



Muskegon Community College Veterans' Newsletter

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Nancy J. Maycroft

Assistant Director of
Financial/Certifying Official

231-777-0342

Nancy.maycroft@muskegoncc.edu

Carmella Martinez

Certifying Official

231-777-0236

Carmella.martinez@muskegoncc.edu

From Nancy Maycroft

I'd like to take this opportunity and welcome all of our veteran students to Muskegon Community College. The Veterans' Office at MCC is here to assist you in any of your educational benefit questions or any veteran benefits. If we don't have the answer, we will find out who can get your questions answered.

Currently, we have 448 veterans on this campus and we certify approximately half of those veterans for educational benefits. We have a newly organized Veteran Student Organization that is here to mentor other veterans to the educational arena.

The Veterans' Office is located in Room 106 and we have two certifying officials that can assist in your educational needs.

Again, welcome to MCC and hope it will be a pleasant adventure for you.

Veteran Student

Organization (VSO)



The Veteran Student (VSO) was started in winter 2009. The goal of the VSO is to:

- To help facilitate the transfer of military and veterans into the MCC campus
- To help veterans connect with the resources available in the community at large
- To promote student awareness of veteran issues
- To help promote the interests and goals among current students who are members of the National Guard, Reserve Units, or veterans and dependents from all branches of the military.

For more information regarding the club, stop by Room 106 or check the Veteran

Changes Taking Place For Certification of Educational Benefits

The Veterans' Office at MCC will begin certifying veterans at the time of registration. So, it is important that veteran students go online to the [VA Re-Certification Request](#) right now.

Once you have registered for your classes, we will check your enrollment and certify you within the same week. This will assist in keeping your benefits coming to you in a timely manner.

If you do not complete the VA Re-Certification Request, you could have a lapse in your educational benefits. The process takes approximately 8 weeks from the time that our office certifies the veteran.

Once the certification leaves our office, it is now in the hands of St Louis and you will be at their mercy. If you have questions regarding your benefits, you can contact St. Louis at the following phone number: 1-888-442-4551.

ACT SOON!

How Claims Are Processed for the New Post-9/11 GI Bill

The Post-9/11 GI Bill is the most complex education benefit program ever passed by Congress. This is because of all of the variables that must be considered before payments can be issued such as: public versus private school tuition rates, differing tuition rates by state, determining a living allowance by zip code, paying a part-time versus full-time student and different benefit levels (just to name a few!).

The claims processing systems that VA has either modified or developed in the months since the bill became law has limited capabilities. This means that all Post-9/11 claims are processed manually to include the separate approval of each type of payment. VA plans to have a more automated system in place by December 2010.

Below is a run down for how our claims examiners at our four Regional Processing Offices process and pay your Post-9/11 GI Bill claim.

Processing and Paying the Post-9/11 GI Bill

In order to process and pay your claim we need two things:

1. A completed application from you.
2. An enrollment certification (VA Form 22-1999) from your school Certifying Official.

These components can be taken care of nearly simultaneously, if the applicant applies and the school sends in the enrollment certification form shortly thereafter; or an applicant can send them in any order, but VA must wait until we have both components before paying a claim



How VA Determines Eligibility

- We receive your application either electronically through VONAPP or through snail mail. *Note: When you send a paper application it must be scanned into an image management system because we process all education benefits in a paperless environment. Everything that is done on your claim is digitized and stored electronically.*
- Your claim is then assigned to a team at our Regional Processing Office and the team leader assigns the claim to an individual claims examiner.
- The claims examiner will review the claim for the following:
 - Completeness
 - Verify periods of active duty service for eligibility using applicant and DoD information (DD-214, military orders, verification email with DoD). This step may require the claims examiner to follow up with the applicant or DoD if not all information is provided.
 - If using transferred entitlement the claims examiner will verify in a VA database and/or with DoD that the transferee was approved to transfer benefits and how many months were transferred.
 - The claims examiner will use a computer program to help determine your benefit level.
- The claims examiner will prepare either a Certificate of Eligibility, or a Denial letter based on the information provided and mail it to the address you provided in your application.

How We Pay You

Remember: To pay you we must have a completed application from you and an enrollment certification from your school.

The claim is assigned to a claims examiner same as above.

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The claims examiner reviews the enrollment certification to ensure the following:

- Completeness
- The school and program that the applicant is enrolled in are approved courses of education

Note: This step may require the claims examiner to follow up with the applicant or school if not all information is provided.

- When we receive an enrollment certification from the school the claims examiner will also access a VA database to determine your living stipend amount and the maximum tuition and fee rates you are eligible to receive.
- The claims processor enters the information from the enrollment certification into a payment calculator
- The amount and type of payments that an applicant is entitled to is then determined
- Each payment type (books and supplies, tuition and fees, basic allowance for housing) is entered separately into our payment system.
- A second claims examiner will review your claim in all of the systems to verify the accuracy of the payment type and amount.
- The second claims examiner will authorize the payment amounts to be released by the Department of Treasury.
- The claims examiner will prepare a letter to the applicant informing them what benefits they are eligible for and the amount of the entitlement and mail it to the address you provided in your application.

The authorized payment is transmitted to Department of Treasury. *(Average time is 2 business days)*

Department of Treasury then issues a payment via direct deposit or paper check to the account you provided in your application. *(Average time is 1 business day)*

For answers to frequently asked questions, add

The Post-9/11 GI Bill,
U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs

As your friend on [Facebook!](#)

GI Bill Verification & Drops/Withdraws

If you are receiving the Montgomery GI Bill, you must verify your school attendance **monthly**. Chapter 33 will not require monthly verification. You should do this through the WAVE.

<https://www.gibill.va.gov/wave>

You may also call: 877-823-2378

Drops/Withdrawals/Grades

If you drop or withdraw from a class you must report it to the Veterans' Office, Room 106. This will be particularly important with the Post 9/11 GI Bill (Chapter 33).

Note: If you drop below 1/2 time your tuition and fees will be reported to the VA. This may result in a reduction of monthly benefits pay.

If you are receiving financial aid, make sure you check with the financial aid office to see how a drop or withdraw will affect your status.

While receiving benefits, you must maintain a 2.0 cumulative GPA and if you receive a failing grade you must report it along with the last day of attendance in the specific course.



Federal Tuition Assistance

Federal Tuition Assistance (FTA) is separate from both the GI Bill and FAFSA. To apply for FTA you must be registered for classes and complete an application.

Each branch of the military handles FTA differently. For more information, go to:

[Armed Forces Tuition Assistance Primer](#)

[Air Force Tuition Assistance](#)

[Army Tuition Assistance](#)

[Marine Corps Tuition Assistance](#)

[Navy Tuition Assistance](#)

Websites That Keep You Connected For VA Benefits Questions

[Military.com](#) is a free membership that connects service members, military families, and veterans to all the benefits of service — government benefits, scholarships, discounts, lifelong friends, mentors, great stories of military life or missions, and more.

[Student Veterans of America](#)— Student Veterans of America (SVA) is a coalition of student veterans groups from college campuses across the United States. Founded in January of 2008, SVA is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization that works to develop new student groups, coordinate between existing student groups, and advocate on behalf of student veterans at the local, state, and national level.

[U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs](#) will assist you in any of your veteran questions from military records, prescriptions, educational benefits, and beyond.