



West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission
1018 Kanawha Boulevard East, Suite 700
Charleston, WV 25301
(304) 558-4016
www.hepc.wvnet.edu

MEMORANDUM

TO: Legislative Oversight Commission on Education Accountability

FROM: Brian Noland

DATE: September 13, 2010

RE: Student Veterans Initiatives

In accordance with West Virginia Code §18B-4-9, the attached report is provided regarding progress toward development of services and facilities for student veterans enrolled in West Virginia public colleges and universities. We appreciate the West Virginia Legislature's ongoing interest in and support of efforts to improve veterans' access to and success in higher education.

Staff of the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission (Commission) and the West Virginia Council for Community and Technical Education (Council) has worked closely with the House of Delegates Veterans Affairs and Homeland Security Committee and the Senate Military Committee as they considered House Bill 4145 during the 2010 legislative session to enhance educational services provided to veterans of the Armed Forces. During the past year, staff of the Office of Veterans Education and Training Programs has actively supported legislative intent to provide "veteran-friendly" services to student veterans.

In addition, the Commission created a Veterans Learner Task Force to support legislative intent and to provide leadership from the campuses to identify needs and concerns of veterans. Representatives from public two- and four-year institutions as well as private institutions have met several times and developed many ideas that ultimately were included in House Bill 4145.

Examples of initiatives to improve and increase support to student veterans include the following:

- Beginning to collect data on veterans in college-level programs in West Virginia.
- Supporting the work of the Commission's Veterans Learner Task Force.

- Providing training workshops for schools' VA certifying officials.
- Planning and conducting a "Returning Veteran Symposium" for school and agency officials on July 28, 2010 at Concord University. Approximately 100 participants attended the symposium to create partnerships among agencies to better help and support student veterans.
- Presenting a "Recruiting Veterans" workshop for college admissions personnel.
- Implementing West Virginia's "Yellow Ribbon" tuition program in conjunction with the new Post 9/11 GI Bill.
- Presenting at state meetings of:
 - Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers;
 - Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators; and
 - Community College Association.
- Visiting every college and university in the state for supervisory reviews and consultation.
- Meeting with community and technical college leaders to help with separation issues pertaining to veterans as the community and technical colleges became independent institutions.
- Creating program approvals for veteran benefits for each newly separated community and technical college.
- Participating in national and regional meetings about the new GI Bill.
- Attending/testifying at two Congressional hearings on the new GI Bill.
- Presenting at West Virginia House of Delegates and State Senate hearings on veterans issues.
- Consulting with college and university officials to assist with "veteran-friendly" initiatives on campuses.

Attached for your information and reference is a recent presentation made by Mr. Skip Gebhart, Administrator, Office of Veterans' Education Programs, during a recent meeting of the Commission. Also attached is a fact sheet which overviews the "Yellow Ribbon Program" in West Virginia.

As we move into a new federal fiscal year, we will keep the issue of "veteran friendliness" at the forefront to assure that all of our campuses are seen as being supportive and responsive to veteran students' needs.



FACT SHEET | Yellow Ribbon Program

- Through the New GI Bill, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) will pay eligible veterans' tuition for programs offered by colleges and universities.
- Tuition payments are limited to the highest in-state undergraduate rate at a public institution in the same state.
- In West Virginia, the 2008-09 maximum tuition the VA can pay is \$9,216 per year.
- Tuition at private and graduate schools, and for out-of-state residents, may exceed the \$9,216 maximum the VA can pay.
- The New GI Bill's Yellow Ribbon program provides additional funds to help cover this excess tuition for veterans who are eligible for full benefits under the bill.
- Participating Yellow Ribbon schools cover up to half of the difference between the maximum and the actual tuition. The VA matches the school's contribution, resulting in no out-of-pocket expenses for the veterans.
- Passed during the 2009 session of the West Virginia Legislature, HB 2335 requires all West Virginia public colleges and universities to participate fully in the federal Yellow Ribbon program for all eligible undergraduate veterans at the full contribution level.
- The new state law allows out-of-state undergraduate veterans to attend a West Virginia public institution free of charge. The VA and the schools will cover the tuition in full.
- Many West Virginia private schools also have elected to participate in the Yellow Ribbon program.
- The VA's website has complete details about the federal program at http://www.gibill.va.gov/GI_Bill_Info/CH33/Yellow_ribbon.htm.
- Interested veterans should contact the admissions office of the institution they would like to attend. The institution will work with the veteran and the VA to determine eligibility.

HEPC Veterans Initiatives



David K. Hendrickson, Chair

Brian Noland, Chancellor

Office of Veterans Education and Training Programs

**Bernard R. “Skip” Gebhart, M.S, M.Ed.
Administrator**



OVET is:

- A unit of HEPC's Academic Affairs Division
- One of 57 “state approving agencies” nationwide
- Designated by the Governor, at the request of Congress, to be the state agency responsible for approving education programs for VA benefits.
- Reimbursed by Congress, through VA, for all expenses related to approvals, monitoring, etc.
 - Current allocation: \$130,000 per year



OVET's Mission

We ensure high quality, well-managed education and training programs for West Virginia veterans, other VA-eligible persons, National Guard members and Reservists.

- We inspect, review, approve, and monitor programs
- We provide in-depth technical assistance and training, outreach efforts, and liaison with related organizations, agencies, and individuals within West Virginia.



OVET's Vision

“Every veteran/eligible person, National Guard member and Reservist in West Virginia will be aware of and have full and fair access to high quality, ethically administered education and training programs that can help them reach their full potential.”



OVET's Desired Outcomes

- Successful students!
- Lower rate of errors and overpayments
- Satisfied clients and stakeholders
- More veterans coming to/staying in West Virginia for school or training
- Higher rate of participation in GI Bill
 - Veterans
 - Training facilities



West Virginia's Approved Facilities

- More than 2,700 active programs in:
 - 43 Colleges and Universities
 - 33 Non-College Degree Schools
 - 41 Apprenticeship and Other On-Job Training Programs
 - 1 Flight School



West Virginia's VA Students

- 5,739 Students Received VA Education Benefits in West Virginia in May, 2010:
 - Public Colleges and Universities 2,033
 - Private Colleges and Universities 3,556
 - Non-College Degree Schools 55
 - On the Job and Apprenticeships 95
- Another 1,000 veterans participate in VA's Vocational Rehabilitation Program



GI Bill Extended Economic Impact

- 685 West Virginia Jobs Supported
- \$6,145,443 Taxes Paid
- \$52,000,000 Overall Impact on West Virginia Economy Annually



FY2010 Accomplishments

- Training workshops school VA certifying officials
- “Recruiting Veterans” workshop for admissions personnel
- Implemented West Virginia’s “Yellow Ribbon” tuition program
- Presented at state meetings of:
 - Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers
 - Association Of Student Financial Aid Administrators
 - Community College Association
- Worked with Legislature and Governor’s Office on “veteran-friendly campus” legislation
- Began collecting data on veterans in college-level programs in West Virginia



FY2010 Accomplishments, 2.

- Supported work of the HEPC Veterans Initiative Task Force
- Visited every college and university in the state for supervisory reviews and consultation
- Met with CTC leaders to help with separation issues pertaining to veterans
- Revised/created program approvals for VA benefits at each newly separated CTC
- Participated in national and regional meetings about the new GI bill
- Attended/testified at two Congressional hearings on the new GI Bill



Issues

- Encouraging veterans to use their benefits
 - “Veteran-Friendly Campus” legislation
- Recruiting out-of-state veterans to come to West Virginia schools
 - Yellow Ribbon legislation
- Improving the new GI Bill
 - S3447, U.S. Senate
- Delays in VA benefit processing/late benefits for students
 - On-going communication/intervention



Upcoming Plans

- Symposium, July 28, Concord University
- Research on veterans' success and participation
- Establishing good database of veteran enrollment, etc.
- Continuing training for school officials and others
- Emphasis on “veteran-friendly campus” programs



Questions? Suggestions?

We value your input and help!

