

# Graduation Ceremony Recognizes 10 Years of the Veteran to BSN Program

*The VBSN program provides an accelerated path to translate time serviced in a military clinical capacity into course credit hours.*

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EINPresswire.com/ -- The Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center (TTUHSC) School of Nursing recognized the 10-year anniversary of the Veteran to Bachelor of Science in Nursing (VBSN) program during the fall 2025 commencement ceremonies held Dec. 13 in Lubbock, Texas. The recognition marks a decade of an accelerated, supportive pathway for military veterans with medical and clinical knowledge and experience. Not including this year's graduates, 172 military veterans have completed their nursing degrees through the program, including 11 graduates who returned for additional degrees.



Veteran to BSN candidates for graduation pose for a photo before commencement.

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We are profoundly grateful for the sacrifices they have made and deeply honored to walk beside them as they continue their mission, now in the noble work of nursing.”

*Holly Wei, Ph.D., R.N., FAAN,  
TTUHSC School of Nursing  
dean*

“For a decade, our Veteran to BSN graduates have embodied courage, discipline and service in its highest form,” Holly Wei, Ph.D., R.N., FAAN, TTUHSC School of Nursing dean said. “The transition of our Veteran to BSN graduates from battlefield and military medical units to professional nursing practice enriches our classrooms, strengthens clinical teams and elevates the quality of care for communities across Texas and our nation. We are profoundly grateful for the sacrifices they have made and deeply honored to walk beside them as they continue their mission, now in the noble work of nursing.”

Since it became operational in spring 2016, the VBSN program has provided a way to translate time serviced in a military clinical capacity into course credit hours, paving the way for U.S.

military veterans to earn a bachelor's in nursing. Designed to build upon the clinical and leadership experience gained in service, the university has graduated nurses representing every branch of the U.S. Armed Forces.

Over the past decade, the program has grown steadily. Since its inception, students have benefited from more than \$900,000 in institutional grants and scholarships to help with the transition from military to academic life. The first graduating class in 2016 consisted of seven students, compared to an estimated 31 in 2025. More than half of all past graduates are male, and all identified as first-generation college students. Students range in age from their early 20s to their mid-50s reflecting the different experiences and life stages represented in the program.

Although the number of veterans enrolled is small in comparison to the overall nursing student population, it's essential for a unique student population. Their impact on patient care, interdisciplinary teamwork and the broader nursing profession is significant because of the values and skills they acquired through military service, providing an accelerated and more efficient route into professional nursing.

"This specialized pathway serves a unique student population — military veterans with a medical military occupational specialty, including active duty, reserve, National Guard and separated/retired service members," Jonathan Menchaca, MSN, R.N., director, Veterans Education Initiatives, said. "These students bring advanced training, real-world clinical experience and a strong sense of discipline and teamwork that directly translate into nursing practice."

VBSN students are enrolled across Texas at TTUHSC locations in Abilene, Amarillo, Austin, Dallas,



Candidates for graduation of the Veterans to BSN program smile before commencement begins.



Students decorate their mortarboards for graduation.



Lubbock, Odessa and San Antonio, allowing veterans throughout Texas to access high-quality nursing education close to home.

"The reactions I receive from military veterans are overwhelmingly positive, and many describe this opportunity as a true life changer," Menchaca said. "For individuals who have spent several years — or even decades — serving in the armed forces, the transition to civilian life can be challenging."

As an alumnus of the VBSN 2018 cohort, Menchaca was medically retired early due to an injury after serving 14 years as a combat medic.



Veterans to BSN candidates for graduation were recognized during commencement.

"My career ended very suddenly after a motor vehicle accident," Menchaca said. "I had completed four deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan and was serving as an instructor for the Department of Combat Medic Training. My military career was moving forward and how I wanted it, but then everything came to an abrupt stop. I found myself unsure of what to do next. I was retired from the Army. Learning about the VBSN program changed everything for me."

Approximately 551 candidates for graduation received bachelor's, master's and doctorate degrees in nursing this fall semester.

Suzanna Cisneros  
Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center  
+1 806-773-4242  
[email us here](#)

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