

ACCT FACT SHEET

Executive Order -- Establishing Principles of Excellence for Educational Institutions Serving Service Members, Veterans, Spouses, and Other Family Members

On April 27, 2012, President Obama issued an executive order aimed at increasing transparency and oversight for higher educational programs that serve veterans. The order directs the Departments of Defense, Veterans Affairs, and Education to: collect and disseminate data regarding the cost and outcomes of academic programs; develop a uniform system to receive reports of abuse or fraud; enhance current support services; and limit recruiting practices of students eligible for veterans' educational benefits.

The executive order sets forth a series of guiding principles for educational institutions by which the agencies shall aim their reforms, including:

- prior to enrollment, provide prospective students with a personalized form that helps them understand the total cost of the educational program, including tuition and fees; the amount of that cost that will be covered by Federal educational benefits; the type and amount of financial aid they may qualify for; their estimated student loan debt upon graduation; information about student outcomes; and other information to facilitate comparison of aid packages offered by different educational institutions;
- inform students who are eligible to receive Federal military and veterans educational benefits of the availability of Federal financial aid;
- end fraudulent and unduly aggressive recruiting techniques on and off military installations;
- obtain the approval of the institution's accrediting agency for new course or program offerings before enrolling students in such courses or programs;
- allow service members and reservists to be readmitted to a program if they are temporarily unable to attend class or have to suspend their studies due to service requirements;
- agree to an institutional refund policy that is aligned with the refund of unearned student aid;
- provide educational plans for all individuals using Federal military and veterans educational benefits that detail how they will fulfill all the requirements necessary to graduate and the expected timeline of completion; and
- designate a point of contact for academic and financial advising (including access to disability counseling) to assist service member and veteran students and their families with the successful completion of their studies and with their job searches.

These principles shall be reflected in new agreements with educational institutions with regard to participation in the Yellow Ribbon Program or the Tuition Assistance Program for active duty service

members. While the principles are not applied to the Post-9/11 GI Bill program, participating institutions are encouraged to comply and will be recognized for doing so.

The executive order instructs the relevant agencies to develop a comprehensive strategy for measuring student outcomes for veterans and service members, and collecting data on the amount of funding received pursuant to the Post-9/11 GI Bill and the Tuition Assistance Program.

The executive order instructs the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide to prospective military and veteran students an online tool to compare educational institutions using measures of affordability and value.

Within 90 days of the date of the executive order, relevant agencies must submit to the President a plan to strengthen enforcement and compliance mechanisms, including: the creation of a centralized student complaint system; restrictions on institutions seeking to recruit on military bases; and trademarking the term “GI Bill” and restricting use of other terms that have been used in recruiting tactics.