

NAVIGATING MILITARY EDUCATION BENEFITS

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ADVISORS ON THE “FRONT LINES”

Other than the CO, advisors may be the first point of contact on campus

Understanding benefits has multiple benefits:

- Insight into the veteran student population
 - Knowing vocabulary and how to ask questions
- Helping veterans in educational planning
 - Maximize benefits
 - Achieve full time BHA
 - Navigate successfully and simultaneously VA and institutional policy
 - What can and cannot be done

INSTITUTIONAL GAINS

What can and cannot be done

- **Consistency**
 - Paperwork
 - Disseminating information

- **Efficient transfer and graduation**
 - 36 months of benefits align with “Fifteen to Four”
 - Graduate with remaining balance = little to no debt = resources available to other non-VA students

VOCABULARY

Active duty

Currently serving in military

Veteran

Having served in the military, but now separated

Dependent

Child or spouse

C.O.

Certifying Official

Certification

The submission of enrollment dates, credits, tuition, and fees

Entitlement

Length of time of benefits

Service Connected

Disability obtained through time in military

Objective

Educational goals. May also hear **Dual Objective** – when a student chooses to pursue more than one degree

Pursuit (rate of pursuit)

Number of credits being pursued compared to number considered to be full-time

B.H.A.

Basic Housing Allowance

Change of Program

When student changes major, degree or department/school/college

Punitive grades

Failing grade calculated into GPA

Non-punitive grades

Not earned credit and not calculated into GPA

BENEFITS OVERVIEW

Stipend

Chapter 30

Chapter 35

Chapter 1606

Chapter 1607

VRAP

Tuition, housing, books

Chapter 31

Chapter 33

ADDITIONAL BENEFITS

- National Tests
- Licensing and certification tests
- Tutoring assistance
- Study Abroad
- Tuition assistance
 - Tuition Assistance Top Up
- Yellow Ribbon

VA POLICY

Courses must be certified to receive military education benefits

- Understand the certification process at your institution
- Know approved programs
 - WEAMS Public
- What role do you play as an advisor?

MILITARY TRANSCRIPTS

VA requires all students submit military transcripts to their institutions

How does your institution accept military credit?

START AND END DATES

Courses that begin and end on the same day are recognized by the VA as being part of the same term

This has complications with:

- **Courses with different dates**
 - Being considered fulltime and receiving full BHA

- **Summer Sessions**
 - Multiple start and end dates

- **Dual enrollment**
 - If student dual enrolled, if courses at both institutions have the same start and end dates, VA will still consider as part of same term

RATE OF PURSUIT & TRAINING TIME

- VA calculates a student's rate of pursuit by dividing the credit hours being pursued by the number of credits considered to be full-time by the school. The resulting percentage would determine the CH 33 or CH 31 student's housing allowance.
 - Rate of pursuit must be >50% to qualify for BHA
 - If taking online courses only, only receive 50% BHA
- Student's using Chapters 30, 35, 1606, 1607 or VRAP benefits would be paid a flat monthly rate based on their monthly enrollment verification.

Credits	Time	Monthly Rate
12	Full	\$1648
9-11	$\frac{3}{4}$	\$1236
6-8	$\frac{1}{2}$	\$824
4-5	$<\frac{1}{2}$	\$824
1-3	$\frac{1}{4}$ or $<\frac{1}{4}$	\$412

DEBTS

Tuition refund deadlines do not align with VA policy

If a CH 33 student withdraws from a course after the first day of instruction:

- Enrollment and rate of pursuit changes and will be adjusted
 - This triggers a student debt to the VA

If a student fails a course:

- Instructors are required to report last day of attendance
 - If student did not attend until the last day of class, may trigger a student debt to the VA

GRADES AND REPEATED COURSES

Courses that are failed or for which the grade does not meet minimum requirements for graduation may be certified for VA purposes if they are repeated.

Courses that are successfully completed may not be certified for VA purposes if they are repeated.

REMEDIAL COURSES

Remedial courses can be certified as part of an approved program, but only for students for whom a verifiable need has been established

Need placement test documentation

ROUNDING OUT

Students can “round out” their last semester with non-required courses to be considered full-time

- **Need at least one required/certifiable course**
- **Can only “round-out” once per program**
 - **If fail last required course in round-out semester and need to extend graduation to retake the course, cannot round-out again**

EDUCATIONAL PLANNING

Identifying Educational Objective

- What does student want to accomplish?
 - Degree, major(s), minor(s), certificate(s)
 - Remaining entitlement
 - Move dates

Create plan from the very beginning

- What can and cannot be done
 - How to fit “what cannot” around the “what can”
- Maximize benefits
 - Full time BHA
 - Little to no debt
- Efficient transfer/graduation
- Academic planner in STAR

“COUNTER INTUITIVE ADVISING”

There are nuances to academic planning you understand as an advisor that students may not

- **Elective math**
 - Work backwards and calculate how many elective credits student can “play with”
 - Discuss when best to use elective credit
- **Not double dipping**
 - May need to separate out requirements to have more certifiable credits
- **Summer school**
 - Condensed sessions, therefore can earn more credit in short time (efficient use of eligibility)
 - Students may rely on summer school for BHA
- **Adding additional programs of study**
 - If approved program, the VA will certify the courses

THE FORMS

**Get to know your C.O.
Call if you have questions**

Fill out the forms correctly

- Can you sign? If not, who? How help student prepare and how to give referral...
- This is a signed contract and documentation for VA
 - What is each course?
 - Is it approved?
 - Are these online courses?
 - Are these repeated courses?

Minimize bureaucracy and prevent runaround

- If you know how the system works you can teach every veteran and dependent student

RESOURCES

**We do not advise on VA policy or benefits.
We aid in the navigation.**

Refer students to CO or Vet Success Rep for all VA policy questions - They can direct from there...

- Rate of pursuit, debts, BHA, ect....

Other resources

- GI Bill Website
- WEAMS Public
- VA Hotline: 1-888-442-4551
- Honolulu Vet Center: 808-973-9387
- West Oahu Vet Center: 808-674-2414

QUESTIONS?

Contact:

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Quick Reference and Resources – Student Veterans

Benefits

U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs

<http://www.va.gov/>

GI Bill Website

<http://www.gibill.va.gov/>

The Department of Veterans Affairs provides access and information to veteran services. Specifically the G.I. Bill website is the home for all educational benefits provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs. This site outlines benefit types as well as aids in the selection of school, applying for benefits, and navigating the certification process.

WEAMS Public

<http://inquiry.vba.va.gov/weamspub/buildSearchInstitutionCriteria.do>

This site allows for the search of institutions of higher learning and programs approved to receive VA educational benefits. This is helpful in determining what courses are certifiable or not.

To view the list of approved programs for your institution:

1. Click on HI on the map
2. Click on "the name of your institution"
3. Click on Programs (near the top of the page)
4. Click on "Institution of Higher Learning" to view approved lists of degrees
5. Click on "Non College Degree" to view approved lists of undergraduate certificates, graduate certificates, and post-baccalaureate certificates

Student Organizations

Student Veterans of America

<http://www.studentveterans.org/>

Student Veterans of America (SVA) exists to provide military veterans with resources, support, and advocacy needed to succeed in higher education and beyond.

Hawaii Alliance of Student Veterans

<https://www.facebook.com/HIStudentVeterans>

Hawaii state-wide Alliance of Student Veterans has been formed. The Alliance serves as a great referral to student veterans looking to get involved and connect to other veterans on campus and in the community.

Local Resources

Vet Centers

<http://www.vetcenter.va.gov/>

Offers counseling services to combat veterans and their families.

Honolulu Vet Center: 808-973-9387

West Oahu Vet Center: 808-674-2414

The transition from military life to college life

ACE Military Students and Veterans

<http://www.acenet.edu/Content/NavigationMenu/ProgramsServices/MilitaryPrograms/index.htm>

This site was created as a means to connect the U.S. Department of Defense with higher education through outlining the military training student veterans receive. These outlines can help colleges determine how to award college equivalent credit for military service. Additionally, it is an online source to help college administrators better understand the experiences of military personnel and connect to many resources, studies, programs, and services.

Leadership Exchange: From Soldier to Student I and II

http://www.leadershipexchange-digital.com/lexmail/2009fall/?sub_id=Dq9v2rVwcJls&folio=22
<http://www.acenet.edu/news-room/Documents/From-Soldier-to-Student-II-Assessing-Campus-Programs.pdf>

Outlines the current characteristics of contemporary student veterans and assesses college programs for veterans and service members.

Social work and service members

<http://www.socialworkers.org/military.asp>

A guiding to helping and working with service members. Includes online training resources.

Articles

Ackermann, R., Di Ramio, D. (Eds.). (2009). Creating a veteran friendly campus. *New Directions for Student Services*, 126.

DiRamio, D., Ackerman, R., & Mitchell, R.L. (2008). From combat to campus: Voices of student veterans. *NASPA Journal*, 45(1), 73-102.

Rumann, C. B., Hamrick, F. A. (2010). Student veterans in transition: Re-enrolling after war zone deployments. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 81(4), 431-458.

Ryan, S. W., Carlstrom, A. H., Hughey, K. F., Harris, B. S. (2011). From boots to books: Applying Schlossberg's model to transitioning American veterans. *NACADA Journal*, 31(1), 55-63.

Other resources

Military terminology:

Glossary of DoD Work Force Terms: <http://siadapp.dmdc.osd.mil/personnel/NETGLOSS.HTM>

Department of Defense dictionary of military terms: http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/dod_dictionary/

Ted Talks: "War Tapes"

http://www.ted.com/talks/deborah_scranton_on_her_war_tapes.html

Deborah Scranton talks about her documentary, The War Tapes. She gave three National Guardsmen fighting in Iraq cameras to document their own tours of duty, the result was a documentary of firsthand accounts of the war in Iraq.

In their own words: Montgomery College student veterans

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bXlel20tpSA>

Documentary about student veterans produced by Dr. Esther Schwartz-McKinzie.