

# Updates on VA Benefit Changes

As everyone knows there have been major changes in VA Benefits that go into effect beginning on August 1, 2011. Based on the letters that the VA has been sending out, there has been confusion as to who the changes will affect and how much it will affect your payments. Most of these issues were cleared up at the recent VA Conference. Chapter 33 (Post 9/11) vets will see the most significant changes but everyone will be affected. Here are the latest updates from the VA:

## All Students Receiving VA Benefits

- VA benefits will generally be subject to the same Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) standards as students receiving financial aid. The VA does allow some mitigating circumstances that Financial Aid does not allow. If your VA benefits are placed on suspension due to GPA, completion rate, or maximum time frame and you have mitigating circumstances you may appeal a suspension of VA benefits. The VA defines mitigating circumstances as “anything which is **both** unexpected **and** beyond the students control” which prevents the student from complying with the SAP standards.
- You can appeal suspension of VA benefits by completing a SAP appeal form and submit it to your Veterans’ Advisor on either the Venice or Bradenton campus. Please write VA in large letters at the top of the appeal form.
- Because of new reporting requirements you will be required to fill out a form to request certification of your courses with the VA beginning with the fall semester. Your courses will not be certified until we receive this form. Once you are certified the timing of the payment of your benefits is determined by the VA. You can obtain payment information by calling the VA at 888-442-4550.
- After you submit the form requesting certification of your courses you will be required to complete a form any time there is a change to your schedule. Any adds, drops or withdrawals must be reported immediately.
- A copy of these forms is attached to this email and will be posted on the SCF web site.

## Chapter 31 and Chapter 33 Benefits

- Chapter 31 (Voc/Rehab) students may now opt to receive the same monthly BAH as Chapter 33. In order to be eligible you must have served at least 36 consecutive months of active duty after 9/11. Contact your Voc/Rehab counselor for details on making the selection.
- Some students opted to receive Chapter 33 benefits in lieu of Voc/Rehab because of the difference in the monthly check. The VA has realized that by doing this many veterans cannot receive the additional benefits that veterans with disabilities are entitled to under Chapter 31. Since vets receiving Voc/Rehab benefits can now receive Chapter 33 BAH you may want to

reevaluate your decision. YES you can apply for Chapter 31 benefits; this is the one time that your selection of Chapter 33 benefits is not irrevocable. File for Chapter 31 benefits by submitting a VA form 28-1900 online.

**Chapter 33 Benefits (beginning Aug 1, 2001)**

- The VA will now only pay in-state tuition and fees. Until now out-of-state students received \$295 per credit toward tuition. I will forward updates on this as they become available.
- If you are registered in at least one classroom based course your BAH will continue to be based on zip code – not the national average as previously
- If you are registered in all online courses you are now eligible to receive a monthly BAH payment. You may receive up to ½ the national average for E-5 with dependants. The maximum payment for full time students with 100% eligibility will be \$635/month.
- You will no longer receive BAH for the time between semesters,
- There has been some confusion as to how the VA will compute your BAH. Here is the latest update:

<u># Credits</u>	<u>% BAH</u>
12 or more	100%
11	90%
10	80%
9	80%
8	70%
7	60%
6 or less	0%

- Effective August 1 there are new VA regulations regarding the payment of tuition and fees made to the school. If you are receiving any financial aid that is specifically designated to be used solely for tuition and fees and not designated for general education benefits that amount will be deducted from the amount that the VA will pay to the school. If you receive any of the aid that might be deducted, the amount of your refund will be reduced

***Examples:***

**Items Not Deducted**

Pell Grant  
 Stafford Loans  
 SCF Foundation Scholarships  
 Bright Futures  
 Florida Prepaid

**Items Deducted**

National Guard Tuition Assistance  
 Reserve Tuition Assistance  
 MYCAA  
 EDD  
 Some outside scholarships  
 Employee Tuition Reimbursement  
 Purple Heart Waiver