

## Veterans Advisory Committee on Education

810 Vermont Ave,  
Washington DC

May 16 and 17, 2007

### Attendees:

#### *Committee*

Mr. James Bombard, Chair

Mr. James G. Blair

Mr. Colbert Boyd

Dr. Michael Cappeto

Mr. Robert Clark

Mr. Jeff Cropsey

Ms. Faith DesLauriers

Rear Admiral Russell W. Gorman (Ret.)

*(Not in attendance Michael P. Cline)*

Dr. Steve Kime

Ms. Lisa Lutz

Col Robert Norton (Ret.)

Mr. Stephen Rosmarin

Mr. George Rubin

Mr. Joseph Sharpe

Ms. Kathy Snead

Mr. C. Donald Sweeney

#### *VBA*

Mr. Keith Wilson – Director, Education Service

Mr. Robyn Noles – Education Service

Mr. Salminio Garner – Education Service

Ms. Andrea Jones – Education Service

### *Guests Present*

See Attachment A

### **Wednesday, May 16, 2007**

Meeting Convenes 8:50 a.m.

Jim Bombard opened the meeting by welcoming all members and recommended that members review the agenda. Mr. Bombard went on acknowledging the new members to the committee and welcoming them. Mr. Bombard asked that they introduce themselves to the rest of the committee.

Jeff Cropsey, Colbert Boyd, Kathy Snead and Lisa Lutz gave the committee an overview of their backgrounds, credentials, current professional business efforts and extended their appreciation for being appointed to the VACOE.

Mr. Bombard introduced Congressman Bob Filner, Chairman of the House Veterans Affairs Committee (HVAC).

Congressman Filner spoke of some of the efforts of the HVAC, including enhancing educational benefits by expanding certification programs for servicemembers and veterans to use their educational entitlement. Congressman Filner said that the HVAC is doing all it can to move the GI Bill into the 21st Century; making sure no warriors are

left behind. Congressman Filner asked that the Committee share some of their ideas that could improve the educational benefits for those serving our country.

Mr. Kime commented that this is the second time Congressman Filner spoke to the VACOE and that he was pleased that the HVAC was interested in improving the GI Bill. Mr. Kime asked where this Congress currently is in making this happen. Mr. Kime added that transferring the entire responsibility for the educational benefit program to VA from DoD would improve the process.

Congressman Filner said that there is support from Congressman Snyder and others of the HVAC to pass a bill shifting the funding for Guard and Reserve benefits from DoD to VA. Snyder is very focused and working to gain the support of the bill; his position on both the HVAC and the House Armed Services Committee (HASC) makes him an ideal advocate for this proposal.

Mr. Sweeney added that this would create greater equity in the Active Duty and Selected Reserve GI Bill programs.

Congressman Filner asked that Mr. Kime present his ideas to his office and he would be sure to review them. The Congressman said that the American people must understand that our mission doesn't stop when the soldiers come home, we must ensure our warriors receive the health care, education and other benefits they have earned.

Mr. Rubin mentioned that the VACOE made a recommendation to the VA Secretary that involved private institutions and business having the capability to offer grants to veterans and those that serve in the armed forces.

Congressman Filner found the idea interesting and asked Mr. Rubin to send information to his office about this idea.

Mr. Cropsey commented to the Congressman that a total force GI Bill is long overdue. He also noted that, as the Director of DANTEs, he sees the increasing importance of certifications. DoD has seen an increase in requests for certifications, including the need to certify veterans for teaching positions in Florida where there are significant teacher shortages.

Mr. Rosmarin recalled the VACOE meeting in San Diego at Camp Pendleton where during a town hall meeting soldiers requested that they be allowed to transfer their benefit to their dependents. He asked about the possibility of expanded transferability options for soldiers.

Mr. Blair posed a question about ill treatment of veterans on campus, as a result of negative attitudes toward the war. Congressman Filner stated that he does not have the sense that this exists.

Mr. Gorman asked a question about the \$1200 MGIB buy-in; currently there is no provision for those who previously opted out to become eligible. He noted that young people are often naive when they enter the armed forces and should be given another opportunity to get the GI Bill although they may have waived it earlier in their military career.

Congressman Filner agreed and stated that he believes it is an earned benefit and the HVAC would look into that idea.

Ms. Lutz mentioned that she agrees with Mr. Cropsey's comment about the increases in licensure and certification program participation. She affirmed that these programs are highly beneficial and are being used more frequently by servicemembers and veterans.

Ms. DesLauriers commented that short term high cost programs should be pushed. She recalled that DoD said they may have not informed Reservists of the 1606 extension provisions and this opportunity to get the GI Bill. She also noted that legislation should be passed to ensure that GI Bill payments are not counted as income for federal student aid purposes.

Mr. Sweeney offered the services of the VACOE as a resource for the HVAC's deliberations on Total Force proposals.

Congressman Filner thanked the Committee for their dedication to the servicemembers and veterans and expressed his appreciation to them for sharing their ideas and comments.

Break 9:40 a.m.

Reconvene 9:45 a.m.

When the meeting reconvened, the members reviewed the minutes of the previous meeting. Mr. Kime moved that the minutes be accepted and this motion was carried.

Mr. Bombard asked the remaining members to introduce themselves. After all remaining members completed their introductions, Mr. Bombard introduced Keith Wilson, Education Service Director.

Mr. Wilson provided the Committee with an overview of the chapter 1606 extension issue, for the benefit of the new members. Mr. Wilson said that VA has been paying Reservists based on the 1606 extension (Active duty service time served plus four months) since the 1990's. DoD and the VA General Counsel offices have been

involved and discussed the VA's interpretation of this statute; after some time the VA's statute interpretation was jointly agreed upon.

Mr. Wilson stated that the Guard and Reserve units were not aware of this provision. To address this, DoD is revising publications to incorporate this statutory agreement. DoD is still responsible for making individuals aware of this benefit extension provision.

Mr. Norton asked Mr. Wilson how long we will allow the benefit to be paid.

Mr. Wilson responded by saying most individuals who are enrolled and dropped out or stopped attending will be paid if eligible.

Mr. Wilson gave the following example: if a Guard member or Reservist is called up for 12 months and separates, then his/her extension begins at 12 months plus 4 additional months.

Mr. Norton commented that most Reservists don't understand how this extension works.

Mr. Wilson mentioned that the information that is in the press and the media has simply been wrong.

Mr. Clark commented that MGIB-SR is not a readjustment benefit; the chapter 1606 extension is just to make up for missing time in school.

Mr. Sharpe said that this confusion hurts morale overseas, as some Reservists got the extension while others didn't. Some left Iraq and got the extension.

Mr. Norton asked if the VA pays at the end of the semester.

Mr. Wilson replied saying that the Education Service will verify this but he believes we do.

Ms. DesLauriers expressed concern that many schools are not aware of the 1606 extension and they receive calls on this. This is a particular concern because many of the affected individuals are separated from their units. She asked if VA is going to inform the schools of the extension.

Mr. Wilson affirmed that he would work with the RPOs to ensure that the schools are aware. The Education Liaison Representatives are responsible for getting the word out and this was done on an earlier occasion.

Admiral Gorman asked how VA determines if the reservists are still eligible for the benefit once they have separated.

Mr. Wilson replied that this question is best answered by DoD.

Mr. Clark responded that if the reservist remains in the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) they are still eligible.

This concluded discussion of the chapter 1606 extension.

Mr. Bombard moved the meeting to address pending legislation. Mr. Bombard asked Mr. Wilson to go through pending legislation issues.

Mr. Wilson noted that Education Service has been inundated with an overwhelming number of bills to review and to develop comments on the proposed legislation and costing assumptions. Mr. Wilson went on to highlight S. 22 (Senator Webb) that proposed paying for tuition and fees and a \$1,000 monthly stipend to all beneficiaries who served post 9/11. This bill would add a new section, Chapter 33, to Title 38 U.S.C. Another bill, S. 698 proposed giving a lump sum payment of \$80,000 to participants in the Dependent Education Assistance (DEA) program. A House bill, H.R. 1102, sponsored by Representative Vic Snyder proposed placing chapters 1606 and 1607 of title 10 U.S.C., under title 38 U.S.C. Mr. Wilson noted that we support this bill in part.

Mr. Boyd asked what the bill the VA supports most.

Mr. Wilson replied by informing the committee that the VA has testified on seven education related bills and expects to testify three more times this summer on Education related issues. Accelerated Payment is covered quite frequently by members of the HVAC and SVAC. Generally, H.R. 1102 is the most similar to the VACOE Total Force Concept although there have been many bills that incorporate these ideas in some ways. Mr. Wilson also noted that some of the proposed bills would be very costly if implemented.

Mr. Rubin commented that a large percentage of students receive financial aid and pondered whether the Webb bill could be modified to make it more affordable; for example, if colleges and universities could offset veterans' tuition and the government could fund the balance.

Mr. Wilson said that any reply he could make would be speculative; however, he would have concerns with having the GI Bill take any other assistance received into consideration.

Mr. Kime agreed that the GI Bill should be separate and distinct from anything else that the veteran might receive.

Mr. Wilson noted that Education Service is actively engaged with the HVAC and SVAC on their proposals and is providing technical advice, cost estimates and other assistance.

Mr. Bombard commented that he attended a hearing last week and it appears that Webb's bill has four co-sponsors and general support overall.

Mr. Norton noted that Senator Clinton will also be sponsoring a GI Bill revision.

Secretary Nicholson greeted the Committee and presented certificates to the newly appointed Committee members. The new appointees were: Mr. Colbert L. Boyd, Mr. Jeffery P. Cropsey, Ed.D., Ms. Lisa Lutz, and Ms. Kathy Snead.

The Secretary spoke briefly to the Committee stressing the importance of the VACOE's work and sharing his personal belief in the importance of education. He recalled how his mother and father came from humble beginnings but insisted that he and his seven siblings go to college. This led the Secretary into a productive life to serve in the military. The Secretary conveyed that VA cares and has compassion for those that serve their nation. Accordingly, VA provides for those who serve in three ways: health care, benefits, and memorial affairs. The Secretary also commented that after returning from his service in Vietnam, he experienced discrimination that other soldiers endured. The Secretary expressed his pleasure that Congressman Filner was able to meet the VACOE.

The Secretary stated he feels that we are doing a good job of administratively managing the education program. He noted the Committee's role in providing perspectives to help us keep the benefit current and prepare it for the future. The Secretary also noted that our focus should not be exclusively on academics and higher learning, but should include vocational education. VA can help our young soldiers capitalize on the tremendous training they receive in the military, operating very complex equipment including nuclear or technical recon devices. This is one reason credentialing and licensing opportunities are so important for veterans. If some of these soldiers move into the civilian workforce, they should be able to easily obtain certification or a license, thereby easing their transition back into civilian life. The Secretary thanked the Committee for their dedication to those that serve our country and noted that he looked forward to receiving their recommendations. He then took a group photo with the Committee members.

Break 10:50 a.m.

Reconvene 11:00 a.m.

Mr. Bombard asked that Mr. Kime introduced Doug Herrmann who made a presentation on problems of veterans in American colleges and universities.

Mr. Herrmann commented that when his association (Veterans Education Association) first began they didn't realize that there was a problem until they performed a study. The report included articles, documents and anonymous surveys from veterans. Of those surveyed, about one third believed they received lower grades and less financial aid than they should have because they were veterans. Mr. Herrmann mentioned that it was hard to identify the problem, but found that it only takes one instance of discrimination to deter a veteran from attending school. Some examples are:

- Faculty may give veterans the cold shoulder
- Veterans are at times forced to pay total tuition and fees
- Very few scholarship programs are offered to veterans
- Lack of consistency in granting transfer credits or allowing credit for military experience
- Reservists are told to re-apply for school once they return from active duty serving their country
- No support for veterans that have service-connected disabilities
- Faculty make disparaging remarks and have no respect for veterans

Mr. Herrmann went on to say that most veterans accept these acts of discrimination as status quo, but the VACOE can act to help reduce discrimination. The VACOE could tell the higher learning institutions that this is unpatriotic.

Mr. Blair asked if the VA has done any surveys of veterans that would have any further data to support this.

Ms. Snead commented that there are organizations that ensure schools are sensitive to veterans needs; our veterans deserve to be treated with dignity and respect.

Mr. Kime mentioned that the Servicemembers' Opportunity Colleges (SOC) Veterans Proposal addresses these issues. Discrimination still exists, as the Secretary stated earlier, although Iraq is not on the same scale as Vietnam.

Mr. Wilson added that the VA has a customer satisfaction survey that only addresses how the VA administers the benefit to the individuals.

Ms. Snead added that the Committee could do something to help.

Mr. Herrmann responded that his association has a good practices statement that could be used.

Mr. Kime commented that the Committee should look at Mr. Herrmann's statement of good practices. We should keep in mind that Veterans make up three percent of the student population; perhaps we could recommend that the VA Secretary tell the Secretary of Education about this issue.

Col. Norton suggested that we should first look at this question and ensure that the size and degree of this problem merits a recommendation to the Secretary; perhaps a survey would be in order to verify the size of the problem.

Mr. Wilson added that he agreed with Col. Norton.

Mr. Blair asked if the VACOE or VA could do this.

Mr. Wilson commented that doing a survey is not that easy; the questions must be framed in such a way that the answers are clear and relevant to the specific question being asked.

Mr. Bombard responded by reiterating that the idea of veterans discrimination is real and there is a feeling that veterans couldn't wear their uniforms without being subject to discrimination.

Mr. Sharpe commented that he personally experienced discrimination from professors. In 1994-1996 while in college, the professors who held seats on the boards that approve enrollment to specific courses would openly disallow veterans from gaining approval in taking certain programs. In addition, these same boards would allow illegal aliens to receive tuition assistance, even though veterans couldn't get anything.

Mr. Cappeto recommended that the VA and the Committee think long and hard about issuing a survey; having experience in developing and generating framed language for something like this takes a very keen eye. We need granularity and should review this subject closely.

Mr. Bombard asked Mr. Cappeto to work with Mr. Kime on this matter. Ms. DesLauriers inquired about the level of service that some schools are offering to veterans; she noted that at many institutions veteran services are delivered by secretarial level staff. Mr. Bombard tabled the subject and suggested that we move on to the next agenda item, pending legislation. Mr. Bombard turned the discussion over to Mr. Wilson who introduced his staff member Robyn Noles, Education Service, Legislation and Strategy Development Team Leader.

Mr. Noles introduced his staff, Mr. Salminio Garner, Ms. Andrea Jones and Mr. Barrett Bogue, Management and Program Analysts for his team.

Mr. Noles began to highlight all education-related bills and shared with the Committee the bills that held similar attributes. Bills discussed included S. 22, Webb's revised bill, H.R. 1102. Mr. Noles also highlighted the cost impact of some bills.

Keith noted that there is a much higher level of interest in education bills than in the past. He added that the number of proposed bills has increased drastically and that his staff has worked tirelessly to provide comments and costing to the bills.

Mr. Bombard thanked Mr. Herrmann for his presentation and Mr. Noles for the overview of the pending legislation.

Lunch 12:00 p.m.

Afternoon session reconvenes at 1:00 p.m.

Mr. Bombard asked Mr. Wilson to begin covering the next items on the agenda.

Mr. Wilson began by giving the Committee an update about the Contract Call Center. In this overview, he noted that the problem of claims processing timeliness and workload was increasing. He was aware that VA needed to identify both long-term and short-term strategies to address the workload issues. For this reason, he recommended to the Under Secretary that the Contract Call Center be formed the Call Center was activated on September 18<sup>th</sup>, 2006 and ended in mid-March 2007. Although the Call Center staff didn't retain certain elements of the training as hoped, its activation did improve claims processing. The Call Center's activation allowed 75 of the 125 RPO employees who had been handling calls to process claims, instead. Overall, 100,000 additional claims were processed because of the Call Center. Currently, VA has half the number of pending claims that they did at this time last year. Mr. Wilson noted that as a result of the gains made during the call center's activation, VA now has an opportunity to look at long-term strategies for workload management. He also said that he is now hiring additional staff at the RPOs.

Mr. Kime asked why VA didn't keep the call center activated.

Mr. Wilson commented that we had caught up on claims to the point that it wasn't cost effective to continue using the contract.

Mr. Boyd asked Mr. Wilson if this meant that due to less pending claims, less calls and inquiries were received in the Call Center by individuals.

Mr. Wilson replied that this was correct.

Mr. Rubin asked what amount VA paid in contract costs to support the Call Center.

Mr. Wilson couldn't recall the exact cost.

Admiral Gorman asked if the VA has moved to accept electronic signatures and documents.

Mr. Wilson replied that while 40 to 45% of claims are received electronically, the system generates a hard copy signature page that the claimant must mail in so the claim can be completely processed. Acceptance of electronic signatures is a government-wide issue, but VA does have regulations in place to handle electronic signatures once they can be accepted.

Mr. Wilson also noted that the Web Automated Verification of Enrollment (WAVE) system allows the individual to check on the status of their claim electronically, without requiring a phone call.

Mr. Cropsey mentioned that the U.S. State Department has an electronic status-update system for passports.

Mr. Wilson gave the Committee an overview of The Education Expert System (TEES). He noted that the TEES initiative is now funded and it will enhance VA's ability to handle education claims without human intervention. Most data is received from DoD in an electronic format. The human element of the claims process slows the VA's processing down, so minimizing human intervention will reduce the claims processing time. TEES will also allow us to add more individualized information to the WAVE website.

Admiral Gorman asked if we knew the number of participants receiving benefits as compared with last year's numbers.

Mr. Garner replied that in April 2006 there were over 386,000 participants and in April 2007 there were over 392,000 participants. Overall claims are presently about ten percent higher than this time last year. Original claims are up about twenty percent.

Ms. DesLauriers noted that deployed students are taking advantage of online courses at her institution.

Mr. Cropsey stated that DANTES' data supports Ms. DesLauriers' assertion. Mr. Blair inquired whether VA Education has a presence in Baghdad.

Mr. Wilson stated that we do not.

Ms. DesLauriers commented that the call center may have impacted and improved claims processing; however, it also caused confusion to the veterans who were attending school and trying to determine what they were eligible for.

Mr. Wilson acknowledged that there were some problems, but overall the VA opinion was that the call center was successful.

Mr. Wilson then began to inform the Committee about the RPO Workshop recommendations. VA organized a workshop where all the RPOs could make their suggestions during this "workshop" and it was the Headquarters' responsibility to determine if the ideas had merit and could be implemented to improve claims processing. There were 73 recommendations, 26 were implemented and 3 are currently being reviewed for potential implementation.

One recommendation under consideration deals with the requirement to report prior credit to the VA in order to process the claim. This is not a statutory requirement, and VA is considering withdrawing the requirement for schools to notify VA of the prior credit up front and placing the burden for this on the compliance side.

Mr. Wilson then began to discuss the next matter: the Total Force Report. He distributed copies the Total Force Working Group Report to the Committee members. Mr. Wilson reviewed some of the key points and concerns of the Total Force Working Group (TFW Group), including the \$1,200 contribution issue. The TFW Group came up with a version that keeps with the spirit of the recommendations of the VACOE.

Mr. Clark who is also a member of the TFW Group explained the elements of a fee-based concept that would take the place of the \$1,200 payment once enacted. If an individual has already paid the \$1,200 he or she would still receive the \$1,075 full monthly benefit, but those that have not would pay a fee by receiving a reduced monthly benefit. New participants who had not made the contribution would have their monthly benefit amount reduced by approximately 3%.

Mr. Wilson highlighted the 1<sup>st</sup> bullet on page 4 of the report, addressing the MGIB-SR program. The report acknowledges that the situation of Reservists has changed since 1985, and since the inception of the 1607 program. He directed the Committee's attention to the last bullet on page 5, which notes that under the TFW Group proposal all basic rates and rules governing those rates could be consolidated into title 38 U.S.C. and payments could be made from VA appropriated funds. The TFW Group advocates a tiered approach to benefit payment rates. This is addressed on page 6, and it includes provisions for individuals who are currently eligible to receive chapter 1607. Reservists and Guard members would receive half of the full benefit rate and portability similar to that which chapter 30 participants have. However, Reservists who use their benefits after separation would receive a further reduced rate. This is a TFW Group effort to give reservists and guard incentives not to leave the Selected Reserve.

Mr. Clark agreed that this was the reasoning behind the reduced benefit for those who left the reserve or guard.

Mr. Kime commented that this was a start, but only half of what the reservists and guard has earned. VACOE's goal in promoting a total force benefit was different from what the TFW Group created.

Mr. Wilson also covered the portion of page 9 that recommended extending the delimiting date from 10 years to 20 for active duty, reservists and guard soldiers. The TFW Group also agreed that 36 months should be given to anyone that has made a commitment to serve their country. The VA assumes that the VACOE will take the report and do what they feel would be most beneficial to the service members, reservists and guard soldiers.

Mr. Sweeney asked if there was any data that supported the TFW Group's assertion that reservists and guard participants would leave the service if they had 100% portability.

Mr. Wilson responded by stating that he is unaware of any statistical data; RAND Corp made the assumptions.

Col. Norton commented that it appears that those who are participants in REAP would receive more benefits under the TFW group's proposal than they currently do under chapter 1607. Mr. Sweeney mentioned that soldiers serving less than 6 months will be disadvantaged by the proposal.

Mr. Wilson asked if the Committee had an opportunity to review the costing.

Mr. Blair asked about the level of return for the Buy-Up incentive.

Mr. Wilson replied that it is a 9 to 1 return rate. Individuals receive an additional \$150 per month by contributing \$600.

Admiral Gorman asked Col. Norton about the Reserve reactivation period.

Col. Norton replied by saying the reservists are being reactivated at an increased rate, which makes the idea of the reduced percentage of portability more concerning; if the reservists and guard members serve the same amount of time as an active duty soldier, then they should receive the same rate of portability.

Mr. Boyd asked if the VA could provide the names of all those who were part of the TFW Group.

Mr. Wilson agreed to get that information to the VACOE.

Mr. Clark elaborated on the \$1,200 payment amount.

Ms. DesLauriers asked whether the money goes to VA or DoD.

Mr. Wilson said that the money goes to the Treasury; it is not specifically in an account or under any control by the VA.

Admiral Gorman commented that the TFW Group report suggested eligibility is based only on cumulative service time when aggregate service should also count.

Mr. Sweeney asked if there were any elements in the analysis that were weighted when developing the report.

Mr. Wilson said he did not believe any weights existed.

Mr. Kime expressed concern that page 7 only spoke of giving half the benefit rate to reservists.

Col. Norton also expressed concern that reservists are more apt to leave the reserves if full portability of the benefit was available is unfounded.

Mr. Wilson reminded the Committee that the difference with full portability for the reservists is that most are employed outside of the armed forces in professional careers, while those who are full time active duty only have the military as their full time job.

Break 2:38 p.m.

Reconvene 2:42 p.m.

Mr. Bombard moved the meeting on to the next segment of the agenda; a presentation by Kathy Snead on The Student Bill of Rights. See attachment B

Ms. Snead mentioned that the Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (SOC) organization is concerned with higher learning institutions using pressure tactics on the soldiers which lead them to believe that they can't disenroll. Also, there are military-like websites that gives the soldiers the impression that the colleges and universities listed on these dot.com websites are approved by or associated with the military. SOC investigated these military-like websites and found that it falls just short of advertising and marketing ploys. These websites lean toward only a few higher learning institutions and not the vast majority of those educational institutions that are most prone to treat the solders with the dignity they deserve. Ms. Snead asked if the Committee has any ideas that could help.

Mr. Blair commented that the corporate grant proposal could be added to the Student Bill of Rights on a website to help guide them to the scholarship programs offered by the corporate arena.

Ms. Snead said scholarship information is included on SOC's site.

Mr. Blair added that corporations are gaining a lot of steam and offering more grants to veterans.

Mr. Cropsey mentioned that DANTES is doing something similar, offering help to severely disabled servicemembers, families and dependents. SOC is contracted by DoD and has a link on the DANTES website to promote membership into SOC.

Col. Norton asked if two-year degree programs participate and sign up for the Student Bill of Rights and is there any indication that more should be offered to members of the armed forces.

Ms. Snead replied yes to both of Col. Norton questions.

Admiral Gorman asked if state organizations signed up to participate in SOC; Gov. Schwarzenegger has a veteran mandate to help and assist to those that serve our country.

Ms. Snead responded no, but stated that SOC has made two presentations to the California Governor's executives.

Mr. Kime commented that SOC was originally created to help active duty members and never focused on veterans. There has always been concern that SOC lacked emphasis on the veteran. We should continue to tell colleges to support our soldiers from the time the soldier is activated until they enter into veteran status. VA needs a program to affirm active duty support, as well as veterans for education. He proposed that VA

could possibly look at the SOC model and implement it on its own, stating that this Student Bill of Rights has teeth.

Ms. Snead commented that SOC recommends that colleges award credit to soldiers for certain MOS's. We have heard the deans of some colleges say, "We don't use life experience toward academic credit." SOC suggested that if a higher learning institution wants to be listed, it must agree and affirm to meet the standards of the Student Bill of Rights on the SOC website. This is the only way that institutions can be listed on the SOC website. DoD has standards of good practices for higher learning institutions.

Mr. Bombard thanked Ms. Snead and opened the floor to the Committee for new business.

Col. Norton mentioned that there is a new bill by Senator Clinton and Representative Murphy that is similar to the Webb bill, but without the stipend. It also includes tuition and assistance and micro loans. Rep. Patrick Murphy is an Iraq war veteran and he is someone to watch.

Mr. Rubin added that he is the only Iraq veteran in Congress.

Col. Norton commented that the bill appears to cost \$7.1 billion. This is less than the Webb bill, because it doesn't include the stipend. He also noted that we need to support S. 644, as it finds those with two years of aggregate active duty service as eligible.

The Committee was provided a list of the 50 most attended schools by service members and veterans. Mr. Garner explained that the list was merely a snap shot of active award payments to current benefit participants (students). The list does not represent all schools that students attended, but gave an example of the schools that appear to have students whom received payments during the month of April.

Ms. Lutz shared with the Committee a matter of new business pertaining to the now dissolved Professional Licensing and Certification Committee (PCLAC), another committee which previously advised VA on education issues. She discussed the various matters that were under that committee's purview.

Ms. Lutz asked that the next meeting's agenda include a discussion of licensing and certification (L&C) and volunteered to brief the VACOE on the PCLAC's recommendations and the value of licensing and certification to our servicemembers in their transition back into civilian life.

Mr. Bombard agreed to add this to the next meeting's agenda.

Admiral Gorman suggested that VACOE must ensure that we focus on getting the benefits to the soldier.

Col. Norton suggested that we should have the VA brief the VACOE on the MGIB and L&C programs. He noted that since there are now new members of the Committee, it would be useful if all could be updated on the various educational programs available to the veterans.

Mr. Bombard agreed and then opened the meeting to public comments.

Mr. Bill Dozier, of the VFW commented on the need for transferability to all servicemembers. He also noted that we, as veterans' advocates, should look at some of the successful programs of the past. Also Mr. Dozier and Ex-Officio Ron Drach reminded the committee of SMACTA.

Mr. Bombard thanked all in attendance and called the meeting to adjourn at 3:57p.m.

### **Thursday, May 17, 2007**

Commence 8:55 a.m.

Mr. Bombard opened the meeting by introducing Juan Lara, a staffer on the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity. Mr. Lara explained that the Rep. Stephanie Herseth-Sandlin, chairwoman of the subcommittee, is working to move title 10 "as is" into title 38 U.S.C. He also noted that H.R. 1102 is considered a primary focus for the HVAC. Mr. Lara suggested to the Committee that in order for the VACOE to be heard they must explain good legislative ideas and provide a basis or rationale for their suggestions. Mr. Lara thanked the Committee for their work and the VACOE moved on to the next agenda item.

Mr. Cappeto began his presentation on Marymount Manhattan College's attempts to recruit and expand veteran's enrollment opportunities. As an informational item for the Committee, he distributed a sheet which he had created about the college's veteran recruitment efforts. Mr. Cappeto noted that colleges like veterans for many reasons, including the following:

- They are appreciative of their efforts in our nation's current conflicts.
- Veterans tend to be predominantly male and higher education is currently about 60% female.
- Students who are exiting the military are typically a little older than other new students.
- Veterans have life experiences which are good for the college environment.
- Veterans enhance the campuses' overall diversity.

Mr. Cappeto further stated that advertising the school's grant program had been placed on Marymount's website, the ad had not generated any interest or applications.

Marymount had anticipated that veterans from outside of the state of New York would apply, but this has yet to happen.

Mr. Rubin added that his institution, Lafayette College, has also had some difficulty getting veterans to enroll.

Mr. Blair commented that perhaps if this information was included in TAP briefings, it would gain more exposure.

Mr. Cropsey mentioned that DANTES already has a vehicle to advertise this type of information.

Mr. Rubin said we need to make sure that not just a few schools, but all schools, have an opportunity to get the word out and offer enrollment grants and discounts to veterans. There are many private organizations that are eager to give to our veterans.

Ms. Snead agreed.

Mr. Blair added that the information flow is critical to make this work; organizations like the Horatio Alger Foundation are in place and ready to help our veterans.

Ms. Lutz suggested that the Committee should look at the Certification On-Line Opportunity Licensure (COOL) Website as a model.

Mr. Bombard interrupted the Committee's discussion and introduced Congressman Boozman.

Congressman Boozman acknowledged that after reviewing the bios he realized that the members on the VACOE could be doing something else, but instead use their valuable time to help the veterans; he thanked the Committee members for their service.

Also, Mike Brinck, a minority staff director for the HVAC Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, arrived at the meeting and shared with the Committee that he personally did not support the moving of title 10 educational programs into title 38. It would be a highly expensive move, costing \$2.3 billion dollars to accomplish. VACOE must take into account that other veteran benefits are just as significant as education. Compensation and pension, adaptive housing and rehabilitation programs are very important right now. Securing that large amount of money to help education would be very hard to do and that an unintended consequence of the move would be that Selected Reserve educational benefits would be competing with other programs for funds. The Budget Committee would really need convincing to get this type of thing funded.

Mr. Wallace, VFW Director was introduced by Mr. Bombard.

Mr. Wallace suggested that, contrary to what Mr. Brink said, the VACOE shouldn't think about money. VACOE should create a perception of reality and not focus on reality

itself, as it pertains to availability of funds to improve education programs to veterans. Mr. Wallace recalled that when he was a young Marine, the GI Bill education programs helped him to get his degrees. He thanked the Committee for their work and ended by telling VACOЕ to find a way to make things happen and help improve education opportunities for veterans.

The Committee resumed its discussion of marketing educational programs and opportunities to veterans and Mr. Cropsey mentioned that the DANTES website could be a useful tool for advertising grant opportunities.

Mr. Blair asked how many hits are received on DANTES.

Mr. Cropsey said that the DANTES site receives about 100,000 hits each month.

Mr. Cappeto proposed that the VACOЕ draft a letter encouraging college presidents to consider veterans' service to their country when making admissions decisions. He noted that he would be happy to draft this letter, to be signed off on by the Committee, for the next meeting.

Mr. Bombard encouraged Mr. Cappeto to draft this letter.

Admiral Gorman inquired whether VA has any data or has conducted any studies on when veterans leave school.

Mr. Cappeto replied that colleges handle attrition privately.

Mr. Wilson stated that VA's Education Service is beginning to study veteran outcomes, i.e., successful graduation by GI Bill participants.

Ms. DesLaurier noted that, from her school's experience, veterans do not drop out. They tend to be very goal-oriented students who finish their programs. Ms. DesLauriers proceeded to state that when veterans do leave school, it is primarily because of financial difficulties if they are in high-cost programs.

Mr. Clark mentioned DoD's interest in having at least 90% of their recruits in possession of a high school diploma. He stated that successful completion of high school is an indicator of an individual's ability to honor a commitment and that this bodes well for their successful completion of their commitment to their service contract with the armed forces.

Mr. Cropsey asked if the VA keeps usage data.

Mr. Wilson replied that the current usage rate is approximately 71%, the highest ever in history. This number is based on those who have reached their delimiting date and used some portion of their entitlement.

Break 9:55 a.m.

Reconvene 10:05 a.m.

Amanda Meredith, staffer for Senator Craig, and Babette Polzer, staffer on the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, were introduced by Mr. Bombard.

Ms. Meredith informed the VACOE that Senator Craig wants to extend the accelerated payment program to the guard, reserve and dependents. Additionally, he would also like to change the requirements to allow aggregate years of service and enhance buy-up options for Guard and Reserve members. She did acknowledge that there are fiscal constraints which affect efforts related to proposed education program enhancements. A bill to change the SAA program is also under consideration. This bill would reduce the \$19 million funded through the Readjustment Benefits budget to \$13 million; the remaining \$6 million could be paid through General Operating Expenditures (GOE) funds.

Mr. Blair asked where is the Senate currently is on the various Education bills. Ms. Polzer suggested that the revised S. 22 bill will reduce some of the initial version's costs and has been reasonably well received.

Mr. Blair commented that he would hope the bill passes soon, in order to make it available to the veterans.

Ms. Polzer suggested that it depends if we want pie in the sky or something in between.

Col. Norton mentioned that Clinton's bill is similar to Webb's bill but costs less; S. 644 is a less costly bill, with a price tag of \$2.3 billion over 5 years, instead of \$7.8 billion. VA estimated the cost of Senator Webb's initial bill as over \$90 billion dollars.

Ms. Meredith commented that there are a lot of bills out there that are going to help veterans, but we haven't identified cost offsets for these bills.

Ms. Polzer agreed and added that there is at least \$100 billion worth of bills on the table right now; some are for health care, adaptive housing, and other benefits.

Mr. Blair inquired about top priorities for individuals on the HVAC and SVAC.

Ms. Polzer replied that the number one priority is to help the service-connected disabled veterans.

Mr. Brink added that there are competing interests within the Committees. The Minority has little power to get the Committee to push forth conflicting ideas.

Mr. Sweeney commented that portability is a major issue for our reservists.

Ms. Polzer suggested that the Armed Services Committees would not be easily induced to offer portability to reservists.

Mr. Blair mentioned that during the VACOE's town hall meeting in San Diego at Camp Pendleton, the Marines there told the Committee that education is just as important to them as health care.

Ms. Polzer noted that there is a mark-up session scheduled for veterans' benefits legislation in June.

Both staffers thanked the Committee for their time.

Break 10:30 a.m.

Reconvene 10:40 a.m.

Mr. Bombard asked the Committee to discuss and summarize the issues from this meeting. Mr. Bombard nominated Mr. Sweeney, Col. Norton and Mr. Kime to form a working group to review the TFW Group report and address any VACOE issues or concerns.

Col. Norton and Mr. Blair each suggested that the Committee endorse the TFW Group report and create a matrix of the various the differences that exist between the TFW proposal and the current benefit programs.

Mr. Bombard stated that he would draft a letter which could accompany the TFW group report when the Committee sends it to the HVAC and SVAC.

Mr. Sweeney complimented the TFW Group on their efforts and noted that there were several components of their proposal which he particularly liked, including the user fee and the 20 year delimiting date. He noted that he, like most members of the Committee, is concerned about the proposal's portability provisions. He is not convinced that portability will adversely affect retention and he has concerns about equity, noting that he feels an individual who has served two tours has earned full portability, not just 45%.

Mr. Bombard agreed that the TFW Group constructed some artificial constraints to get from point A to point B, in their drafting of the portability provisions

Mr. Sweeney commented that he will summarize his analysis of the proposal and will provide this to the Chairman (Mr. Bombard) by the end of the next week.

Mr. Wilson said that the VA believes the Committee will be the deliverer of the report to those on the Hill, hoping it will happen sooner than rather than later.

Col. Norton discussed the DoD concept of an Operational Reserve Force and their use of a phased operational reserve plan. DoD has deployed 600,000 individuals so far and reactivated 85,000 for returned tours of duty. He observed that the way the educational benefits are laid out does not match DoD's operational policy for use of the reserve. The original VACOE proposal said that servicemembers should not be treated

differently; they should receive equal benefits for equal service; if you serve 24 months, then you should receive 24 months of benefit. He noted that this report suggests that an individual who serves 90 days on active duty would receive 36 months of benefit. The VACOE letter should clearly state that total equity is needed.

Mr. Sweeney commented that the three R's of retention, recruitment and readjustment are still as valid today, as they were in the 80's.

Mr. Bombard told the Committee that Mr. Cappeto would draft a letter as to the best way to reach veterans who could potentially enroll. Mr. Cappeto agreed.

The Committee then proceeded to discuss veterans' treatment on campus.

Col. Norton inquired whether there was any empirical evidence that veterans receive ill treatment on campus. He suggested that before the Committee fully accepts Dr. Herrmann's local data on ill treatment of veterans on campus, a national pattern needs to be identified. This should precede any recommendation from the Committee to the Secretary.

Ms. DesLauriers noted that perhaps we can do something to heighten national awareness among college administrators of the problem. She also observed that there will always be groups who dislike other groups and that perhaps the best course of action would be to add veterans to the list of groups represented in diversity initiatives.

Mr. Bombard commented that we must assume the problem is real and noted that Mr. Sharpe had experienced it himself.

Mr. Kime reiterated that veterans are generally only 3% of the college population

Mr. Cappeto mentioned that surveys sometimes create a perception of a major problem where one did not previously exist.

Ms. Snead suggested that perhaps we should send a letter on this topic to campus presidents, governors of states, or even address it during conferences. The letter could address how some veterans experience discriminatory actions from higher learning institutions. VA representatives could talk about these problems.

Mr. Cappeto emphasized that any letter or communication about veterans on campus should focus on the positive, i.e., how they enrich the campus environment and should be valued.

Mr. Boyd added that we can all agree that some, if not all, servicemembers coming home experience difficulty adjusting back into civilian life; this would be just another type of difficulty amongst the others that could be addressed.

Mr. Bombard agreed and suggested that this aspect of readjustment could be something that is included during TAP briefings.

Ms. Lutz said that she would present on PCLAC's activities at the next VACOE meeting.

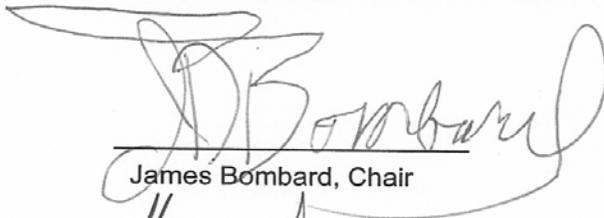
Mr. Wilson expressed that he was pleased that Ms. Lutz, a former member of PCLAC, could share insights on licensing and certification with the Committee and noted the importance of these types of opportunities for veterans.

Mr. Bombard commented that he recently testified on distance learning, and at that hearing Congresswoman Herseth-Sandlin was also very interested in licensing and certification.

Mr. Wilson said that Mr. Bombard's recollection was correct.

Mr. Bombard also noted that the Committee may also need to look into distance learning opportunities for veterans, as they are a very popular modern educational technique. The Committee proposed that the next meeting be held at Fort Stewart, Georgia. The date will be determined in the coming months.

The meeting adjourned at 11:47 a.m.

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James Bombard". The signature is written over a horizontal line.

James Bombard, Chair

A smaller, more cursive handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Salminio Garner". The signature is written over a horizontal line.

Salminio Garner, Recorder

Attachment A

**Veterans Advisory Committee on Education**

*810 Vermont Avenue,  
Washington, DC*

**May 16 and 17, 2007**

**Special Attendees**

May 16, 2007

VACO – Washington, DC

Mignette Humphrey	Northern Virginia Community College (NVCC)
Ron Drach	Ex-Officio, Department of Labor (DOL), Veterans’ Employment and Training Service (VETS)
Bill Dozier	Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW)
Doug Herrmann	Veterans Education Association
Congressman Bob Filner	Member, House Veterans Affairs Committee (HVAC)
Jack Mordente	National Association of Veterans’ Program Administrators (NAVPA)

May 17, 2007

VFW – Washington, DC

Juan Lara	Staffer, House Veterans’ Affairs Committee (HVAC), Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity Majority Staff
Mike Brinck	Staffer, House Veterans’ Affairs Committee (HVAC), Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity Minority Staff
Bill Dozier	Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW)
Robert E. Wallace	Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW)
Eric Hilleman	Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW)
Congressman John Boozman	Member, House Veterans’ Affairs Committee (HVAC)
Babette Polzer	Staffer, Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee (SVAC)
Amanda Meredith	Staffer, Senator Larry Craig

**DRAFT—Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (SOC) Consortium**  
**Student Bill of Rights**

**All military student populations have basic rights to satisfactory college marketing, admissions, and student services practices to include the right to:**

- Accurate information about a school's programs, requirements, accreditation and its potential impact on course transferability.
- Access to basic college/university information and fees without disclosure of student personal information.
- Discuss career goals and educational programs without high-pressure registration and enrollment efforts from institutions.
- A clear and complete explanation of course/program enrollment procedures and all **resulting** financial obligations.
- Explore, without coercion, all financial aid options before signing up for student loans.
- Freedom from misleading scholarship offers including those based on military tuition assistance.
- Be financially obligated only for the current academic term, not future terms or entire programs.

- Appropriate academic screening and course placement based on student readiness.
- Appropriate, accessible academic and student support services.
- Clearly defined institutional “drop/add” and withdrawal policies and procedures including information about the impact of military duties (e.g., mobilization, activation, temporary duty assignments) on their academic standing and financial responsibilities.
- Clearly defined grievance/appeals processes.
- Freedom from “look-alike” **commercial** Web sites that appear to be officially endorsed or sanctioned by government or military organizations. [A common challenge for servicemembers is discerning official sites with unbiased college information from those commercial sites selectively representing institutions . While the first Right listed encompasses the misrepresentation aspect, does it sufficiently inform servicemembers to examine the marketing integrity of institutions?]

# **SERVICEMEMBERS OPPORTUNITY COLLEGES**

## **SOC PRINCIPLES AND CRITERIA**

**2007-2009**

Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (SOC), a consortium of national higher education associations, functions in cooperation with the Department of Defense (DoD), the Military Services including the National Guard, and the Coast Guard to help meet the voluntary higher education needs of servicemembers.

Hundreds of thousands of servicemembers, civilian employees of DoD, the Military Services including the National Guard, the Coast Guard, and family members enroll annually in programs offered by more than a thousand colleges, universities, and postsecondary occupational and technical institutions. These voluntary programs are a significant joint venture and require strong commitment and coordination among academic institutions and agencies, the Military Services including the National Guard, the Coast Guard, and the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD).

SOC is a vehicle to help coordinate voluntary postsecondary educational opportunities for servicemembers. SOC does this by:

- seeking to stimulate and help the higher education community to understand and respond to special needs of servicemembers;
- advocating the flexibility needed to improve access to and availability of educational programs for servicemembers;
- helping the Military Services including the National Guard, and the Coast Guard understand the resources, limits, and requirements of higher education;
- helping the higher education community understand the resources, limits, and requirements of the Military Services including the National Guard, and the Coast Guard;
- seeking to strengthen liaison and working relationships among military and higher education representatives.

## SOC PRINCIPLES

To achieve its goals, SOC is founded on principles agreed to collectively by the higher education community through the SOC Advisory Board, the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), and the Military Services including the National Guard, and the Coast Guard.

SOC Principles are predicated upon such principles as those set forth in the *Joint Statement on the Transfer and Award of Credit* of the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO), the American Council on Education (ACE), the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), and are drawn principally from the cumulative experience of educational institutions and agencies judged successful in their work with servicemembers. The Principles embody a needed institutional flexibility with thoughtful development of programs and procedures appropriate to the needs of servicemembers, yet recognize the necessity to protect and assure the quality of educational programs.

**Principle 1.** In order to enhance their military effectiveness and to achieve their educational, vocational, and career goals, servicemembers should share in the postsecondary educational opportunities available to other citizens.

**Principle 2.** Educational programs for servicemembers should rely primarily on programs, courses, and services provided by appropriately accredited institutions and organizations, including high schools, postsecondary vocational and technical schools, colleges, and universities.

**Principle 3.** To enhance access to undergraduate educational opportunities for servicemembers, institutions should maintain a necessary flexibility of programs and procedures, particularly in admissions, credit transfer, and recognition of other applicable learning, including that gained in the military; in scheduling and format of courses; and in academic residency requirements to offset servicemembers' mobility, isolation from campuses, and part-time student status.

## SOC INSTITUTIONAL MEMBERSHIP

Institutional members of SOC may be entire institutions or appropriate subdivisions (e.g., colleges, schools, or major divisions). To become an institutional member of SOC, an institution must meet three requirements:

- Each institution must satisfy six initial conditions.

- A responsible administrative official must commit the institution or the appropriate major subdivision to fully comply with and support the SOC Principles and Criteria as it delivers undergraduate postsecondary programs, courses, and supporting services to servicemembers on military installations or at locations accessible to them.
- The prospective institutional member must be approved as meeting SOC Principles and Criteria by the Director of SOC.

### **INITIAL CONDITIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP**

Institutional members must meet the following conditions:

- be listed in the *hep Higher Education Directory*;
- be a degree-granting institution that is accredited by an institutional accrediting agency that has been recognized by the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation (COPA), the Commission on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation (CORPA), or CHEA;
- meet appropriate provisions of DoD Directive 1322.8, *Voluntary Educational Programs for Military Personnel*, DoD Instruction 1322.25, *Voluntary Education Programs*, and appropriate Service regulations when providing educational services on military installations;
- be approved for educational benefits by the appropriate State Approving Agency for veterans' benefits;
- agree to submit data for the *SOC Guide*;
- not be listed in the *Guaranteed Student Loan Data Book* as having excessive student loan default rates.

### **SOC CRITERIA**

Inherent in the SOC Principles are expectations and standards essential to their translation into performance and action. The SOC Criteria express those expectations and standards and constitute an operational framework for SOC member institutions to extend to servicemembers undergraduate educational opportunities that are sometimes distinct from common institutional practice. The Criteria characterize flexibility essential to the improvement of access by servicemembers to undergraduate educational programs. The Criteria stipulate that institutional policies and practices be fair, equitable, and effective in recognizing special and often limiting conditions faced by military

students.

### **Criterion 1. Transfer of Credit.**

Since mobility makes it unlikely that a servicemember can complete all degree program requirements at one institution, a SOC institution designs its transfer practices for servicemembers to minimize loss of credit and avoid duplication of coursework, while simultaneously maintaining the integrity of its programs. It is recognized that SOC institutions must maintain quality and integrity within a complex academic and regulatory environment where resource, regulatory, and academic realities sometimes militate against the broad spirit of flexibility that SOC advocates. Consistent with this reality and with the requirements of a servicemember's degree program, a SOC institution follows the general principles of good practice outlined in the *Joint Statement on the Transfer and Award of Credit*. Each institution may be required to submit documentary evidence that it generally accepts credits in transfer from other accredited institutions, and that its credits in turn are generally accepted by other accredited institutions.

### **Criterion 2. Academic Residency Requirements.**

A SOC institution limits academic residency requirements for active-duty servicemembers to no more than 25 percent of the undergraduate degree program; recognizes all credit course work offered by the institution as applicable in satisfying academic residency requirements; and allows servicemembers to satisfy academic residency requirements with courses taken from the institution at any time during their program of study, specifically avoiding any “final year” or “final semester” residency requirement, subject to stated requirements in specific course areas such as majors. If a SOC institution offers one hundred percent of an undergraduate degree online, that institution may require active-duty servicemembers to take thirty percent of that degree program to obtain residency. (Institutions joining SOC primarily for the purpose of participating in the Concurrent Admissions Program (ConAP) are exempted from this criterion.)

### **Criterion 3. Crediting Learning from Military Training and Experience.**

A SOC institution provides processes to determine credit awards and learning acquired for specialized military training and occupational experience when applicable to a servicemember's degree program. A SOC institution recognizes and uses the *ACE Guide to the Evaluation of Educational Experiences in the Armed Services* in determining the value of learning acquired in military service, and awards credit for appropriate learning acquired in military service at levels consistent with *ACE Guide* recommendations and/or those transcribed by the Community College of the Air Force, when applicable to a servicemember's program.

### **Criterion 4. Crediting Extra-Institutional Learning.**

Recognizing that learning occurs in extra-institutional and non-instructional settings, a SOC institution

provides processes to evaluate and award appropriate undergraduate level credit for such learning through practices that reflect the principles and guidelines in the statement on *Awarding Credit for Extracurricular Learning*. This shall include awarding credit through use of one or more of the nationally recognized, non-traditional learning testing programs provided for servicemembers by the OSD, such as described in the *ACE Guide to Educational Credit by Examination*. These examinations include CLEP, DSST, and ECE whether or not they supplement institutional challenge examinations or test-out procedures.

## **SOC INSTITUTIONAL OPERATING GUIDELINES**

In addition to the SOC Criteria, some operating guidelines can be drawn from the SOC Principles and the experience of educational institutions and agencies that have shown success and quality in their educational offerings to servicemembers. These guidelines should be viewed as desired institutional behavior for SOC institutions.

**Admissions.** In recognition of the preparation and experience of many servicemembers, SOC institutions facilitate the admission and enrollment of qualified candidates by providing means to determine levels of ability and achievement of servicemembers. Admissions practices, developed primarily for recent high school graduates, often work to the disadvantage of a servicemember who may be qualified for college-level work, yet may be unable to satisfy commonly imposed requirements. Specialized training and experience in the Military Services or elsewhere, that may qualify individuals for college admissions and credit, often go unrecognized.

To facilitate admission and enrollment of qualified servicemembers, SOC institutions:

- recognize the GED high school equivalency certificate/diploma, utilizing ACE-recommendations concerning academic performance;
- accept and record previously successful postsecondary study as part of the servicemember's program requirements, if appropriate;
- recognize learning gained from specialized training and experience in the Military Services or elsewhere;
- establish competency by nationally recognized means, such as standardized tests;
- publicize alternative admission procedures available to servicemembers;
- conduct timely evaluation of the educational records and relevant experiences of servicemembers;

- waive formal admission for servicemembers seeking enrollment in course work for transfer to another institution;
- complete student agreements or learning contracts for all degree-seeking servicemembers.

**Extra-Institutional Learning.** The military is an employer committed to providing genuine access to educational opportunity clearly connected to military workplace learning. In recognition of this commitment, SOC institutions help servicemembers and veterans to incorporate credits in their degree programs based on collegiate-level learning achieved not only through formal school training but also through occupational experience, and nationally recognized, non-traditional learning testing programs. This learning can occur both in the military and in civil society.

Military occupational experience represents a legitimate area of learning outside the formal classrooms of specialized military training courses. A SOC institution should recognize the value of such experience and award appropriate credit for Military Occupational Specialties (MOS) and Navy Rates and Ratings as recommended by the *ACE Guide to the Evaluation of Educational Experiences in the Armed Services*.

Learning may also be acquired through other experience, civilian non-collegiate courses, and collegiate non-traditional courses. Courses in the last group have evaluative mechanisms vouched for by the operating institution. Credit recommendations for training courses offered by business and industry, government, labor unions, and other public and private sectors are given in the *ACE National Guide to Educational Credit for Training Programs*, the *ACE Guide to Educational Credit by Examination*, and *A Guide to Educational Programs in Noncollegiate Organizations* by the Board of Regents, The University of the State of New York.

The portfolio evaluation method, sponsored by the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) and used in some form by hundreds of institutions, is also an important aid in determining credit equivalence and applicability of experiential learning.

**Distance Learning.** Increasing numbers of accredited colleges and universities offer distance learning opportunities to qualified students. Distance learning comes in a wide variety of modalities including on-line courses, video cassette courses, paper-based correspondence courses, instructor-enhanced independent study courses, and many variations of these and other methodologies. Instruction can occur synchronously among sites using a network of videoteleconferencing systems and locations. Most often instruction is asynchronous whereby students do not engage in learning together at a distance on a pre-set schedule. With distance learning, as with extra-institutional learning, SOC institutions must determine the comparability of the nature, content, and level of transfer credit in relation to their own course offerings. SOC institutions are diligent in evaluating the appropriateness and applicability of credits earned in transfer through distance learning from properly regionally and nationally accredited institutions. Generally SOC institutions can determine comparability by examining the course learning outcomes, course descriptions and other materials obtained from institutional catalogues, and from direct contact between knowledgeable and experienced faculty and staff at both the receiving and sending institutions.

DANTES provides useful listings of available independent study courses in its *Independent Study Catalog* and distance learning programs in its *External Degree Catalog*.

To enhance study opportunities for servicemembers, SOC institutions:

- advise and assist servicemembers to make maximum use of distance learning;
- provide their own modes of distance learning. Through advisement and listing in their publications, they make students aware of acceptable forms of distance learning available through other sources;
- consider the acceptance in transfer, when appropriate to a servicemember's program, of credit earned through distance learning from other regionally and nationally accredited institutions.

**Graduate Education.** SOC Institutional Operating Guidelines facilitate graduate program admissions, enrollment, and degree completion by servicemembers. SOC institutions offering graduate programs:

- recognize the maturity and experience of servicemembers as adult learners in admissions and enrollment policies and procedures;
- maximize institutional delivery options to meet the special needs of servicemembers;
- have flexible policies regarding the transfer of graduate credit by servicemembers and veterans from accredited institutions, and apply those credits where appropriate to meet degree requirements;
- recognize graduate-level learning gained from specialized training and experience in the Military Services as recommended by the *ACE Guide to the Evaluation of Educational Experiences in the Armed Services* and apply that credit to a student's degree program where appropriate.

**Institutional Commitment.** In order to achieve consistent application of policy in offering programs for servicemembers, SOC institutions make appropriate assignment of responsibility and monitor institutional performance in the delivery of such programs.

Programs for military students, whether offered on-campus or on an installation, require added institutional attention and supervision. Procedures that may have been effective for the usual campus or student population no longer suffice. The nature of the institutional commitment to servicemembers needs to be made clear to institutional representatives as well as to the student.

Demonstrating their understanding of and commitment to servicemembers, SOC institutions:

- publicize widely to their faculty and students the nature of their commitment and programs and activities offered on behalf of servicemembers and include a statement of commitment to SOC in their catalogs;
- provide effective administrative staffing and processes to give adequate support to programs for servicemembers;
- develop procedural directives for instructors, counselors, admissions officials and program officers governing special requirements of servicemembers;
- ensure the comparability of off-campus courses to on-campus, while recognizing and accommodating programs to the particular needs of the adult learner;
- designate a contact office or person for servicemembers;
- designate a senior administrative official to oversee programs for servicemembers and veterans, monitor institutional compliance with the SOC Criteria, and serve as principal spokesperson and respondent on SOC matters;
- conduct staff orientation programs to prepare full-time and adjunct faculty to work with the adult part-time learner;
- provide scheduling on a planned program basis rather than by individual courses;
- ensure access to all courses needed for degree completion by scheduling at appropriate locations and times, not necessarily related to regular academic terms.

**College Recruiting, Marketing, and Student Services.** To facilitate the enrollment process and continued student success of qualified servicemembers in postsecondary education, SOC institutions will:

- **Outreach to servicemembers using advertising, college recruiting, and admissions information that adequately and accurately represents the programs, requirements, and services available. Military students considering course enrollments require adequate time to make informed decisions and consult with education service counselors. High-pressure promotional activities or “limited time only” enrollment discounts are inappropriate recruiting activities by SOC Consortium institutions.**
- **Provide adequate access to the range of student services appropriate to support the programs, including admissions, financial aid, academic advising, delivery of course materials, competency testing, course placement, and counseling.**
- **Ensure that students admitted into college programs possess the requisite knowledge and academic preparation to succeed. Where technology aids (computers, personal digital assistants, or other technology packets) are employed in the program as key instructional components, institutions must provide assistance to students who are experiencing difficulty using the required technology.**
- **Provide adequate, clearly established means for resolving student grievances. In particular, provide transparent due-process procedures related to tuition and financial aid matters, course withdrawals due to unanticipated deployments, lack of consistent computer connectivity, and changes of duty.**

**Veterans’ Services.** For veterans returning to civilian life to begin or continue study, civilian SOC institutions provide appropriate evaluation of their training, experience, and prior study and other services similar to that afforded servicemembers. Some of the SOC Criteria apply equally to the institution's treatment of veterans—admission practices, transfer of credit and recognition of other forms of learning, including military experience. When a servicemember has completed the residency requirement while on active duty at a SOC college, that college is obliged to recognize that fact when the servicemember becomes a veteran. Although broader instructional offerings and services may be available to returning veterans, counseling, evaluation, and planning are of particular importance in assisting them to reach their personal and career goals.

Recognizing the continuing educational needs of veterans, civilian SOC institutions

- encourage veterans to continue or complete study started during service or interrupted by duty requirements
- offer opportunities to veterans similar to those extended to servicemembers under the SOC Criteria, including provision of information and counseling services to ensure that veterans are aware of the benefits, regulations and potential problems of veterans’ assistance programs

- comply with the provisions of *38 USC 1775* pertaining to veterans' educational assistance
- provide veterans, previously admitted as SOC students, with opportunities to complete their programs under the conditions of their student agreements.

**Family Members' and DoD Civilians' Services.** Families of active-duty servicemembers and DoD civilians, including Non-Appropriated Fund (NAF) employees, experience many of the same kinds of disruptions in pursuing a college degree as do active-duty servicemembers. Because of that, SOC institutions assist them by extending the considerations described for veterans under Veterans' Services.

# MarymountManhattan

a college of the liberal arts

*Earn your degree while living and learning in **New York City***

## Veteran's Scholarship

### MMC HISTORY

Originally established as the city campus of Marymount College, Tarrytown, N.Y., the College was independently chartered in 1961 as Marymount Manhattan College.

### LOCATION

MMC consists of two buildings on 71st Street in Manhattan between Second and Third Avenues, filled with study lounges, science labs, classrooms, studios, galleries, computer labs, club meeting rooms, performance venues — the works. Think of it as a vertical approach to college.

### SIZE

MMC enrolls approximately 2,000 undergraduate students, from 48 states and 36 countries. The student/faculty ratio is 12:1 — small classes are taught only by faculty members, not graduate assistants.

### CURRICULUM

Students complete a required liberal arts core curriculum, a shared curriculum that ensures that each student understands the different disciplines and how they connect, and one of 17 major programs. MMC's location in New York City allows for internship opportunities to complement the many academic programs in the Divisions of Business Management & Accounting, Sciences, Humanities, Fine & Performing Arts, and Social Sciences.

### SCHOLARSHIP OVERVIEW

Marymount Manhattan College offers veterans of the United States Armed Forces a **\$5,000 annual scholarship** (\$2,500 per semester). To be eligible for an MMC Veterans' Scholarship, the veteran must have been honorably discharged from the Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marines, or Navy, and have successfully completed the MMC admission process. The veteran must be a full-time student at MMC and pursuing a course of study that will lead to a baccalaureate degree. The MMC Veterans' Scholarship will normally be awarded for no more than eight semesters, but under unusual circumstances, a petition may be presented to the

Director of Financial Aid for one additional semester of study. The Veteran's Scholarship is in addition to MMC's academic scholarships for which students may qualify. Entering transfer students require a 3.5 GPA to receive \$4,000 per year and freshmen require a 3.0 GPA and 1150 SAT (25 ACT) to receive \$6,000 per year.

### ADMISSIONS REQUIREMENTS

- Completed application
- Official copy of high school or secondary school transcript or GED score sheet and GED diploma.
- Official transcripts from any and all accredited post-secondary institutions attended (transfer students)
- \$60 nonrefundable application fee
- SAT I and/or ACT scores (not required if graduated from high school more than 5 years ago)
- Two recommendations
- Essay (250-500 words)

### TUITION & FEES

- 12-15 credits, \$9,819 per semester (\$19,638 annually)
- Complete the Free Application for Federal Student aid (FAFSA) at [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov) to apply for need based financial aid.

MARYMOUNT MANHATTAN COLLEGE • 221 EAST 71ST STREET • NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10021

1-800-MARYMOUNT • 212-517-0430 • [ADMISSIONS@MMM.EDU](mailto:ADMISSIONS@MMM.EDU) • [WWW.MMM.EDU](http://WWW.MMM.EDU)