters do not need a marketing team to approach donors; simple emails or phone calls can accomplish the relationship building. Once the relationship has been established, money becomes an easier afterthought, and ownership and loyalty are established.

Fundraising is all about relationship building. Interpersonal relationships will always support success and mitigate failures, but it requires a lot of time and preparation. Chapter Leaders should learn and understand the value of the Chapter, to easily communicate that to potential donors. This is a deliberate action; communicate the “who we are, what we do, and why it matters” of the Chapter. Also communicate how working with and supporting the Chapter is fun and easy. The relationship will drive donations without having to have a donation drive. Relationships are also more sustainable and require fewer resources (i.e., financial resources to put on an event, volunteers, etc.) and could provide better return on investment as it costs little to nothing to build a relationship.

Collaboration, like relationship building, is an easy and important way to raise funds and resources for a Chapter. A simple conversation about collaborating on an event or working towards a shared goal is the simplest way to start a partnership with someone. Once the interest is there and the importance of the collaboration is communicated, the money will again be an easy discussion because of the shared goal. In the end, everyone wants the same positive outcomes.

Many Chapters Leaders become intimidated asking for larger amounts of money. National Headquarters fundraises millions for research, advocacy, and programs and services, but a Chapter is much smaller. This thinking is a nonexistent barrier and should not prevent Chapter Leaders from making the “big ask.” There are plenty of foundations, corporate philanthropies, local business, and nonprofits available for partnerships. Chapters also have the benefit of a university’s history of alumni giving. If a significant event requires significant resources to put on, communicate that to potential partners. The worst they can say is “no,” but the potential for a life-long partnership is incredible.

Stewardship follows cultivation in the relationships of fundraising. Donors should be communicated the impact of their donation. “Your generous donation sent 15 student veterans to the SVA National Conference where they networked with 3,000 other student veterans to learn best practices for their Chapter as well as networked with potential employers and learned new skills.” Those that benefit should send “thank you” notes as well as follow-ups, especially if great news follows such as a job offer. Stewardship can be maintained through simple newsletters or email updates or even holiday cards thanking them for their support.

A Chapter’s goal is long-term sustainable revenue generation, and it can be achieved by building a diverse and prepared fundraising plan. A Vice President of Fundraising can establish a legacy for the Chapter by setting up a position of success for the Chapter long after they leave by maintaining stewardship and continuing to cultivate donor relationships through their tenure. This can be continued by strong Chapter Officer transition plans.

Donor Cultivation Chart

|                          | <b>Low-Dollar</b>  | <b>Medium-Dollar</b>  | <b>High-Dollar</b>  |
|--------------------------|--|---|---|
| <i>Reason For Giving</i> | They believe in the Chapter's mission, appreciate personal relationships, and could be Chapter Members.  | They want to experience the "joy of giving." They wanted to feel and be connected to the student veteran community because they feel a strong affinity for it. These might be members of the local community                    | They want to directly affect the overall success of the Chapter and its members. They see value in the individuals the Chapter serves and/or an important need. They may be employers that want to hire student veterans.                                 |
| <i>Tactics</i>           | Email, social media, events, and direct outreach.  | Provide plenty of opportunities to directly interact with the student veterans they are supporting. This ensures that they can see and feel the importance of their donation and they may eventually become High-Dollar Donors. | Demonstrate the value of the Chapter to them specifically. What will their return on investment be? Continue to demonstrate the value of their impact with opportunities to continue to fund.   |
| <i>Message</i>           | Demonstrate the impact of their donation directly in the community. For example, "A \$20 donation enables our Chapter to ensure the success of student veterans like Jane Smith via programs and resources like our Resume Workshops." | Focus on building personal relationships and opportunities for these donors to meet the members of the Chapter. Provide special opportunities like a gift or special seating at an event.                                       | Their large donation gives them the perceived opportunity to interact with SVA and have some level of input. Their funds allow the Chapter to make a much greater impact. Consider allowing them to offer feedback on how that impact might be increased. |

## Definitions

**Bylaws.** An established, written collection of rules and procedures that Chapter Leaders follow to ensure efficient, fair, and sustainable operations.

**Chapter Member.** someone who has met criteria set by the Chapter affording them the benefits of membership.

**Chapter Advisor.** A faculty/staff member of the university (or college, or school) that holds a formal status within the organization, providing counsel and guidance on behalf of the university.

**Chapter Leader.** Any member of the Chapter that serves, in any capacity (elected, appointed, or neither) to lead other members of the Chapter or otherwise steps into a role outside of the traditional, participatory member role. Chapter Leaders may also be referred to as “officers” (see below).

**Chapter Officer.** A specific Chapter Leader who holds one of the elected or appointed leadership positions within the Chapter. Suggestions for Chapter Officers include:

- President
- Vice President of Programs and Member Development
- Vice President of Finance
- Vice President of Recruitment and Member Engagement
- Vice President of Fundraising
- Vice President of Communications and Marketing
- Policy Liaison
- Career Services Liaison
- Disability Services Liaison

**National Conference.** Held annually, SVA’s NatCon is the largest annual convening of Post-9/11 veterans in the world. Often referred to as “NatCon”.

**National Headquarters.** The office located in Washington, D.C. in which the executive leadership and their staff execute their roles to support our Chapters and our mission.

**Philanthropy.** A charitable fundraiser or service project sponsored by Chapter.

**SVA Alumni.** Any former student veterans, military-affiliated students, supporters, or allies who choose to identify as members of our community after graduation.

**SVA Chapter.** A local group affiliated with the larger global organization, commonly designated by the University (college/school) name affixed to SVA (i.e., “Chapter of *State University*”). To be considered a registered SVA Chapter, the group must be a registered student organization on campus and maintain current contact information with National Headquarters.

**SVA Leadership Continuum.** A series of core annual programming and events that support and enhance the growth of chapters and individuals designed to transform the SVA Experience into personal and professional success.

**SVA Liaisons.** Chapter Leaders who focus their time in one of three key areas in support of student veterans and military-affiliated students.



## Appendix A – Leadership Success Themes

### *President*

- **Peer leadership.** Leading peers, especially in all-volunteer organization, is one of the more difficult leadership challenges one can face. In the military, and in many civilian organizations, it can be easy to take for granted the ability to give directions to team members who “report” to a position and expect those directions to be followed. In volunteer organizations, while there are positions of leadership, one cannot rely on any official authority that might exist in a different type of organization. Leading through relationships, influence, and shared belief is most effective. This approach is, in fact, a significantly more mature and effective path towards organizational leadership, respect, productivity, and effectiveness.
- **Overall executive leadership of a student organization.** ARCI Model of organizational management – This is a model that can help clearly define roles within a team or on a given project. It also serves to set a clear picture of expectations and deliverables for all team members. A – R – C – I are explained below and represent a decreasing level, from left to right, of ownership over a given effort. Accountable - The ultimate accountable owner of an effort, outcomes, and/or end state. This person has the authority to make all final decisions they deem necessary. If they delegate that authority on a specific decision or effort, it does not mean they are no longer accountable for the outcome of that decision. There can only ever be one “A.” Responsible – The person responsible for the day-to-day execution of a task or larger effort. Multiple people and/or positions can be the “R” on a given effort, but they should always align their efforts to accomplish their objective in the most effective and efficient manner possible. Those designated as “R” are ultimately accountable to the “A” on an effort. Consulted – These roles must be consulted prior to accomplishing a given body of work or making a key decision. These are primary partners and stakeholders that have subject matter expertise and/or key relational value necessary to push an effort forward in the best possible manner. Informed – Those designated as “I” are partners and/or stakeholders that either require, or would benefit from, awareness of the results of decisions or milestones on a given effort. These individuals do not provide input on an effort during its execution.
- **Delegation and Supervision.** Even with ultimate accountability over all aspects of a Chapter’s functions, the delegation of key responsibility areas to others is of primary importance. This does not, however, alleviate or change the ultimate accountability and ownership the role of President has over all functions within a Chapter. A president should not attempt to do everything themselves. Develop the relationships with peers that are necessary to create others with sufficiently high levels of ownership. Supporting the key leaders within a Chapter, namely the vice presidents and liaison roles, is incredibly important to the long-term success of the team. Those leaders must know the president supports them in the execution of their roles and will provide the necessary level of engagement to ensure their success. The president must supervise the work being done on an effort as well as key outcomes. It is recommended that the president set up recurring touchpoints with all leaders in the Chapter to ensure high quality relationships, deliverables are being met, and any roadblocks to success are removed.
- **Executive Relationships with University Leaders.** As the face of SVA at University, spending adequate time with administrators, educators, decision makers, and members of other campus organizations will be key to solidifying the brand of the Chapter as well as future growth. Relationship building is vital to the long-term success of any organization or venture. Building these relationships takes significant time and it might look like there are no direct benefits to doing so. Authentic relationship creation is, by nature, a long-term effort and must come from a place of real service to another. Seek first to help before ever asking for help. It is a mutually beneficial arrangement.
- **Strategic Thinking.** A president must look at the entire year of their tenure but also the years to come and what multi-year initiatives are in play for both current, and future, leaders. When making decisions, a president must ask themselves what the implications and second, third, fourth, etc. order

effects could be by going down a particular path. A president should be able to clearly articulate how tactical decisions support, and further, strategic initiatives.

- **Core Values-Based Leadership.** As a leader, understand the importance of making decisions, both practical and strategic, from a source of your own personal core value set. This personal core value set, which is part of the foundation that makes up your leadership ethos, is a vital element to staying on a path that leads to both personal, and Chapter, success. Core **Values-based leadership is at the heart of personal leadership development curriculum at the Leadership Institute. All Chapter presidents are encouraged to attend this premier leadership event.**
- **Self-Care.** It is possible to become burned out as the leader of a student organization. Chapter presidents must be able to finish their term with something left to give to future generations of Chapter Leaders and with a desire to still be involved as a member and a mentor. Taking the time to ensure academic and family responsibilities are taken care of both reduce the stress placed on a Chapter president, but also afford time to step away from the Chapter to focus on other things. Mental health and sleep are incredibly important to effective leadership. Chapter presidents should set a standard of health in leadership by utilizing campus services where offered, when necessary.

### *Vice President of Programs and Member Development*

- **Establish an event planning checklist.** For every event, large or small, establish clear goals and objectives for the event, consider attendance goals, location, venue cost, food cost, and promotion and marketing. Set a realistic timeline for achieving certain benchmarks for larger events.
- **Delegate responsibilities.** Use the brainpower of the Chapter Members to handle the various tasks of event planning. Delegating will allow focus to remain on the big picture without getting lost in the weeds.
- **Leverage on and off-campus partners.** To maximize Chapter programming, relate strategic alliances with congruent student organizations, and local community-based organizations to increase Chapter visibility on campus and in the greater community, and to assist with larger, logistically challenging events. Provide programming that has broad appeal across student organizations. Veterans are a diverse cross-section of America, so it is easy to find common threads between you and other student organizations. Themes like leadership, service, and diversity are not exclusive to the military.
- **Provide a clear path from membership to Chapter Leadership.** Chapter Members should be aware of and understand each leadership position and be encouraged to pursue at least one that might spark their interest. A new member orientation, or first Chapter meeting of the year should include each Chapter Leader giving a brief presentation of what their role entails. Member development includes encouraging members to take advantage of your National Headquarters professional development opportunities such as NatCon, the Leadership Institute, Regional Summits, and the LinkedIn Professional Development Community.

### *Vice President of Finance*

- **Trustworthiness/Integrity.** All roles in finance require personal accountability of handling money and finances as well as appropriate transparency. The Vice President of Finance must abide by all rules and regulations pertaining to management of a nonprofit organization's finances at the federal, state, and institutional levels. When mistakes are made, integrity requires that they be addressed openly and quickly.
- **Speaking truth to power.** Support Chapter Leadership as a financial advisor by balancing Chapter goals with Chapter financial capabilities. Many Chapter Leaders have impressive ideas for the

Chapter but must be reined in when the finances cannot support them. Finding a balance is especially important in producing a quality Chapter with limited revenue.

- Understand the unique role of the Vice President of Finance. Within the leadership team, this role is unique in that a higher level of trust and responsibility is present to include its connection to the overall success of all Chapter efforts. Institution-specific training or requirements may be in place, and this position must adhere to each.

### *Vice President of Recruitment and Member Engagement*

- **Establish a recruitment playbook.** The Chapter strategic plan is the road map for recruitment goals, strategies, and objectives. It will indicate how many, when, where and what type of events to host, as well as the recruitment goals for each event. Work with the Vice President of Communications and Marketing to create promotional documents, fliers and/or pamphlets for tabling and/or posting around campus in high traffic areas such as the student center, veteran resource center, commuter lounge, SCO's office, etc. Identify places where student veterans are likely working, studying, and living on campus; start by asking Chapter Members themselves.
- **Form alliances with key enrollment management administrators.** SCO have access to all students who are receiving VA benefits. Meet with the SCO to discuss sending out a welcome letter to all incoming students receiving VA benefits. The Director/Dean of Admissions is responsible for recruiting students to the college or university. Meet with the Director/Dean to see if they would be willing to provide information about the Chapter in the admissions presentation, and/or add Chapter promotional material to their recruiting table at local college transfer fairs. The Assistant/Associate Director of Transfer Admissions will likely meet all student veterans enrolling into the college or university, as most veterans are considered transfer students. Working closely with the transfer counselor can be an effective way to recruit incoming students. The Dean of Students is responsible for all aspects of student life on campus. It is important to know this individual when it comes to reaching all students on campus.
- **Establish a recruitment pitch.** An elevator pitch for prospective members should be brief and highlight all the key benefits of joining the Chapter. Ensure all Chapter Members know the pitch or talking points.
- **Cultivate an active, engaged membership.** Identify meaningful programming that members will want to take part in. Use straw polls and surveys to better understand membership needs and limitations. Leverage your knowledge of membership to identify the most impactful events. Consider the childcare needs, and other benefits, geared toward student veterans with children. Identify family-friendly events like trips to amusement parks, picnics, etc. Understanding that the purpose of enrolling in higher education is professional elevation and work with the Career Services Liaison to create professional development events. Consider virtual events for student veterans who work and attend school.

### *Vice President of Fundraising*

- **Relationship Building.** Engage with all opportunities on and off campus to create genuine relationships, which can be leveraged for mutually beneficial outcomes.
- **Communication.** Be able to tell the compelling story of your Chapter, its members, and your engagement with the university and the community to drive people to your brand.
- **Collaboration.** Work closely with the Vice President of Finance to understand funding needs and to develop a goal for fundraising.

- **Research.** Understand the fundraising and development guidelines of the university and work to include those in the fundraising plan.

### *Vice President of Communications and Marketing*

- **Plan and tell the story.** Use the Chapter calendar and school's academic calendar to help design a communications plan for the year, including key dates, key messages, and communications tactics. Use the communications plan to schedule and guide the written content, photos, and videos that the Chapter will share. Decide on members of a communications committee to help meet these goals. Consider the following skills to seek for your committee: writing ability, photography, videography, social media, graphic design, and web design.
- **Stay organized and make history.** Taking detailed notes in all official meetings, managing event attendance and rosters, and sharing meeting minutes with the Chapter are all essential to healthy Chapter management. The history of student veterans on campus and the Chapter are worth preserving and sharing. Take an active interest in honoring the student veterans who came before while also documenting current history in the making.
- **Collaboration.** Work closely with other vice presidents to determine how communications can support their goals. For example, pitching a news article before Veterans Day about the Chapter's upcoming event may help generate attendance at the event and grow awareness. Did someone in the Chapter get elected to student government or receive a prestigious scholarship? Stay in touch with Chapter Members and work with them to help share their achievements. Seek out ways to partner with and support other student groups on campus.
- **Engage with peers and community.** Seek out ways to insert the Chapter into ongoing events and conversations on campus in relevant ways, such as diversity recognition months, graduation, Veterans Day, or campus-specific moments throughout the year. If there were to be a crisis on campus or a sensitive situation, stay calm and serve as a voice for your Chapter. Work with National Headquarters to share your successes with a larger audience.

### *Policy Liaison*

- **Identify key policy issues impacting Chapter, campus, and community.** The Policy Liaison helps guide leaders through the policy landscape, knowing the issues that impact you as a Chapter is key to success.
- **Support the connection to National Headquarters for Chapter Members.** Joining regularly scheduled calls and communicating with SVA Government Affairs will help ensure issues and roadblocks are addressed and overcome. Sharing across fellow Policy Liaisons and with the Government Affairs team will also inform the policy work for the larger network and National Headquarters. **\*COVID-specific measures were passed almost immediately after the first university made the decision to go virtual due to a conversation with a Chapter Policy Liaison.**
- **Build relationships with university leaders.** Many policy issues are best resolved at the university level. Developing strong, positive relationships, alongside fellow Chapter Leaders, is critical to addressing policy needs.
- **Build relationships with local elected leaders.** Policy issues that require legislation, either at the local, state, or federal level, require strong working relationships with elected officials and their staff; a willingness to communicate and meet with all levels of elected officials is important to gain momentum on policy issues.
- **Interact with fellow Policy Liaisons.** There is strength in numbers in building advocacy coalitions. A willingness to share best practices, shared experiences, and ideas with fellow Policy Liaisons across

other Chapters will grow the success of all in the network. **\*The Policy Liaison Program (PLP) offers consistent and scheduled communications that facilitate this coalition building and best practice sharing.**

- **Supporting other Chapter Leaders.** Policy needs and concerns can be shared or experienced by many. Hearing from other Chapter Leaders and members and identifying potential needs from more than a single perspective will create an inclusive space for all to access, and succeed in, higher education.

### *Career Services Liaison*

- **Leverage National Headquarters and network for professional development opportunities.** Learn about the wealth of programs and available resources and channels for student veterans to seek professional guidance and advice. Understand the importance of being involved in SVA programming (e.g., Regional Summits, Leadership Institute, NatCon, professional opportunities from SVA partners, workshops, internships, access to mentors, employment opportunities, etc.). Connect with SVA relevant platforms and partners including LinkedIn, Indeed, Hiring Our Heroes, and through The Business and Industry Roundtable to provide the Career Services Liaison with updated opportunities.
- **Implement VA Work Study as a Career Services Liaison.** Understand VA Work Study program and how to implement it as a Career Services Liaison.
- **Encourage help-seeking behavior of student veterans in your Chapter.** Most students do not leverage Career Services or the breadth of services that they provide; student veterans are even less likely to leverage these resources while on campus.
- **Engage student veterans in career focused aspects of their education.** Encourage employment and internships during college and in career and professional development opportunities and resources throughout a student's academic journey and near graduation.

### *Disability Services Liaison*

- **Make the connection between service-connected disability and academic support services on campus.** The military does not provide information about how a service-connected disability translates to an academic disability, and VA does not diagnose a veteran's disability, they only determine a level of compensation. Colleges understand learning disabilities of traditional, incoming first-year college students, but are not familiar with military service-connected disabilities.
- **Encourage help-seeking behavior among student veterans.** Student veterans attend college with the "suck it up and drive on" mentality instilled in them by military training, this works well in combat, but can be detrimental in the civilian world. Normalize disability services representatives as well as other assistance-service representatives in the veteran space.
- **Learn how to conduct a conversation with student veterans with service-connected disabilities.** Student veterans may not feel comfortable disclosing their disability, the Disability Services Liaison should not ask a student veteran, "Are you disabled?", they should ask, "Do you have a VA rating?" or "Have you filed a disability claim with VA?"
- **Implement VA Work Study as a Disability Services Liaison.** Understand VA Work Study program and how to implement it as a Disability Services Liaison.
- **Understand how you can help student veterans and your college or university.** Colleges and universities are focused on students performing at a high level and graduating on time. When a student "slips through the cracks," it hurts the college by decreasing graduation and retention rates.

As the Disability Services Liaison, you are helping the college retain and graduate students by ensuring accountability for all student veterans.







## Appendix D – Sample Meeting Agenda and Announcement

### *Agenda Items*

The following agenda items are suggestions and can be adapted to meet the needs of the Chapter. The most common procedural guide is "Robert's Rules of Order."

*Call to Order.* The President calls the meeting to order. The call order may be followed by any opening ceremony the Chapter may have instituted.

*Roll Call.* If attendance is taken, it should be done from a prepared list of members' names. The list can include spaces for recording whether a member is present, absent, or tardy. Or pass around a sign-in sheet during the meeting.

*Reading and Approval of Minutes.* After the minutes from the previous meeting are read, any corrections are made, and minutes are approved.

*Reports of the Officers.* The President recognizes each officer in turn. Reports are usually for informational purposes. If a report involves a recommendation for action, the Chapter may discuss the recommendation when the report is finished.

*Reports of the Committees.* The President calls for reports from standing committees first (i.e., marketing committee), followed by reports of special committees (i.e., homecoming committee).

*Unfinished Business.* Includes all business left over from previous meetings, working from a list of unfinished business topics, each one in turn for discussion and action.

*New Business.* Members can introduce any new topics at this time.

*Announcements.* The President may make, or call upon other members to make, any announcements of interest to the organization.

*Program.* Some Chapters may elect to have a speaker, film, or other educational or cultural program. This is usually presented before the meeting is adjourned, because the program may require action to be taken by the organization.

*Adjournment.* The agenda is completed, and meeting is over.

## *Sample Meeting Agenda*

[Your Chapter Name]  
[Your Educational Institution]  
Agenda for the [insert # here] Chapter Meeting of the [insert year] Academic Year,  
[date and time]  
[Location]

I. Call to Order

II. Attendance

III. Amendments to Current Agenda

IV. Approval of Last Session Meeting Minutes

V. President's Reports and Announcements

1. Item to discuss - Minutes recorded on this topic

2. Item to discuss - Minutes recorded on this topic

VI. Vice President's Reports and Announcements

1. Item to discuss - Minutes recorded on this topic

2. Item to discuss - Minutes recorded on this topic

VII. Vice President's Reports and Announcements

1. Item to discuss - Minutes recorded on this topic

2. Item to discuss - Minutes recorded on this topic

XV. Advisor's Reports and Announcements

1. Item to discuss - Minutes recorded on this topic

2. Item to discuss - Minutes recorded on this topic

XVI. General Announcements

XVII. Adjournment

## *Sample Meeting Announcement*

Dear [FIRST NAME] (or Dear Chapter Member),

We're looking forward to our next meeting on [DATE], [TIME], [LOCATION].

Here are draft agenda items. Please let us know by [DATE] at [TIME] if you have any comments or additional topics you'd like to include.

### **Draft Agenda:**

- SVA Professional Development survey results and ways forward
- New Student Veteran Orientation update
- Weekend viral story about veterans - Discussion of Issues, Concerns, Actions
- Chapter Officer Updates
- Elections (Yes, we know it's a long way off)

### **Upcoming Dates to Note:**

- Date/Time – Using your GI Bill Workshop (Location) / Open to all students
- Date/Time - Monthly National Headquarters call (all members welcome to sit in)
- Date/Time – US Navy Band @ John Doe Senior High (free tickets for vets and friends available at VRC)
- Date/Time – Veterans Service Day\*\*\* This is a big event, so start pubbing and share to your networks NOW so we have a big turnout. Email Amina if you want to help out or have any questions (aminastudent@college.edu)

See you on [DATE]/[TIME].

Your Chapter Leadership (Mario, Jesse, Amina, Hector)  
sva-stateuniversity@college.edu

## Appendix E – Event Planning Checklist

- ✓ **Determine What Type of Event or Activity You Will Host Based on Your Audience.** Brainstorm with friends, family, and colleagues about the type of event or activity you would like to hold in your community. Take into consideration your target audience and what will interest them the most.
- ✓ **Form a Core Group of Volunteers & Delegate Tasks.** Organize a group of fellow volunteers to divide the different tasks required to execute your event or activity. Use the group's personal and professional knowledge and networks in order to outreach to different venues and vendors.
- ✓ **Choose A Date, Time and Location.** A successful event or activity takes time to plan, even with the help of committed volunteers. Remember your target audience when deciding the time, date, and location of the event or activity. Don't forget to check with your local government for necessary licenses and permits.
- ✓ **Create a Budget and Set Goals.** Outline a realistic budget, considering all costs associated with your event or activity. Engage your committee of volunteers to accomplish certain tasks. It is equally important to also set a realistic goal for your event in order for your budget to not exceed your expected donations raised. For ticketed events, use an online service like Eventbrite.
- ✓ **Register Your Event or Activity with Your School or Community if Necessary**
- ✓ **Promote Your Event or Activity.** A promotional plan is the key to a successful event or activity. Since you have already determined your target audience, as well as the date, time and location, you should create flyers, posters, brochures, invitations, tickets and emails to notify the target audience of the details. Electronic invitations, like those offered at websites such as Evite.com, have no printing costs involved and are the quickest and easiest way to spread the word. Also, use social networking sites to recruit guests.
- ✓ **Determine the Agenda.** Whether you have guests, speakers, or musical talent at your event or activity, it is important to create an agenda or run-of-show. This will organize the day of your event or activity and keeps the program on schedule for you and your guests.
- ✓ **Host the Event or Activity.** It is the day of your event or activity! All of your pre-planning will help make the day run as smoothly as possible. Look for help on logistical tasks from your committee of volunteers. Enjoy the experience. Make sure that you collect the donations in a systematic way to remain organized and keep track of all money.
- ✓ **Thank Everyone.** It is both important and courteous to thank all of your guests for participating in the event or activity, especially those who donated any services or talents. Remind everyone why the event occurred and how they can make a difference in the future by helping your Chapter.
- ✓ **Collect Outstanding Donations (as applicable).** Sometimes people will pledge donations and then fail to give the money at the event. Try and collect money before the event, but if you have to wait until after, always be pleasant and persistent. Remind the person of their pledged donation and ask how best to collect the money.

## Appendix F – Sample Press Release

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

[First and last name], [SVA title]

[Phone number]

[Email]

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

[Month date, year]

### **1-2-line title in bold, no longer**

*Sub header using italics, should expand upon the above title and clarify organizations involved*

*City, State Abbreviation* – Your opening sentence should serve as a “hook” for the reporter, just like the opening sentence of a news story – you want to grab the reporter’s interest. The following sentences should clearly describe the who, what, when, where, and why of your event and reason for the press release.

The second paragraph is a great place for a quote from a Chapter Leader or a member participating in the program or event. Remember that reporters often use quotes from press releases in their stories, so ensure that this quote is appropriately written and reflects the event, milestone, or program as well as the Chapter’s goals. The quote should expand upon the importance and meaning what the Chapter is doing.

The third paragraph is the appropriate place to include additional details about the event or topic. Dive further into the purpose, explain who will be attending, highlight the compelling aspects that will make a great story, etc.

Finally, add a sentence about contact and more information.

### **About Student Veterans of America**

With a mission focused on empowering student veterans, SVA is committed to providing an educational experience that goes beyond the classroom. Through a dedicated network of more than 1,500 on-campus chapters in all 50 states and three countries overseas representing more than 750,000 student veterans, SVA aims to inspire yesterday’s warriors by connecting student veterans with a community of like-minded Chapter Leaders. Every day these passionate leaders work to provide the necessary resources, network support, and advocacy to ensure student veterans can effectively connect, expand their skills, and ultimately achieve their greatest potential. For more information, visit us at [www.studentveterans.org](http://www.studentveterans.org).