



## Legislative Fiscal Bureau

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October 5, 2010

TO: Members  
Special Committee on Review of Higher Education Financial Aid Programs

FROM: Emily Pope, Fiscal Analyst

SUBJECT: State Veterans' Education Programs

In response to questions asked during the August 17, 2010, meeting of the Legislative Council Special Committee on Review of Higher Education Financial Aid Programs, I have prepared an overview of state veterans' education programs.

There are three major state-funded veterans' education programs: (1) veterans tuition and fee reimbursement grants, administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs; (2) National Guard tuition grants, administered by the Department of Military Affairs; and (3) veterans tuition and fee remissions, administered by the Higher Educational Aids Board (HEAB), the University of Wisconsin System, and the Wisconsin technical college district boards. These programs are described below:

**Veterans Tuition and Fee Reimbursements.** This program, which is funded through the veterans trust fund, provides reimbursement, upon an eligible veteran's successful completion of a semester, of up to 100% of the cost of the individual's undergraduate tuition and fees, less any other grants, scholarships, or remissions received, based on the costs of a UW-Madison resident undergraduate. The veterans tuition and fee reimbursement grants apply to the unremitted portion of tuition and fees at those institutions. The veteran may enroll on a full-time or part-time basis at any UW institution, Wisconsin technical college, approved private post-secondary institution, public or private high school, or similar institution that has a reciprocity agreement with Wisconsin. Part-time students may also be reimbursed for courses taken at out-of-state institutions if the institution is within 50 miles of the veteran's residence and the state boundary and if a correspondence course is not offered in this state.

Veterans are eligible for reimbursement based on their length of service. Veterans that were on active duty for at least 90 days may be reimbursed for up to 30 credits or two semesters; veterans

with at least 181 days of active duty service are eligible for up to 60 credits or four semesters; and veterans with at least 731 days of active duty service are eligible for up to 120 credits or eight semesters.

Veterans are eligible for full tuition and fee reimbursement for full-time study only for credits begun prior to their 10-year anniversary of their separation from active duty. After the 10-year delimiting date, full-time students may be reimbursed for no more than 11 credits per semester and 60 credits total. Up to 60 credits of part-time study may be reimbursed with no time limits.

Eligibility is restricted to veterans with incomes of \$50,000 or less (plus \$1,000 for each dependent in excess of two). Veterans are not eligible for reimbursement if they are eligible for National Guard tuition reimbursement or if they have an undergraduate degree. In 2009-10, 845 tuition and fee reimbursement grants were awarded, totaling \$1,726,300 and averaging \$2,043 each.

**National Guard Tuition Grants.** Wisconsin National Guard members are eligible to receive reimbursement grants equal to 100% of the maximum resident undergraduate tuition rates charged by UW-Madison for a comparable number of credits. The grants may be received for up to eight semesters of full time study or 120 credits of part-time study. Eligibility is limited to enlisted members and warrant officers of the Wisconsin National Guard who do not hold a bachelor's degree or its equivalent. Reimbursement of tuition may be obtained by National Guard members who were enrolled at any accredited institution of higher education in Wisconsin or at an out-of-state institution that has a reciprocity agreement with this state, including certain institutions in Minnesota, Michigan, Illinois, and Iowa. No National Guard member may receive a reimbursement grant under this program in any semester in which the person also receives a grant under the veterans tuition and fee reimbursement grant program. In 2009-10, 1,660 grants were awarded, totaling \$2,905,500. Average fall grants were \$1,817, average spring semester grants were \$1,796 and average summer session grants were \$1,076. This program is funded by state general purpose revenues (GPR).

**Tuition and Fee Remissions.** The UW System Board of Regents and each Wisconsin technical college district board is required to remit tuition and fees, less any amount paid under the federal Post-9/11 G.I. Bill and certain federal programs providing for the education of officers and disabled veterans, to students who are qualified veterans. Qualified veterans are eligible for remissions for up to a total of 128 credits or 8 semesters, whichever is longer. To qualify as a veteran for this remission, a student must: (1) be verified by the Department of Veterans Affairs as a resident of this state for the purpose of receiving benefits; and (2) have been a resident of this state at the time of entry into the armed services. In addition, a student's military service must meet one or more of the following criterion: (1) service of at least one term under honorable conditions during a war period or in a crisis period; (2) service on active duty under honorable conditions for the full period of the initial service obligation; (3) service qualifying for certain service-related medals; (4) service ending in honorable discharge for a service-related disability or for reasons of hardship; or (5) service ending in release under honorable conditions due to a reduction in the armed forces. For students who qualify for this remission but do not qualify for resident tuition as

determined by the UW System and WTCS, the nonresident portion of tuition is also remitted.

Veterans who are eligible for benefits under the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill must use those benefits before accessing state tuition and fee remissions. This applies even if the student is eligible for benefits under the Montgomery G.I. Bill or certain other federal education programs for veterans unless the student is eligible for 12 months or less of benefits under those programs. Veterans whose stipend under the Montgomery G.I. Bill or under certain other federal education programs would have exceeded the amount of the monthly housing allowance provided under the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill (adjusted to reflect the annual books and supplies stipend) are reimbursed for the difference in these benefits.

In 2009-10, the UW System provided remissions totaling \$12.6 million to 3,051 veterans and reimbursement payments totaling \$0.6 million to 517 veterans. The Wisconsin technical colleges provided remissions totaling \$4.2 million to 2,833 veterans and reimbursement payments totaling \$0.5 million to 456 veterans.

A GPR appropriation under HEAB funds reimbursement payments to veterans and is used to partially reimburse the UW System and Wisconsin technical college district boards for remissions provided to veterans as well as to the dependents of deceased or disabled veterans. In 2009-10, the UW System received \$4.8 million through this appropriation and the Wisconsin technical college district boards received a total of \$1.7 million. These amounts fully funded all reimbursements paid to veterans and reimbursed the institutions for approximately 22% of remissions provided to veterans and dependents.

I hope this information is helpful. Please contact me if you have additional questions.

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