



# 2020-2021 IMPACT REPORT CHEZ VETERANS CENTER



Dear Friends,

As the Interim Director of the Chez Veterans Center (CVC), I am honored to serve veterans and military-connected students at the University of Illinois. It is especially my pleasure to thank you for your benevolence and commitment to the CVC. Your generosity has enabled veterans from Illinois and across the nation to achieve their dream of attaining an undergraduate and/or graduate education.

The Chez Veterans Center is a truly remarkable facility, particularly given that it is the only center for military-connected students on a university campus that houses residential and service functions in one structure. Our building contains classrooms and computer labs, research space, a well-equipped gym, fully functional kitchen, study rooms, lounges, residential rooms, staff offices, and even playrooms for children.

We provide an array of resources for veterans and military-connected students. Some of these include academic coaching, tutoring, individual and group mental health counseling, career guidance, peer and corporate mentoring, and VA benefits consultation. We also conduct advocacy and veteran ally training, serve as a catalyst and clearinghouse for research by scholars on campus and nationally, and teach university courses on issues confronting veterans. It's no surprise that over the past few years, the CVC has become the hub of activity for military-connected students at the University of Illinois.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic has necessitated structural and operational changes at the CVC to meet preventive guidelines from the federal government, our mission to maximize the academic, psychosocial, and career potentials of veterans and military-connected persons remains unchanged. Similarly, we are undaunted in our vision to be the preeminent university center for transformational research, education, and innovative support services that benefit current and future generations of veterans, active duty members of the military, reservists, National Guard members, and their families.

At the CVC, we are committed to pursuing innovative and collaborative research, increasing awareness through creative educational programming, engaging diverse communities, offering full accessibility to our services by persons with varying abilities, and maintaining the utmost integrity of purpose.

I encourage you to visit our website to learn more about our activities and services. We welcome visitors to our facility (when it's safe to do so) and are always in search of partners to work with us in helping fulfill the nation's goal of enhancing the academic success of veterans and military-connected students on college campuses. Thank you again for your significant support of the Chez Veterans Center and all who benefit from it. The impact of your generosity is highlighted in this report.

With my best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Reginald J. Alston". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Reginald J. Alston, Ph.D.**  
Interim Director, Chez Veterans Center

# CHEZ VETERANS CENTER

## DID YOU KNOW?



### 5 YEARS

The Chez Veterans Center has been providing support for military-connected students since 2015.

14

### RESIDENTIAL SUITES

Twelve of the suites are occupied for the 2020/21 school year. The remaining two suites are not occupied due to the COVID-19 pandemic and some classes being held online.



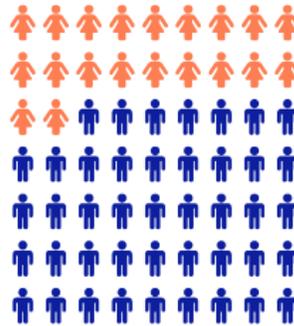
### 566

This is the number of military-connected students being reached by the Chez Veterans Center (veterans, active military, guard/reserve & dependents).

## STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

Military-Connected Students at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

Department of Defense Active Duty Service Members



VS

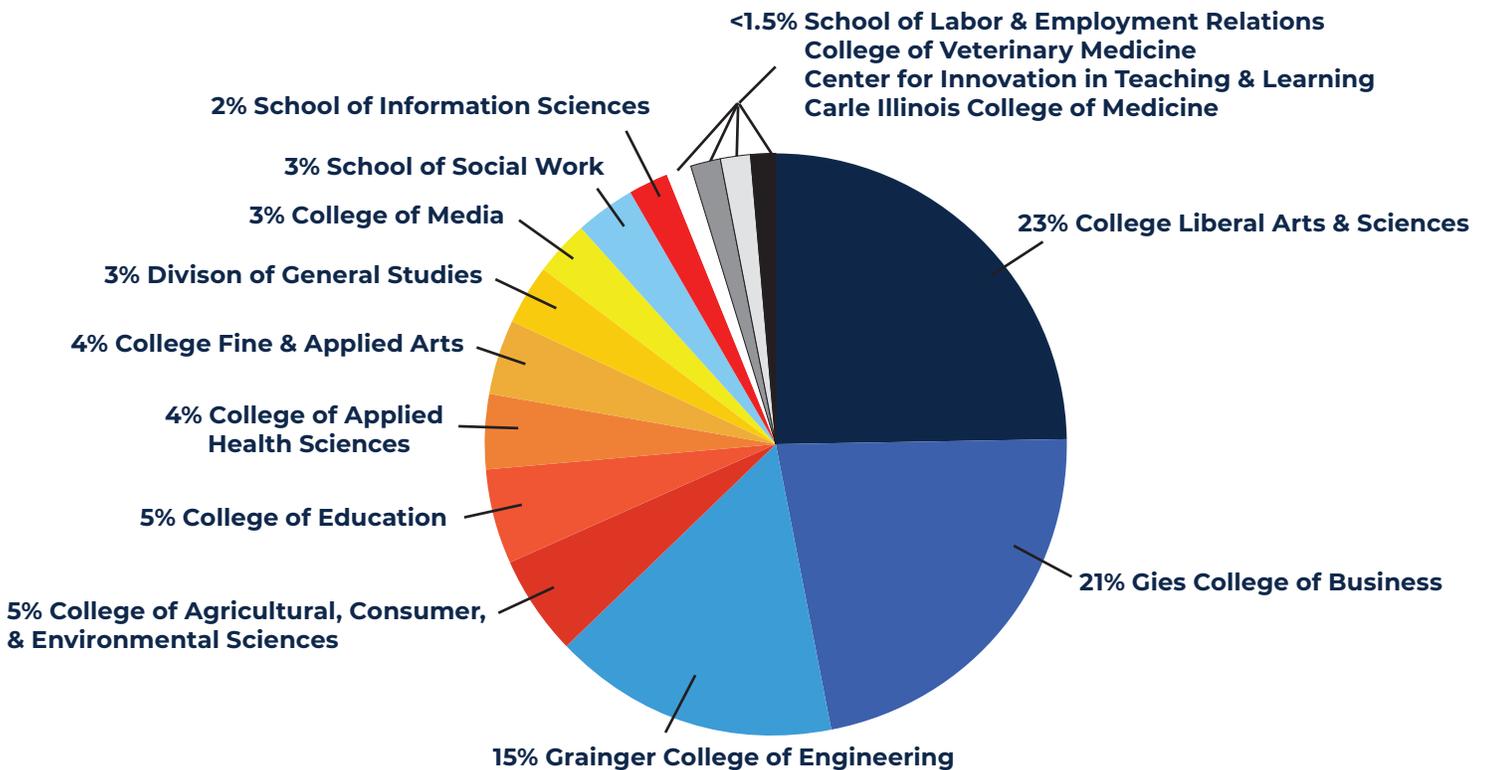
Female: 31.4%  
Male: 68.6%

Female: 16.5%  
Male: 83.5%

287 UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

276 GRADUATE STUDENTS

## STUDENTS BY COLLEGE



# CHEZ VETERANS CENTER

## MSKC SEED GRANTS

**\$120,000** 8 seed grants of \$15,000 each have been distributed since 2018

The Chez Veterans Center facilitates and catalyzes Military/Veteran-focused research across campus through its Military Service Knowledge Collaborative (MSKC). The mission of the MSKC is to foster collaboration between researchers and Military/Veteran communities that includes:

- Strategic partnering to facilitate access for recruitment and ensure the needs of this community are central to project development
- Community events that create spaces for researchers and Military/Veteran stakeholders to network
- Educational trainings and workshops tailored to fuse the societal military-civilian divide and help researchers develop necessary cultural competencies for engaging with this community in research

The MSKC Research Seed Grant Program provides support for researchers to develop partnerships with Military/Veteran communities and explore research that will spark innovative and progressive change. Funded projects include:

- Healing the Aftermath of War: Evaluating the REBOOT Combat Recovery Program
- MR Elastography (MRE) as a Biomarker for Post-Traumatic Epilepsy (PTE)
- Partnering with Military Families via Telehealth: Empowering Caregivers and Enhancing Communication Skills of Children with Autism
- Identifying Changing Responsibilities and Support Needs of Aging Caregivers of Veterans with Traumatic Brain Injury
- Examining the Intersection between Cannabis, Opioids and Benzodiazepine Use by Older Veterans in Illinois

## CVC RESIDENT

**Robert Bookland**  
Junior, Actuarial Science  
United States Air Force



"When I applied to UIUC I was on painkillers recovering from having two plates and ten screws placed in my ankle. Three weeks prior, I had a skydiving accident that also

left me with a broken back. In this time of chaos, the CVC provided me with housing and peers who could relate to my life experiences, and when Tricare was out of reach they helped me get VA healthcare and the physical therapy that I needed. If it wasn't for the CVC, I'm not sure if I would have the confidence to start school let alone my level of academic success."

## CVC ALUMNUS

**Matthew Cutright**  
Finance, UIUC '19  
US Navy



Matthew works for Ernst & Young as a business consultant for their government private sector and is currently

working with the defense health agency to build a financial management program for a directorate within the agency. The CVC provided him with information about the Undergraduvets event, where he met Ernst & Young.

## CAMP MACKALL



**39 students have completed the program since 2017**

CampMackall Veteran Mentoring Network (CMVMN) is a yearlong program dedicated to assisting student veterans with their career development by creating opportunities for mentoring and networking with professionals from some of the nation's finest companies. Their professional mentoring program provides a unique career development opportunity to those student veterans attending a post-secondary institution in Champaign-Urbana, from former service members to current Reservist and National Guardsmen.

# CHEZ VETERANS CENTER

## CAMP MACKALL MENTORSHIP



**Alex Romero (RST '18) with Mentor, Jayne DeLuce, Visit Champaign County President and CEO (Leisure Studies '87 & '88)**

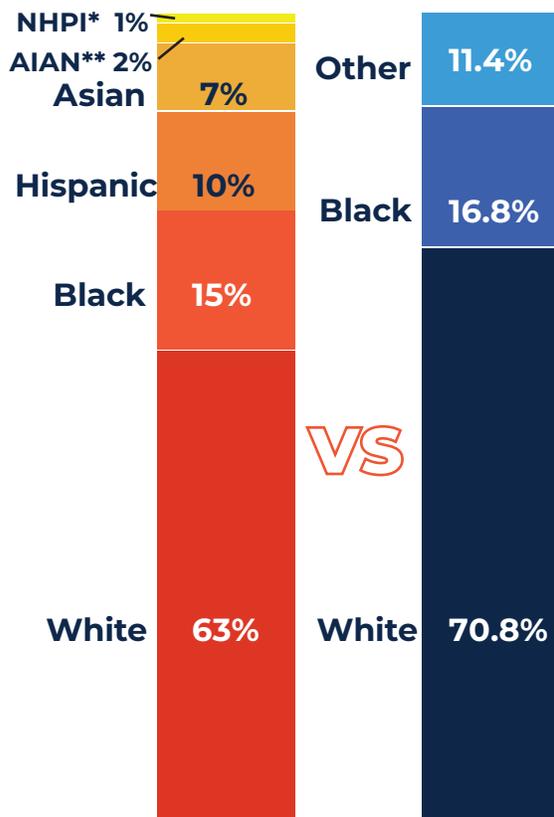
"Prior to submitting my application to the University of Illinois, I first looked into the Chez Veterans Center's website/social media platforms and was impressed with the structure of the Center along with the community involvement. The CampMackall mentorship program was another (main) reason why I chose to pursue graduate school at UIUC. I've created a close bond with my mentor for years to come. Jayne DeLuce has been a

phenomenal mentor throughout my time at UIUC. We've formed a friendship that will last beyond my time at graduate school."

**374 ON CAMPUS STUDENTS**

**192 ONLINE STUDENTS**

## STUDENT ETHNICITY



Military-Connected Students at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

Department of Defense Active Duty Service Members

\* NHPI: Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander

\*\*AIAN: American Indian or Alaska Native

## DONOR FEATURE

**Adeline "Jo" Puccini**

Speech Correction, UIUC '50

Adeline "Jo" Puccini made a gift to the Chez Veterans Center in 2014 to support student veterans and the importance of higher education. She, her husband, and daughter have a total of seven degrees between them. The third floor of the CVC is named the "CAPT J. E. Puccini, USN, Adeline K. and Nancy Ann Puccini Residential Floor."

Jo feels the twenty years she spent as a navy wife, working with her husband for the U.S. Navy, were the best years of her life. During that time, she felt privileged to meet the Joint Chiefs of Staff while welcoming Senator Jeremiah Denton and his wife to Washington, D.C. (Senator Denton was a U.S. Navy Rear Admiral and Naval Aviator.)

