

# THREE POINTS OF CONTACT



## **Bateman Case Study Competition**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

When a military veteran steps foot on a college campus, she or he not only must navigate a new university, but also the transition to civilian life. What happens when a veteran attends Texas Christian University (TCU), a traditional campus with most students between the ages of 18 and 22? How can the university welcome these non-traditional students? This campaign addressed these challenges.

TCU's chapter of SVA, called Student Veterans Alliance, carries on the mission of national SVA by providing a community and resources for student veterans. Through our campaign, we highlighted student veterans on TCU's campus with a dynamic social media campaign, a video interview series and mutually beneficial partnerships with TCU Athletics, TCU Admissions and TCU's "theCrew," a popular campus organization, which hosts campus-wide events.

We partnered with TCU Rugby and TCU Baseball to host tailgates connecting student veterans with the TCU community in a non-academic environment. We secured 50 free tickets for veterans and their families to attend the TCU Baseball game. We also had the daughters of two students veterans throw out the first pitch on opening weekend in honor of veterans' service to our country.

To give traditional students a more intimate look into the lives of student veterans, we released four videos with in-depth interviews. We used the hashtag #VeteranFact as part of our social media campaign to distribute information about U.S. veterans, Texas veterans and TCU student veterans. We extended this social media campaign through yellow ribbon guerilla marketing on TCU's campus. We collaborated with "theCrew" to increase awareness of student veterans and TCU's chapter of SVA. During this event we encouraged traditional students to write "Thank You" letters to veterans.

The Three Points of Contact campaign exceeded all objectives with extensive media coverage and social media engagement, as well as meeting the overall campaign goals laid out by PRSSA. Our team connected student veterans to twice the number of resources originally intended and surpassed the objective to build awareness on campus by 30 percent. We built momentum for TCU's SVA chapter to grow by setting the precedent for successful events and starting important conversations on campus.

## RESEARCH

### Situation Analysis

Student Veterans of America was founded to ease the transition for student veterans from the military to college campuses. The TCU chapter, founded in 2010, aims to unite the 210 student veterans on campus. TCU's SVA chapter benefits students by providing resources and a sense of community for student veterans, but it has tremendous potential to grow. The chapter struggles with active member engagement with fewer than 10 members consistently attending chapter meetings.

Traditional TCU students keep themselves busy with academic and social activities. Additionally, they devote their time to internships, multiple organizations, Greek life, philanthropy events and their friend groups. A normal day for a traditional student drastically contrasts to what may be a typical day for non-traditional student veterans who often balance school life with families and jobs.

While TCU prides itself on its yellow ribbon school status, a large majority of the student body - 59 percent - is not aware of student veterans on campus. However, opportunities exist to unite the campus by raising awareness and visibility for the SVA chapter and the student veterans it serves among the TCU student body, staff and faculty.

# Secondary Research

Our research of student veterans and SVA in academic journals, reports, news articles and websites revealed that:

- Texas is home to the second largest number of veterans in the United States.
- TCU has 10,323 total students, with 8,894 undergraduate and 1,429 graduate students.
- Veterans comprise 3 percent of the student body or approximately 210 students.
- With more than 200 cause-related, professional and needs-based organizations on campus, TCU's SVA chapter faces competition.

Student Veterans...

- Often feel lost within their new campuses and out of place;
- Are typically much older than traditional students and have different responsibilities, including families and jobs;
- Often have previous college education, from either before or during their military time; and
- Study harder than traditional students, but are typically less engaged in campus life.

TCU's Chapter of SVA...

- Is dedicated to supporting veterans in the educational setting and helping veterans transition by connecting them with other veterans and other groups of students on campus;
- Has no public digital or social media channels and only one private Facebook group that acts as a platform for conversation about relevant topics and chapter announcements; and
- Has a limited presence on campus, mainly during Veterans Week held every November.

# Primary Research

Prior to our campaign, we conducted a survey and five in-depth interviews with traditional students and student veterans.

## Survey

One survey was sent out to 2,000 members of the TCU student body, including both traditional students and student veterans, to ascertain awareness of both student veterans and SVA. We received 282 responses. From these respondents, we learned:

- 78 percent of TCU students were not aware of SVA;
- 59 percent of TCU students had no awareness of student veterans on our campus;
- 58 percent of TCU students did not know any student veterans personally; and
- 64 percent of TCU students said they would like to learn more about student veterans

## In-Depth Interviews

Five in-depth interviews were conducted with student veterans to gain insight into their lives and their perceptions about and connections to SVA. The interviews revealed:

- General feelings of support for student veterans from those who are aware of student veterans, especially amongst faculty and staff;
- Noticeable discomfort from traditional students when in the presence of student veterans;
- SVA at TCU has a communication problem after a difficult officer transition year; and
- Overall, there is a lack of education and awareness about student veterans across campus.

# TARGET AUDIENCES

## Primary Audience

- Student veterans on TCU's campus

## Secondary Audiences

- Traditional students on TCU's campus
- Families of TCU student veterans
- Faculty and staff on TCU's campus
- Student veterans who may transfer to TCU
- Campus and local media

# CAMPAIGN THEME

## Three Points of Contact

- Three Points of Contact, a commonly used military parlance, refers to a support system used when facing complicated tasks. Your three points keep you grounded. Our campaign focuses on the Three Points of Contact available to student veterans: SVA, TCU and the Fort Worth community, which connect students to resources and support throughout their college career and beyond.
- We maintained the Three Points of Contact theme throughout our campaign as a hashtag, but we also disseminated information to our target audiences through Three Points of Contact: digital media, written material and inclusive events.
- Given that Three Points of Contact is a commonly used military training phrase, we knew it would grab the attention of student veterans.

## CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

**Challenge:** TCU's chapter of SVA is re-establishing itself after a year of change. SVA underwent a change in leadership, restructuring of the organization and recovery from debt left by previous leadership. Due to this restructuring and recent security threats, the chapter lacks a public online presence. As the chapter rebuilds, so does its active membership and member engagement. However, there are fewer than 10 members actively involved with the chapter.

**Opportunity:** We took the limited membership as an opportunity to reintroduce the chapter to the campus body and potential members. We increased awareness of SVA not just among traditional students but also among other student veterans who might be interested in joining SVA. By garnering attention and engagement through various events, we gave SVA's leadership team the ideas and momentum to improve active membership.

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**Challenge:** TCU released for spring break during the last full week of the campaign, March 5 - 13. A weeklong break meant most students, including our team, left Fort Worth for vacation.

**Opportunity:** We took this campus-wide break to focus on our social media platforms. We implemented a cross-platform social media campaign to help drive awareness of veterans in general. Through our Twitter account, we increased the activity of our #VeteranFact campaign where we tweeted statistics regarding veterans in Texas, at TCU, and in popular culture.

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**Challenge:** After detailed planning of our Opening Weekend TCU Baseball tailgate and promoting the event through 20 media outlets, including Fort Worth, Texas Magazine, the game's start time changed less than 24 hours before the event. Fear of inclement weather led TCU Baseball to move the time from 1 p.m. to 11:30 a.m on February 21. We anticipated the time change, which allowed us to immediately make the necessary phone calls, social media posts and event updates to ensure everyone was aware of the time changes.

**Opportunity:** Though we ended up with a decent turnout, we still had a surplus of food from our sponsor, Raising Cane's. We turned this into an advantage by donating the leftovers to the Union Gospel Mission of Tarrant County, an idea suggested by SVA president William Howe. Union Gospel Mission serves the homeless in Tarrant County, including many homeless veterans.

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**Challenge:** In spite of multiple press releases, emails, phone calls and personal visits to editorial teams and reporters at TCU student media to cover our events, none of our early stories were published by campus media source, TCU360. Given that the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex is the fifth largest Designated Market Area in the United States, gaining local media coverage for our events proved challenging despite follow up emails and calls.

**Opportunity:** Instead of relying on our campus and local media to spread the word about our campaign, we focused on our owned media: social media platforms, video interviews, email blasts and word-of-mouth. We were able to effectively drive people to our events and increase awareness about student veterans through these channels.

# GOALS

**Goal 1:** Make student veterans and their families informed consumers of their GI Bill benefits.

**Goal 2:** Provide useful information about SVA for student veterans and their families.

**Goal 3:** Raise campus and community awareness about SVA and its programs.

**Goal 4:** Enlist the support of all stakeholders: faculty, community veterans, employers and government leaders.

**Goal 5:** Recognize military training and experience to ensure service members and veterans have access to higher education and meaningful employment opportunities.

**Goal 6:** Shift the narrative by eliminating the perception of the “Broken Veteran.” Tell the varied paths and success stories of student veterans.

# OBJECTIVES

**Objective 1:** Connect student veterans and their families to five on-campus and local resources by March 15, 2016.

**Objective 2:** Increase traditional students’ awareness of SVA by 10 percent by March 15, 2016.

# STRATEGIES & TACTICS

**Strategy 1:** Create consistent branding to be used in all messaging.

**Rationale:** A unified message with consistent branding will connect our campaign to our target audience. The campaign must connect with student veterans but also be understandable by our secondary audiences.

**Tactic 1:** Create a consistent campaign theme for Three Points of Contact.

The Three Points of Contact campaign theme is based on the support system of the same name. This phrase was used on all of our social media, press releases, documentation and collateral. The font used is bold and powerful, while the three logos for SVA, TCU and the City of Fort Worth visually explain the campaign message.

**Tactic 2:** Create a consistent design for Lila Public Relations.

As a team, we branded ourselves as Lila Public Relations to distinguish our campaign from the other team’s at our school. We developed a brand standards guide that includes a logo, colors and fonts. These guidelines were used on all of our press releases, social media platforms and collateral materials.

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**Strategy 2:** Partner with on-campus and local organizations to raise awareness of student veterans.

**Rationale:** To achieve our objective of connecting student veterans and their families to on-campus and local resources, we needed to ensure that campus groups and local organizations were aware of veterans on campus. Our primary research indicated that traditional students wanted to learn more about student veterans through community involvement. Because TCU students lead busy lives and are typically involved in many organizations, we decided to partner with groups on campus with high visibility and create events that would bring both traditional students and student veterans together.

**Tactic 1:** We partnered with TCU Rugby to host a tailgate, because many student veterans are involved with TCU’s Rugby team. This brought traditional students and student veterans together to support the team as they competed against the University of Texas. We made sure our tailgate events happened on the weekend, so student veterans could come back to campus with their families.

**Tactic 2:** We hosted a TCU Baseball tailgate on Opening Weekend open to families and students. By working with the ticket office, we purchased 50 tickets, which were all donated to SVA members’ families. We coordinated with TCU

Athletics Marketing to organize the first pitch and a brief announcement thanking veterans for their service. We used SVA's contacts with the U.S. Army Recruitment Office of Fort Worth to arrange a table with a pull-up bar, freebies and information to attendees about veterans and the Armed Forces. Raising Cane's restaurant donated 250 pieces of chicken in support of veterans on TCU's campus. Though inclement weather and time change stifled the number of game and tailgate attendees, 33 people attended our tailgate. We donated the excess food to Union Gospel Mission of Tarrant County, which supports a large population of the homeless in Fort Worth, including homeless veterans.

**Tactic 3:** We partnered with "theCrew," a TCU organization which plans events to build community on TCU's campus, for the "Support Our Student Veterans" event. We organized the event in the Brown Lupton University Union, a building with high levels of traffic on campus. During our event, students wrote "Thank You" letters to veterans, took pictures with the American flag for social media and earned yellow ribbon cookies by answering veteran trivia questions from our Twitter campaign. We also handed out pamphlets for students with facts about veterans and SVA, how to get involved with SVA on campus and appropriate conversation starters. Our preliminary research and informal interviews with SVA members revealed that many traditional students on campus do not know how to approach them.

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**Strategy 3:** Educate student veterans and their families about on-campus resources and benefits.

**Rationale:** As part of our objective to educate student veterans and their families about campus resources and benefits at TCU, we met multiple times with SVA faculty advisers and Ricardo Avitia, Certifying Official at TCU. By informing student veterans about the campus and community resources available to them, we were able to connect them to a stronger support system.

**Tactic 1:** We created a flier containing campus and local resources for student veterans per the recommendations of Ricardo Avitia and the SVA faculty advisers along with our own research. We included on-campus offices, such as Career Services and Campus Life and community resources, such as Texas Veterans Commission. We compiled all the resources on an easily accessible flier and distributed them at events.

**Tactic 2:** We hosted a "Maximizing Your GI Bill Benefits" lunch with Ricardo Avitia. Once a month, the TCU Admissions Center offers an information session to veterans who are considering transferring to TCU. Our team built on this existing event by hosting an informational luncheon before the March 2 session. This lunch was open to both current TCU student veterans and potential transfer student veterans. There were 24 attendees, and Ricardo Avitia was present to answer all of the student veterans' questions about TCU, the GI Bill and campus resources. The luncheon also gave potential transfer students a chance to speak with current TCU student veterans about life at TCU and the transition. The food for the luncheon was donated by a favorite TCU restaurant, Salsa Limon.

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**Strategy 4:** Encourage secondary target markets to learn more about veterans in higher education.

**Rationale:** We wanted to raise awareness in the Fort Worth community as well as with our secondary audiences at TCU. We engaged our secondary audiences of traditional students, student veterans' families, TCU faculty, TCU Administration and potential TCU transfer students through social media, media relations and our interview series.

**Tactic 1:** We utilized Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to communicate facts about our campaign, information about SVA, veteran facts and our events to raise awareness and knowledge of student veterans on our campus. We also publicized our interview series and contacted many local and veteran media outlets through our social platforms. In our posts, we utilized #3PointsOfContact and #VeteranFact to gauge the success of our social media efforts and establish continuity. We wanted to keep our Facebook posts to a minimum in order to avoid crowding newsfeeds and to retain and grow as many Facebook likes as possible.

**Tactic 2:** In order to eliminate the stigma of the "broken veteran" on our campus, we developed an interview series to showcase personal stories from student veterans on campus. We conducted four on-camera interviews with several TCU student veterans who had diverse military and academic backgrounds. The veterans discussed their experiences on campus, how their families would benefit from higher education, the legacies they hope to leave at TCU and what they have learned from other TCU students. They also shared what they hope to teach TCU students and how they want to be more involved on campus.

**Tactic 3:** For every event and video release, we drafted and distributed press releases to TCU and Fort Worth media. Through media relations, we convinced the public to learn more about student veterans. A popular sports news source on campus, Frogs O' War, picked up the story of the TCU Baseball event for student veterans after receiving an email pitch and press release. The story published on Facebook received more than 900 likes.

**Tactic 4:** To provide more information to traditional students about student veterans and to encourage them to start a conversation with veterans on campus, we offered fliers with information and conversation starters at events with traditional students. The flier included details about SVA, how to get involved, interesting facts about student veterans on campus as well as questions to start a conversation. With this information, we were able to provide resources to bridge the gap between traditional students and student veterans. By simply asking how their day was going, traditional students can be proactive in eliminating an invisible barrier.

**Tactic 5:** In order to reach traditional students on campus, we also presented a brief overview of our campaign to seven classes containing about 150 students total. By attending classes with the professors' approval, we brought the story of SVA and our campaign directly to members of our school. We were able to enlist their support and encourage students to participate in events and engage on social media. Meeting with students gave a face to our campaign and invited them to be a part of the initiative.

**Tactic 6:** After learning about TCU's GI Bill process and yellow ribbon school status from TCU's Certifying Official, Ricardo Avitia, we wanted to incorporate yellow ribbons in our campaign. Because spring break limited the number of events we could host on campus, we wanted to implement a campus-wide tactic that would catch the eyes of TCU faculty, administration and students. We made small yellow ribbons and attached slips of paper with facts about veterans, our team name and our social media handles. The ribbons were placed in prominent areas on campus and garnered attention on social media. We photographed the yellow ribbons around campus for our social media pages and posted the photos across our social media platforms.

## EVALUATION

### Objective 1: Exceeded

We connected student veterans and their families to more than 10 resources instead of our initial goal of five by distributing fliers on campus, posting on social media and hosting various events. These resources bridged the gap between TCU's SVA chapter, campus life, and the City of Fort Worth.

### Objective 2: Exceeded

We exceeded our goal by increasing traditional students' awareness of SVA and exceeding our initial objective of 10 We increased traditional students' awareness of SVA and exceeded our initial objective of 10 percent. Our survey sent to students evaluating the success of our campaign revealed that 13 percent of TCU students learned about Student Veterans of America during our campaign.

### Campus Outreach Events

- TCU Rugby Tailgate: 64 attendees
- TCU Baseball Tailgate: 33 attendees
- Maximizing Your GI Bill Benefits Luncheon: 24 attendees
- Support our Veterans Event: 91 attendees

### Media Coverage

*Frogs O' War*, *Fort Worth*, *Texas Magazine* and *TCU 360* wrote about various events that we hosted, including our TCU Baseball tailgate, which was one of our kickoff events. We promoted our events on local event calendars, such as Yelp, What2Do@TCU, Eventbrite, CultureMap Fort Worth and TCU Announce.

*Frogs O' War* wrote about our TCU Baseball tailgate, highlighting the 50 free tickets we offered to student veterans' families for the opening weekend of TCU Baseball game and that two daughters of TCU student veterans threw out first pitches. Approximately 1,427 people shared the article on Facebook and 933 liked it. At 8,685 page views, this story was the fourth most-read story out of 98 published articles in February.

*Fort Worth, Texas Magazine* listed our TCU Baseball tailgate as the number one event for the weekend of February 18, 2016 in its “The Social Seven” blog. The article was shared on Facebook 46 times, liked 12 times, tweeted about 17 times, and shared through a third party 64 times.

Campus media, *TCU 360*, wrote about and produced a news video of our final event, “Supporting Our Student Veterans,” where TCU students wrote letters to and learned about student veterans and SVA. The online media outlet reaches more than 75 percent of the student and faculty population.

Our team was invited to talk about the campaign on Radio Bapola’s popular Saturday afternoon show on the campus radio station, KTCU. We promoted our TCU Rugby and Baseball tailgates, as well as our social media platforms.

National SVA shared all four videos of our student veteran interview series on its social media. Their Facebook page boasts more than 16,000 likes.

We used our contacts in the TCU Office of Marketing and Communication and an email pitch to convince the official TCU Facebook page to share our first interview video. The post received 90 likes and seven comments. TCU’s Facebook page has 72,864 likes.

We also posted on the TCU Student Veteran Alliance private Facebook group. Our posts about our campaign, events and updates reached the 141 members.

### **Social Media Metrics**

We quickly developed a large following on Facebook with 460 total likes and reaching 3,418 people during our campaign. On Twitter, we averaged 393 impressions a day or about 11,790 impressions total. Our Instagram account had 71 followers and over 260 likes on our various photos. Our student veteran interview series on YouTube has 393 views.

## **CONCLUSION**

### **Overall Success**

Our Three Points of Contact campaign sought to connect student veterans to TCU, the local SVA chapter and Fort Worth through a variety of events, social media channels and partnerships. Lila Public Relations connected with campus organizations and departments to provide gatherings for student veterans and increase awareness among traditional students. The interview series gave this underrepresented student population a chance to share their unique experiences with traditional students and faculty. As a result of this campaign, Lila Public Relations started important conversations among traditional students, faculty and SVA members on the transition from service to the classroom, the diverse student veteran experience and resources student veterans can use to achieve success.

### **Testimonials**

“I think student veterans feel that they are being heard more. They aren’t invisible anymore. This team has shed a light on student veterans that didn’t exist before at TCU. Now administration is having talks, and hopefully we have encouraged students with our stories of perseverance and experiences. We want to continue the collaboration between students.”

- William Howe, Student Veterans Alliance President

“I think it’s a really great cause, writing to veterans. I appreciate how they’re not doing just a flimsy event, but they’re having more substance to it. I think student veterans are super brave and it’s awesome that we are appreciating them and showing our love for their bravery.”

- Kelsey Werner, TCU traditional student

“The campaign means a great opportunity for TCU students to not just learn more about veterans, but to get our name out there as a student body, as a veteran body. As a student veteran, this means forward progress. It’s always a strange feeling getting recognized because almost any veteran will tell you we don’t consider ourselves heroes, we’re doing the job we signed up to do, and to have people in the school voluntarily do this for us is just touching, and I really look forward to where this could be going in the future.”

- Gabriel Merigian, TCU student veteran

“When it starts with just one voice, the voice is feeble. When that voice is joined by its comrades, it is heard. When outsiders are supporting these comrades, that’s evidence of understanding. With understanding, we can make the change. The new statistic is that 88 percent of Post 9/11 GI Bill users are dropping out. This is a problem that needs the understanding of the American community for it to change. This is what the campaign has done.”

- Cristina Mungilla, TCU student veteran

### **Accomplishments**

- Raised awareness of TCU SVA, both to student veterans and traditional students, as the organization rebuilds itself
- Brought student veterans together during events specifically catered for them
- Introduced four student veterans through interview videos to TCU’s student body
- Connected traditional students to student veterans
- Taught traditional students about TCU’s student veteran population
- Localized a broad issue of veterans’ affairs to focus on student veterans attending TCU

TCU SVA continues to progress with the momentum built this semester. Already, current SVA officers are working to repeat similar events, talk to administration and use data collected during the campaign to provide better resources for student veterans at TCU. The chapter hopes to continue our TCU Baseball event by offering tickets to family members for a fun family weekend. TCU’s SVA also plans on hosting the luncheon for potential transfer student veterans every semester to integrate potential students into the Horned Frog family.

We are proud to say that our work in the 2016 Bateman Case Study Competition helped our SVA chapter further establish itself at TCU and in Fort Worth by creating valuable relationships and starting important conversations. The Three Points of Contact campaign united the SVA chapter, the TCU community and the City of Fort Worth by providing keys to success for student veterans.

Through our campaign we reached meaningful milestones for this important organization and formed lasting friendships by starting conversations in our community. This was just the start. We built the momentum. Now it is up to all of us as points of contact to connect the community and continue the story.