

Opportunity

for Servicemembers and Veterans

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To Presidents, Chancellors, and Other Academic Decision-Makers

There has been great speculation and renewed energy within many academic institutions about how best to engage and enroll our nation's veterans in post-secondary education as a result of the passage of the "21st Century GI Bill" in July 2008. Encouraging veteran enrollment in post-secondary education helps increase America's competitiveness in the global economy and expands our country's human capital supply, while recognizing the contributions and sacrifices of veterans of the U.S. armed forces. The higher education associations have been working collaboratively to engage their members in open campus dialog about how institutions can help veteran student populations transition successfully.

Just how large will the influx of new veteran students be to our classrooms across the country (and Internet)? The Department of Veteran Affairs estimates that the number of veteran students attending college by 2010 will increase by 20-25 percent over the current enrollment levels, with the total number of beneficiaries for all veteran education benefit programs approaching 640,000.

I encourage each of you to engage your key administrators and faculty about ways your institution can help veteran student populations access and enroll in your programs. Are there opportunities for

enhancing campus programs and services that will enable veterans to effectively integrate into your campus culture? Are there obstacles or barriers preventing greater numbers of veterans from accessing your educational programs? Establishing a campus working group (including some student veterans themselves) might reveal some creative solutions for better serving your existing veteran student population and for reaching out to others.

As the 2009-2011 SOC Consortium membership renewal begins in November 2008, it is important that each SOC Consortium institution review its policies contained on its institution page in the *SOC Consortium Guide*. The designation of knowledgeable, accessible SOC Institutional Representatives and SOC Counselors with up-to-date contact information is key to a fully functioning SOC College Consortium. I appreciate your help in this important matter.

Kathy M. Snead
President, SOC Consortium

Post-9/11 Veterans Education Assistance Act of 2008

Veterans Affairs and American Council on Education to Convene Regional Meetings on New GI Bill Implementation

The Post-9/11 Veterans Education Assistance Act of 2008 was signed into law on June 30, 2008. To learn more about the new law and its impact on student veterans and academic institutions, see the Department of Veterans Affairs GI Bill Web site: <<http://www.gibill.va.gov>>. Draft regulations and implementation plans for the Post 9/11 GI Bill will be released for public review and comment on or around December 1st.

The American Council on Education, in partnership with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, will host three regional meetings to educate campus leaders about provisions of the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008 and solicit input on the implementation of payment systems.

These meetings are open to representatives of the higher education community on a first-come, first-served basis at the following locations:

January 6, 2009: Los Angeles, California

January 9, 2009: Washington, D.C.

January 14, 2009: Chicago, Illinois

Further information and online registration for this event can be found at <www.acenet.edu/STWS>.

An American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) document entitled "Post-9/11 Veterans Education Assistance" provides a preliminary analysis of educational assistance of the Post-9/11 GI Bill. This document can be accessed through the AASCU Web site at <<http://congressweb.com/aascu/federalpolicyadvocacy.htm>>. The bill summary is located under the July 10, 2008 date and can be downloaded as a PDF document.

A Bird's Eye View of the Military Student Population

Within the Department of Defense there were roughly 800,000 individual enrollments in undergraduate and graduate courses in fiscal year 2007. Nearly \$500,000,000 was expended in Tuition Assistance for Voluntary Education. Similar enrollment figures and expenditures were recorded for fiscal year 2006 (Source: *FY 07 and FY 06 DANES VOLED Fact Sheets*). The Government Accountability Office estimates that 82% of the nation's colleges and universities enroll National Guard/Reserve soldiers.

The Department of Veterans Affairs reports that more than 523,000 veterans received GI Bill education benefits during fiscal year 2007. It is believed that the percentage of veterans using GI Bill benefits has increased 24% since 2001. Approximately 71% of eligible veterans use some portion of their GI Bill benefits, but only 6% exhaust them.

Ways SOC Consortium Colleges Can Help Transitioning Servicemembers

All SOC Consortium institutions are strongly encouraged to provide transitioning servicemembers easy access to good information about transfer credit, credit for their military learning, financial aid, and orientation for adult learners. Many colleges and universities establish and maintain well-designed, up-to-date Web pages on their institutional Web sites targeted to military servicemembers and veterans. These Web pages provide valuable information that military students can easily access and use to expedite their entry and acceptance into the academic world.

SOC Consortium institutions develop policies that help servicemembers pursue education opportunities and complete degrees, adjust existing policies that accommodate military students who withdraw for a call to active duty, and then encourage their students to re-enroll and transition back to the classroom after returning from military service. Many servicemembers have continued college while on active duty.

Often SOC Consortium institutions help their military student overcome financial barriers. This may entail tuition waivers and financial assistance until GI Bill or tuition assistance funding kicks in. It also may include both grants and loan eligibility. Deferred tuition payment plans are part of this mix. Scholarship and work-study opportunities are often made available not only to military students, but also their spouses and children.

Institutions are taking actions to help servicemembers and veterans feel more comfortable in their academic environment. Some develop a Veterans Support Committee to improve the campus climate for veterans, using lessons learned from veterans and from surveys administered to student veterans. Student Veterans Club on campus, veterans' centers, support groups, and lounges can provide meeting space and opportunities for collaboration and socialization. Work-study students can be assigned to assist entering veterans with concerns to provide information and lower cultural barriers. Faculty, staff, and administration can become more aware of student veteran needs and concerns.

Administrative hurdles can be reduced. A simplified and expedited application process may be established for veteran readmission; extended, more flexible enrollment deadlines may be put in place; and course schedules may be adapted for transitioning active-duty servicemembers. Academic and counseling services may be instituted that are specifically targeted to military students. Priority registration may be made available for returning military students.

Colleges can help veterans overcome injury and/or trauma-related barriers as they provide services and support for the needs of disabled veterans. Mental health issues that affect enrollment and student success can and should be addressed directly and compassionately.

Academic research is needed that focuses on needs of returning servicemembers. Bright minds and willing advocates can surely expand the knowable base in this arena and point adult education practitioners to best practices that serve both the learners and the nation as a whole.

Visit SOC on the Web

<http://www.soc.aascu.org/>

SOC College Consortium Membership

SOC Consortium membership renewal for 2009-2011 is underway. Current member institutions have been sent their Institutional Information page for review and updating. All institutions renewing (or applying for SOC Consortium membership) are asked to provide a veterans program administrator or school certifying official point-of-contact which will appear on each Institutional Information page in the 2009-2011 *SOC Consortium Guide*.

At its October 3, 2008 meeting, the SOC Advisory Board modified one of the initial conditions for SOC Consortium membership to "be a degree-granting institution that is duly accredited by an institutional accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education or by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA)."

Why It's Important to Maintain Your SOC Membership?

Your SOC Consortium membership provides your institution:

- full SOC Consortium partnership and helps market itself as a "military friendly" institution;
- favorable publicity in SOC and other higher education publications/Web sites at no cost;
- the ability to compete in the military market in which "SOC Consortium membership" is required/stipulated for education services contracts and memoranda of understanding;
- enrollment strategies to draw military students based on military-friendly policies and practices; and
- access to SOC Concurrent Admissions Program (ConAP) and SOCGuard that help build partnerships in the local military and veteran communities, publicize academic offerings, and boost enrollment.

Responsibilities and Functions of Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (SOC) Institutional Representatives and Counselors

SOC Institutional Representative

Responsibilities as articulated in the SOC Application for Institutional Membership:

"This policy-level administrator is responsible for implementing and overseeing institution's compliance with the *SOC Principles and Criteria*."

Functions:

- Have read and understand *SOC Principles and Criteria 2009-2011*.
- Have working knowledge of the institution's policies and procedures regarding the award of credit and acceptance in transfer of credit transcribed by other institutions, particularly as shown on the institutional page of the *SOC Consortium Guide*.

- Be listed as the "SOC Institutional Representative" in the *SOC Consortium Guide*, whereby being able and available to answer inquiries and to market institutional programs and services to servicemembers, veterans and their adult family members who may express interest.
- Serve as the institution's central point-of-contact regarding the institution's education programs and services that are available to servicemembers, veterans, and their adult family members and be able to discuss how these programs and services comply with *SOC Principles and Criteria*.
- Serve as this institution's principal policy-level administrator for compliance with the *SOC Principles and Criteria*.
- Have read and understand the September 28, 2001 *Joint Statement on Transfer and Award of Academic Credit* as approved by the American Council on Education (ACE), the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO), and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA).
- Serve, in conjunction with the institutional president, chancellor, or chief executive officer, as the institution's chief advocate of servicemembers' education and continuously strive within the institution to improve its policies, procedures, programs and services offered servicemembers, veterans, and their adult family members.
- Provide general oversight for institutional participation in specific SOC programs, including SOCAD, SOCNAV, SOC-MAR, SOCCOAST, SOCGuard, and ConAP.
- Be the institutional point-of-contact for troubleshooting inquiries made by the SOC director and staff.
- Receive and disseminate as appropriate within the institution SOC news bulletins, memoranda, and other information regarding education for servicemembers, veterans, and their adult family members.
- Keep the senior institutional leadership informed regarding issues affecting education of servicemembers, veterans, and their adult family members; when necessary work with the president, chancellor, or chief executive officer and others, as appropriate, to resolve institutional policy and procedural issues that affect education for servicemembers, veterans, and their adult family members.
- Be able to provide statistics regarding the number of current enrollments of active-duty servicemembers, veterans, and National Guard/military reserve personnel.
- Update SOC Application for Institutional Membership every two years ensuring that all information is current and accurate and submit it to SOC by the date requested by SOC.

SOC Counselor

Responsibilities as articulated in the SOC Application for Institutional Membership:

"This counselor is responsible for advisement of the military students who are participating in programs under the SOC designation."

Functions:

- Have read and fully understand *SOC Principles and Criteria 2009-2011*.

- Have read and understand the September 28, 2001 *Joint Statement on Transfer and Award of Academic Credit* as approved by the American Council on Education (ACE), the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO), and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA).
- Have full working knowledge of the institution's policies and procedures regarding the award of credit and acceptance in transfer of credit transcribed by other institutions, particularly as shown on the institutional page of the *SOC Consortium Guide*.
- Be able and available to counsel servicemembers, veterans, and their adult family members with regard to education programs and services available to them and how these programs and services comply with *SOC Principles and Criteria*.
- Work with the SOC Institutional Representative by keeping informed; fill in for the SOC Institutional Representative when that individual is not available.

DoD Worldwide Education Symposium 2009

"Educating America's Patriots"

July 27-31, 2009

Marriott Atlanta Marquis, Atlanta, GA

Key objectives to be addressed at WW09 are:

- To explore strategies to effectively deliver voluntary education programs which meet changing needs of the military
- To increase cooperation between DoD education personnel and academic institution personnel
- To form joint Service education partnerships to address changing needs and declining resources and to build communities of practice
- To provide career development opportunities for education personnel
- To stimulate creative thoughts about current educational issues
- To address quality issues in continuing education
- To ensure the symposium is not a single event in time, but an on-going learning experience for the voluntary education community

These objectives will be accomplished in light of the overall Symposium theme, "Educating America's Patriots"

For complete details and registration visit:

<http://www.ww09atlanta.com/>

SOC College Workshops

SOC College Workshops have two primary goals. One is to bring college representatives up to date on Service-specific SOC programs. The second is to highlight ways colleges can use all SOC programs to recruit and retain students in a military market consisting of active-duty servicemembers, reserve component members, and veterans.

To date, the following SOC Workshops are scheduled for 2009:

- **March 26, 2009**, SOC Degree Network System Workshop, SOC Office in Washington, DC
- **March 27, 2009**, SOC College Consortium Workshop, SOC Office in Washington, DC
- **April 8, 2009**, SOC College Consortium Workshop, Hotel Del Coronado, San Diego, California
- **April 9-10, 2009**, SOC College Consortium and SOC Degree Network System (DNS) Workshop, Lake San Marcos Resort, Lake San Marcos, CA

Specific details about confirmed SOC Workshops can be obtained on the SOC Web site at:

<http://www.soc.aascu.org/>

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