



# Student Veterans of America

Fall '23 Newsletter

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# NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT



As we bid farewell to 2023, the journey we've taken together this year has been nothing short of inspiring. Our 15th anniversary year has seen student veterans raise the bar in terms of success, engagement, and community. It has also seen them unite and thrive in the face of challenges, demonstrating resilience, determination, and unwavering support for one another. Together, we've shattered preconceived notions, opened doors to opportunities, and ignited a collective spirit that defines the essence of what SVA is all about. SVA chapters, the heart of this organization, have been a beacon of empowerment, fostering a community where dreams are realized, and barriers are dismantled. As we reflect on the past year, let it be a testament to the indomitable spirit of our chapters, proving that with solidarity, every challenge is surmountable and every dream achievable. Here's to a future filled with continued progress, success, and the enduring camaraderie that defines the SVA journey.

I look forward to hearing many more stories of success at our 16th Annual NatCon, January 4-6, 2024, at the Gaylord Opryland Resort and Convention Center in Nashville, Tennessee.

- Jared Lyon, National President & CEO

*The quarterly newsletter is a place to learn about the behind-the-scenes work of SVA Headquarters, review SVA's most recent programming, shine a light on stellar people and chapters in the community, and remain closely informed on the months ahead. As always, SVA is here to see student veterans to, through, and beyond their higher education journey.*





# LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

Student Veterans of America hosted the 2023 Leadership Institute in Washington D.C. from October 19 – 21, 2023. SVA's Leadership Institute is the premier student leadership experience in the country. Each year we host some of the nation's top one-percent of student veterans for an all-inclusive three day leadership experience.

Thanks to our amazing sponsors at The Boeing Company for making this years' Leadership Institute possible. Their generous contributions in support of student veterans has allowed us to facilitate this transformative program.

Thank you  **BOEING**



# Research

## **The Student Veterans of America (SVA) Annual Census Survey is almost closed!**

In the autumn of each calendar year, SVA initiates a nationwide survey of veterans in higher education which is focused on collecting data on current student veterans and alumni. The data collected is then parsed into key takeaways which are used in discussions with policy makers, our partners, and the public at large.

Our Annual Census is one of the few national-level sources containing student veteran demographic data. Previous census surveys have produced insightful takeaways in important areas: academic success; disabilities; education debt; and military specialty and academic concentration.



### **Academic Success**

Student veterans perform well in academic settings despite their intersectional challenges which may affect their performance and their ability to attend school.



### **Disabilities**

Having a disability can affect the academic performance, finances and employment of student veterans and it can impact their collegiate experience.



### **Education Debt**

Education debt that occurs from attending college or university is one of the main factors which can influence a veteran's decision to pursue higher education.



### **Military Specialty and Academic Concentration**

A veteran's military specialization does not always translate or equate to civilian careers or interests, and often times veterans choose to pursue careers different from their military specialization.

**The Annual SVA Census is conducted each year via a web survey which is sent to our SVA networks, campus chapters, veteran points of contact on college campuses, and trusted social media channels.**



# Partner Spotlight

## \$1 Million Gift from The Walt Disney Company



Student Veterans of America (SVA) is the recipient of a \$1 million gift from The Walt Disney Company, establishing Disney as the founding sponsor of the SVA Career Center. This visionary gift will empower SVA to revolutionize career support for the nation's student veterans and pave the way for their successful transition into the civilian workforce.

The SVA Career Center, scheduled to launch as an online resource early next year, will offer tailored career readiness services, technology-driven programs, and a network of industry experts and mentors dedicated to supporting the unique needs and honing the distinctive skills of student veterans. Disney's investment will not only contribute to the establishment of this world-class SVA Career Center but will also foster the development of a strong community.

"We're proud to make this donation to the Student Veterans of America for their new virtual career center, which will help veterans making the transition from military life to college and career," said Bob Iger, Chief Executive Officer of The Walt Disney Company. "We believe Disney has an important role to play in giving back to those who bravely serve our country in uniform, and we look forward to finding even more ways to stand behind those who stand up for America."

Through this enhanced relationship with Disney, SVA looks forward to fostering a culture of innovation, collaboration, entrepreneurship, and success for student veterans nationwide, ultimately reshaping the landscape of post-military employment and empowerment.



# Student Veteran Spotlight

## Alex Ortiz

**Law Student | Veterans Policy | Tax Policy Advocate  
VFW-SVA Legislative Fellow | US Army Veteran**

VFW-SVA Legislative Fellow and 2022 Finalist for Student Veteran of the Year, Alex Ortiz, has accepted a position as Committee Member on the Advisory Committee for the U.S. Outlying Areas and Freely Associated States at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. In this position, he will be representing the unincorporated territory of Puerto Rico.

Ortiz would like to thank Student Veterans of America's Vice President of Government Affairs, Tammy Barlet, for her support and mentorship over the past two years. Also, Ortiz would like to extend his deepest gratitude to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Hon. Denis R. McDonough, and everyone who was involved, for entrusting him with this position on the Advisory Committee for the U.S. Outlying Areas and Freely Associated States.

Alex Ortiz is an outspoken advocate for the veteran community, and speaks about a multitude of issues veterans may face ranging from military discharge to finding a new purpose post-military. Currently, Ortiz is a 2L law student at the Inter-American University of Puerto Rico School of Law, and is active on-campus and in the local community.



# Board Spotlight

## Joseph Sautter

**STUDENT VETERANS OF AMERICA'S  
BOARD TREASURER**

Joe Sautter has been a member of the SVA Board of Directors since 2022 and was elected to serve as the Board Treasurer in 2023. He is the General Manager of Sports Logistics & Event Management at ESPN Wide World of Sports and runDisney at the Walt Disney World® Resort.

Joe joined the Sports and runDisney team in 2018 in his current position where he leads the teams that execute over 60 different types of sporting events at the Sports complex with 16 baseball/softball diamonds, 18 multi-purpose fields, a track and field complex and two field houses and an arena. He and his team contributed to a Disney-wide effort to ensure the MLS tournaments and NBA Bubble happened seamlessly during the pandemic. He also leads the team that coordinates 27 races over 10 runDisney race weekends throughout the year in WDW, Disneyland Paris and Castaway Cay with Disney Cruise Line.





# Chapter Spotlight

## Cornell Veterans

Cornell University has been named the #1 Best College for Veterans in the 2024 U.S. News ranking! This remarkable achievement is a testament to the dedication and support of our outstanding Cornell Vet Team and Faculty.

Today, at Cornell University as we came together for the 2nd Annual Military/Veterans Reception, our Provost, Michael I. Kotlikoff, proudly declared Cornell is now a Purple Heart institution. It's a true honor reflecting our deep commitment.

A decade ago, we stood with just six student veterans; today, we stand united with over 100, along with a vibrant ROTC brigade that includes Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force. This journey was fueled by the collective dedication of staff, alumni, and students. The incredible veteran community at Cornell stands as a testament to our shared values and unwavering support. One of the biggest achievements we made was initiating the first and only veteran program house of the Ivies - a space where camaraderie and growth intertwine. And we are honored to bring this Purple Heart Plaque back to the Veteran program house.

As we celebrate these achievements, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to our military community for their sacrifices and resilience. Together, we continue to create an inspiring legacy.



## Syracuse University

Syracuse University SVO stopped by the SVA HQ and had the opportunity to speak with our Vice President of Government Affairs, Tammy Barlet, and Director of Development, Calvin Jensen.

During this time the student veterans learned about SVA's legislative priorities, programming, and our upcoming National Conference (NatCon).





# DEI Spotlight

The Visibility Exchange is our newest educational program that brings the Student Veterans of America Team on the road and directly to your university! Thanks to the generous support from RTX, this dynamic and engaging half-day program provides an opportunity for the SVA Team to work with your campus chapter leadership and members. Using interactive exercises and reflections, the SVA Team assists campus chapters in engaging a broader and more robust membership, growing and strengthening the chapter, identifying allies on campus and building meaningful relationships, and developing action plans specific to your campus. While on campus, the SVA Team is also able to meet with university leadership to help campuses support inclusive veteran environments and highlight the great work being done by your chapters.

The Visibility Exchange was launched this fall at Marshall University, and traveled to Cal State Fullerton, Virginia Commonwealth University, Howard University, Florida State, Alabama State, University of Nevada Las Vegas, and the University of Kansas, with neighboring campuses joining each presentation. The SVA Team is gearing up for another season full of travel to bring the Visibility Exchange to even more campuses and student veterans this spring. If you are interested in learning more or hosting the Visibility Exchange on your campus, please reach out to [programs@studentveterans.org](mailto:programs@studentveterans.org).





# Local Chapter News

## Operation Iron Ruck Auburn University & Alabama University

Operation Iron Ruck is an annual event hosted by the Auburn Student Veterans Association (ASVA) and the University of Alabama Campus Veterans Association (CVA) to raise awareness and funds for veteran suicide prevention. Student veterans, veteran alumni and ROTC from both universities completed a 151-mile ruck which started at the University of Alabama and ended at Auburn University. Each year the game ball is carried and delivered by the ruckers.



## Clemson v University of South Carolina Rivalry Tailgate

*"Enemies on the gridiron, allies on the battlefield!"*

SVA Chapters from Clemson University and the University of South Carolina have put aside their fierce rivalry for a few hours before the big game to host the first annual co-tailgate to celebrate the similarities in the veteran community.

## Casper College Veterans Club

Casper College Veterans Club, a chapter of Student Veterans of America, recently held their annual Veterans Ball. The Veterans Ball served as a way to honor the Veterans in the community as well as raise money to send student veterans to our 16th Annual NatCon. The Casper College SVA Chapter led by Chapter President Caleb Lindsay, raised over \$2,700 in raffles, which will help send student Veterans to NatCon.

