



Minnesota
STATE COLLEGES
& UNIVERSITIES

Veterans Services

Minnesota State Colleges and Universities

OVERVIEW

The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities has a long history of providing education and training to veterans and those on active duty seeking to learn new skills, enhance existing skills and translate skills learned in the military for use in the civilian world. In a recent survey of 2,500 Minnesota National Guard soldiers completing their overseas deployment, 80 percent – a higher than anticipated percentage – said they wanted to begin or return to higher education. Annually, about 5,000 veterans who received education benefits attend one of the 32 Minnesota State Colleges and Universities. This is about 60 percent of veterans who attend colleges and universities in Minnesota. As times have changed, Minnesota's state colleges and universities have shifted to meet current needs of returning veterans.

MINNESOTA NATIONAL GUARD DEPLOYMENT

Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, more than 11,000 members of the Minnesota National Guard have been called to active duty overseas. In June 2007, an estimated 3,000 Minnesota National Guard members who were serving overseas began returning to the state. Thousands of other Minnesotans serve in the regular armed forces and federal reserve units.

PREPARING FOR MINNESOTA'S RETURNING VETERANS

Meeting the needs of returning veterans is a complex undertaking. Many veterans face personal, relationship, education and employment issues on being discharged or completing military duty. Veterans' families also may need help while their loved ones serve overseas and when they return home. In September 2005, the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system office provided additional training for counselors, student affairs staff and administrators working with the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs and the Minnesota Army National Guard. In addition, the system and state Department of Veterans Affairs worked with Gov. Tim Pawlenty and the Legislature to develop and pass the Minnesota Higher Education Fairness Act and to fund the Minnesota Higher Education Veterans Program. The legislation provided assistance and resources for developing veterans-friendly colleges and universities.

BEYOND THE YELLOW RIBBON PROGRAM

In 2007, the governor charged state government with developing the "Beyond the Yellow Ribbon" program to assist returning service members readjust to civilian life. A Higher Education Task Force quickly concluded a systemic approach was necessary. In partnership with the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs and the Minnesota Army National Guard, the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system participated in the program's Family Preparation Academies, Family Reintegration Academies, initial reintegration training and 30-day follow-up training. Many of the events were held on the system's campuses. The program now has become a national model that supports the successful reintegration of veterans.

EDUCATION-RELATED BENEFITS AND SERVICES AVAILABLE FOR VETERANS

- **Veterans Centers** are now open on 44 of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system's 53 campuses.
- **A network of 12 regional representatives** from the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs serves all higher education institutions in Minnesota. Eleven of the representatives and the state director are hosted by system colleges and universities.
- **A system policy** provides choices for students in the Reserve or National Guard who are deployed during a semester to complete their courses and protects them from adverse academic consequences.
- **Online education information** is available through a Web site, mymilitaryeducation.org, hosted by the system and the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs.
- **A phone line for educational counseling and advising**, a service of mymilitaryeducation.org, is available from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Friday and from 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. on weekends for domestic and international calls.
- **Minnesota Online opportunities** – Service men and women can take an array of online courses offered by Minnesota State Colleges and Universities while in the military. For more information, go to www.minnesotaonline.org.
- **College credit for military education and training** is granted to veterans using the American Council on Education guidelines and standards. Efforts are underway to systematically expand this benefit.
- **Almost all Minnesota State Colleges and Universities** have joined the Servicemember Opportunity Colleges Consortium, which helps service members and their families overcome barriers to completing college degrees because they frequently move from place to place.
- **In-state tuition rates are available for non-resident soldiers and veterans.** A bill moving through the Minnesota Legislature would extend this benefit to spouses and children of non-resident soldiers and veterans.
- **Veterans in college awaiting federal benefits can delay tuition payments without penalty.** A state college or university will not charge late fees or other late charges for veterans who are eligible or have applied to receive federal educational assistance.
- **Veterans Upward Bound** – Minneapolis Community and Technical College has a Veterans Upward Bound program that has operated continuously since 1972. A second program that provides special academic and support services to eligible veterans has been established on the Cambridge and Coon Rapids campuses of Anoka Ramsey Community College.
- **The Minnesota GI Bill** was developed and passed by the Legislature. This "last dollar in" program provides additional benefits to veterans after other benefits have been exhausted.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Steven Frantz, system director, student affairs. Office of the Chancellor, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities. St. Paul, Minnesota. For an interview, call Melinda Voss at 651-296-9443.

ABOUT MINNESOTA STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system comprises 32 state universities and community and technical colleges on 53 campuses serving the higher education needs of Minnesota. The system serves about 242,000 students per year in credit-based courses and an additional 140,000 students in non-credit courses. The University of Minnesota is a separate system.

For more information or to arrange media interviews, please contact Melinda Voss, public relations director, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, at 651-296-9443, or melinda.voss@so.mnscu.edu.

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