



April 20, 2009

Background on the Yellow Ribbon Program

The Yellow Ribbon GI Education Enhancement Program (Yellow Ribbon Program) is a provision of the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008. This program allows institutions of higher learning in the United States to voluntarily enter into an agreement with Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to fund tuition expenses that exceed the highest public in-state undergraduate tuition rate. The institution can contribute up to 50% of those expenses and VA will match the same amount as the institution. The Post-9/11 GI bill covers undergrad and graduate programs. In April 2009, the VA released its final regulations, clarifying the rules that will govern the program. Institutions have until May 15th, 2009 to enter into an agreement with the VA to be eligible to participate for the fall 2009 academic year. The New York figures will allow for tuition up to \$970 per credit hour along with up to \$3,457 per term for fees. These figures are based on tuition number from Cornell University, a private university that includes some public state programming due to its land-grant status.

The Institution of Higher Learning (IHL) must agree to:

- Provide contributions to eligible individuals who apply for the Yellow Ribbon Program on a first-come first-served basis, regardless of the rate at which the individual is pursuing training in any given academic year;
- Provide contributions during the current academic year and all subsequent academic years in which the student maintains satisfactory progress, conduct, and attendance;
- Make contributions toward the program on behalf of the individual in the form of “a grant, scholarship, or otherwise”;
- State the dollar amount that will be contributed for each participant during the academic year;
- State the maximum number of individuals for whom contributions will be made in any given academic year.

Tuition Benefits For Students

The Post-9/11 GI Bill pays up to the highest public in-state undergraduate tuition. The student’s tuition and fees may exceed that amount if they are attending a private institution, graduate school or attending in an out-of-state status. If they are enrolled at a Yellow Ribbon participating institution and the tuition and fees exceed the highest public in-state undergraduate tuition, additional funds may be available for their education program without an additional charge to their entitlement. Institutions that voluntarily enter into a Yellow Ribbon Agreement with VA choose the amount of tuition and fees that will be contributed. The VA will match that amount and issue payment directly to the institution.

Eligibility Requirements

Only individuals entitled to the maximum benefit rate (based on service requirements) may receive this funding. Therefore, they may be eligible if:

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- They served an aggregate period of active duty after September 10, 2001, of at least 36 months;
- They were honorably discharged from active duty for a service connected disability and they served 30 continuous days after September 10, 2001;
- They are a dependent eligible for Transfer of Entitlement under the Post-9/11 GI Bill based on a veteran's service under the eligibility criteria listed above.

Issues Clarified by the VA Final Regulations Issued in April

Many private institutions had expressed concern that they would be required to sign only one agreement for the entire university, lumping undergraduate admissions with graduate programs, despite widely different costs and admissions schedules. The VA dealt with this concern in the final regulations by stating that institutions would be allowed to set different agreements based on student status – undergrad, grad, doctoral – or for different programs.

Additionally, many privates were concerned about the manner in which colleges would need to provide the tuition assistance. The draft regulations stated that money had to come in the form of a waiver, and that the yellow-ribbon agreements would specify a percentage of the excess cost the college would pay. The final regulations state that a college can “state the maximum dollar amount that may be provided to each participant during the academic year, and provide contributions by direct grant, scholarship, or otherwise.”

Additional Benefits

- Eligible veterans qualify for the Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH), based on geographic duty location, pay grade and dependency status. See this link to determine BAH: <http://www.defensetravel.dod.mil/perdiem/bah.html>
- Eligible veterans qualify for an annual books & supplies stipend of \$1,000 paid proportionately based on enrollment

Timelines for Participation and Benefits

Students must be enrolled in an approved program offered by an IHL. Institutions have until May 15th, 2009 to enter in an agreement with the VA for the fall 2009 academic year. Students may search for institutions that are participating in the Yellow Ribbon Program on a VA website, starting on June 1, 2009. Final per state tuition figures will be available on August 1, 2009. Benefits are payable for training pursued on or after August 1, 2009. No payments can be made under this program for training pursued before that date.

Additional Resources

Yellow Ribbon Program Agreement Form to be Signed by Institutions:
<http://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-22-0839-ARE.pdf>

2008-2009 In-State Maximum Tuition & Fees (by state):
http://www.gibill.va.gov/GI_Bill_Info/CH33/Tuition_and_fees.htm

Yellow Ribbon Final Regs Summary Prepared by NACUBO:
<http://www.nacubo.org/x11623.xml>