

### **Regulation for Military Student Success**

I. Purpose. This regulation provides a framework for the constituent institutions of the University of North Carolina System (UNC System) to develop and maintain a comprehensive network of services for military-affiliated students seeking to meet their educational goals. This regulation implements the requirements of Section 700.7.1 of the UNC Policy Manual and serves to promote the general welfare of military-affiliated students at constituent institutions.

II. Definitions. For the purposes of this regulation, the term “military student” shall mean any student who is a veteran or actively serving member of the United States Uniformed Services as defined in 37 U.S.C. §101(3), a member of the military reserves, or a member of the National Guard. The term “military-affiliated student” shall include both “military student” as defined above and any student who is the spouse, child, surviving spouse, or surviving child of a “military student” as defined above, as well as any student who is a Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) cadet.

III. Data Collection and Reporting on Military-Affiliated Students. The UNC System Office shall establish appropriate and uniform data collection guidelines and procedures that will enable the tracking of academic progress of military-affiliated students.

IV. Application Fees for Service Members and Veterans. Constituent institutions shall waive the admissions application fee for all military students, as defined in this regulation.

V. Tuition Rates for Military-Affiliated Students. Constituent institutions shall clearly articulate the process for military-affiliated students to establish eligibility for the in-state tuition rate pursuant to state and federal law, and pursuant to the guidelines of the Residency Determination System. Information regarding eligibility for in-state tuition shall be publicized as part of both the undergraduate and graduate recruitment and admissions processes.

VI. Faculty and Staff Support Training on Issues Affecting Military-Affiliated Students. Constituent institutions shall provide support for faculty and staff training on issues that are unique to, or commonly encountered by, military-affiliated students. This training should conform to best practice guidelines. Professional advisors and faculty should be well-versed in continuous enrollment provisions in order to assist military-affiliated students in making the best decisions about their academic program choices.

VII. North Carolina National Guard Tuition Assistance Benefit. The North Carolina National Guard Tuition Assistance benefit shall be applicable to students at UNC constituent institutions seeking to achieve a two-year associate degree, a four-year baccalaureate degree, or a graduate degree. It shall also be applicable to students enrolled in a program granting a graduate certificate, and to students enrolled in a professional certification program recommended by the director of the North Carolina National Guard Education and Employment Center and approved by the North Carolina National Guard Education Services Officer.

VIII. Campus-Based Support Structures for Military-Affiliated Students. Constituent institutions shall create campus-based military affairs committees to assist military-affiliated students in successfully

transitioning and succeeding beyond the educational environment. To ensure effectiveness, these committees should, at a minimum, be charged with:

- A. Facilitating awareness and communication between key departments with regard to constituent institution-based services for military-affiliated students;
- B. Coordinating and evaluating programs and services for those students;
- C. Factoring those students into institutional planning, particularly with regard to diversity;
- D. Ensuring institutional compliance with standards based on policy implemented by the Department of Defense (DoD), The Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA);
- E. Ensuring institutional compliance with the guidelines and recommendations in the most current version of the VA's School Certifying Official (SCO) Handbook.

IX. Financial Support of Military-Affiliated Students

A. Constituent institutions shall create policies that guarantee that military-affiliated students using United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) education and training benefits are held harmless from VA processing delays that prevent timely payment of their educational benefits. These policies shall include provisions:

- 1. Granting exemption from late payment fees on students whose VA educational benefits are delayed;
- 2. Maintaining students' course registrations until such delayed payments are received;
- 3. Adhering to provisions in the Veterans Benefits and Transition Act of 2018 when VA payments are delayed. Penalties prohibited by the act include, but are not limited to, denial of access to classes, libraries, or other institutional facilities, or the requirement that the student borrow additional funds, because of their inability to meet their financial obligations to the institution.

B. Constituent institutions shall develop a policy providing military-affiliated students using DoD Tuition Assistance, DHS Tuition Assistance, or VA education and training benefits with "bridge loans," payment plans, tuition deferments, vouchers, or some combination of these items to cover tuition, fees, housing, books, and other expenses related directly to university life, as defined by campus policy, until payment is received from the VA, the DHS, or the DoD. To avoid imposing any financial penalty on students awaiting VA, DHS, or DoD payments, institutions must not charge interest on any "bridge loans" they provide. The provision of all "bridge loans" must comply with applicable law, including but not limited to, the Veterans Benefits and Transition Act of 2018.

C. Scholarships and Grants. Development and Advancement offices at constituent institutions are also encouraged to create, fund, and maintain scholarships and grants for military-affiliated students.

X. Campus Employment. Constituent institutions are encouraged to apply for designation as an official VA Work Study Site and recruit eligible military-affiliated students, when appropriate, for VA work-study positions.

XI. Organizations and Communication. Constituent institutions are encouraged to support student veteran organizations and/or other military-affiliated student organizations. The student organization advisor is encouraged to communicate updates on veterans and military affairs on campus, as well as on topics and announcements related to any military-affiliated student groups.

XII. Academic Support for Military-Affiliated Students

A. Orientation/Transition Seminar. Constituent institutions shall provide break-out sessions focused on military-affiliated students as part of their regular orientation programs. When possible, institutions should make these resources available online. Constituent institutions offering a credit-bearing introduction to the university course should consider providing a section, or sections, exclusively for military students.

B. Priority Registration.

1. Military-Affiliated students using VA education benefits, students using DoD or DHS Tuition Assistance (TA), students on national service academy graduate degree sponsorship, and students who have been released from active duty for a specific amount of time to attend college through a military degree completion program often face unique scheduling challenges. Constituent institutions shall recognize such challenges by providing these students with priority enrollment and registration. Institutions should offer early/priority registration and/or other scheduling assistance to ensure those with time constraints attributable to their benefits can utilize those benefits fully, or to the maximum extent possible.

2. To the extent permitted by applicable law and policy, institutions may, at their own discretion, extend early/priority registration to other military-affiliated students not utilizing VA education benefits, to improve their rankings associated with nationally publicized designations such as "Military-Friendly" and "Best-for-Vets".

C. Academic Assistance. Constituent institutions shall evaluate, review, adapt, and monitor academic assistance, including mentoring and tutoring, for their military-affiliated students. Institutions should report challenges and successes to the institution's Military Affairs Committee.

D. Service Cords. Constituent institutions are encouraged to provide military service cords for graduating military students. Institutions shall communicate to these students a process for acquiring these cords. Service cords shall be provided free of charge, when possible. Institutions shall consider officially recognizing these graduates in the printed program and/or during the ceremony.

XIII. Call to Duty

A. Constituent institutions shall accommodate military-affiliated students who are "called to duty." The call to duty may include, but is not limited to:

1. Service in the uniformed services as defined in 34 CFR §668.18;

2. Guard or Reserve duties, such as participation in weekly or monthly meetings, weekend drills, annual trainings, military schooling, or other training or official military events; or
3. Active duty, Guard, or Reserve military members on extended training and/or deployments, or a Permanent Change of Station (PCS) move; and
4. Institutions should honor these same policies for military-affiliated students affected by a parent or spouse's call to duty.

B. Short-term (fewer than 30 days) absences due to call to duty. Any military student enrolled in a constituent institution called to duty for a short period during a semester/term, which does not require withdrawal, shall:

1. Notify their course instructors immediately. Military students who believe their military requirements may affect their enrollment/attendance during a specific semester should inform their course instructors at the beginning of the semester or as soon as the potential call to duty is reasonably known;
2. Provide a copy of orders or a letter from the unit command to the course instructor, once the call to duty is confirmed and if the student needs to be excused from class(es);
3. Be given an excused absence for the period of time the student is called to duty;
4. Be given the opportunity to make up any test or other work missed during the excused absence. The course instructor is encouraged to permit the student a reasonable amount of time to make up missed assignments;
5. Be given the option, when feasible, to continue classes and coursework during the academic term through online participation for the period of time the student is called to duty;
6. Be given a temporary grade of incomplete (I) for any course that the student was unable to complete as a result of being called to active duty. However, the student must complete the course requirements within the period of time specified by the constituent institution in order to avoid receiving a failing grade for the course;
7. Be permitted to drop, with no penalty, any course that the student was unable to complete as a result of being called to duty.

C. Military Withdrawal. Due to call to duty situations, military-affiliated students may need to withdraw from coursework during the course of a semester.

1. Students are expected to complete all the courses for which they are registered at the close of the course adjustment period *unless* withdrawal is permitted due to extenuating circumstances or military service.<sup>1</sup>

2. Military students who believe their military requirements may affect their enrollment/attendance during a specific semester should inform their course instructors in a timely manner.

3. Military students who have scheduled/known calls to duty during a semester should avoid registering for courses in which their military commitments will affect their academic attendance, performance, and learning. In those cases, the military students should work to seek a deferral or other arrangements and constituent institutions should work with the students on the program of study to rearrange the academic planning.

4. Constituent institutions shall develop policies that permit a military-affiliated student to withdraw from a course or courses at any time and without academic penalty due to a documented call to duty as defined in 34 CFR §668.18. Institutions should extend all components of this policy to apply to military-affiliated students affected by a parent or spouse's call to duty, if they demonstrate sufficient cause for consideration due to changed circumstances.<sup>2</sup> These policies must:

a. Be published in the appropriate sections of the university catalogue and website;

b. Describe the process by which the student (or an appropriate officer of the Armed Forces or official of the DoD or DHS) gives advance written or verbal notice of call to duty to the designated campus body or official<sup>3</sup>;

c. Describe the process by which the student informs the appropriate campus body or official of intent to return to the institution upon completion of period of service.

D. Graduate Students Called to Duty. In addition to the other applicable requirements of this policy, graduate students called to duty may require additional considerations by the constituent institutions. Overall, and to the extent permissible, the institutions shall hold the graduate student harmless due to call to duty situations. These policies should include (but are not limited to):

1. Establish the process for adjustment of any time limits for degree completion;

2. Describe a process that recertifies the currency of all graduate degree requirements that may be beyond allowed time limits, including review in the case of required repetition of course work that might be outdated.

E. Refund of Tuition, Fees, and Other Expenses. Enrolled students called to duty during the semester, and who complete a military withdrawal from their course(s), shall be afforded the following special considerations. Constituent institutions shall:

1. Issue a full refund of all payments made by or on behalf of the student, and/or adjust the student's financial aid account, as appropriate.

2. Issue a full refund for textbooks purchased through the university bookstore for the semester in progress. The student being called to duty must present the textbooks, purchase receipt(s), and a copy of the applicable military orders.<sup>4</sup>

3. Issue a prorated refund of room rent for a campus residence facility. This refund will be based on the student's official check-out date.<sup>5</sup>

4. Issue a prorated refund of board fees. This refund will be prorated from the opening date of the dining hall for the term during which the call to active duty occurs.

5. Allow unpaid account balances to be subject to a payment plan formulated with the student. No collection actions will occur during a deployment.

F. Academic Credit. Constituent institutions must have a separate transcript notation appropriate for students who withdraw for call to duty situations.

G. Deferral of Enrollment. Constituent institutions will allow admitted military-affiliated students to defer admission if they are called to duty before the start of a term. Constituent institutions should consider, in cases of a national emergency or crisis, allowing a deferral of enrollment for students who enlist in the United States Armed Forces prior to enrolling. Constituent institutions shall:

1. Describe the process by which the student (or an appropriate officer of the Armed Forces or official of the DoD or DHS) gives advance written or verbal notice of call to duty to the designated campus body or official;<sup>6</sup>

2. Describe the process by which the student informs the appropriate campus body or official of intent to return to the institution upon completion of period of service;

3. Publish the details of the process in the appropriate sections of the university catalogue and website;

4. Include provision for a full refund on all deposits paid by the student;

5. Clarify the notification process of all relevant offices on campus.

H. Readmission to the University. No student shall be denied readmission to a constituent institution solely because of a call to duty situation. Constituent institutions shall:

1. Readmit students who seek readmission no later than three years after the completion of the period of service,<sup>7</sup> at the same academic standing as the time of their call to duty, pursuant to 34 CFR §688.18, and subject to campus safety policies and procedures.<sup>8</sup>

2. Waive any new application process or fees.<sup>9</sup>

3. Describe the process by which the student informs the appropriate campus body or official of intent to return to the institution upon completion of the period of service.

4. Adjust the registration window for students to allow for early registration, if possible.

5. Clarify variations in regulations for readmission for students:

- a. Who were on academic probation or suspension; or
- b. Who were away longer than three calendar years following the completion of service.

6. Indicate a process for reinstatement to a specific undergraduate program of study.

I. Scholarship Status. When possible, and depending on the availability of funds, military-affiliated students receiving university scholarships at the time of their call to duty should be able to receive the remainder of the scholarship upon their return. Constituent institutions shall develop policies related to the impact of call to duty on the scholarships they award. These policies must:

1. Include provisions to notify students about the status of their scholarships at the time of a military withdrawal or leave of absence;
2. Describe the rules related to reinstatement of scholarships and the process to initiate reinstatement when possible.

#### XIV. Other Matters

A. Effective Date. The requirements of this regulation shall be effective on the date of adoption of this regulation by the president.

B. Relation to Federal and State Laws and Policies. The foregoing regulation as adopted by the president is meant to supplement, and does not purport to supplant or modify, those statutory enactments, regulations, and policies which may govern or relate to the subject matter of this regulation.

C. Relation to Professional Certifications and Licensure Standards. Institutions should recognize that this regulation relates to UNC System policy only, and not to professional certifications or applicable licensure standards set by external agencies and associations.

D. In cases where adherence to this regulation may conflict with university or academic program accreditation standards, institutions should prioritize adherence to accreditation standards.

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<sup>1</sup> See Section 400.1.5[R], Section II.C of the UNC Policy Manual

<sup>2</sup> Campuses may choose to process family requests under the extenuating circumstances provision of their policies, as outlined in Section 400.1.5[R] of the UNC Policy Manual. Alternatively, campuses may choose to process family requests under documentation and review requirements set up for persons called to active duty.

<sup>3</sup> No notice is required if the giving of such notice is precluded by military necessity, such as a mission, operation, exercise, or requirement that is classified or a pending or ongoing mission, operation, exercise, or requirement that may be compromised or otherwise adversely affected by public knowledge (HEA Sec. 484C(c)(1)(A)(B)(C)).

<sup>4</sup> Campuses with a rental program should consider a refund or a prorating of the rental fee.

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<sup>5</sup> If the student is receiving a BAH benefit from the VA for housing, they are entitled to keep all funds through their last date of attendance (as certified on campus). Any funds received from the VA for any period after the last date of attendance become a VA student debt.

<sup>6</sup> No notice is required if the giving of such notice is precluded by military necessity, such as a mission, operation, exercise, or requirement that is classified or a pending or ongoing mission, operation, exercise, or requirement that may be compromised or otherwise adversely affected by public knowledge (HEA Sec. 484C(c)(1)(A)(B)(C)).

<sup>7</sup> A student hospitalized or convalescing from an illness or injury suffered during the performance of military service shall notify the institution of the intent to return no later than two years after the end of recovery. A student who fails to apply for readmission within the period described shall not automatically forfeit such eligibility for readmission to the institution of higher education, but shall be subject to the institution's established leave of absence policy and general practices. (HEA Sec. 484C (c)(4)(A) through (c)(4)(C)).

<sup>8</sup> Required checks for campus safety will be performed.

<sup>9</sup> Required checks for campus safety will be performed. Constituent institutions will incur the fee.