



TEXAS VETERANS COMMISSION

"Helping Veterans Starts Here"

VETERANS EDUCATION EXCELLENCE RECOGNITION AWARD

Application Package

November 1, 2023

Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Application Period.....	2
Application Submission.....	2
Eligibility Criteria	3
Award Levels	3
Award Process.....	4
Information and Assistance	4
Application Form.....	1
Section 1: Applicant Information	1
Section 2: Student Veteran and Military Connected Population.....	2
Section 3: Centralized location for students who are veterans to meet or find assistance and information.	3
Section 4: An institution employee who serves as a central point of contact for students who are veterans.	5
Section 5: A United States Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) work-study program.....	7
Section 6: Admission and enrollment policies for veterans.	9
Section 7: New student orientation and courses for veterans.....	11
Section 8: A student organization for veterans.	13
Section 9: Academic support services for students who are veterans.	15
Section 10: Mental health and disability services.....	17
Section 11: A housing policy that applies to veterans.	19
Section 12: Faculty and staff training on issued affecting students who are veterans.	20
Section 13: Career services for students who are veterans.	21
Narrative Impact Statement	22
Supporting Documents	23
Supplemental Pages.....	23
Supporting Video	23

Introduction

Thank you for your interest in the Veteran Education Excellence Recognition Award (VEERA) Network.¹ The Texas Veterans Commission recognizes academic institutions of higher education² committed to supporting the needs of student veterans and other eligible family members.³ This award recognizes the institutions that provide excellence in education and related services to veteran students, and promotes best practices by awarding Gold-, Silver- and Bronze-level status to those offering such services.

Institutions of higher education selected for an award are recognized publicly on the Texas Veterans Commission’s website and through various agency publication and media announcements. Awardees will receive an electronic badge for use on the institution’s website, within printed materials, and for outreach to and recruitment of potential student veterans.

Institutions wishing to be recognized for the veteran-centric services they provide should review eligibility criteria provided within this document; complete the self-nomination application form (application); and submit the application with supporting documentation before the close of the annual application period.

Application Period

- Institutions of higher education may apply for recognition under the VEERA Network by completing and submitting the required self-nomination application form (application) and supporting materials before the close of annual application period.
- The application period opens annually on November 1 and closes on April 1 of the following calendar year. Applicants can apply for recognition each year the VEERA Network award is offered by the Texas Veterans Commission.

Application Submission

- All applications must include: Application Form; Narrative Impact Statement; Supporting Documents; Supplemental Pages, as appropriate; and supporting video (Refer to appropriate sections of the application).
- All applications must be received by the Texas Veterans Commission no later than 5 p.m. CDT, April 1 of the given calendar year.

Submit by Mail

Texas Veterans Commission
Veterans Education Department: VEERA
P.O. Box 12277
Austin, TX 78711-2277

Submit by Delivery Service

Texas Veterans Commission
Veterans Education Department: VEERA
1801 Congress Ave, Suite 14.1000
Austin, TX 78701

Submit by email: VEERA@tvc.texas.gov

¹ Texas Government Code, Chapter 434, Section 252.

² Texas Government Code, Chapter 434, Section 451.251(2); Texas Education Code, Chapter 61, Section 61.003.

³ Family members include those individuals eligible to receive education benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Eligibility Criteria

1. All applicants must be considered an institution of higher education as defined within the [Texas Education Code, Chapter 61, Section 61.003](#).
2. Applicants must provide services related to at least one of the criteria identified in Item 3.
3. The Texas Veterans Commission evaluates applications on a variety of criteria that highlight the various education and ancillary services offered by an institution, and which contribute greatly to the overall success of veteran students and their families. Each application is evaluated as to the existence and quality of:
 - a centralized place for students who are veterans to meet or find assistance and information;
 - an institution employee who serves as a central point of contact for students who are veterans;
 - a United States Department of Veterans Affairs work-study program;
 - admissions and enrollment policies for veterans;
 - new student orientation and courses for veterans;
 - a student organization for veterans;
 - academic support services for students who are veterans;
 - mental health and disability services;
 - a housing policy that applies to veterans;
 - faculty and staff training on issues affecting students who are veterans;
 - career services for students who are veterans; and
 - any other criteria considered necessary or appropriate by the commission.⁴

Award Levels

The Texas Veterans Commission provides three levels of recognition intended to highlight the depth and breadth of services provided to veteran students and their families, and across various institutional structures and services. The award committee will provide an overall score related to the institution's services, and as provided within the application package. This overall score will determine the award level for the selected awardees.

- Gold-Level Awardees receive a minimum overall evaluation score of 90%.
- Silver-Level Awardees receive an overall evaluation score between 75% and 89%.
- Bronze-Level Awardees receive an overall evaluation score between 50% and 74%.

The VEERA Network award is non-competitive and may be awarded to one or more qualified institutions of higher education. Applicants receiving an overall evaluation score of 49% or lower will not be selected for the VEERA Network recognition during the given year.

Note: The VEERA Network award neither provides authorization for nor indicates that any or all programs offered by the awardee are approved for delivery under VA Education Benefits or meet the requirements of Title 38 U.S.C.

⁴ Texas Government Code, Chapter 434, Section 45; Texas Administrative Code, Title 40, Part 15, Chapter 461, Subchapter B

Award Process

At the close of the application period, the Texas Veterans Commission VEERA Network award committee will review all submissions.

- The committee is comprised of three staff members of the commission:
 - one member is selected from the Veterans Education Department, and
 - two members are selected from other departments within the commission.
 - Veterans Education Department Outreach and Education Coordinator(s) may provide consultative services to the committee members and will not serve as voting members of the committee.
- The Veterans Education Department initially screens all applications to determine an institution's eligibility as defined by the Texas Education Code (refer to *Eligibility Criteria*). All applications from qualified institutions are forwarded to the award committee for evaluation of the existence and quality of each item addressed in the application package. Applications are referred to the committee no later than April 15 of the given year.
 - The award committee may request applicants provide additional clarifying information related the application materials submitted. The committee will allow an institution ten (10) business days to submit the additional information. Institutions will be notified of the need for additional clarifying information no later than May 15 of the given year.
 - The committee will use a scoring matrix to evaluate and assess each application. All evaluation, scoring, and selection of awardees will be completed by June 1 of the given year.
 - All awardees will be notified and recognized no later than June 30 of the given year.
- All decisions of the award committee are final for the given year.

Information and Assistance

Institutions may contact the Veterans Education Department for information and assistance regarding the VEERA Network program. Contact us at:

Outreach & Education Coordinator:	512-463-3168 or VEERA@tvc.texas.gov
Operations Manager:	512-463-8189 or education@tvc.texas.gov
Director:	512-463-6160 or education@tvc.texas.gov



Veteran Education Excellence Recognition Award (VEERA)

Annual Application for Recognition

Application Form

Section 1: Applicant Information

Complete the following section, ensuring all fields are completed. Enter "N/A" for fields that do not apply or for which there is no available information.

Institution Name

Mailing Address

Physical Address

Phone Number

Website Address

Number of students enrolled

at end of Academic year 2022/2023.

(Total student population)

Provide the following information for at least two individuals who may be contacted regarding this application. These individuals should serve as the points of contact for the awards committee during the evaluation period.

Primary Point of Contact

Alternate Point of Contact

Name

Name

Phone Number

Phone Number

E-mail Address

E-Mail Address

Application Certification Statement

I certify, to the best of my knowledge, that the information contained in this application, supporting documents, and video is true and correct in content and representation.

Name Authorized Representative/Submitter

Position Title

Date

Signature of Authorized Representative/Submitter



Veteran Education Excellence Recognition Award (VEERA)

Annual Application for Recognition

Section 2: Student Veteran and Military Connected Population.⁵

Complete the following section, ensuring all fields are completed. Enter “N/A” for fields that do not apply or for which there is no available information.

- A. Does your institution have an established process to identify student veterans and military connected individuals through the admissions process? Yes No

If ‘yes’, summarize the institution’s identification process and how that information is used to support student veterans.

- B. As possible, provide the number of student veterans population at your institution for the following (as of August 2023):

Number of student veterans receiving Dept of Veterans Affairs education benefits.

Number of student veterans receiving Hazlewood Act tuition exemption benefits.

Number of student veterans not receiving Dept of Veterans Affairs education benefits.

Number of student veterans receiving other education benefits (e.g., scholarships, grants, fellowships, other financial aid).

Total number of student veterans enrolled at end of academic year 2022/2023

- C. Does the institution have a Veteran Advisory Council (or similar) that addresses student veteran concerns and best practices? Yes No

Is a student veteran a participating member of this council? Yes No

Is the Director/Manager of the Veterans/Military Connected Resource Office or Center a member of this council? Yes No

⁵ The terms ‘student veteran’ and ‘military connected population’ are used synonymously throughout this form and are used to represent any student veteran, active duty service member, eligible family member or other military connected individual who may receive veteran services from the institution.



Veteran Education Excellence Recognition Award (VEERA)

Annual Application for Recognition

Section 3: Centralized location for students who are veterans to meet or find assistance and information.

Identify which of the below services your institution provides to student veterans. These services should be separate and distinct from the overarching services provided to the institution's general student population. *(Check all that apply and complete additional information for each section selected.)*

- A. Dedicated Veterans/Military Connected Resource Office or Center.

Staffed by Institution Employees

Full-Time

Part-Time

Staffed by VA Work Study Students

of Work Study Participants

- B. Dedicated meeting space for student veteran studying, tutoring, and meetings.

Space located within Veterans/Military Connected Resource Office or Center

Computers with Internet and intranet connections

Printers, Copiers, Scanners, and similar equipment

- C. Dedicated student veteran lounge or similar meeting space.

Space located within Veterans/Military Connected Resource Office or Center.

Food preparation area (counters, sinks, beverage dispensers, microwaves, etc.)

Food storage area (refrigerators, freezers, etc.)

Recreational Activities (e.g., TVs, game consoles, table games, etc.)

- D. Dedicated classroom spaces for orientation and veteran-centric presentations.

Space located within Veterans/Military Connected Resource Office or Center.

- E. Lending library allowing student veterans to check out textbooks for class requirements.

- F. Secure lockers or shelving units that allow student veterans to securely leave items between classes.

- G. Other:

Other:

Other:



Veteran Education Excellence Recognition Award (VEERA)

Annual Application for Recognition

Provide supportive narrative for all items selected indicated in Section 3. The summary should adequately describe and communicate the purpose and function of each space, service, amenity, staff services (institutional employees and work study participants), and assistance provided to student veterans.



Veteran Education Excellence Recognition Award (VEERA)

Annual Application for Recognition

Section 4: An institution employee who serves as a central point of contact for students who are veterans.

Identify whether your institution has dedicated employees who serve as central points-of-contact for student veterans, and indicate the functions and responsibilities of the employee(s). *(Check all that apply and complete additional information for each section selected.)*

- A At least one employee who serves as a central point of contact for student veterans.

Employee(s) who serves as primary resource to student veterans with information regarding policy, procedure, and available services our resources (on- and off-campus).

	# Full-Time	# Part-Time
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Employee(s) who is responsible for coordinating, facilitating, or promoting student veteran programs on and off campus.

	# Full-Time	# Part-Time
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- B. Employee(s) who serves on institution’s Veteran Advisory Council (or similar) or who otherwise contributes to the activities and initiatives of the that council.
- C. Employee(s) who creates and maintains relationships within the local community to support the institution’s student veterans.
- D. Employee(s) who facilitates or coordinates sessions for faculty, administration, and staff that provide training or information on military culture, student veteran characteristics, and similar.
- E. Employee(s) who facilitates or coordinates focus group, information-sharing or similar sessions between faculty, administration, and staff and student veterans addressing student veteran concerns, support services, or recommendations associated with their academic success.
- F. Employee(s) who facilitates or coordinates veteran/military connected population program initiatives both on and off campus.
- G. Other specific functions performed by employee(s):

Other specific functions performed by employee(s):

Other specific functions performed by employee(s):



Veteran Education Excellence Recognition Award (VEERA)

Annual Application for Recognition

Provide supportive narrative for all items indicated in Section 4. The summary should adequately describe and communicate the role and function of institution employees who serve as primary points-of-contact for veteran students.



Veteran Education Excellence Recognition Award (VEERA)

Annual Application for Recognition

Section 5: A United States Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) work-study program.

Identify whether your institution provides VA work-study opportunities to student veterans and which of the below services your institution provides to support the programs. *(Check all that apply and complete additional information for each section selected.)*

- A At least one VA work-study program is offered at the institution.

Number of VA work-study positions provided within the Veterans/Military Connected Resource Office or Center.

Number of VA work-study positions provided within administration and student support services (e.g., financial aid, registrar, admissions, deans' offices, student support services, etc.).

Number of VA work-site locations supervised by institution staff.

- B. Designated institutional employee(s) is responsible for identifying and coordinating VA work-study opportunities and work sites across campus.
- C. Designated institutional employee(s) is responsible for identifying and coordinating VA work-study opportunities and work sites within the local community.
- D. VA work-study participants assist with or participate in new student orientation, seminars, and/or workshops focused on familiarizing student veterans with campus facilities and services; resources; institution policies; opportunities; benefits; and/or affinity groups.
- E. VA work-study participants assist or participate in student veteran mentoring programs.
- F. VA work-study participants assist student veterans in completing enrollment/registration processes.
- G. VA work-study participants assist student veterans in obtaining VA certificates of eligibility and other supporting documents required for the use of veteran education benefits.
- H. VA work-study participants assist with graduation/commencement planning and ceremonies.
- I. Other specific functions performed by VA work-study participants:

Other specific functions performed by VA work-study participants:

Other specific functions performed by VA work-study participants:



Veteran Education Excellence Recognition Award (VEERA)

Annual Application for Recognition

Provide supportive narrative for all items indicated in Section 5. The summary should adequately describe and communicate the number of opportunities, roles, and functions for VA work-study participants.



Veteran Education Excellence Recognition Award (VEERA)

Annual Application for Recognition

Section 6: Admission and enrollment policies for veterans.

Identify the admission and enrollment policies and considerations your institution provides student veterans. *(Check all that apply and complete additional information for each section selected.)*

- A. At least one student veteran-centric enrollment or admission policy is offered at the institution.

Priority registration/enrollment is offered for veterans/active duty students.

Early registration is offered for veterans/active duty students.

Early registration is offered for family members/military connected population.

Application fee waived for veterans/active duty students.

Application fee waived for family members/military connected population.

- B. Institution provides specific grants or scholarships only to student veterans.

Name of grant/scholarship:

Purpose and intent of grant/scholarship:

Name of grant/scholarship:

Purpose and intent of grant/scholarship:

- C. Other specific admission and enrollment policies for student veterans and/or family members:

Other specific admission and enrollment policies for student veterans and/or family members:

Other specific admission and enrollment policies for student veterans and/or family members:



Veteran Education Excellence Recognition Award (VEERA)

Annual Application for Recognition

Provide supportive narrative for all items indicated in Section 6. The summary should adequately describe and communicate the various enrollment and admission policies provided to assist student veterans in obtaining and completing their academic goals.



Veteran Education Excellence Recognition Award (VEERA)

Annual Application for Recognition

Section 7: New student orientation and courses for veterans.

Identify which of the below services your institution provides to student veterans. These services should be distinct from the overarching orientation services provided to the institution's general student population. *(Check all that apply and complete additional information for each section selected.)*

- A. At least one seminar, new student orientation, or breakout session is offered specifically for student veterans and which identifies student veteran services; resources; institution policies; opportunities; benefits; and/or affinity groups.

Specific student veteran seminars, workshops, or similar sessions are offered veterans, *separately from and which compliment*, new student orientation offered to the general student population.

Student veteran breakout sessions or workshops are offered as a component of the new student orientation offered to the general student population.

Student veteran seminars and workshops are conducted regularly throughout the academic year.

Monthly Quarterly Other

- B. Institution administration (e.g., President/Chancellor, Provost, Dean of Students) hosts welcome briefing and/or reception for student veterans and family members.
- C. Veterans/Military Connected Resource Office or Center mentors and assists student veterans with course selection; degree/program completion; and interactions with faculty; staff; and resource personnel.
- D. Institution offers seminars, workshops, or courses that allow student veterans and faculty/administration to engage and share information; resources and insight on issues, concerns, campus climate; and matters associated with student veterans' academic success.
- E. Institution partners with Texas Veterans Commission to provide information on veteran benefits; no-cost services provided by the Commission; and to connect veterans to available benefits, services, and resources.
- F. Other specific new student orientation and courses provided to student veterans:

Other specific new student orientation and courses provided to student veterans:



Veteran Education Excellence Recognition Award (VEERA)

Annual Application for Recognition

Provide supportive narrative for all items indicated in Section 7. The summary should adequately describe and communicate the various orientation and informational sessions, or specific courses focused on ensuring academic success of student veterans.



Veteran Education Excellence Recognition Award (VEERA)

Annual Application for Recognition

Section 8: A student organization for veterans.

Identify which of the below services your institution provides to student veteran organizations. *(Check all that apply and complete additional information for each section selected.)*

- A. Institution hosts and/or sponsors a student veteran organization (SVO).

Institution recognizes the SVO(s) and affords the same status as other sponsored student clubs and organizations.

Name of SVO:

Name of SVO:

Name of SVO:

Institution provides designated spaces to SVO to conduct meetings, network, and gather.

- B. SVO leadership participates in veteran advisory committee, or similar committees, providing input regarding policies, campus climate, and services available to student veterans.
- C. Campus Police Department partners with SVO to identify opportunities to strengthen support and conflict/de-escalation strategies related to student veteran interactions.
- D. Institution provides media opportunities (e.g., institution website, radio, newspapers, magazines) to SVO to highlight student veteran successes; publish interest pieces/resources; manage blog/discussion boards; or similar.
- E. Other support or activities of the SVO:

Other support or activities of the SVO:

Other support or activities of the SVO:



Veteran Education Excellence Recognition Award (VEERA)

Annual Application for Recognition

Provide supportive narrative for all items indicated in Section 8. The summary should adequately describe and communicate the SVO(s) that may exist, the support provided by the institution, and contributions the SVO makes to the institution ins support of student veterans and academic success.



Veteran Education Excellence Recognition Award (VEERA)

Annual Application for Recognition

Section 9: Academic support services for students who are veterans.

Identify which of the below support services and activities your institution conducts to support student veteran outcomes. *(Check all that apply and complete additional information for each section selected.)*

- A. The institution tracks veteran enrollment, retention, and completion rates.
- B. The institution provides transitional or remedial assistance to student veterans.

Services are provided during *(check all that apply)*

Normal business hours Evenings Weekends

- C. The institution provides tutoring services to student veterans.

Services are provided during *(check all that apply)*

Normal business hours Evenings Weekends

- D. Academic and/or career services advisors provide student veterans with degree/program checklist or “roadmap” that identifies requirements for program completion; internship opportunities; necessary or recommended certifications; and similar information that will enhance post-graduation employment opportunities.

- E. Other support services or activities:

Other support services or activities:

Other support services or activities:



Veteran Education Excellence Recognition Award (VEERA)

Annual Application for Recognition

Provide supportive narrative for all items indicated in Section 9. The summary should adequately describe and communicate the support services and activities conducted that ensure academic success and outcomes for student veterans.



Veteran Education Excellence Recognition Award (VEERA)

Annual Application for Recognition

Section 10: Mental health and disability services.

Identify which of the below services your institution provides, and activities conducted to support student veterans. *(Check all that apply and complete additional information for each section selected.)*

- A. Health and wellness facilities are available on campus and services are provided in a confidential and secure setting.
- B. The institution ensures facilities used by student veterans are accessible and accommodate physical disabilities.
- C. Institution ensures facilities used by student veterans are clearly identified and that way-finding signage is posted/positioned on campus.
- D. Counseling and health services staff receive training associated with specific student veteran needs (e.g., post-traumatic stress disorder; traumatic brain injury; military sexual trauma; moral injury)
- E. Local community service programs and resources are integrated into services provided by the institution for student veterans.
- F. Statewide and/or national programs and resources are integrated into services provided by the institution for student veterans.
- G. Institution provides accommodations/transportation for physically disabled student veterans to attend sporting, recreational, or leisure activities.

Accommodations/transportation provided at to the student veteran	Minimal Cost	No Cost
Accommodations/transportation provided by	institution	community partner, state agency, or other

- H. Institution partners with Texas Veterans Commission, Veterans Mental Health Department to provide mental health and peer counseling services to student veterans.
- I. Other mental health or disability services:

Other mental health or disability services:



Veteran Education Excellence Recognition Award (VEERA)

Annual Application for Recognition

Provide supportive narrative for all items indicated in Section 10. The summary should adequately describe and communicate the mental health and disability support services provided to student veterans.



Veteran Education Excellence Recognition Award (VEERA)

Annual Application for Recognition

Section 11: A housing policy that applies to veterans.

Identify which of the below services and considerations your institution provides to student veterans
(*Note: Institutions with no campus housing may still meet the minimum VEERA award criteria.*)

- A. Institution provides housing (*check all that apply*)

On-Campus

Contract/Off-Campus

Institution has no campus housing

- B. Institution maintains a housing policy that provides specific services or opportunities for student veterans.

Policy includes roommate matching opportunities.

Policy provides housing accommodations for non-traditional student veterans (e.g., single parents, working students, part-time students, etc.)

Policy provides housing accommodations for disabled student veterans in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Policy provides for a veteran Living Learning Community, veteran-only housing, or similar veteran-centric placement/assignment of housing.

- C. Institution adjusts or supplements housing costs, and accompanying meal plans, to match local stipend/monthly housing allowance received by Post 9/11 GI Bill participants.

Provide supportive narrative for all items indicated in Section 11. The summary should adequately describe and communicate the institution's housing policy for student veterans.



Veteran Education Excellence Recognition Award (VEERA)

Annual Application for Recognition

Section 12: Faculty and staff training on issues affecting students who are veterans.

Identify which of the below activities your institution conducts to ensure faculty and staff are knowledgeable of student veteran characteristics, influences, and concerns. *(Check all that apply and complete additional information for each section selected.)*

- A. Institution designated an employee/representative to provide information and assistance to faculty and staff who advise or mentor student veterans.
- B. Institution incorporates student veteran component or focus into faculty and staff inclusion programs, discussions, and activities.
- C. At least once per semester, the institution provides faculty and staff training on military culture; veteran characteristics and traits; veteran needs; and similar student veteran influence (e.g., lectures, brown bag presentations, seminars, workshops, etc.).
- D. Institution has developed a formal 'veteran friendly' campus program that provides faculty and staff with knowledge and resources to support student veteran academic success.
- E. Institution recognizes faculty, staff, and administrators who effectively support student veterans.

Provide supportive narrative for all items indicated in Section 12. The summary should adequately describe and communicate the institution's initiatives and programs designed to support faculty and staff with veteran interactions and support services.



Veteran Education Excellence Recognition Award (VEERA)

Annual Application for Recognition

Section 13: Career services for students who are veterans.

Identify which of the below services your institution provides, and activities conducted to support student veterans. *(Check all that apply and complete additional information for each section selected.)*

- A. Institution maintains a career services/placement/development office or center.

Career services office or center sponsors alumni career and mentoring network for student veterans.

Career services office or center sponsors professional networking events with business owners and employers wishing to hire veterans/student veteran graduates.

Career services office or center utilize various career placement services offered by state and federal agencies; local workforce boards; and for-profit and non-profit organizations.

- B. Career service office or center mentors and counsels student veterans on coursework and work experience to complement degree/program objectives (e.g., specialized coursework, internships, externships, certifications, and licensures)

- C. Institution provides career services to student veterans from time of enrollment to degree/program completion.

- D. Career services office or center partners with Texas Veterans Commission, Veterans Employment Department, or local state workforce boards to provide job coaching; employer showcases and hiring events; and career development services.

- F. Other career services:

Other career services:

Other career services:

Provide supportive narrative for all items indicated in Section 13. The summary should adequately describe and communicate the career services provided to student veterans.



Veteran Education Excellence Recognition Award (VEERA)

Annual Application for Recognition

Narrative Impact Statement

Provide a summary of the impact the services your institution's programs and policies upon student veteran successes and ability to participate in and/or complete academic programs.



Veteran Education Excellence Recognition Award (VEERA)

Annual Application for Recognition

Supporting Documents

You may include optional supporting documents associated with institutional policies in the application package.

You may also include any optional supporting documents identified below as representations of communications and reference materials provided to student veterans.

Optional Supporting Documents

- Copies of institutional policies for items identified in Section 6.
- Samples of newsletters and other published media as addressed in Section 8D.
- Copies of institutional policies for items identified in Section 9.
- Copies of institutional policies for items identified in Section 11.
- Web addresses highlighting veteran-specific information and resources contained within your institution's website.
- Samples of orientation materials, fact sheets, quick references sheets or similar materials provided to student veterans.

Supplemental Pages

Supplemental pages for summary statements in Sections 11, 12, and 13 may be included with the application package

- Supplemental pages should include the institution's name and reference to specific section.
Example: Acme University, Supplement Page – Summary Statement, Section 11.
- Supplemental pages are not to exceed one full page in length.

Supporting Video

All application packages must include a video highlighting your institution's student veteran services.

- Videos must be no longer than 10 minutes in length.
- Videos must be viewable using standard media platforms (e.g., MS Media Player, iTunes)
- Videos may be submitted via USB drive, CD ROM, or shared web/file link.

Shared web/file links may be sent to VEERA@tvc.texas.gov.

Include "VEERA Application Video" and institution name in subject line.

Video should include:

- footage showcasing Veterans/Military Connected Resource Office or Center, student veteran meetings spaces, and similar.
- footage relevant to services and activities identified in Sections 3 through 13 (qualifying criteria/categories) of the application form.