



David Hendrickson  
Chair

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**West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission  
West Virginia Community and Technical College System**

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Robert Brown  
Chair

James Skidmore  
Chancellor

September 1, 2011

The Honorable Jeffrey Kessler  
Acting Senate President  
West Virginia State Senate  
Room 227M, Building 1  
State Capitol Complex  
Charleston, West Virginia 25305

The Honorable Richard Thompson  
Speaker  
West Virginia House of Delegates  
Room 228M, Building 1  
State Capitol Complex  
Charleston, West Virginia 25305

Dear Mr. President and Mr. Speaker:

In accordance with West Virginia Code §18B-4-9, the following 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 on-going interest in and support of efforts to improve veterans' access to and success in higher education.

During the past year, staff of the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission (Commission) and the West Virginia Council for Community and Technical Education (Council) have actively supported legislative intent to provide "veteran-friendly" services to student veterans throughout the state. Through the efforts of our Office of Veterans Education and Training Programs, staff has conducted their federally-reimbursed program approval and review activities.

The Commission's Veterans Learner Task Force has continued to support legislative intent and to provide leadership to the campuses to identify needs and concerns of veterans. The Task Force is developing a survey to determine the current state of services to veteran students and results will be compiled later this year. The Task Force also has developed a "mini-grant" program to provide institutions with seed money to begin projects that will enhance services to veterans with awards to be made during the Fall 2011 semester. The Task Force is guided by the provisions of West Virginia Code §18B-4-9.

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

- Collection and analysis of data on veterans in college-level programs in West Virginia;
- Continued Commission and Council support of the Veterans Learner Task Force;
- Hosting statewide meetings of school certifying officials and others who work with veterans to bring them up to date on new VA benefits and to improve services;

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- Presenting at state meetings of the Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers and the Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators;
- Speaking at institutional programs for new veteran students;
- Visiting every college and university in the state for supervisory reviews and consultation;
- Meeting with Community and Technical College officials to assist with ongoing issues pertaining to veterans following the Community and Technical Colleges separation from their former parent institutions;
- Participating in national and regional meetings about the new GI Bill;
- Attending Congressional hearings on improvements to the new GI Bill;
- Presenting at West Virginia State Senate and House of Delegates hearings on veterans issues.
- Consulting with college and university officials to assist with “veteran-friendly” initiatives on campuses; and
- Exploring development of an Institute for Veterans Education and Training Success to provide professional training and support to campus-based staff working with veteran students.

In addition to his normal duties during the past year, a member of our staff, Mr. Skip Gebhart, Administrator of the Office of Veterans Education and Training, has played a significant national role in working to protect the rights of the states to manage education and training programs for the GI Bill. Federal legislation in 2010 virtually stripped the states of approval authority that they had held for 65 years and may affect the amount of reimbursement the states receive for GI Bill-related work. The Administrator, as Legislative Director for the National Association of State Approving Agencies for Veterans Education and Training, has spent many hours in Washington, D.C. meeting with Members of Congress and staff to educate them about the success of the former approval and review system and to urge that it be restored. The impact of the legislation extends to our institutions and ultimately to the veteran students who attend them, so it is a critical issue.

During the next year, our focus will continue to be on assuring that West Virginia’s is seen as the most “veteran-friendly” higher education system, one in which each veteran student will have the services, support, and education necessary to graduate and succeed. Please feel free to contact Mr. Gebhart at 304-588-0263 or either of us if we can provide additional information regarding these initiatives.

Sincerely,



Brian Noland  
Chancellor



James L. Skidmore  
Chancellor

cc: The Honorable Robert Plymale  
Chair, Senate Education Committee

The Honorable Mary Poling  
Chair, House Education Committee