

**TRUIST LEADERSHIP CENTER
IMPACT REPORT**

Veterans Leadership Academy
ECU Military & Veterans Resource Center
Division of Student Affairs

Submitted by:

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Needs or Opportunities

Military service provides its members with wide range of experiences throughout their enlistment that is not easily quantified. Service members are expected to uphold a strict code of conduct of behavior, act in leadership roles to lower enlisted, rigidly adhere to procedures related to their Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) and often endure high-tempo operations in life-threatening operations. The insulated nature of the U.S. Armed Forces means that few civilians understand the nature of military service. This is furthered by a minimal percentage of U.S. citizens who join the military, furthering isolating the experience of service members. Due to the lack of understanding in the civilian sector of the complexity of military service, veterans must be aware of learning to leverage their previous experiences in terms the civilian sector can understand and appreciate.

In addition to the challenges of the military-civilian divide, service members are often encultured in a way that teaches them to communicate in a direct manner and expect sustained excellence from their subordinates, co-workers, and supervisors. If civilians fail to live up to the unrealistic expectation of veterans, this can cause unnecessary stress for the veteran and strife in the workplace.

Many service members do not want to continue in the same occupational field that they had in the military. College provides a fresh start for student veterans and offers valuable opportunities to learn about their new discipline and how their experiences in the military can be used to succeed in the civilian sector. Numerous studies, most notably the Student Veterans of America's NVEST report, showed that student veterans are more likely to major in some challenging programs. Student veterans are also more likely to have higher GPAs and graduation rates than their traditional student peers. Despite achieving academic success, student veterans reported difficulty learning how to translate their military experience to a resume and incorporate their skillset in the civilian workforce. Currently, East Carolina University has approximately 800 veterans, many of whom have been deployed to combat zones due to our proximity to Camp LeJeune and Fort Liberty. The Veterans Leadership Academy provides student veterans at ECU the opportunity to listen to leaders in a variety of fields about their transition from the military to the civilian sector, allows for frank discussions between students and staff about military culture and how that their military skillset can be leveraged for success both on the job market and in the workplace, provides opportunities for self-reflection about their leadership abilities, feedback on their resumes, and to examine the viability of their intended career path.

Defined Aims

1. **Develop Interpersonal Skills:** The primary aim of the Veterans Leadership Academy is to equip student veterans with the necessary interpersonal skills to succeed in the civilian workforce. This includes enhancing their communication, teamwork, leadership, and

problem-solving abilities. By focusing on these skills, the program aims to enhance their overall employability and facilitate their integration into diverse professional environments.

2. **Bridge Military and Civilian Skillsets:** The Veterans Leadership Academy aims to help student veterans effectively leverage their military skillsets in the civilian sector. It recognizes the unique strengths and experiences veterans bring to the table and seeks to translate those skills into relevant competencies valued in the civilian workforce. The program focuses on helping veterans articulate and showcase their transferrable skills, such as discipline, adaptability, resilience, and strategic thinking, to prospective employers.
3. **Facilitate Transition from College to Workforce:** The academy aims to provide student veterans with guidance and support during their transition from college to the workforce. It recognizes the challenges and adjustments that come with this transition and seeks to provide resources, mentorship, and networking opportunities to facilitate a successful shift. The program emphasizes practical advice, workshops, and networking events specifically tailored to the needs of student veterans, helping them navigate the nuances of the civilian job market.
4. **Learn from Veteran Professionals:** The Veterans Leadership Academy aims to connect student veterans with experienced professionals who have successfully transitioned from college to the workforce. By facilitating mentorship and knowledge-sharing opportunities, the program aims to provide insights into various career paths and industries. Student veterans will have the chance to learn from veterans who have already made successful transitions and gain valuable advice, industry-specific knowledge, and strategies for success.
5. **Foster a Supportive Community:** The academy aims to create a supportive community among student veterans, where they can connect with peers who share similar experiences and challenges. By fostering a sense of camaraderie and belonging, the program aims to provide a supportive environment for personal and professional growth. This community will serve as a valuable network for collaboration, resource sharing, and ongoing support beyond the duration of the program.
6. **Encourage Lifelong Learning and Growth:** The Veterans Leadership Academy aims to instill a culture of lifelong learning and personal growth among student veterans. It encourages them to continuously develop their skills, stay updated with industry trends, and pursue further education or training opportunities. The program aims to equip student veterans with the mindset and resources necessary for continuous professional development, enabling them to adapt to evolving career landscapes and excel in their chosen fields.

Overall, the Veterans Leadership Academy is committed to empowering student veterans by providing them with the necessary interpersonal skills, knowledge, and support to thrive in the civilian workforce. Through a comprehensive curriculum, mentorship, networking, and a supportive community, the program aims to facilitate successful transitions and foster leadership development among student veterans

Participants

Gender

Female - 6

Male - 4

Branch of Service

Army (3)

Navy (3)

Marines (4)

Major/Program:

Nursing (2)

Hispanic Studies

Higher Education (2)

Business

Doctor of Public Health

Information Technology

Industrial Technology

PsyD

Logic Model

Goal: To teach ECU students transitioning from Military Leadership Roles to align their leadership skills so they are equipped to step into management roles and lead effectively in the civilian landscape.

Leadership Competencies Targeted: Other perspectives, Advocating a point of view, Systems thinking, Positive change, Group development, Personal contributions

Participants

The program is targeted towards student veterans as they transition from military to campus to career

Activities

Eight evening seminars (includes many different speakers), 4 career transition seminars, one day of service, alternative spring break opportunity

Outputs

Participant journal entries after each seminar
of attendees at each seminar

of participants performing day of service

of participants attending alternative spring break

Short-term Impacts

Participants who can:

- Articulate an understanding of differences between military and civilian leadership
- Demonstrate effective communication within diverse communities with confidence
- Think strategically within a collaborative environment
- Apply ECU's leadership definition to their field of study
- Interact appropriately, demonstrate empathy, and utilize others' contributions effectively
- Apply experiences and education to becoming career ready
- Show increased confidence transitioning to the civilian world
- Show improved networking skills
- Leverage an expanded network, including senior leadership at ECU
- Establish bonds within new community

Activities

Career Transition Workshops: Dr. Perry in the McClammy Counseling & Research Lab approached the MVRC to discuss implementing career transition workshops in collaboration with Career Services. These career transitions workshops are not designed to be traditional Career Services programming, but instead focus on the emotional aspects of deciding on a new career path and thoughtfully preparing for the future. In response to these needs, Dr. Perry held 4 in person career transition classes, which were recorded for online students to review. Students were required to attend Career Fair, have resume reviewed by Career Services, and have their headshots taken at Career Fair.

Informational networking: MVRC staff reached out to national veteran communities on various social media sites to request veterans within different fields to have an online session with our students to discuss transition out of the military, job searching, interview processes,

workplace culture, and leadership in the civilian sector. Due to this we were able to set up online conversation with a technology analyst, cybersecurity professional, an integrated program planner, and an occupational therapist.

Etiquette Dinner: MVRC staff collaborated with Career Services to hold an etiquette dinner with 4 local employers to provide opportunities for students to practice networking, but also learn skills to feel confident in a business lunch or an interview that includes a meal with potential employers.

Leadership readings and discussions: Students were asked to read passages about servant leadership, transformational leadership, participative leadership, and laissez-faire leadership. After reading these passages, students were asked which type of leadership resonated with them, if any of them had worked with supervisors who had used one of these leadership styles, and then what leadership style that they aspired to use in the future.

DISC assessment: The DISC assessment is a valuable tool that can teach students about their leadership style and provide insights into their strengths and areas for growth as a leader. By understanding their behavioral tendencies and preferences, these students can gain clarity on how they naturally lead and interact with others in a leadership role.

Implementation Fidelity, Quality, and Outputs

Fidelity. All programs were well-planned and delivered. The in-person Career Transition seminars were not well attended, but this could be due to the difficulty in selecting a time that works for students' schedules and also that many of them are commuter students living far from campus. **Quality.** Students were asked to provide feedback on the quality using a Likert scale 1-5 (one being the lowest and five being the highest) on the session and if they felt the material was both relevant and useful. All sessions received high ratings for both relevance and usefulness.

Career Transitions Seminar:

Relevant: 4.8

Useful: 5.0

Informational Networking:

Relevant: 4.7

Useful: 4.4

Etiquette Dinner:

Relevant 5.0

Useful: 5.0

Leadership Discussions:

Relevant: 4.8
Useful: 4.75

DISC assessment
Relevant: 5.0
Useful 4.9

Outputs include:

- 10 student veterans completed the Veterans Leadership Academy
- Partnered with Career Services and the McClammy Counseling & Research Lab
- Students were asked to discuss and compile a list of issues they felt were relevant to student veterans at ECU. Students were asked to read an article about Veterans Critical Theory and explore their experiences with the disconnect between actual veteran needs and what program administrators assume is needed. Students provided a document of issues and included what measures they would take to incorporate changes and their priorities.

Evidence of Impact

Impacts During and Post-Participation

At the end of the program students were asked to reflect on its impact through an open-ended item. These responses were analyzed using qualitative analysis, which involved an iterative review of the data, development of a coding scheme, application of coding scheme, and checks for disconfirming evidence.

Students noted a number of impacts, especially as it related to their leadership development. Students observed more reflection on their interpersonal skills. They expressed knowledge of leadership styles and how different styles may be more or less effective in different environments. Many were reframing their skillsets and voiced how the VLA activities were helping them to recognize how to take charge of their own lives. See Table 1 for themes and sample quotes.

Table 1. Participant Perceptions of Impact

Themes	Quotes
Increased Self-awareness of Transferrable Skills (n=4)	<i>I just want to continue learning how to make my unique skills and traits work for me and not against me.</i> <i>I was able to see a lot of different skills that can be added to my resume. It puts some of the thoughts about what skills I have into word form which can be difficult when trying to come up with it on the fly</i>

	<p><i>I considered the skills I have and those I would need to accomplish these goals when filling out the mentioned worksheets. I realized I have more skills that I would of thought of off the top of my head and I identified skills I would like to strengthen or develop. I enjoyed the worksheet because I like to plan and it allows me formulate a plan to work on developing and strengthening skills that will benefit my future goals.</i></p> <p><i>The next article/exercise about transferrable skills, Wow! I could not believe how many of these skills I possess. It built up my confidence to see how many of these skills I have. Even though I know that I have acquired many valuable skills, I had no idea how many. Some of these skills I would have never said I had. This exercise and the list was very helpful.</i></p>
<p>Knowledge of and Ability to Identify Leadership Styles (n=4)</p>	<p><i>The leadership styles that resonated with me the most were participative, transformational, and laissez-faire. The transformational leadership style stood out to me the most because I really appreciated the leaders that I had in the Army that worked toward molding me into the person that I am today.</i></p> <p><i>In the military, I appreciated the transformational leadership. I was taught to train soldiers to take my job. The idea is to mentor and train soldiers to be prepared to move up. A soldier was to learn how to think for themselves, think of the best ways to accomplish a task yet never forgetting the team and its mission.</i></p> <p><i>I have always been partial to the participative leadership style. Anybody can bring up concerns or issues but it takes a person with true buy-in to develop solutions as well as identify issues.</i></p>
<p>Reflective Insights into Own's Life Through Application of Powerful Metaphor (n=3)</p>	<p><i>The mighty river metaphor fits better with how I view the world and me in it. You cannot control nature itself or the nature of other humans, but you do have control over yourself and how you adapt to different situations you are placed in. I just liked this one more than the others because it pointed out that you could do better or worse through your own navigation or from outside conditions beyond your control.</i></p> <p><i>I enjoyed the article about life metaphors and its included exercises. It made me think about the different ways I view life and the control we have over it. Looking at the other metaphor examples provided in the article automatically led me to think about different people that I know who fit in each. This made me believe more than ever that the way we think is the way we act</i></p> <p><i>The metaphor I mostly resonated with is the metaphor of the colossal dice. I often think of what my life would have been if certain situations had occurred instead of the ones I found myself in. The other metaphors are really good and thought provoking as well, but I think one thing the others had in common was a definite outcome/future. But with the dice, the future</i></p>

	<i>is random based on whatever happens or whatever is rolled, then you move on with it and adapt to it.</i>
<i>Felt More Focused, Accountable After “Preferred Future Selves” Exercise (n=2)</i>	<i>Of all the exercises we completed I enjoyed the one titled ‘Your Preferred Future Selves’ the most. Not only was I able to write down and look at the top three (of many) ways I see myself in the future, but I was able to rank them. It was very satisfying to see my future in writing, and in a way, it holds me accountable.</i> <i>I liked putting my preferred future roles down because it focuses me. This exercise reminded me of making vision boards</i>
<i>Better Interviewing Skills (n=2)</i>	<i>During this seminar, I learned that being interviewed does not get any easier. Having joined the military straight out of high school, I had not had very much experience with it. I have had a few interviews since getting out, but I am currently a full time student and volunteer. The interviews that I did have were successful, but I ultimately decided that being a full time student was difficult given my choice of future career. That being said, I know that I will have to go through many different interviews once I have completed my program and completing practice interviews like the one we did during the seminar will benefit me in the long run even if it does not make the process easier.</i> <i>This seemed to be different than other classes I have had on interviewing. It was not the usual instruction over what to wear and how to act. The different parts of the interview were explained (i.e., pay negotiation, elevator pitch, transferrable skills). We have so much to offer an organization and have so many skills, it’s difficult to know how to pick and choose what is important to say and important to leave out when interviewing.</i>

Statements from students:

I was in the Veteran's Leadership Academy in Spring semester. I enjoyed everything about it. I learned so much more about myself as well. I wanted to do this again because it addresses different topics. I just want to learn more and continue to be better. I still find it to be I was going to say a struggle but I'm not sure if it's quite that anymore. We just think different and do different. That can sometimes be frustrating for not only me but also those who work with me. I know that before people learn me they think I cuss too much, that I think I'm smarter or better than them, or am impatient. I do cuss (I understand time and place--still a work in progress). I think differently, outside of the box, and don't understand why wait or waste time. I'm sure most of us, if not all of us, deal with the same thing. I just want to continue learning how to make my unique skills and traits work for me and not against me.

The leadership styles that resonated with me the most were participative, transformational, and laissez-faire. The transformational leadership style stood out to me the most because I really appreciated the leaders that I had in the Army that worked toward molding me into the person

that I am today. Despite any moments that we had that were not so great, I had leaders that believed in me until the very end and helped guide me so that I could become an NCO that did the same for my own Soldiers. I got to know, first-hand, how it felt to make a difference in someone's life and lead them towards their own professional goals. This allowed me to help one of my Soldiers commission. In the future, I want to try to mix those three leadership styles since they all have their own positives that can have a great impact on the companies that I may end up working for in the future.

In the military, I appreciated the transformational leadership. I was taught to train soldiers to take my job. The idea is to mentor and train soldiers to be prepared to move up. A soldier was to learn how to think for themselves, think of the best ways to accomplish a task yet never forgetting the team and its mission.

I have always been partial to the participative leadership style. Anybody can bring up concerns or issues but it takes a person with true buy-in to develop solutions as well as identify issues. During my combat deployments I preferred for my leaders to display the servant leadership style. I did not want a person making decisions that were designed to get him another award, I wanted decisions that would get us home alive. I will model the participative style. I have used this in the past and it weeds out the whiners. Some people will whine about everything and if you constantly ask that person for ideas to solve their perceived problem they will either come up with solutions or quit bringing up issues that are not truly issues.

This seminar was very informative. I was able to see a lot of different skills that can be added to my resume. It puts some of the thoughts about what skills I have into word form which can be difficult when trying to come up with it on the fly. Hearing the metaphors about the world was insightful and allowed me to gain a better understanding of the ups and downs that I have experienced in my lifetime. Working in teams and getting to see how fellow veterans are holding up upon their transition out of the military gives hope to my own future.

The career assessment workshop was informative for me in that it validated that I could have a variety of opportunities and choices with regard to my future. It's up to me to imagine and then do the work to make my desires and ideas a reality. Of all the exercises we completed I enjoyed the one titled 'Your Preferred Future Selves' the most. Not only was I able to write down and look at the top three (of many) ways I see myself in the future, but I was able to rank them. It was very satisfying to see my future in writing, and in a way, it holds me accountable. Workshops like these are so different from the military mantra of "choose your rate, choose your fate" that one must have gentle reminders that it's ok to pivot in life and change careers, or pick a lifestyle that is preferential to one's personality, aptitude, and skills. Overall, I felt the workshop added value to me as a military veteran, and I look forward to the next task of having my resume reviewed.

The mighty river metaphor fits better with how I view the world and me in it. You cannot control nature itself or the nature of other humans, but you do have control over yourself and how you adapt to different situations you are placed in. I just liked this one more than the others because it pointed out that you could do better or worse through your own navigation or from outside conditions beyond your control.

I liked putting my preferred future roles down because it focuses me. This exercise reminded me of making vision boards, The transferrable skills made me feel more valuable. I often think that professional certifications are all that companies value and forget that there are a lot of skills that I picked.

I enjoyed the article about life metaphors and its included exercises. It made me think about the different ways I view life and the control we have over it. Looking at the other metaphor examples provided in the article automatically led me to think about different people that I know who fit in each. This made me believe more than ever that the way we think is the way we act.

The next article/exercise about transferrable skills, Wow! I could not believe how many of these skills I possess. It built up my confidence to see how many of these skills I have. Even though I know that I have acquired many valuable skills, I had no idea how many. Some of these skills I would have never said I had. This exercise and the list was very helpful.

This was an enlightening essay to read. The metaphor I mostly resonated with is the metaphor of the colossal dice. I often think of what my life would have been if certain situations had occurred instead of the ones I found myself in. The other metaphors are really good and thought provoking as well, but I think one thing the others had in common was a definite outcome/future. But with the dice, the future is random based on whatever happens or whatever is rolled, then you move on with it and adapt to it. It just makes me think of how my life would be if I had chosen a differently in most aspects of life. We roll the dice and whatever the outcome is, we get to choose how to adapt and incorporate that into our existence and purpose in life. Even though rolling dice can yield random results, we also get challenged on how we move on with the randomness and choose what to do with it.

In conducting the Transferrable Skills and Preferred Future Self Activities, after reading the "Mind and Metaphor" pdf, I found myself force to face what it is I'd like to do beyond the more immediate future. I enjoy education, which is why I am working toward my Master of Arts in Education - Adult Education. I would like to work with either college students facilitating their success in reaching their academic goals or within training departments in emergency management/preparation offices. I considered the skills I have and those I would need to accomplish these goals when filling out the mentioned worksheets. I realized I have more skills that I would of thought of off the top of my head and I identified skills I would like to strengthen or develop. I enjoyed the worksheet because I like to plan and it allows me formulate a plan to work on developing and strengthening skills that will benefit my future goals.

The resume builder workshop was helpful and informative. I have paid for professional resume services after retiring from the military, and also received CV editing services from the ECU Career Center prior to last week's workshop so I felt prepared. One thing the Career Specialist recommended and was reiterated by the Veteran Leadership representative was to include more of my nonmilitary public health experiences (mission work, community volunteer time and internships) on my CV, and to include numbers and categories to help make it clear to read. I will incorporate the recommendations from both resources and look forward to the next seminar.

During this seminar, I learned that being interviewed does not get any easier. Having joined the military straight out of high school, I had not had very much experience with it. I have had a few interviews since getting out, but I am currently a full time student and volunteer. The interviews that I did have were successful, but I ultimately decided that being a full time student was difficult given my choice of future career. That being said, I know that I will have to go through many different interviews once I have completed my program and completing practice interviews like the one we did during the seminar will benefit me in the long run even if it does not make the process easier.

This seemed to be different than other classes I have had on interviewing. It was not the usual instruction over what to wear and how to act. The different parts of the interview were explained (i.e. pay negotiation, elevator pitch, transferrable skills). We have so much to offer an organization and have so many skills, it's difficult to know how to pick and choose what is important to say and important to leave out when interviewing. What to highlight and what not to bother with. I have only had one official interview in 15 years. Yet, in the past 5 years, I have been offered and taken advantage of professional opportunities for which only 1 required an interview. This class has made me reflect on that and made me realize how things can work differently depending on the "world" that you are in. I have realized that the work that I do and the organizations I do it with, is results-based and requires a certain personality, a certain skill set. Thinking about it this way makes me realize that each position that I hold is my job interview for the next. I believe the more we can understand about the interview process and the why behind each topic/step, and the more we can practice, we will be better and more confident during an interview. It's not that we are qualified for any position. We just have to learn how to play this game in the civilian world, the same way we did in the military world.

I have completed similar exercises in the past with very similar results. For the DISC Assessment my profile is DC which means that I am direct and analytical. The last time I took an assessment similar to this was about 13 years ago with very similar results. I thought I would change over time but I guess I have not. Many people do not like the direct style because it is perceived to be a cold style. By this I mean direct and right to the point without a lot of compassion. For me I believe it indicates that I want to be precise so there is no question as to the meaning of my statements. I do enjoy the analytical side of things. Give me a problem some time and a few resources and I will have some answers based on fact not emotion.

During this seminar, I was able to learn about the differences between leadership styles in the civilian sector and the military. Although there is still a sort of "chain of command" at most civilian jobs, the dynamic is not the same. Direct communication between people of varying levels of leadership is more common as a civilian. I also learned that there are many jobs out there that have a larger veteran population which can make feeling more comfortable working in the civilian sector a smoother transition. These are things to think about when applying for jobs in the future.

This seminar was very informative for multiple reasons. I was able to speak with and learn from a female veteran that served during a time when females were only just beginning to get the recognition that they deserved. She informed us that here transition out of the military was not the easiest as she was unsure of what she wanted to do at first. The GI Bill was also different

than it is today in that she needed to use it before 15 years passed or it would expire, which made her feel even more rushed to choose a career. Despite that, she offered the advice of making sure that I determine what key things I wanted in my future before making that decision so that I may choose one that will make me happy in the long run.



TRUIST leadership success story

Daniel Masters

A Marine Corps veteran returns to school and learns how to change his leadership style in the educational setting.

Veteran's Leadership Academy Participant



beginning the journey

Daniel retired from the Marine Corps before he decided to attend ECU to study maritime history, coastal studies, and Spanish. He wanted to involve himself in the veteran side of campus and learn about the differences in leadership in the Marine Corps and education, so he joined the Veteran's Leadership Academy (VLA).

new avenues to leadership

Daniel looked forward to hearing success stories from people who had found success in both the academic and civilian work environment and learning from them. He also wanted to be a part of the small community of veterans that shared the bond of leadership and combat experience.

leadership in new settings

The VLA helped Daniel learn how to build a team effectively and learn more about himself through the Myers-Briggs personality test. After taking the test, he better understood how he interacted with other people, especially because its different than interacting with people in the Marine Corps.

When he had a group project last semester, he was tempted to lead as he had in the military by taking charge and delegating tasks. Daniel realized he was the only undergraduate student in this group. He was able to recognize that working cooperatively as a team would be a better dynamic. **The VLA helped Daniel grow and know himself better as a leader in a new environment.**

his testimonial

"I'm really grateful for [the VLA] and I think that if it had that much impact in creating new opportunities for me at my age and with my life experience, I can only think that it's even more important for the younger Veterans that went through it, especially."

understanding the change process

The VLA gave Daniel more knowledge of his leadership style and improved his ability to work in a team outside of the Marine Corps. **"I gained an insight into what it takes to get academic success and then what it takes to transition into a civilian work environment."**

Daniel has always loved North Carolina and its history and has been able to research and present on shipbuilding in Wilmington during World War II. He has been given the opportunity to bring the presentation to a professional conference for maritime historians and publish an article on the topic.

the lasting impacts

Daniel continues to see the value in what he learned and developed during the VLA. He was able to meet and see veterans who have succeeded outside of serving in the military and **"that example to follow is worth its weight in gold."**

continuing the journey

Daniel hopes to pursue a graduate degree in the Maritime Program. He is thrilled to be pursuing degrees that he is passionate about and is grateful to the VLA for providing him opportunities to further his ability to lead in the civilian world.



TRUIST leadership success story

Jeremiah Caudill

A former marine learns how to apply his skillset in a civilian setting

Veterans Leadership Academy Participant



beginning the journey

Jeremiah enrolled at ECU to fill his free time after serving 20 years in the marine corps. As someone who spent two decades in the military, he was in culture shock. Jeremiah was unsure how to apply his skillset outside of the military and in normal civilian life but credits the Veterans Leadership Academy (VLA) for his successes in doing so.

new avenues to leadership

Jeremiah joined the VLA after enrolling at ECU, participating in the programs very first class. He was offered a spot in the program by one of his professors and was skeptical that anything would come out of it, explaining that he did not know what he was lacking so he could not understand why the VLA would be helpful.

applying skills in a new way

The VLA helped Jeremiah identify the things he did not know about civilian life, such as how to communicate effectively outside of a rigid military setting. He says that the program gave him the chance to broaden how he looks at the world, stating that “when you spend your entire life in the military and you’re set on a structured path, you don’t understand that there is an entire spectrum of ways to get from point A to point B.”

He believes that the VLA not only helped him understand different perspectives, but how to apply his military skillset to civilian life successfully as well.

his testimonial

“The VLA has given me the chance to broaden how I look at the world. When you spend your entire life in the military and you’re set on a structured path, you don’t understand that there is an entire spectrum of ways to get from point A to point B. You don’t have to stick to this rigid structure. The program evolves to fit the needs to the people that it’s catered to, and I really enjoyed it and appreciate it.”

understanding the change process

Jeremiah took every opportunity to connect one-on-one with veterans who were once in his same position. He explains that the realization of having a similar background to guest speakers is what made him develop a “why not me” attitude. He no longer feels like the pursuit of acclimating to civilian life is a hopeless one.

At dinners and keynote speeches, Jeremiah saw before him living proof that it is possible to be a successful leader post-military. He describes flourishing businesspeople and politicians who encouraged him to follow in their path and jumpstart his new life in the civilian setting.

the lasting impacts

After seeing the successes of fellow veterans in the civilian world and developing his own skills, Jeremiah decided to take his academic journey to the next level. Jeremiah credits his drive to pursue graduate school to the VLA. “The VLA helps you build skills to move on, and I think I learned a lot of those and how to use the skills I had through that program. If I hadn’t done it, I probably would’ve stopped at my [Bachelor’s Degree](#).”

continuing the journey

Jeremiah plans to finish his master’s degree in history in the coming months. After finishing his degree, Jeremiah hopes to continue to build upon the leadership skills, communication skills, and the confidence he gained through the VLA.

Lessons Learned

Half the student veterans who enrolled in the Veterans Leadership Academy completed the program, making completion an issue for the program, although the students that did successfully complete the program were fully engaged throughout the program. Time constraints are a significant factor that can impact student veterans' completion of a leadership program. Student veterans often have a multitude of responsibilities that demand their time and attention, making it challenging to fully engage in extracurricular activities such as leadership programs. These are some aspects related to time constraints that students stated impacted their ability to complete the program:

1. **Academic Workload:** Student veterans are typically enrolled in academic programs and need to dedicate substantial time and effort to their coursework. The demands of studying, attending classes, completing assignments, and preparing for exams can be time-consuming. Balancing these academic responsibilities with the commitments of a leadership program can become overwhelming, causing veterans to prioritize their academic work over extracurricular activities.
2. **Part-Time Jobs:** Many student veterans take on part-time jobs to support themselves financially while pursuing their education. These employment commitments, which often have fixed schedules, can limit the available time for participating in a leadership program. Juggling work responsibilities alongside academic obligations leaves little room for additional commitments, making it difficult for veterans to allocate sufficient time to complete the program.
3. **Family and Personal Obligations:** Student veterans may have family responsibilities, such as caring for children, supporting a spouse or partner, or taking care of aging parents. These obligations require their time and attention, leaving limited flexibility to engage in extracurricular activities. Additionally, veterans may have personal commitments, such as attending medical appointments, managing personal finances, or dealing with personal challenges, which further restrict their availability for the leadership program.
4. **Transition and Adjustment Period:** Transitioning from military service to civilian life can be a complex process that requires time and energy. Student veterans may need to acclimate to a new environment, establish social connections, and navigate the intricacies of the academic setting. During this period of adjustment, veterans may prioritize activities that help them settle into their new circumstances, leaving little capacity for participation in a leadership program.
5. **Multiple Commitments:** Student veterans may have a combination of academic, professional, and personal commitments that demand their attention simultaneously. The cumulative effect of managing various responsibilities can result in time constraints that make it challenging to fully engage in a leadership program. It becomes a matter of prioritizing activities that are deemed most essential or urgent, which may lead to reduced participation or non-completion of the program.

To address time constraints, VLA can consider implementing strategies such as:

- **Flexibility:** Providing flexible scheduling options for program activities can accommodate the diverse needs and availability of student veterans. This could include offering different session times, providing online or asynchronous learning opportunities, or allowing veterans to participate in the program at their own pace.
- **Efficient Time Management:** Teaching participants effective time management strategies can help them better prioritize their responsibilities and create space for program engagement. Providing resources, workshops, or coaching on time management techniques can support veterans in effectively allocating time to both academic and extracurricular commitments.
- **Streamlined Program Structure:** Designing a program structure that optimizes time utilization can help accommodate the busy schedules of student veterans. This could involve condensing sessions, focusing on essential content, and ensuring a clear and concise curriculum that maximizes the value of each program component.
- **Clear Program Expectations:** Clearly communicate the program's objectives, requirements, and expectations to participants from the outset. Provide a comprehensive overview of the program structure, time commitment, and any associated responsibilities. Ensuring that participants have a clear understanding of what is expected of them can help set realistic expectations and increase their commitment to completing the program.
- **Flexible Program Structure:** Design the program with flexibility in mind to accommodate the diverse needs and constraints of veteran participants. Provide options for in-person and online sessions, allowing veterans to choose the format that works best for them. Consider offering asynchronous learning opportunities, where participants can access program materials and complete assignments at their own pace, enabling them to better manage their time.
- **Relevant and Practical Content:** Ensure that the program content is relevant and practical for veteran participants. Tailor the curriculum to focus on skills and knowledge that are directly applicable to their transition into the civilian workforce. Incorporate real-world case studies, guest speakers from veteran-friendly industries, and opportunities for participants to apply their learning in practical scenarios.
- **Networking and Peer Support:** Facilitate networking opportunities and foster a supportive community among veteran participants. Encourage collaboration, peer-to-peer learning, and information sharing. Provide platforms or events where participants can connect with alumni or veterans in civilian fields, allowing them to learn from their experiences and gain valuable insights into the transition from college to the workforce.
- **Recognition and Celebration:** Recognize and celebrate the accomplishments of program participants. Highlight milestones, achievements, and success stories to reinforce the value and importance of completing the program. Consider organizing a graduation ceremony or a closing event to honor participants' efforts and acknowledge their growth throughout the program.

By implementing these strategies, the Veterans Leadership Academy can create a supportive and engaging environment that promotes completion rates. By addressing barriers, providing tailored

support, and fostering a sense of community and relevance, participants will be more likely to remain committed and successfully complete the program, thereby maximizing the benefits and impact of the academy.

Participation/Retention Remediation Plan

Out of the initial group of 20 enrolled students, a total of 10 students successfully completed the program. The 10 students who completed the program remained fully engaged throughout its duration, underscoring the program's potential impact. However, the majority of the students (N=9) who did not complete the program stopped participating the first week with concerns about balancing the program's time demands alongside their academic and family commitments. The remaining student who did not complete the program had health issues and withdrew from their classes for the spring semester but expressed interest in taking part in the program when they returned.

To address this issue, we will be providing an information session prior to recruitment for the program where we will provide a comprehensive overview of the program's syllabus and time requirements. This event aims to furnish prospective students with a clear understanding of the time investment needed before they decide to enroll in the program.

In addition, we will provide students who enroll in the program with faculty mentors within their department from a past list of faculty members who indicated a desire to mentor student veterans. We believe this addition will be value-added and will provide students with external motivation and support to complete the program.

Lastly, program staff will engage a student evaluator (provided and vetted by the Office for Faculty Excellence) to conduct interviews with students who discontinued their participation. This will help us learn more about their experience and potential obstacles they faced. This student evaluator will also help develop a participant observation assessment protocol to collect qualitative data, helping us to learn more about the lived experience of students working their way through the program. This approach ensures a neutral and relatively unbiased assessment of the underlying factors contributing to their decisions.

2023-2024 Truist Leadership Center - Student Affairs Allocation	Funding
Leadership Development Academy (LDA) textbooks	\$3,000
LDA speaker stipends	\$3,000
LDA fireside chats / lunch & learn series	\$4,000
Branding / marketing materials	\$2,000
Program meals	\$3,000
Leadership Development Academy Expenses	\$15,000
Partial LeaderShape program fee (instructors and curriculum)	\$6,000
Student transportation (partial)	\$1,500
Student room and board (partial)	\$2,500
LeaderShape Expenses	\$10,000
Veterans Leadership Academy textbooks / curricular materials	\$4,000
VLA field trips	\$3,000
Program meals	\$3,000
Veterans Leadership Academy Expenses	\$10,000
TOTAL	\$35,000

Budget justification

The Center for Leadership and Civic Engagement (CLCE) at ECU provides opportunities for the campus community to learn, serve and lead with our community as active citizens and advocates for positive social change. Over the past 10 years, CLCE has become a hub for leadership education on campus, offering its own programs within the Division of Student Affairs and supporting other leadership programs run by other colleges, schools, and departments across the university.

CLCE has offered an intensive co-curricular seminar called the Chancellor's Student Leadership Academy (CSLA) for the past 10 years; this program has always been funded by an endowed fund through the chancellor's office. CSLA costs approximately \$5000-\$6000 per year. Additionally, in partnership with the Military and Veterans Resource Center, CLCE staff helped develop the Veterans Leadership Academy (VLA) for student veterans. Since its inception, VLA has been funded (\$10,000) by the Truist Leadership Center.

Truist Leadership Center has funded the Leadership Development Academy (LDA) for nearly 15 years. This program provides a semester-long professional development program for ECU faculty and staff, with mentoring opportunities for CSLA students as well. During that time, a part-time program coordinator facilitated the program, in partnership with the office of the vice chancellor for student affairs. Over the past 2-3 years, because of staffing changes post-Covid and office restructuring, that program coordinator position was eliminated in favor of having CLCE and other Student Affairs staff members facilitate the program. That new model has been more efficient and helped to integrate the program into CLCE's broader offerings. Truist funds the LDA at \$15,000 per year. Because of the changes during the last few years (position elimination, etc.), the LDA fund balance has grown. We are requesting to revise the fund agreement to allow for greater flexibility in spending these remaining funds moving forward. The revision would give CLCE more flexibility to use remaining funds for LDA and VLA (\$25,000) to further support student leadership development.

Since 2020, CLCE staff members as well as other Student Affairs leaders have organized a Leadership Collaborative workgroup to bring together leadership educators across Student Affairs to discuss assessment, planning, and collaboration related to leadership programming, especially for students. This workgroup also advises CLCE staff on trends, student needs, and interest with respect to leadership program offerings. In addition to high-impact programs for students like CSLA and VLA, the Leadership Collaborative and CLCE staff have long supported the LeaderShape program, a 4-day national, intensive leadership training offered off-site for students. The program costs approximately \$40,000 for 60 student participants and 8 faculty/staff facilitators. We are requesting that we use some of the LDA funds moving forward to help fund this program. Funds from the CLCE annual budget and from the endowed fund through the chancellor's office will continue help to cover costs for the LeaderShape program.