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SR-15-16-44 BAPC

Marshall University

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**Budget and Academic Policy Committee
RECOMMENDATION**

SR-15-16-44 BAPC

Recommends that the Faculty Senate approve request to grant priority registration to all active duty military and veteran students who receive educational benefits.

RATIONALE:

In November 2015, Marshall University Interim President Gary White accepted the Higher Education Policy Commission's 5-Star Challenge. To meet the challenge, Marshall University agrees to implement a policy of priority registration for all active duty and veteran students using educational benefits obtained through military service. Priority registration is necessary for this population because their educational benefits are tied to timely completion of a degree program. Timely completion of the degree can be hampered significantly if classes fill up and become unavailable. The inability to register for classes in accordance with their degree plan puts students at risk of losing their educational benefits. Moreover, all active duty students work full-time as do the majority of veteran students, so in addition to meeting requirements for scheduled degree completion, students also have to negotiate school and work schedules. Adherence to the 5-Star Challenge requires that Marshall University adopt this policy of priority registration for active duty and veteran students using educational benefits by September 1, 2016.

FACULTY SENATE CHAIR:

APPROVED BY THE
FACULTY SENATE: Larry Stieblew DATE: 4/15/2016

DISAPPROVED BY THE
FACULTY SENATE: _____ DATE: _____

UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT:

APPROVED: James G. Fildes DATE: 4-26-16

DISAPPROVED: _____ DATE: _____

COMMENTS: _____



The 5 Star Challenge

The 5 Star Challenge is a voluntary initiative that will be offered to each of our institutions. Institutions that accept the challenge will have until September 1, 2016, to implement the Stars. In keeping with a longstanding military tradition, participating institutions will be issued an actual Challenge Coin that will be provided by the Commission's Office of Veterans Education and Training. As this Challenge is a compact of sorts between the student veterans and the institutions, the coins will be exchanged via the customary handshake between the institution's student veteran organization's President and the institution's President, Provost, or other similar official. Challenge coin ceremonies at participating institutions are encouraged to take place during the week of Veterans Day, 2015. Institutions will be notified of this Challenge in the coming weeks and will be asked to reply by September 1, 2015, if they intend to accept the Challenge. Institutions that accept the Challenge will be provided with a detailed guide on exactly how to succeed in implementing each Star in the Challenge as well as assistance in promoting and carrying out the Coin exchange.

1. Commitment

The leadership at each institution will demonstrate its commitment to student veterans/dependents by:

- Signing and implementing the Principles of Excellence,
- Signing and implementing the 8 Keys to Success,
- Reemphasizing compliance with West Virginia's Veteran-Friendly Campus Act.

2. Access and Affordability

Institutions will foster increased access and affordability by:

- Actively implementing and promoting resident tuition provisions of the federal Choice Act,
- Actively promoting and screening for tuition waiver availability for eligible dependents of fallen service members,
- Ensuring timely execution of VA Yellow Ribbon agreements, DOD MOU's, etc.

3. Academic Support

Institutions will foster increased academic support by:

- Establishing priority registration for students using VA education benefits,
- Ensuring advising staff and student veterans/dependents are aware of specific concerns associated with use of VA education benefits,
- Collecting and reporting appropriate data to help identify potential obstacles impeding timely graduation.

4. Cultural Support

Institutions will foster increased cultural support at the institution by:

- Ensuring key supportive staff are selected, trained, and clearly identifiable,
- Ensuring that a forum is available for sharing the profound experiences many student veterans/dependents possess in order to promote a culture of awareness, understanding, and support,
- Connecting student veterans/dependents with one another, staff, and alumni that share a similar background.

5. Community Collaboration

Institutions will increase collaboration with the community by:

- Identifying and networking with area stakeholders,
- Hosting events on campus to increase awareness of resources and opportunities,
- Identifying and promoting service opportunities and recreational/social activities that will foster reintegration into the community.

West Virginia's "Veteran-friendly Campus Act"

- (1) Establishing veteran-friendly community and technical college degree programs which recognize and award academic credit toward degrees for various types of technical and vocational military training and experience;
- (2) Developing policies for each state institution of higher education to grant academic credit for Armed Forces experiences;
- (3) Developing programs to encourage student veterans to share their specialized experience and knowledge gained through military service by making presentations in class, public school programs and local community organizations;
- (4) Establishing and sponsoring an organization for student veterans on campus and encouraging other veteran-friendly organizations;
- (5) Appointing and training specific faculty within each degree program or major as liaisons and contacts for student veterans;
- (6) Providing information about programs that grant credit for prior learning to student veterans and potential student veterans;
- (7) Coordinating existing disability services on campus with veteran disability services available from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, other federal and state agencies, and private resources;
- (8) Designating individuals to provide financial and psychological counseling services on each campus who are trained to effectively respond to the needs of veterans and to provide services or referrals to services to fulfill these needs for student veterans, and to the extent practicable, providing those services and programs in one location;
- (9) Developing training materials on responding to student veteran needs to be available for continued professional development of counselors to student veterans;
- (10) Facilitating regular statewide meetings for all personnel at state institutions of higher education who regularly provide specific services to student veterans to discuss and develop best practices, exchange ideas and experiences, and hear presentations by individuals with generally accepted expertise in areas of the various needs of student veterans;
- (11) Gathering data on the status of student veterans, including their graduation rates, comparing that rate with the graduation rate of other students in the institution, and reporting those results to appropriate state and federal agencies, including the West Virginia Legislature;
- (12) Establishing a program to create a collaborative relationship between student veterans and alumni of the institution, and with prospective employers to facilitate and provide employment as well as social opportunities to graduating student veterans;
- (13) Developing and facilitating communications between state institutions of higher education and various veteran organizations in the state to advance veteran causes that benefit student veterans;
- (14) Coordinating among all relevant departments within each state institution of higher education including but not limited to admissions, the registrar, the bursar, the veterans advocate and financial aid to ensure that relevant deadlines or timelines are met for certifying veterans' enrollment as early as practicable to ensure that assistance is received from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) in a timely fashion.

Measures to achieve greater coordination shall include but are not limited to:

- (A) Identifying applicants who are veterans as early as possible;
- (B) Taking affirmative steps to reach out to veteran applicants to inform them of relevant policies, timelines or deadlines for receiving veterans assistance;

(C) Developing a communications plan between departments, applicants and students to ensure that deadlines or timelines are being met;

(D) Developing plans to assist students when U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs benefits are not received in a timely fashion. Such plans could include forbearance of payment deadlines, short term loans, grants, or a revolving fund.

(E) Making every effort to provide sufficient class sections to meet the needs of students for classes which are required for graduation, including where appropriate, giving student veterans priority registration.

Veterans Advocates. Each state institution of higher education shall appoint or designate and train a person, preferably a veteran, to serve as a veterans advocate on its campus. The commission and council shall also provide training for veterans advocates at each of the institutions under their respective jurisdictions. The veterans advocate shall serve as the primary point of contact and campus advocate for current and prospective students who are veterans of the Armed Forces of the United States or are current members of the Armed Forces of the United States, including reserve components of the National Guard of this state or any other state.

The duties and responsibilities of the veterans advocate include, but are not limited to the following:

- (1) Assist and facilitate student veterans in utilizing services, resources and facilities available at the institution; and
- (2) To the extent resources are available for such purposes, provide services, programs and assistance to current and prospective student veterans designed to encourage, promote and facilitate the recruitment, retention and academic success of such students.

The commission and council jointly shall submit a report to the Legislature on September 1, annually, on the progress toward implementing this section.

Principles of Excellence

Educational institutions participating in the Principles of Excellence program agree to the following guidelines:

- Provide students with a personalized form covering the total cost of an education program.
- Provide educational plans for all military and Veteran education beneficiaries.
- End fraudulent and aggressive recruiting techniques and misrepresentations.
- Accommodate Servicemembers and Reservists absent due to service requirements.
- Designate a point of contact to provide academic and financial advice.
- Ensure accreditation of all new programs prior to enrolling students.
- Align institutional refund policies with those under Title IV, which governs the administration of federal student financial aid programs.

The 8 Keys

- Create a culture of trust and connectedness across the campus community to promote well-being and success for veterans.
- Ensure consistent and sustained support from campus leadership.
- Implement an early alert system to ensure all veterans receive academic, career, and financial advice before challenges become overwhelming.
- Coordinate and centralize campus efforts for all veterans, together with the creation of a designated space for them (even if limited in size).
- Collaborate with local communities and organizations, including government agencies, to align and coordinate various services for veterans.
- Utilize a uniform set of data tools to collect and track information on veterans, including demographics, retention, and degree completion.
- Provide comprehensive professional development for faculty and staff on issues and challenges unique to veterans.
- Develop systems that ensure sustainability of effective practices for veterans.

West Virginia's "War Orphans Act"

- Mandated tuition waiver for a child or spouse of a wartime veteran that was either killed in the line of duty or later perished as a result of wartime injury or illness.