

2020 Annual Report



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On the cover:

Student Veteran of the Year Finalists Timothy Brown (Georgetown University), Ashley Dent (New York Institute of Technology), Britnee Davis (Baldwin Wallace University), Rebecca Larson (University of Texas at Austin), Anette Nance (University of Pittsburgh) Student Veteran of the Year Bonita Rodriguez (Pace University), SVA National President and CEO Jared Lyon, and Student Veteran of the Year Finalists Michael Muir (Brown University), Alexander Picciano (Lakeland Community College), and Rodger Pinto (Indiana University South Bend).

Our Community's Resilience Shines Through a Challenging Year

Dear Friends,

Throughout SVA's fourteen years we turn to the inspiration of our community for fortitude, ingenuity, and resilience when challenges arise. That inspiration served us well in a year that witnessed the birth of a once-in-a-century pandemic.

In the summer, millions of people protested in the streets, calling for racial justice in response to systemic racism in this country and sparked by the tragic murder of George Floyd and others. SVA seeks to be one of the most inclusive student organizations in America, and every one of us can contribute to bring about the change this nation needs.

For many, 2020 marked a first-ever transition to fully virtual learning. While technology allowed student veterans to continue rather than pause their studies, we faced the real-world challenge of adapting the GI Bill and related benefits to encompass a digital world it had not been built for. With pride, I can tell you that our Government Affairs team was able to address this transition in a matter of days with allies on Capitol Hill to make sure that student veterans experienced the least possible impact to their education benefits.

After addressing these immediate needs, efforts continued to adapt our programs and events to virtual modalities and our partners supported us throughout the process. Regional Summits were held virtually and our attendance more than tripled from the prior year. We also graduated another class of Leadership Fellows at our Leadership Institute in the fall. In January, 2020, SVA held its twelfth annual National Conference in person, in

Los Angeles, with 2,600 attendees, the most in our history. In March during Washington Week, I delivered testimony on our legislative priorities to the House and Senate Committees on Veterans Affairs and we were joined by 100 of our chapters on Capitol Hill. In 2020, we also completed significant upgrades to the SVA website and the resources it provides, including our Career Center and Chapter Handbook.

As you will see, the team at Student Veterans of America's National Headquarters has continued to advocate for and empower our chapters, even in unprecedented times. From research and data analysis that unlocks insights about the population we serve to our programs and events that teach student veterans the tools to ensure their success, our team continues to build onto the bright futures every service member deserves.

Your support is invaluable not only to the more than 750,000 student veterans we support annually but to all those yet to come. For those of you who have been in the Student Veterans of America family for many years, we remain so grateful and proud of the work we have achieved with your support. And, for those of you who are new to our organization, I hope that this report allows you to learn more about our mission, impact, and population, who we proudly call *tomorrow's leaders*.

Jared Lyon, MPA

*National President & CEO
Student Veterans of America*



Mission

Act as a catalyst for student veteran success by providing resources, network support and advocacy to, through, and beyond higher education.

Vision

Empowering student veterans to lead and live their best lives.

COVID-19

91%

of student veterans worried that COVID-19 would impact their educational goals



More than

500,000

students were protected from losing their GI Bill benefits during the COVID-19 pandemic

754,000

student veterans are on a campus with an SVA chapter.

\$11.47B

Advocated on behalf of \$11.47 Billion in U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs education benefits.

72%

student veterans maintain a better success rate in higher education



Who are student veterans?

More than 1 million Americans are currently receiving GI Bill benefits and 754,000 of them are on campuses with an SVA Chapter. Being a veteran is an experience, not an identity, and SVA seeks to foster a spirit of inclusion at every campus we engage with. This also includes welcoming military-connected students to join our community, including but not limited to military and veteran spouses, family members, caregivers, ROTC students, supporters, and allies.

- Student veterans have delayed their goals in higher education and career to first serve all Americans.
- Two-thirds of student veterans are **first-generation graduates**, so graduating from college is often decades in the making for their families.
- **Women veterans are the fastest-growing population in the veteran space** and women student veterans make up more than half of our campus chapter leaders nationwide.
- Compared to traditional students, student veterans are **likely to be older, married, have children, have a disability, and be working full- or part-time.**

80% are between the ages 24-35

31% are women

46% have children

19% are single parents

52% are married

90% were enlisted

74% work full- or part-time

96% voted in the 2020 election

Programs & Services

SVA's National Headquarters administers programs and services that empower student veteran success to, through, and beyond higher education by focusing on the chapter-centric life cycle of student veterans.

Learn more at
studentveterans.org/programs

National Conference

SVA kicks off every year with its National Conference, or “NatCon,” which is the largest annual gathering of student veterans in the country. From daily general sessions featuring compelling speakers, to breakout sessions focused on dozens of topics, to the SVA Honors ceremony recognizing outstanding student veterans, family members, mentors, chapters, and partners from the year prior, NatCon embodies SVA’s goal of empowering student veterans.

2,600 students, partners, allies, supporters, and thought leaders attended SVA’s twelfth annual National Conference in Los Angeles, California from January 3-5, 2020. Keynote speakers, performers, and participants included best-selling author Simon Sinek, former Miss USA Deshauna Barber, adaptive athlete Kirstie Ennis, Grammy nominated singer-songwriter MAJOR., Law & Order SVU actress Jamie Gray Hyder, and actor Rudy Reyes.



Top-left: NatCon attendees at the registration desk.

Top-right: The lobby of the JW Marriott Los Angeles L.A. LIVE served as a central hub for attendees to connect and recharge.



Bottom-left: Student Veteran of the Year finalists Ashley Dent and Rodger Pinto introduce Simon Sinek to the main stage.

Student Veteran of the Year
Bonita Rodriguez, Pace University

Chapter of the Year
Colorado State University

Advisor of the Year
Dr. Emily Ives, UCLA



Washington Week

Each March, SVA's policy and advocacy priorities are formally published through a series of events around Capitol Hill, the White House, and executive branch departments. Between witnessing testimony to the House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committees on SVA's legislative priorities, a higher education policy panel, networking happy hours, and training on how to

schedule meetings with their lawmakers, attendees learn to engage with public policy through immersive experiential learning. SVA remains a credible and reliable go-to resource for Capitol Hill and for federal agencies because of our organization's interaction with student veterans in higher education. More than 100 chapters traveled to Washington, DC to participate in Washington Week 2020.

Top: Tamara Hiller (Third Way), Taela Dudley (The Century Foundation), and Ethan Pollock (The Aspen Institute) participate in the Higher Education Symposium on March 2, 2020.

Bottom-left: SVA National President and CEO Jared Lyon testifies before the House and Senate Committees on Veterans Affairs on March 3, 2020.

Bottom-right: Chapter Leader Fatima Jaghoori (Kansas State University) speaks with U.S. Senator Jerry Moran.

Regional Summits

Throughout the summer, SVA’s Regional Summits take place across the country for all chapters, new and established, to come together and explore sessions that will help grow chapter success strategically. These Summits offer the tools, techniques, and tactics for greatest impact throughout the academic year. The topics covered include finances, communication, disability services, recruitment, professional development, leadership workshops, and more.

In 2020, SVA engaged with 956 Chapter Leaders from 443 schools at Regional Summits. The program was held virtually.



SVA’s Vice President of Programs and Services Dr. Abby Kinch teaches during the Regional Summits. Virtual delivery allowed for the program to reach more students in 2020 than in any prior year.

“ I met another chapter president who wasn’t that far away from me, and who helped me draft a letter to my school administration to outline ways to support veterans enrolled there. We now have a space on campus for veterans to meet and study with coffee and free computers and printers to use. It’s exactly what we needed.”

CHAPTER PRESIDENT EDWARD COX (SULLIVAN UNIVERSITY)

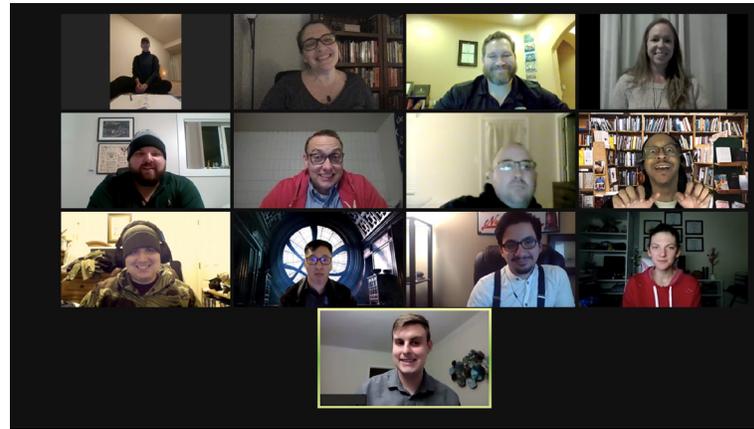
The Leadership Institute

Each fall, the top performing student veterans and military-connected students from around the country are invited to Washington, DC to attend the Leadership Institute, where they complete an immersive experience exploring their own individual success. Upon graduating, attendees become part of an exclusive class of Leadership Fellows.

The Leadership Institute is designed to equip tomorrow’s leaders to serve and create a lasting community of impact. After student veterans have been selected from a rigorous application process, the program guides them through the practice of understanding their own core values in order to create a personal leadership vision and action plan, with the end result being the development of their personal leadership ethos—that “force” that guides beliefs, behaviors, and actions. Of course,

as with all SVA programming, participants also leave with a tight-knit community of fellow chapter leaders and mentors to support their continued growth.

In 2020, SVA hosted the Leadership Institute virtually and graduated a new class of 113 Leadership Fellows.



Leadership Fellows meet on Zoom with their mentor group led by SVA’s Vice President of Programs and Services Dr. Abby Kinch.

Digital Resources

After acting quickly to protect GI Bill benefits and pivoting to virtual delivery for our programs, SVA made significant improvements to its digital resources for chapter leaders in 2020. In addition to a brand new SVA website, we launched the Career Center and Chapter Handbook.

The Career Center provides access to more than 3.5 million active job postings and interactive profiles for each of our partners in the Partner Directory. Our Chapter Handbook is a living resource with the best practices, videos, examples, and templates for all aspects of sustainable chapter leadership and management.

Campus Liaisons

Campus Liaisons are chapter leadership positions focused in one of three key areas in support of student veterans and military-connected students: policy, disability services, and career services. SVA's National Headquarters supports students in each of these roles with training, outreach materials, connections to partners and decisionmakers, and other resources.

- **The Policy Liaison Program (PLP)** is a community providing educational resources for student veterans on advocacy and policy best practices at the campus, local, state, and national levels.
- **Disability Service Liaisons (DSLs)** are student veterans who help their peers connect to underutilized campus resources.
- **Career Services Liaison (CSLs)** are responsible for the engagement and development of a chapter's relationship with the Career Services office on campus.

Scholarships

Every year, SVA works with its partners to provide scholarships to deserving student veterans and military connected students. Since 2008, SVA has awarded more than \$2 million in scholarships.

Raytheon Patriot Scholarship:

- Arturo Garcia (*California State University, Northridge*)
- Karisa Myers (*Ohio State University*)

Raytheon SPY-6 Scholarship:

- Chris Ricks (*Harvard Business School*)
- Francheska Salazar (*George Washington University*)

Google SVA Scholarship:

- Adrianna Guevarra (*Oregon State University - Cascades Campus*)
- Amanda Krug (*Pennsylvania State University-World Campus*)
- Jazmin McCrea (*Western Governors University*)
- Nicole Miller (*San Diego State University*)
- Levi Redlin (*University of Wisconsin-Madison*)
- Scott Shirley (*University of Washington - Bothell Campus*)
- Trenton Smith (*San Francisco State University*)
- Roman Taylor (*University of California - Berkeley*)

NBCUniversal Scholarship:

- Alexis Jones (*San Diego Mesa College*)
- Rodrigo Soza (*Columbia University*)

VFW-SVA Legislative Fellowship

In keeping with its shared commitment to student veterans' success, every year the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) teams up with SVA to host the VFW-SVA Legislative Fellowship program, providing an opportunity for 10 exemplary VFW members who are student veterans to make their voices heard on Capitol Hill and in their community.



VFW-SVA Legislative Fellows with U.S. Representative Mark Takano, Chair of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee.

Home with the Brave

After in-person graduation ceremonies were canceled for student veterans, military-connected students, and their families across the country due to COVID-19, SVA hosted a virtual graduation ceremony for thousands of graduates and their families that we called Home with the Brave.

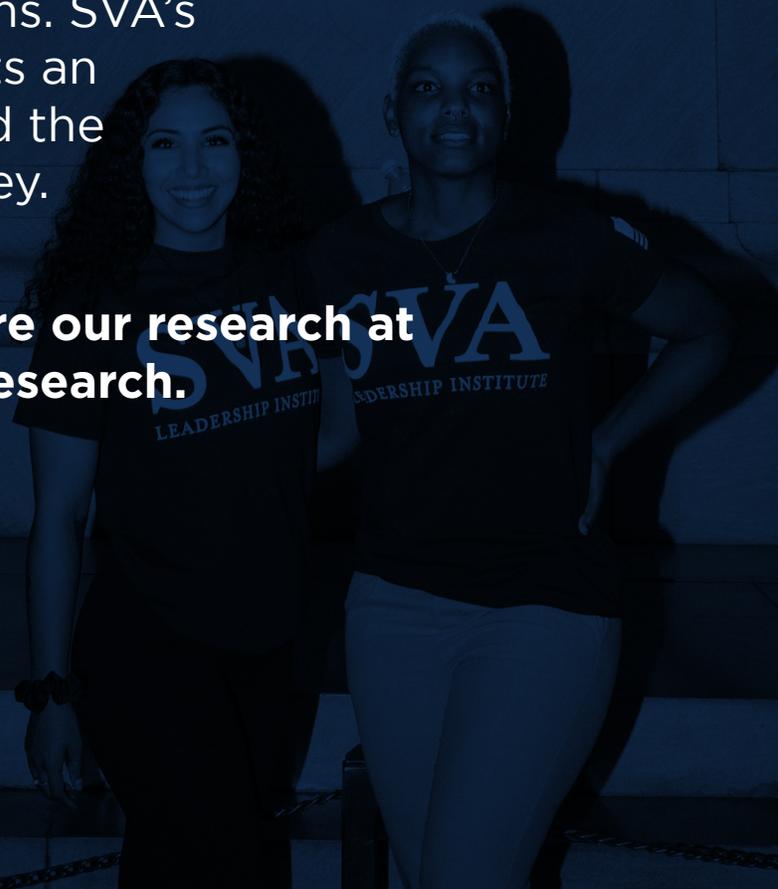
The graduation special featured 16 celebrity participants, including NBC Nightly News anchor Lester Holt, actor Sebastien Stan, actor and comedian Tony Hale, and actress and director Melissa Fumero. More than 100,000 viewers tuned in to Home with the Brave on Facebook Live and Xfinity X1.



Research

Student Veterans of America works to inform the public, stakeholders, policy makers, and others on the concerns of student veteran and military-connected students through empirical research. By investing in research, SVA is filling the void in data collection showcasing student veteran success. We also use surveys and program evaluations for data collection and improving programs. SVA's research team conducts an annual SVA Census and the Veterans Opinion Survey.

Learn more and explore our research at studentveterans.org/research.



The Life Cycle Atlas

Launched in 2019, the purpose of the Life Cycle Atlas is to fill the gap in current research on the education life cycle of student veterans to provide policy makers, stakeholders, the public, and student veterans with accurate information to make data driven decisions. The project builds on previous research by unlocking never-before-seen insights on career trajectories, skills gaps, geographic trends, and more that will not only help improve SVA's work but also empower all veterans service organizations to improve their programs.

The veteran journey from high school through service, college, and employment has become more diverse and complex since the original GI Bill was founded in 1944. The increase in both the ways to serve in the military and methods to attend college, such as online and hybrid instruction, has created new paths for service members that did not exist for previous generation of service members and veterans. However, the most common path found from the project is still active-duty service, then college, then entering the workforce.

SVA's research demonstrates that service members are exposed to implicit messaging

that they are not college material much sooner than previously thought and the message may have direct influence on their decision to enroll in college following military service. This negative implicit messaging may start as early as high school. Once enlistees share that they are joining the military, their guidance counselors stop providing college preparation materials and often turn over the guidance to military recruiters. This is compounded in the military where superiors discourage service members from taking classes out of fear of their not re-enlisting. This messaging may occur over ten years (from high school through military service), resulting in transitioning service members being more focused on employment and not higher education.

Student veterans are not utilizing on-campus career preparation services, such as resume writing and job interview skills. This leads to student veterans' using old resumes developed as they were transitioning out of the service or to their approaching a job only as a veteran and not as a college graduate with military experience.

The Life Cycle Atlas is made possible with support from the PwC Charitable Foundation, Inc.

Visit studentveterans.org/lifecycleatlas to explore the data and learn more.

SVA Census

The SVA Census is an annual survey focused on collecting demographic data on student veterans and SVA alumni for use in discussions with policy makers, partners, and the public. The SVA Census is conducted via a web survey sent to SVA's network, SVA chapters, veteran points of contact on college campuses, and social media channels. The survey is in the field during October of every year.

Academic Success

According to the 2020 SVA Census Survey, **nearly two-thirds student veterans were enrolled as full-time students.** On average, they took on 13 credit hours per semester. 75% of student veterans were attending 4-year public and private institutions, and their cumulative average GPA was 3.42 on a 4.0 scale, an increase from 2019. 87% reported having an up-to-date LinkedIn profile. Nearly two-thirds of student veterans are first generation college students.

Education Debt

While the majority of student veterans report using some form of the GI Bill, it does not cover the true cost of education and many still file for federal student aid. Many veterans also file for federal student aid; 63% student veterans completed and submitted a 2018-2019 FAFSA. Not all student veterans graduate debt free, however. Of the individuals that graduated with educational debt, 42% said it was a moderate or serious financial burden.

Disability rating from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Nearly two-thirds student veterans state they have a VA disability rating. Of the student veterans who have a disability rating, three-fourths report that it has some level of stress and impact on their education.

Veteran Opinion Survey

SVA's Veteran Opinion Survey measures the opinion of America's veterans by studying a sample of that population utilizing surveys, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions. The survey gives veterans a stronger voice on the topics and issues specific to them.

COVID-19

In 2020, student veterans reported a discomfort with returning to in-person classes due to COVID-19. **Student veterans reported high levels of discomfort (49.4%) attending large classes in-person such as lecture halls with more than 30 people compared to other forms of instruction such as labs (34.5%) and seminars (34.3%).**

Overall, student veterans expressed the lowest discomfort in using campus services, such as campus veteran centers (20.7%), health center (26.5%), and campus library (29.6%).

Economy

While a majority of the respondents held a negative view of the economy, respondents had not felt the current economy downturn directly. Many were concerned an economic downturn would eventually affect them. **A majority of respondents (87.4%) rated the current economy as Fair (31.4%) or Poor (56.0%) which matches other recent polls of the general population.** One-in-ten (11.4%) respondents reported that their household does not have enough money to pay monthly bills and other financial commitments. At the time of the survey, 43.2% of respondents reported some level of concern that they will not have a job in the next 3 months.

GI Bill

Respondents also reported that **Student Veterans of America (SVA) should remain focused on GI Bill issues** and veteran mental health concerns throughout 2020.

Government Affairs

SVA's Government Affairs Department shapes policy proposals and regulations on behalf of veterans in pursuit of career advancement through higher education. Our team works closely with Congress, the White House, and the federal government to promote forward-looking policies that will help veterans acquire the education they need to thrive in the modern workforce.

**Learn more at
[studentveterans.org/
government-affairs](https://studentveterans.org/government-affairs)**



U.S. Senator Tom Carper welcomes Washington Week attendees to Capitol Hill.

Bipartisan Breakthrough on the 90-10 Rule

Protect VETS Act (S.2857) Introduced

This bill was the first-ever bipartisan piece of legislation introduced in the Senate to close the 90-10 loophole. The bill would ensure Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) education benefits and Department of Defense Tuition Assistance dollars are counted with other federal student aid in the 90-10 Rule, which limits the amount of student aid proprietary schools can receive from the federal government.

Supporting Veterans in STEM

Supporting Veterans in STEM Careers Act (S.153) Signed into Law

This bill encourages Student Veterans to participate in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields by, among other things, expanding opportunities for these students to participate in National Science Foundation STEM programs.

A Landmark Year for Policy Advocacy

2020 was one of SVA's most impactful years in advocacy since our founding. Many of this year's legislative victories have their origins in issues brought to SVA directly by student veterans in recent years at Regional Summits, the Leadership Institute, and NatCon.

In addition to tackling several established policy priorities, SVA was successful in responding to the unexpected challenges faced by student veterans, service members, and their families due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Protecting Student Loan Borrowers

Congress Passes Congressional Review Act Resolution to Overturn Borrower Defense Rule (H.J.Res. 76 and S.J.Res. 56)

With broad bipartisan support, Congress passed a Congressional Review Act resolution to overturn a harmful new Borrower Defense Rule after an intensive advocacy effort by several higher education and veteran-serving organizations, including SVA.

Expanding Pandemic Protections for Student Veterans

The Student Veteran Coronavirus Response Act of 2020 (H.R.6322) Signed into Law

This legislation ensured that student veterans would continue to receive VA work-study payments during the COVID-19 emergency and protected students against certain negative impacts of pandemic-related school closures.

Continuing Appropriations Act, 2021 and Other Extensions Act (H.R.8337) Signed into Law

This legislation capped months of advocacy by SVA for Congress to extend the pandemic-related protections in S.3503 and H.R.6322, which were set to expire on December 21, 2020. It ensures that military-connected students continue to receive full Monthly Housing Allowance if their courses are converted to online status and that students continue to receive VA work-study payments during the COVID-19 emergency. The legislation extended these, and other protections found in S.3503 and H.R.6322, for an additional year to December 21, 2021.

Improving All Aspects of GI Bill Success

Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D. Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020 (H.R.7105) Signed into Law

This extraordinary piece of legislation addresses a range of issues that impact almost every major aspect of veteran-related policy, including health care, housing and homelessness, women veterans' issues, and education and transition issues. The bill also addresses issues related to GI Bill and transition benefits brought to us directly by students in recent years, including expanding in-state tuition benefits, postponing service members' decision requirements about enrolling in the Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB), ending the MGIB's tax on troops by sunseting the lesser-used benefit in 2030, and opening the Yellow Ribbon Program to students studying abroad at international colleges and universities. The legislation expands pandemic-related protections for students using VA education and transition benefits and also includes provisions that will protect student veterans, service members, and their families from low-quality and bad-actor schools.

Modernizing VA Work Study

Ryan Kules and Paul Benne Specially Adaptive Housing Improvement Act of 2019 (H.R.3504) Signed into Law

This bill, in addition to addressing important specially-adaptive housing issues, will reduce delayed payments for students participating in the VA Work-Study program by implementing a payment process similar to the more efficient system used by the Department of Education.



Improving FAFSA for Student Veterans

Removal of Certain Veteran Benefits from FAFSA Calculation (H.R.133) Signed into Law

This bill removes the need for veterans and their dependents to report benefits like disability compensation and survivor benefits when applying for Federal Student Aid, which will help many of these students qualify for additional aid.

Creating a Permanent Servicemembers and Veterans Initiative at DOJ

Servicemembers and Veterans Initiative Act of 2020 (H.R.8354) Signed into Law

This bill makes permanent a 2015 initiative at the Department of Justice to protect service members and veterans' legal rights related to financial, housing, employment, and voting issues.

Pandemic Monthly Housing Allowance Protections

S.3503 Signed into Law

This was the first round of pandemic relief, specific to VA education benefits, that Congress passed after SVA identified that student veterans may suffer reductions in their Monthly Housing Allowance as they transitioned to fully online learning because of COVID-19. The bill moved swiftly and passed into law less than two weeks after the issue was first identified thanks, in part, to an intense advocacy effort led by SVA, which produced a coalition letter with 70 signatures from organizations and institutions calling on Congress to pass the legislation.

SVA's Vice President of Government Affairs Lauren Augustine speaks to Washington Week attendees on Capitol Hill.



Pamela Erickson, BA

Chairperson

*Global Communications & Corporate Affairs Lead, Raytheon Technologies
Boston, Mass.*



**Major General
Chris Cortez,
USMC (Ret.), MA**

Vice-Chairperson

*Vice President of Military Affairs, Microsoft
San Diego, Calif.*



Frank Gaudio, JD

Treasurer

*PwC Charitable Foundation Trustee
Chicago, Ill.*



**General George W.
Casey, Jr., USA (Ret.), MA**

Board Member

*36th Chief of Staff of the United States Army
Arlington, Va.*

Term ended August 15, 2021



Sherry Shi, BS

Board Member

*Software Engineer, Facebook
San Francisco, Calif.*



Jared Lyon, MPA

Board Member

*National President and CEO,
Student Veterans of America
Alexandria, Va.*



Fontaine Stegall, BS

Board Member

*Supply Chain Management,
MRC Global
Houston*



J. Ford Huffman, BS

Board Member

*Independent News-Media Strategist
Washington, D. C.*



Alanah Odoms, JD

Board Member

*Executive Director,
ACLU of Louisiana
New Orleans*

Joined May 21, 2021



John Edelman, MS

Board Member

*Managing Director of Global Engagement
and Corporate Responsibility, Edelman
Chicago, Ill.*

Joined May 21, 2021

Statement of Financial Position as of December 31, 2020

ASSETS

Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$1,703,895
Grants and Contributions Receivable	\$643,695
Accounts Receivable, Net	\$44,814
Investments	\$305,341
Prepaid Expenses and Other Assets	\$201,757
Property and Equipment, Net	\$343,554
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2020 Total Assets	\$3,243,056

LIABILITIES

Accounts Payable	\$89,158
Deferred Revenue	\$96,221
PPP Loan	\$293,347
Deferred Rent	\$254,833
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2020 Total Liabilities	\$733,559

NET ASSETS

Without Donor Restrictions	\$132,075
With Donor Restrictions	\$2,377,422
<hr/>	
Total Net Assets	\$2,509,497

For more information, visit studentveterans.org/about/financials

SVA and our student-veteran-led chapters have convened a diverse network of corporations, foundations, and nonprofits that support our shared mission to act as a catalyst for student veteran success by providing resources, network support and advocacy to, through, and beyond higher education. This collaborative effort has enabled our chapter leaders to build inclusive communities on their college campuses that empower student veterans to achieve their greatest potential. We thank our partners for their many years of dedication in support of student veterans, military-affiliated students, their families, and allies.

Champions



Partners





Through a network of more than 1,500 on-campus chapters, SVA has been inspiring tomorrow's leaders since 2008 to ensure they achieve their greatest potential.

STUDENTVETERANS.ORG

202-223-4710

contact@studentveterans.org

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in [linkedin.com/company/studentveterans](https://www.linkedin.com/company/studentveterans)

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