January 14, 2010

Dear Colleague:

I would like to personally thank you for your assistance to our nation’s Veterans, service members, and their families in implementing the considerable and historic changes brought by the Post-9/11 GI Bill these past six months.

The unprecedented demand and intricacies of the student Veteran program created new challenges for us both here at the Department of Veterans Affairs and on your campuses. We continue to work diligently with your administrators to manage this program and provide timely benefit payments to students. We would, as always, like to work with you to enhance the administration of the Post-9/11 GI Bill, and we solicit your comments on how to improve our cooperative efforts.

To date, VA has processed approximately $1.3 billion in payments for over 167,000 students.

We fully understand the importance of providing timely education benefit payments and we continue to work toward further enhancing and streamlining the process. To answer this significant demand, VA hired an additional 760 employees to support Post-9/11 GI Bill claims processing, and we maximized the use of overtime to help mitigate the effects of the extended processing time.

We are seeking your assistance to help improve service. We continue to receive enrollment certifications from schools for terms beginning in August 2009. As you know, prompt submission of information helps avoid delays in tuition and applicable payments to the student Veteran. To help speed the process, we encourage you to submit enrollment certifications even if you do not have the student Veteran’s Certificate of Eligibility (COE). We will work with the student Veteran to resolve any eligibility issues.

VA has committed that enrollments received before January 19 will be paid no later than February 1. Those received on the 19th or after will be paid at the earliest opportunity. VA is making regular payments approximately every 4th day throughout each month and is processing 30,000 claims per week.

We are confident that by working together we can provide timely and high quality services for our student Veterans.

Sincerely,

Michael Walcoff
Acting

Attachments
Post-9/11 GI Bill Lessons Learned

With a semester of the Post-9/11 GI Bill behind us, we are providing a list of "lessons learned" in hopes of working together for a smoother spring enrollment period

- Early submission of enrollment certifications is essential to timely payment.

- A Certificate of Eligibility is not required for submission of the enrollment certification. If a student has provided any documentation to show that he or she is a veteran or dependent that is likely entitled to benefits, an enrollment certification should be submitted as soon as the student enrolls in classes.

- The Post-9/11 GI Bill brought a new dimension to VA education benefits that now involves schools' business offices. Many payment issues can be addressed by the school's certifying official.

- It is critical to VA's processing that students are correctly identified as chapter 33 participants to prevent misrouting of claims.

- Correct direct deposit information is essential for accurate payment routing. If the school's deposit account information changes the school VA certifying official should notify their Education Liaison Representative immediately.
Education Checklist for Eligible Persons Under Chapters 30, 32, 33, 1606 and 1607

1. Have you ever used your GI Bill benefits before?  YES OR NO

   A. ___ YES.

      a. Are you attending the same school?  YES or NO

         ___ YES.  No application is required from you; please see the School Certifying Official (SCO) at your school to certify your actual enrollment period to VA.


   B. ___ NO.  This is my first time. Please complete and submit an Application for VA Education Benefits, VA Form 22-1990 to the VA.  Application is available for electronic submission online at http://vabenefits.vba.va.gov/vonapp/main.asp or download the hard copy application at http://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/22-1990%285-09%29.pdf.

In addition, you may be required to provide one or more of the following documents when you submit your original application.

- A copy of your DD Form 214 member 4 copy (Chapters 30, 33, and 1607 only)
- DD Form 2384, Notice of Basic Eligibility, NOBE (Chapter 1606 only)

Once you have submitted your application, you need to see your School Certifying Official (SCO) at your school. Every school in the United States including some schools overseas that are eligible to train veterans, service members and their dependents, has a designated school certifying official (SCO) located on campus. The SCO is employed by the school and not by the VA. (Hint: Check with Financial Aid Department, Admission and Records Department or Registrar’s Office for your designated SCO at your school)

2. Have you talked to your School Certifying Official (SCO) at your school about your VA enrollment certification, VA Form 22-1999?  YES or NO.

   A. ___ YES.  You are done!  Enjoy pursuing your education goal and good luck on your studies.

   B. ___ NO.  Please locate your SCO on campus and request that a VA Enrollment Certification, VA Form 22-1999, be submitted on your behalf to the VA.  The SCO certifies your actual enrollment period (VA Enrollment Certification, VA Form 22-1999) to the VA and that is what triggers your payment.
NOTE: If you are eligible to receive benefits under the Post 9/11 GI Bill (Chapter 33), your tuition and fees payments are sent directly to the school. Housing allowance, kickers and books stipend are sent directly to the student provided they are eligible for the benefit. Remember that the Post-9/11 GI Bill housing and books and supplies stipends are paid “in arrears.” This means that your housing stipend for January won’t be received until February. Also, if you are starting school for the first time, your first payment may not be for a full month of housing because we pay from the actual day you start school. So, if you start January 8, your February payment will be for the 23 days you attended in January.

To obtain status of your education claim, please call our education call center at 1-888-442-4551 (Monday through Wednesday from 7:00 am to 5:00 pm, Central time). You can also send an electronic inquiry (7 days a week, 24 hours a day) on our website, www.gibill.va.gov under ‘GI Bill Links’ then click on ‘Ask Us a GI Bill Question’ and use the ‘Ask a Question’ tab.