

Dear friends of MVFI,

The past year has been marked by extreme challenges, with the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, continuing economic struggles, national reckonings with racism, and political upheaval. On top of these challenges, our nation's servicemembers, veterans, and their family members were confronted with the disheartening fall of Afghanistan and the 20th anniversary of 9/11.

George Mason University rose to meet these challenges in many ways, including the formal launch of the Military, Veterans, and Families Initiative (MVFI) during the week of Veterans Day in 2020. The MVFI seeks to leverage Mason's strengths as the largest, most diverse, public research university in the National Capital Region to serve those who given their all in service to our nation.

With the support of donors like you, MVFI worked to solidify and expand Mason's impact through educational supports, a wide range of research projects, training of future professionals who will work with veteran and military-connected populations, and direct services offered to the population. In addition, MVFI provided numerous virtual panels and workshops to promote awareness and connection during the pandemic, and also helped launch a Veterans Chapter of the Alumni Association.

I can't thank you enough for your support of our efforts. Mason stands ready to double down on the success we have had in just over a year. MVFI is currently working to increase scholarship support for veterans and military spouses, streamline transfer processes for student veterans, develop a suite of new resources for servicemembers, veterans, and their family members in our student body, and offer more robust research consultation services for nonprofits and governmental agencies. We are deeply dedicated to our mission of serving the military community, and grateful for the support and opportunities we have to do so here at Mason.

Sincerely,

Keith D. Renshaw, Ph.D.

Director, Military, Veterans, & Families Initiative

Introduction

George Mason University's Military, Veterans, & Families Initiative (MVFI) seeks to leverage Mason's strengths as the largest, most diverse public research university in our region to support those who have given their all in service to our nation. We focus our efforts in four main areas:

1. Education

Approximately

10%

of the student body self-identifies as a service member, veteran, or family member (SMVF).

Our Office of Military Services helps these students, from issues related to processing benefits to disbursement of emergency funds for those in need. We also have programs that are specifically geared toward service members or veterans (e.g., Marine Corps Congressional Fellowship Program in the Schar School), some with streamlined transfer of prior training for credit.

2. Direct Services

We provide direct services pro bono to SMVF, through applied training in some of our graduate/professional programs. Two primary examples are the M-VETS clinic in the Scalia Law School and the Center for Psychological Services in the Psychology Department.



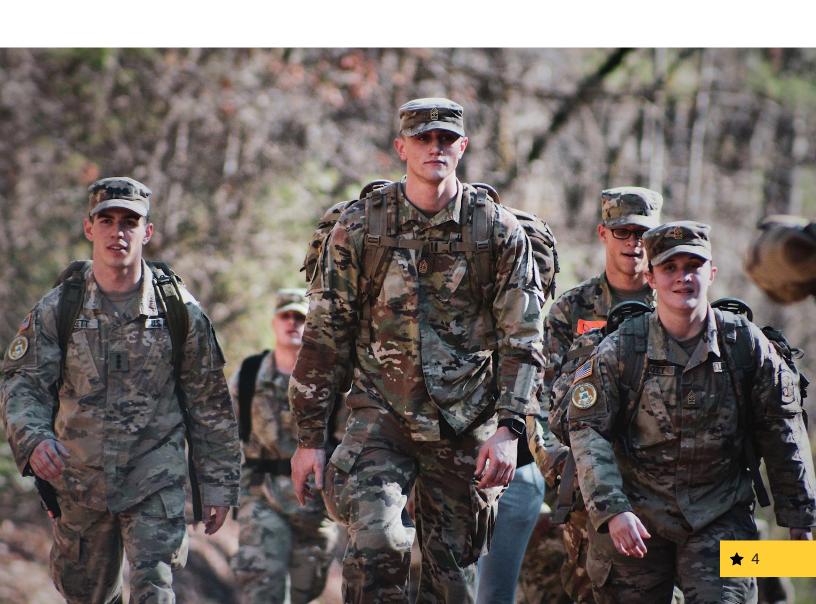
3. Training

We embed training in addressing issues specific to the SMVF population within some of our curricular programs. A primary example of this is the Educate the Educators modules that are offered in the context of curriculum for future teachers who are pursuing their degrees in education through our College of Education and Human Development.

4. Research

We have a wide range of research throughout the university dedicated toward addressing issues specific to the SMVF population. Mason receives substantial funding from organizations like the Department of Defense to support this research.

MVFI formally launched in November of 2020, as we celebrated Veterans' Day in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. This report summarizes the accomplishments of MVFI in its first year.



Internal Infrastructure

We created an internal leadership team that stretches across the university, with representation of

academic and administrative units.

We designed and launched a website to summarize the mission and efforts of the initiative (mvfi.gmu.edu), and subsequently hosted the University's celebration of Veterans' Day during the pandemic with a series of virtual events in November 2020 (mvfi.gmu.edu/veterans-week-2020). MVFI also established a liaison in Career Services (Dorothy Hayden), who has worked with MVFI and our partners to enhance services for SMVF.



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External Partnerships

We created a number of partnerships and connections with external groups in line with our mission.



ServingTogether.
Connecting Veterans.















Achievements

MVFI has worked with the Alumni Association on three key initiatives. First, in recognition of the effects of the global pandemic, "The Military Monday Speaker Series" were held during Spring 2021, aimed at fostering connection among Mason students and alumni while addressing issues like career transitions and health and wellness. Second, we engaged in extensive efforts to identify veterans in our alumni database, leading to the addition of over 6,500 veterans flagged in the database. Finally, we worked with alumni to create the Veterans Alumni Chapter, which was formally recognized in November 2021, and has bold goals to endow a veterans scholarship and build better community among veterans at Mason.

With the support of MVFI, Mason was one of four new institutions selected to receive funding from the Defense Language and National Security Education Office's Project Global Officer (GO). This program will support the training of ROTC cadets in Chinese and Korean languages.

MVFI's partnership with Veterans Health and Wellness Foundation led to the development of a virtual program series during the pandemic, entitled Veterans Lived Experience. This series was held monthly and focused on sharing veterans' own stories related to health and wellness, combined with observations, tips, and resources from professionals. Across nine sessions, we addressed topics such as homelessness,

chronic pain, substance misuse, military sexual assault, posttraumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury, and suicide.

MVFI developed a connection to Mason's ROTC Patriot Battalion. The Director of MVFI provided comments on behalf of Mason at the President's Veterans' Day luncheon, and is also providing a guest lecture to ROTC cadets on issues related to mental health and well-being. MVFI has also helped to launch a drive to fund the Patriot Battalion Scholarship.

MVFI supported Northern Virginia Veterans Association in launching a "solutions collaborative" to address barriers to healthcare for veterans in northern Virginia during the pandemic. This work, which engaged healthcare and veteran leaders across the Commonwealth, resulted in a 23-page "white paper" that laid out proposed solutions, some of which have already begun to be implemented.

MVFI partnered with a number of nonprofits supporting servicemembers, veterans, and families. Their partnership with Hope for the Warriors led to the creation of internships for students from the MSW program in CHHS, and also resulted in a program evaluation for HftW by Mason graduate students. MVFI similarly provided Mason graduate student experiential learning experiences as they conducted program evaluations for both Serving Together and Serving Our Wounded Warriors.

Christy Kenady, Director of Serving

Together provided the following feedback:

The Program Evaluation was AMAZING. The graduate students were phenomenal. They did an incredible job.

MVFI is now operating as the provider of all data collection and analysis for Phase 2 of the Virginia Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide in SMVF.

The Director of MVFI was asked to join the Steering Committee for this effort, and he is currently overseeing the design of the data collection efforts.

MVFI has formed a particularly strong partnership with the Virginia Department of Veterans Services (VDVS). Withthe support of Niyati Dhokai (member, Leadership Team) and the Director, MVFI is providing support to the Virginia Women Veterans Program in relation to an upcoming needs assessment. MVFI also invited VDVS to present to its Career Services, to increase awareness of the resources available to student veterans and their families. At the invitation of VDVS Commissioner John Maxwell, the Director of MVFI presented to the Veterans Affairs Capitol Health Care Network (VISN 5) in December 2021 about how the MVFI-VDVS partnership can serve as a model for other institutions and states.



Impact

MVFI has been able to harness philanthropic energy related to SMVF in a number of ways. The initiative began with a contribution from Technatomy, at the direction of its CEO, Nadeem Butler. Technatomy made a second donation this past year to allow for continuation of important programming.

Support for MVFI causes has kicked into high gear during the past year and can, with great gratitude, claim successes in several programs, including:

- Newly launched sponsorship program for corporations, foundations and large law firm veteran groups
- Funding secured from the Virginia Law Foundation, the Community Foundation of Northern Virginia and Amazon
- Support for MVFI from BAE
 Systems through its Community
 Veterans Program
- Mason ROTC Alumni engaged through an endowed scholarship created by The Patriot Battalion that receives numerous small donor gifts to support cadets through COVID pandemic and beyond, a

- new community listserv and alumni speaker events during Bridge Day, all supported by an annual fund letter from Alumnus Mike Bills.
- Participation in the Falls Church 'Vets Fest' at Falls Church Distillery, with proceeds going to the Veterans Emergency Fund
- Campaign led by The Veterans
 Annual Fund during November's
 Mason Veterans Commemorations
 with a week-long series on veteran
 mindfulness, health & wellness
 and the traditional remembrance
 luncheon, capped off by a concert
 celebrating Veterans and the Arts

- **Funds raised** by The GMU Center for Psychological Services for free therapy and testing services for SMVF in the DMV, which has already resulted in 11 sessions for 6 clients since July 1st, in addition to more veteran services that have been paid for by other partners (Dept of Veteran Services, NVLSP, NLSV, private firms)
- Partner relationship expansion opportunities through The GMU Center for Psychological Services with several corporate and foundation sponsors with interest in supporting Veteran services from the Center, including Leidos, AT&T, DevTechnology and Inova Behavioral Health plus several individual supporters, many of whom will join us at our annual fundraiser in October 2022
- A gracious commitment of funds \$50K from the VDVS Foundation to cover the cost of testing up to 30 veterans referred by their organization
- **Hiring of new staff**, including a postdoc who will focus solely on veteran testing and therapy, allowing the center to reduce its waitlists and expand its services to those in need

- Funding received from the Commonwealth of Virginia for community-based programming, including multiple music workshop series, multiple art workshop series and public performances for The Veterans and the Arts Initiative at the Hylton Performing Arts Center
- **Federal contracts secured** for the Veterans and the Arts Initiative through the National Endowment for the Arts, including one that funded the creation of a Tele-Arts **Engagement Guide in support** of Creative Forces®: NEA Military Healing Arts Network, in addition to support from the Virginia Commission for the Arts and the City of Manassas for the initiative
- **Sponsorships extended** with several corporate and foundation sponsors, including Dominion Energy, JB Sales, Service 2 Sales, **Guitar and Accessories Marketing** Association and several individual supporters for The Veterans and the **Arts Initiative**



Looking to the Future

We have big plans for our future. We will continue to support the community, through partnerships with nonprofit veteran-serving organizations and continued support of the Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide in SMVF and the Virginia Women Veterans Program. We are collaborating with the Veteran Health and Wellness Foundation to develop and integrate training on working with SMVF into several healthcare programs at Mason, including clinical psychology, nursing, social work, nutrition and food studies, and counseling. The projected timeline is to complete this work by Fall 2023. We are working with faculty in the School of Business to host a sponsored series on financial literacy and career transition for SVMF in 2022, and to launch a fellowship program focused on Gov-Con entrepreneurship for veteran small business owners within the next 2 years. We are working to support an expansion of M-VETS to include a 3rd attorney who can help expand the services they offer to veterans of the services they offer to veterans, and we continue to support the Center for Psychological Services in growing the Jennifer DiMauro Honor Fund to provide free services to SMVF. Also in Spring 2022,

MVFI will be working with the Office of Military Services and the Office of the Vice Provost of Academic Affairs to develop ways to streamline pathways from the military to Mason, possibly through our partnerships with regional community colleges.



We are extremely grateful for the support of the broader community for these efforts. MVFI will continue working to keep Mason as one of the most military-friendly and military-inclusive institutions in the nation, while expanding our services to all of those who have given in service to our nation.



