



**Veterans Support Center**

STUDENT AFFAIRS | THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

# Annual Report 2022



## Contents

|                                                   |           |
|---------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>Section 1: Executive Summary</b>               | <b>3</b>  |
| b) <b>Mission</b>                                 | 3         |
| c) <b>Vision</b>                                  | 4         |
| d) <b>Values</b>                                  | 4         |
| e) <b>Purpose</b>                                 | 4         |
| f) <b>Functions</b>                               | 4         |
| <b>Section 2: Status of Strategic Initiatives</b> | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>Section 3: Major Accomplishments</b>           | <b>10</b> |
| <b>Section 4</b>                                  | <b>13</b> |
| <b>Section 5</b>                                  | <b>14</b> |

## Section 1: Executive Summary

- a) This executive summary provides an overview of the University of Utah Veterans Support Center, its mission, functions, programs, services, accomplishments, and challenges. The Veterans Support Center is dedicated to providing support, resources, and a welcoming environment for military-affiliated students, veterans, and their families.



Figure 1: Major Accomplishments during the 2022-23 Academic year.

- b) **Mission: We support military connected student's well-being and success.**  
Our mission is to provide unwavering support for military-connected students, promoting their well-being and fostering a welcoming campus culture. We are dedicated to enhancing their educational experience, breaking down barriers, and unlocking their full academic, psychosocial, and career potentials. Through our comprehensive efforts, we strive to ensure their unconditional success in the classroom and empower them for future endeavors.



c) **Vision:** For students to discover their passion, people, and purpose.



d) **Values:**

- i) Belonging: We will always strive for students to bring their authentic self to campus, where they feel valued and connected.
- ii) Care: We provide a holistic well-being approach so every student feels seen, valued, and heard.
- iii) Integrity: We approach every situation with honesty and transparency to align our actions with our values.
- iv) Lifelong Learning: We provide formal and informal learning opportunities to develop and improve knowledge and skills needed to be successful.
- v) Self-discovery: We believe acquiring insight into one's own character, interests, and skills should be fostered in all aspects of student services.
- vi) Student-centered: We consider the student perspective in all that we do.

e) **Purpose:** The purpose of the Veterans Support Center is to support student well-being and success, particularly for military-connected students. It aims to create a supportive environment and foster a welcoming campus culture, eliminating barriers that may hinder the academic, psychosocial, and career development of MCSs. The ultimate goal is to ensure the unconditional success of these students both in the classroom and beyond.

f) **Functions:**

- i) Providing a Supportive Hub: The Veterans Support Center serves as a central hub for military-connected students, offering a wide range of services and resources to cater to their unique needs.

- ii) **Advocacy:** The center advocates for the rights and needs of military-connected students within the educational institution and beyond.
- iii) **Mentoring:** The Veterans Support Center may offer mentoring programs where experienced individuals guide and support military-connected students in their academic and personal growth.
- iv) **Career Support:** Assistance with career development and job placement is provided to help military-connected students transition successfully into the workforce.
- v) **VA Benefits Advising:** Guidance and support are offered to students regarding their VA (Veterans Affairs) benefits and entitlements.

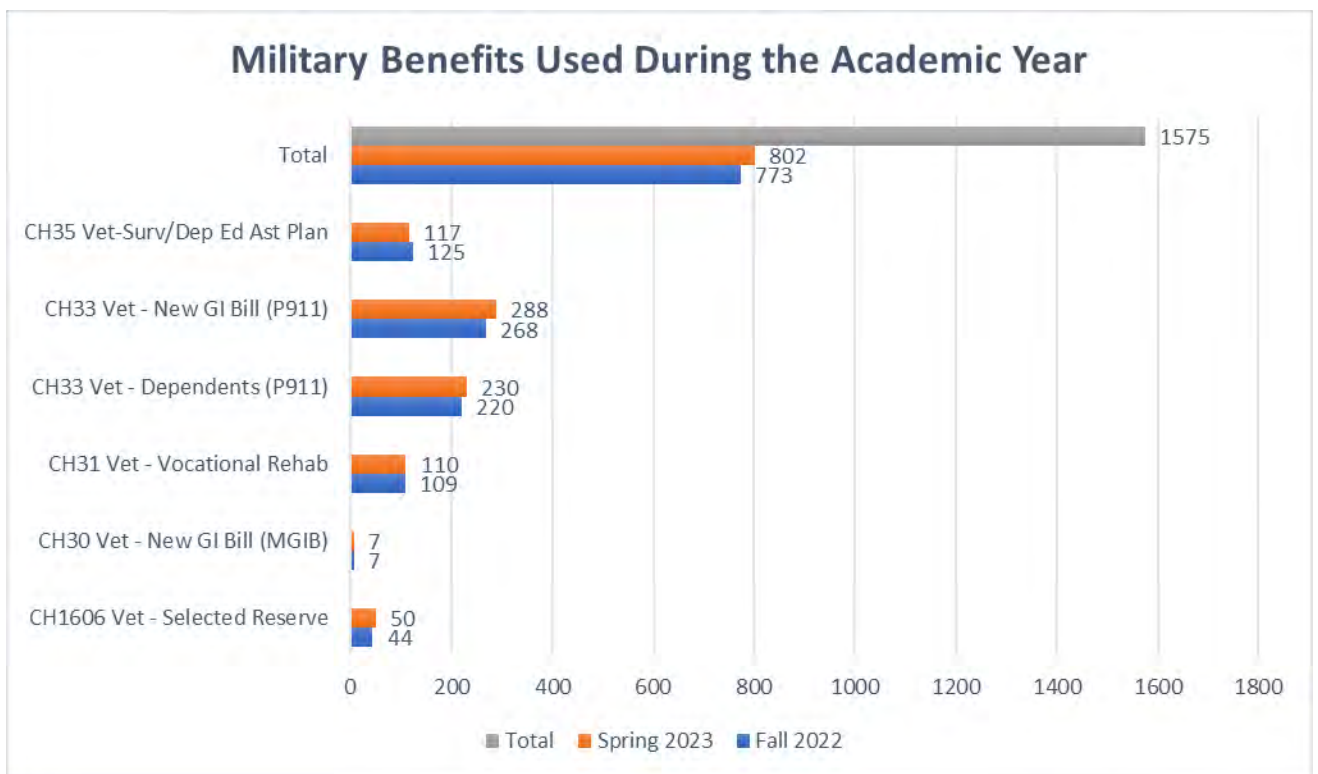


Figure 2: Military benefits used by our military-connected students during the 2022-23 Academic year.

- vi) **Counseling and Health Services Referral:** The Veterans Support Center may facilitate access to counseling services and referrals to health resources when needed.
- vii) **Utah Tuition Gap Processing:** The center may assist in processing the Utah Tuition Gap, a state program designed to fill the gap between in-state and out-of-state tuition rates for qualifying military-connected students who have exhausted all benefits during their final year in college.

- viii) Computer and Printing Resources: Access to computers and printing facilities is provided to assist military-connected students with their academic work.
- ix) Textbook Loans: The Veterans Support Center may offer textbook loan programs to help alleviate the financial burden of purchasing course materials.
- x) Scholarships: Military-connected students may have access to scholarships provided through the Veterans Support Center or its partners.
- xi) Peer Support: The center fosters a sense of community among military-connected students, providing opportunities for peer support and networking.
- xii) Hosting Specialized Assistance: The Veterans Support Center houses specialized personnel such as School Certifying Officers (SCOs), VA Vocational Rehabilitation/Veterans Readiness & Education program (VR&E) counselors. These individuals offer tailored assistance and benefits information to military-connected students.
- g) Overall, the Veterans Support Center plays a crucial role in enhancing the educational experience of military-connected students by providing a comprehensive support system and empowering them to achieve their academic and career goals.

| Retention of Veteran Students 2017-22  |        |        |        |        |        |                        |
|----------------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|------------------------|
|                                        | YR 2   | YR 3   | YR 4   | YR 5   | YR 6   | Total Veteran Students |
|                                        | 1187   | 759    | 446    | 181    | 75     | 1743                   |
|                                        | 68.10% | 43.50% | 25.60% | 10.40% | 4.30%  |                        |
| Graduation of Veteran Students 2017-22 |        |        |        |        |        |                        |
| YR 1                                   | YR 2   | YR 3   | YR4    | YR 5   | YR 6   | Total Veteran Students |
| 8                                      | 112    | 269    | 400    | 441    | 443    | 1743                   |
| 0.50%                                  | 6.40%  | 15.40% | 22.90% | 25.30% | 25.40% |                        |

Figure 3: Retention and Graduation rate of military-connected students during the 2022-23 Academic year.

## Section 2: Status of Strategic Initiatives

- h) The Veterans Support Center has taken a proactive approach in enhancing its support for military-connected students through strategic initiatives. They are focusing on staff training, utilization improvement, addressing space challenges, developing new programs, prioritizing staff management and well-being, recognizing achievements, and seeking partnerships and donors. The center's commitment to ongoing progress is evident through continuous measurement and feedback collection, ensuring a nurturing and inclusive environment for military-affiliated students.
- i) Strategic Initiative 1: Staff Training and Professional Development (ongoing)

- (1) Action Steps:
  - (a) Identify training and professional development courses relevant to each staff member's job.
  - (b) Collaborate with Student Affairs to recommend training courses beneficial to both the center and the department.
  - (c) Allocate funding, if necessary, and seek supervisor approval for staff training.
- (2) Measurement Criteria:
  - (a) Each staff member submits a post-training report detailing what they learned and how they plan to apply it to their work.
  - (b) Conduct surveys or interviews with staff to gauge the impact of training on their job performance.
  - (c) Track improvements in staff efficiency and competence after completing relevant training programs.

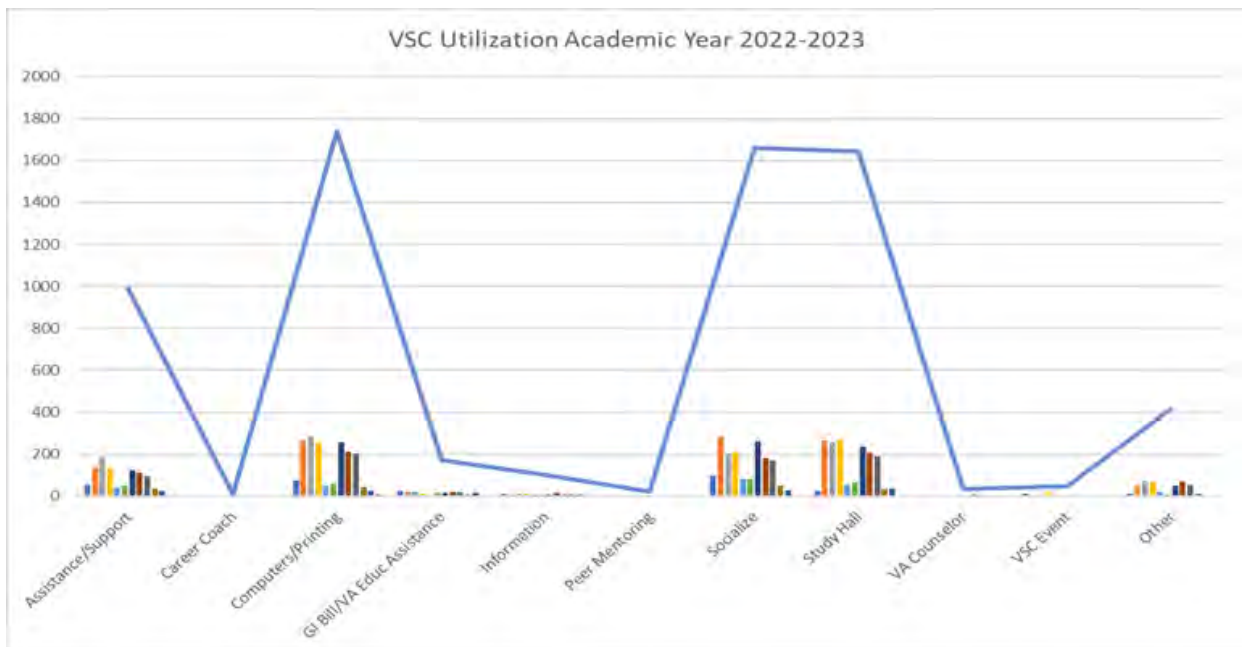


Figure 5: Utilization rate during the 2022-23 Academic year.

ii) Strategic Initiative 2: Utilization (ongoing)

- (1) Action Steps:
  - (a) Implement a check-in system using Tableau to monitor student visits and service utilization.
  - (b) Conduct tabling events to raise awareness of the center's services and resources among Military Connected students.
- (2) Measurement Criteria:
  - (a) Analyze data from Tableau to assess overall center utilization and identify trends.

- (b) Use Qualtrics surveys to gather feedback from students on their experiences with center services.
- (c) Compare utilization rates semester by semester and year over year to track improvements.

iii) Strategic Initiative 3: Space (ongoing)

(1) Action Steps:

- (a) Gather data on center utilization and present it to the university to advocate for additional space.
- (b) Explore partnerships with other organizations or departments to establish satellite centers.
- (c) Secure funding and supervisor approval for the expansion of the center or the creation of satellite spaces.

(2) Measurement Criteria:

- (a) Track the number of students using the center before and after expansion.
- (b) Conduct focus groups with students to assess their satisfaction with the new spaces and services.
- (c) Monitor student feedback through Qualtrics surveys to gauge the impact of increased space on their experience.

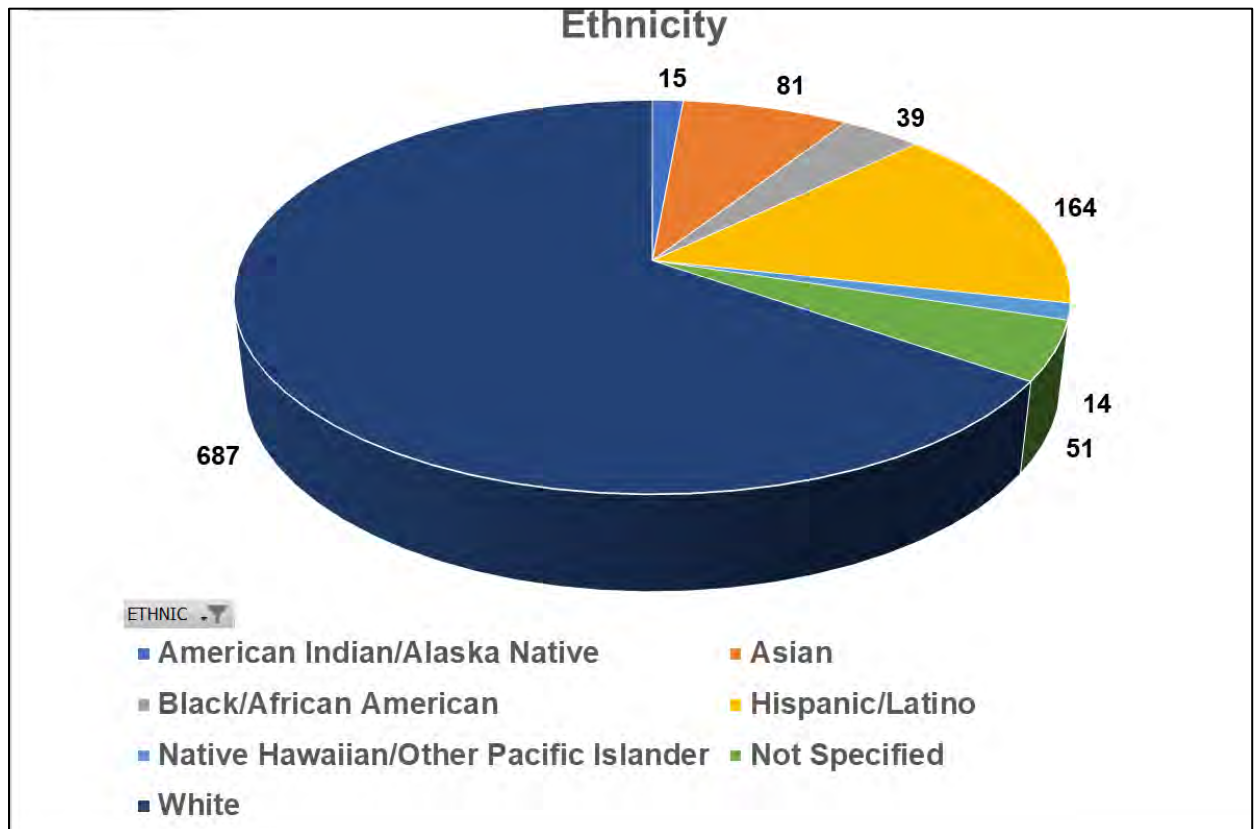


Figure 4: Ethnicity of military-connected students during the 2022-23 Academic year.

## iv) Strategic Initiative 4: Additional Programs (ongoing)

## (1) Action Steps:

- (a) Collaborate with relevant departments to develop programs tailored to Military Connected students' needs.
- (b) Administer a Qualtrics survey to gather student input on the types of additional services they would benefit from.
- (c) Allocate funding and seek supervisor approval for the implementation of new programs.

## (2) Measurement Criteria:

- (a) Track student participation and engagement in the newly implemented programs.
- (b) Conduct focus groups or interviews to collect feedback on the effectiveness and relevance of the new programs.
- (c) Use Qualtrics surveys to assess overall satisfaction with the expanded services.

## v) Strategic Initiative 5: Staff Management and Wellbeing (ongoing)

## (1) Action Steps:

- (a) Set individual professional and personal goals for staff and ensure follow-up counseling.
- (b) Organize team-building activities to foster camaraderie and teamwork.
- (c) Conduct regular check-ins with staff to address their concerns and gather feedback.

## (2) Measurement Criteria:

- (a) Use climate surveys to assess staff satisfaction and identify areas for improvement.
- (b) Track the completion of individual goals using the UUPM or other performance evaluation tools.
- (c) Measure staff engagement and wellbeing through regular assessments and feedback collection.

## vi) Strategic Initiative 6: Staff and Student Recognition (ongoing)

## (1) Action Steps:

- (a) Plan events and ceremonies to celebrate staff and student achievements.
- (b) Utilize social media and monthly newsletters to highlight success stories.
- (c) Establish scholarships and awards to recognize outstanding students and staff members.

## (2) Measurement Criteria:

- (a) Monitor social media engagement and newsletter readership to gauge the reach and impact of recognition efforts.

- (b) Track the number of scholarships and awards given to students and staff annually.
- (c) Collect feedback from staff and students on the effectiveness and meaningfulness of the recognition initiatives.



vii) Strategic Initiative 7: Partnerships and Donors (ongoing)

(1) Action Steps:

- (a) Collaborate with the Advancement team to identify potential donors and arrange meetings with existing donors.
- (b) Forge relationships with university departments and external organizations to expand partnerships.
- (c) Work with the Utah Department of Veterans and Military Affairs to connect with military organizations.

(2) Measurement Criteria:

- (a) Keep a record of the number of new partnerships and donors established each year.
- (b) Track the amount of new scholarships and donations received to support Military Connected students.
- (c) Evaluate the impact of partnerships through feedback from both students and partner organizations.

## Section 3: Major Accomplishments

- a) The Veterans Support Center has achieved significant success in supporting its military-connected students. They have been recognized as a prestigious Military Friendly School and are establishing satellite support centers. The center has successfully held events to honor veterans and military-connected graduates and launched the Military Students at the U (MSU) organization. They introduced the Veterans Studies Certificate

and increased scholarships. Proactive measures to enhance facilities have improved utilization rates and services, reflecting their commitment to creating a supportive environment for the military-connected community.

- i) Major Accomplishment 1: The University of Utah Veterans Support Center has been recognized as a prestigious Military Friendly School, achieving Gold status among Tier 1 Research Institutions. This designation underscores the university's commitment to supporting military-affiliated students and providing excellent educational opportunities. The center remains dedicated to creating an inclusive and supportive environment for its military-connected community.



- ii) Major Accomplishment 2: The Veterans Support Center is partnering with the Quinney College of Law and the Heath Equity and Inclusion at the Eccles Health Sciences Education Building to establish two veteran satellite support centers in fall 2023. These centers will cater to military-connected students pursuing law and health-related degrees, providing tailored support and resources. The initiative reflects the university's commitment to comprehensive support for its military-connected community across diverse academic fields.
- iii) Major Accomplishment 3: The Veterans Support Center held a successful 2022 Veterans Day commemoration, honoring 11 esteemed Utah veterans. The ceremony expressed deep appreciation for veterans' bravery and sacrifices, featuring a bagpipe procession and commemorative medallions. The event also recognized the Student Veteran of the Year, reaffirming the university's commitment to supporting and honoring veterans' contributions to society.

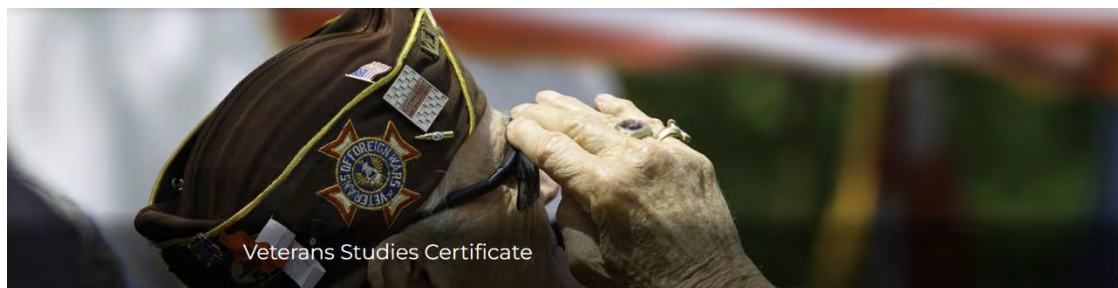


- iv) Major Accomplishment 4: The Veterans Support Center held its first-ever 2023 Bayonet Ceremony, celebrating 315 military-connected graduates for their exceptional dedication and resilience in their academic journey. The event was a heartfelt tribute, recognizing their achievements and supporting them as they begin

new chapters in their lives. The Veterans Support Center takes great pride in honoring these graduates and their contributions to the university community.



- v) Major Accomplishment 5: The University of Utah's Veterans Support Center launched the Military Students at the U (MSU) student organization, in collaboration with ASUU. Led by students, MSU serves as a platform for military-connected students to voice their needs and concerns. The organization aims to support the campus and wider community, fostering a sense of belonging and camaraderie among military-affiliated students while making a positive impact on the university environment.
- vi) Major Accomplishment 6: During the spring semester, the Veterans Support Center organized its first-ever military workshop, which was highly successful. The workshop brought together university staff, faculty, and students to raise awareness of the unique challenges faced by military-connected students on campus. The event highlighted the various ways the Veterans Support Center and the university community can support these students in overcoming their challenges. The workshop facilitated productive discussions and fostered a deeper understanding of the needs and experiences of military-affiliated students within the university community.
- vii) Major Accomplishment 7: The Veterans Support Center successfully launched the Veterans Studies Certificate in the fall semester of 2022. This undergraduate program provides students with a comprehensive understanding of veterans and their experiences, covering various aspects of military service and their implications for veterans and society. The certificate aims to equip students with foundational knowledge to better support and relate to veterans in different settings, promoting empathy and support for veterans in various environments.



- viii) Major Accomplishment 8: The Veterans Support Center's participation in the Student Orientation resulted in attracting more military-connected students and families, leading to increased utilization of its services. Engaging with over 60 new military-connected students and their families, the center fostered a supportive and inclusive environment on campus for the military-connected community.
- ix) Major Accomplishment 10: The Veterans Support Center has made substantial improvements in supporting military-connected students by enhancing its scholarship offerings. The center increased the number of scholarships from 45 to 65 and extended funding for both fall and spring semesters. Additionally, the total amount of scholarships has been raised from \$50,000 to \$75,000, highlighting the center's dedication to alleviating financial burdens and empowering military-affiliated students in their academic journey.
- x) Major Accomplishment 9: The Veterans Support Center responded to the increasing utilization rate by upgrading its facilities. They transformed the conference room into a study hall, adding more computers (from 10 to 15) and soft furniture. This strategic decision reflects the center's commitment to providing a comfortable environment and ample resources for the academic success and well-being of the military-connected community.
- xi) Major Accomplishment 11: The University of Utah Veterans Support Center achieved remarkable success in increasing utilization rates and services for military-connected students. With a significant rise from 4,744 to 6,807 students utilizing its services, the center's efforts have been highly effective. The top three services utilized by students were computers and printing, socializing opportunities, and the study hall. This achievement showcases the center's commitment to meeting the needs of its military-connected community and fostering a welcoming and supportive environment for student-veterans on campus.

## Section 4: Major Challenges

- a) The Veterans Support Center is facing two significant challenges. Firstly, with a growing population of military-connected students, there is an urgent need to expand the support team by securing approval for a Program Coordinator position to enhance services and meet student demands effectively. Secondly, limited space is hindering the center's ability to accommodate the increasing utilization rate and implement crucial programs, such as VA financial wellness and counseling services. Expanding the physical capacity is vital to ensure comprehensive support for military-affiliated students' academic and personal success.
- i) The Veterans Support Center at the University of Utah is facing a critical challenge in meeting the increasing needs of its military-connected student population. With limited core staff members, they urgently require approval for a Program Coordinator position to enhance the support team's capacity. This role is vital for providing comprehensive services to over 1200 military-connected students, ensuring their academic success and well-being on campus.

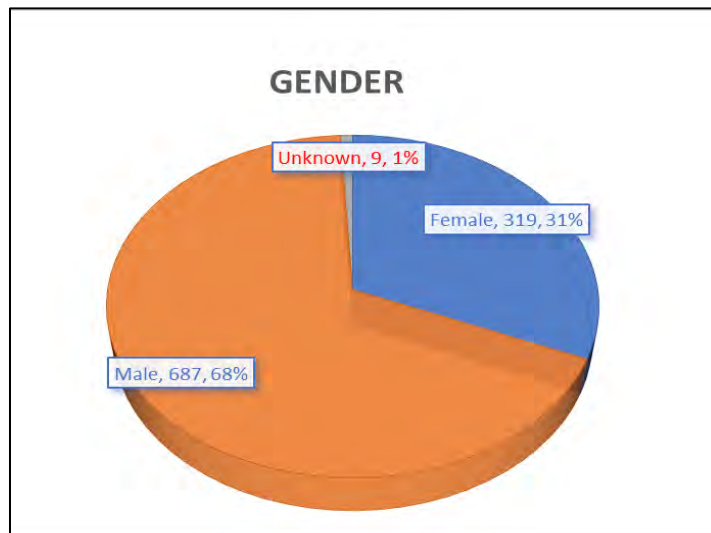


Figure 6: Military-connected student gender during the 2022-23 Academic year.

- ii) The Veterans Support Center at the University of Utah is facing a pressing challenge due to limited space. As the number of military-connected students using the center increases, there is a struggle to provide adequate space to meet their needs. Furthermore, the center's plans to implement crucial programs are hindered by the lack of sufficient space. Expanding the physical capacity of the center is essential to effectively support military-affiliated students and to implement important initiatives focused on their financial wellness, counseling, disability, and access services.

## Section 5: New/Continuing Strategic Initiatives

- a) The University of Utah's Veterans Support Center is actively working on strategic initiatives to enhance support for military-connected students. They are pursuing approval for a Program Coordinator position, expanding services through satellite centers, and considering a name change for inclusivity. The university aims to become the most military-friendly institution by providing in-state tuition for military members and dependents. The center is also focused on finding suitable space and implementing additional programs to create a supportive environment for all military-connected students.



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- (1) The veterans support center will accomplish this by:

- (a) Collaborating with the university to review the budget and request funds to support the Program Coordinator position.
  - (b) Highlighting the vital impact of the role and responsibilities of this position in enhancing support for the 1200 military-connected students.
  - (c) Alleviating the additional duties on the two core staff members, allowing them to focus more on providing comprehensive support to the military-connected community.
  - (d) Evaluating the effectiveness of having the Program Coordinator through current data measurements used to assess the success and impact of the center's programs and services.
- ii) The Veterans Support Center is strategically expanding its services by establishing more veteran support satellite centers through meaningful partnerships. These centers will be strategically located to provide essential support services to the substantial population of military-connected students, creating a more inclusive and supportive campus environment for military-affiliated students.
- (1) The veterans support center will accomplish this by:
  - (a) Conducting Qualtrics surveys to identify colleges with high military-connected student populations.
  - (b) Collaborate with colleges to establish veteran support center satellite programs.
  - (c) Advocate the benefits of these programs to relevant university stakeholders.
  - (d) Ensure seamless integration and coordination between the main center and satellite centers.
  - (e) Evaluate the effectiveness of satellite programs in meeting military-connected students' needs.



- iii) The Veterans Support Center is in the process of undergoing a significant change to better reflect its comprehensive support for all military-connected students. Recognizing that their services extend beyond veterans to include active duty personnel, national guard members, reservists, spouses, and dependents, the center is working to change its name. This rebranding effort aims to raise awareness within the community and emphasize that the center is a dedicated resource for all military-

connected individuals. The name change will signify the center's commitment to inclusivity and ensure that all members of the military community feel welcome and supported.

- (1) The veterans support center will accomplish this by:
  - (a) Conducting Qualtrics surveys among the military-connected student population to gather feedback on the proposed name change.
  - (b) Assess the potential impact of the name change on campus and the community.
  - (c) Evaluate the cost implications of rebranding and its feasibility.
  - (d) Measure the potential increase in awareness and utilization of the center and its services after the name change.

- iv) The veterans support center has a bold vision to become the most military-friendly university in the nation. To achieve this, they are actively working on various initiatives, including modifying university policies such as residency requirements. The goal is to extend in-state tuition benefits to military members and their dependents who are on active duty outside of Utah, aligning with military-friendly practices. This effort demonstrates the university's commitment to supporting the military community and creating an inclusive and welcoming environment for all military-connected students.



- (1) The veterans support center will accomplish this by:
  - (a) Collaborating with departments such as admissions, housing, residency, VA, state, and the university to review existing policies and work towards updating them to better support military-connected students.
  - (b) Evaluating the impact and results of these policy updates by reviewing current data on the experiences and outcomes of military-connected students.

- v) The veterans Support Center is dedicated to collaborating with the university and partners to find suitable space for military-connected students. Their goal is to establish an inclusive environment that fosters support and inclusivity, allowing for the implementation of additional programs tailored to the unique needs of the military-connected community. The center's ongoing efforts reflect their commitment to enhancing the overall experience and success of military-connected students through accessible and tailored support services and resources.

- (1) The veterans support center will accomplish this by:
  - (a) Collaborating with Student Affairs, other departments, and the university to explore alternative options and potential solutions regarding space that would better support the needs of military-connected students.