

Program Review Update 2025

Program: Veterans First

Division: Student Services

Writer(s): Evelyn Andrews

SLO/SAO Point-Person:

Email your completed form to Karin Spirn and your dean by November 3.

Helpful Links:

- ★ [Tools for Writers](#) - with contacts and info for help with specific sections.
- ★ [Program Review Glossary](#) - defines key terms you can review when writing.
- ★ [Discipline Data Packets](#) – institutional research about disciplines and student services
- ★ [Course Success Rates Dashboard](#) – allows you to research your program's success rates

Detailed information and instructions appear at the end of this form. For help, please contact Karin Spirn at kspirn@laspositascollege.edu.

1. Please describe your program's most important **achievements** in year 24-25.

In **Summer/Fall 2024**, the Veterans First Program launched **Operation Gateway**, a two-day onboarding experience designed specifically for newly admitted student veterans.

The program was developed to provide early academic, financial, and personal support, while also fostering a sense of community and ensuring veterans were fully prepared to use their VA education benefits. Operation Gateway centered on three goals: increasing awareness of key campus and community resources, cultivating a sense of belonging among incoming veterans, and strengthening academic planning to support long-term retention.

Over the course of the orientation, student veterans participated in a guided campus tour that introduced them to essential student services such as the computer lab, library, Disabled Student Programs & Services (DSPS), Career Center, and Financial Aid Office. They also met individually with the Veterans Counselor to develop a required educational plan, received a career and internship presentation from Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, heard from an alumni panel of LPC veterans now working in STEM fields, and engaged with community partners during a Veterans Resource Fair.

By the conclusion of the program, participants left with a mapped academic plan, a fully verified VA file, early certification of their courses, scheduled follow-up support from a Veterans Success Coach, personal connections to the Student Veterans Organization and Veterans Resource Center staff, and access to digital tools and materials to assist them throughout their transition into college life. **Spring 2025** – Honoring Women Veterans Event and Scholarships

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In **Spring 2025**, the Veterans First Program hosted the **Honoring Women Veterans** celebration, a signature event dedicated to recognizing the service, resilience, and achievements of women veterans at Las Positas College. As one of the most underserved and historically overlooked populations within the veteran community, women veterans are rarely acknowledged publicly for their military contributions. This event directly addressed that gap by centering their voices, stories, and accomplishments.

A key highlight of the program was the presentation of a \$5,000 scholarship to up to female combat veteran pursuing a STEM major at Las Positas College, generously funded by the Valley Veterans Foundation. Additional scholarships were presented which provided meaningful financial support to help women veterans persist in their academic and career pathways.

In addition, select women combat veterans were honored with handmade Quilts of Valor, a nationally recognized tribute awarded to service members and veterans who have been touched by war. Each quilt was presented in recognition of their courage, sacrifice, and commitment to protecting our freedom.

Beyond celebration, the event served as an affirmation of belonging, visibility, and institutional support for women veterans—many of whom balance multiple identities as students, caregivers, workers, and community leaders. By elevating their achievements, Las Positas College affirmed its commitment to equity, inclusion, and the intentional honoring of underrepresented veteran populations.

2. Please describe your most important **challenges** in year 24-25.

Despite significant progress in programming and student engagement, the Veterans First Program continues to face structural and staffing limitations that directly impact service delivery and equity goals.

Insufficient Space

The current Veterans Resource Center (VRC) is no longer adequate for the volume of students served or the growing demand for academic, social, and mental health support. The limited square footage restricts our ability to:

- Host workshops, success coaching, and peer engagement activities
- Provide private space for counseling, certification support, or VA-related conversations
- Create a consistent gathering place that fosters belonging, community, and retention

A larger and more functional space is essential to sustain meaningful and continuous engagement with student veterans.

Staffing Limitations

The program includes two **part-time staff members**, a Veterans Outreach Specialist and a Veterans Counseling Assistant, who should be converted to full-time roles to ensure program continuity, compliance, and proactive outreach.

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Because of these limitations, we rely heavily on student assistants to:

- Staff the front desk and schedule appointments
- Support outreach and event coordination
- Maintain consistent coverage when professional staff are unavailable

This staffing model is not sustainable and places essential program operations at risk, particularly during peak months (certification cycles, enrollments, and event periods).

3. What SLO(s) or SAO(s) if any did your program assess or discuss since your last program review? Please describe any findings and planned actions.

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4. What are your upcoming plans? Please note any ways that these support student achievement and equity.

The Veterans First Program at Las Positas College is dedicated to advancing educational equity and enhancing student achievement for older, re-entry student veterans by removing structural barriers across the college experience. The program ensures timely access to education through priority registration, and provides personalized, veteran-focused academic counseling from a dedicated Veterans Counselor. A Veterans Specialist serves as the liaison with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to maintain full compliance with veterans' education benefits, while comprehensive programming supports each student's successful transition from military to college culture and fosters a strong sense of belonging and community on campus.

Guided by the U.S. Department of Education's 8 Keys to Veterans' Success, the program intentionally embeds trust, empathy, connection, and wrap-around support into all services. We uphold full compliance with U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs regulations by ensuring student veterans are enrolled in degree-applicable coursework aligned with their academic and benefit requirements—protecting both students and institutional integrity.

To further support whole-student success, the program cultivates strong partnerships with VA agencies, including VA Palo Alto Health Care, and local veteran service organizations to provide “lunch and learn” sessions that reduce stigma, increase resource access, and build community for veterans who may be returning to college with hidden disabilities or service-related trauma. On campus, we collaborate closely with the Disability Resource Center, Financial Aid, Learning Support faculty, and other student services to deliver targeted workshops and in-center support that address the unique academic and personal challenges veterans may face.

Central to this work is the **Veterans Resource Center (VRC)**—a dedicated physical and social space that fosters belonging, peer connection, and identity affirmation for non-traditional, military-connected students.

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The VRC functions not only as a hub for services, but as a community anchor where veterans can find camaraderie, mentorship, and a sense of shared experience rooted in service and commitment to one another.

Upcoming Plans to Strengthen Student Success, Support, and Equity for Veterans

- **Expand use of Joint Services Transcripts (JSTs)** and Credit for Prior Learning to accelerate degree completion and reduce time-to-graduation for veterans.
- **Increase access to basic needs resources** by offering food gift cards, emergency relief funds, and partnerships with the campus food pantry to address food insecurity among student veterans and their dependents.
- **Develop peer- and staff-led mental health support spaces**, including veteran-specific group circles, wellness workshops, and community-building events that reduce isolation and foster belonging.
- **Advocate for expanded staffing** by converting current part-time roles into full-time positions to ensure consistent front desk coverage, event planning, and benefit certification support.
- **Strengthen partnerships with VA mental health and readjustment services** (e.g., VA Palo Alto, Vet Centers) to provide on-campus or virtual counseling access.
- **Create an early alert and follow-up system** for first-term veterans to support retention through proactive check-ins by the Veterans Success Coach team.
- **Host more career readiness events** in collaboration with industry partners such as LLNL, local government, trades, and veteran-friendly employers.
- **Implement targeted outreach to underserved veteran populations**, including women veterans, student-parents, disabled veterans, and LGBTQ+ veterans, through tailored programming and recognition events.
- **Expand financial literacy and benefit navigation workshops** to ensure veterans fully understand VA benefits, FAFSA, scholarships, and long-term funding strategies.
- **Pursue institutional support for a larger Veterans Resource Center** to accommodate workshops, peer mentoring, tutoring, and social connection in a dedicated equity space.

CTE REPORT (CTE DISCIPLINES ONLY)

1. Does this program continue to meet a labor market demand?

- Yes or No:
- Explanation/evidence:

2. Are there similar programs in the area? If yes, list the programs and their institutions.

- Yes or No:
- Explanation/evidence:

3. Has the program demonstrated effectiveness as measured by the employment and completion success of its students? Provide employment and completion success based on Perkins Core Indicator Report.

- Yes or No:

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- Explanation/evidence:

4. Does the program provide opportunities for review and comments by local private industries? Attach most recent Advisory Committee meeting minutes.

- Yes or No:
- Explanation/evidence:

Detailed Instructions and Information

Instructions:

1. Please answer each question with enough detail to present your information, but it doesn't have to be long.
2. If the requested information does not apply to your program, write "Not Applicable."
3. Optional/suggested: Communicate with your dean while completing this document.
4. Send an electronic copy of this completed form to Program Review chair Karin Spirn and your Dean by November 3.
5. Even if you don't have much to report, we want to hear from you, so your voice is part of the college planning process.

Audience: Deans, Vice Presidents of Student Services and Academic Services, All Planning and Allocation Committees. This document will be available to the public.

Uses: This Program Review will inform the audience about your program. It is also used in creating division summaries, determining college planning priorities, and determining the allocation of resources. The final use is to document the fulfillment of accreditation requirements.

Please note: Program Review is NOT a vehicle for making requests. All requests should be made through appropriate processes (e.g., Instructional Equipment Request Process) or directed to your dean or supervisor.

Time Frame: This Program Review should reflect your program status during the 24-25 academic year. It should describe plans starting now and continuing through 2025-26. It is okay to include information outside of these time windows as needed.

Program Review Process: Comprehensive Program Reviews will be completed every three years, in alignment with the SLO/SAO cycle. On the other years, programs will complete an update.

SLO/SAO Process: SLOs and SAOs should be assessed according to a three-year plan, with comprehensive reporting on the third year. For more information, contact SLO chair John Rosen: jrosen@laspositascollege.edu

Equity is a guiding principle. Here is the LPC definition:

Las Positas College will achieve equity by changing the impacts of structural racism, ableism, homophobia, and systematic poverty on student success and access to higher education, achieved through continuous evaluation and improvement of all services. We believe in a high-quality education focused on learning and an inclusive, culturally relevant environment that meets the diverse needs of all our students.

LPC Equity Definition: Equity is parity in student educational outcomes. It places student success and belonging for students of color and disproportionately impacted students at the center of focus.