

Dear Veterans and Family Members Using VA Education Benefits:

Greetings! We know a lot of students are struggling right now with the adjustment to online classes, social distancing measures, and general anxiety about what the future holds. Here's an update to clarify some questions you may have about your education benefits as a result of the CARES Act, and a reminder of important resources to support you.

Post-9/11 GI Bill® Benefits (Chapter 33)

- **Question:** All of my in-person classes have been converted to online instruction in response to the COVID-19 epidemic. Will this cause VA to reduce my Monthly Housing Allowance?
 - **Answer:** No. If you were certified for in-person classes this semester, and those classes have been converted to an online-only instructional method in response to COVID-19, VA will continue to pay the in-person rate for those credits. Remember, VA pays your benefits for participating in your educational program. As always, contact us if you are having difficulty in your classes; we will help you consider your options so you can decide on the best course of action.
- **Question:** Does this also apply to next semester?
 - **Answer:** Yes. If you take a class in summer 2020 or fall 2020 that is typically offered in-person, but now is available only online as part of YC's COVID-19 response, we are permitted to certify that class as an in-person class for purposes of allowing your Monthly Housing Allowance to be paid at the higher in-person rate. The CARES Act permits this special exception **only between March 1, 2020, and December 21, 2020.**

All VA Education Benefit Types

- **Question:** I tested into a remedial math or English class (numbered below 100) as a prerequisite to taking the required class for my degree or certificate; however, I have been told that VA does not pay benefits for remedial courses if taken online. Is there an exception for this, since YC is only offering online classes this summer?
 - **Answer:** Yes. Recent legislation allows benefits to be paid for remedial classes taken online if they are usually available in person, but are only offered online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. If you are not sure whether your class qualifies, contact our office. Be sure to get familiar with virtual tutoring, workshops, and other support for students at www.yc.edu/learningcenter.
- **Question:** What about changes to my schedule during this time?
 - **Answer:** If a student becomes ill due to COVID-19, or is caring for a family member who is ill due to COVID-19, and cannot continue training, they should notify VET Services immediately and if possible, provide documentation of the diagnosis. The school is required to report the reduction or termination of the student's enrollment as usual, but we can note the reason as related to COVID-19. Whatever the reason, students considering withdrawing from one or more classes should consult VET Services first to better understand their options and the possible impact on benefits.

- **Question: What can I do to increase my financial resources right now?**
 - **Answer 1:** Enrolled students can submit a **Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)** now, and be considered for aid eligibility for this entire 2019-2020 academic year (fall 2019, spring 2020, summer 2020). We encourage all students receiving a VA education benefit to also apply for financial aid. A separate application at the same site is needed for aid for the next academic year, so do one for now and one for next year (2020-2021)! Visit www.fafsa.gov to apply. More financial aid resources are available at www.yc.edu/financialaid, including professional assistance for submitting your application.
 - **Answer 2:** Many students work while going to school. Full-time or part-time employees whose ability to work has been impacted by the pandemic may be eligible for **unemployment insurance** from the State of Arizona, based on recent legislation. See the two attached flyers for information and instructions from the Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES) , you should apply for unemployment insurance, and seek guidance from knowledgeable professionals to be sure your application has the best chance of getting approved.

Self-Care / Emotional Health

- **Question: What can I do if I am overwhelmed, anxious, depressed, or in crisis?**
 - **Answer 1:** If it is an emergency, call 911.
 - **Answer 2:** If you or someone you know is in crisis, visit VeteransCrisisLine.net; call **1-800-273-8255** and Press 1; [confidential chat](#); or text (838255). For veterans, service members, National Guard/Reserves, and family members/friends.
 - **Answer 3:** If you are not in crisis, but are feeling stressed out and want help finding a way forward, try one of these options:
 - Reply to this [email](#) or call us: **(928) 717-7613**. We will respond within one business day, and will be happy to assist you by phone or Zoom videoconference.
 - Visit Yavapai College's [COVID-19 Response Page](#). We highly recommend this page—great resource, updated daily!
 - Search for resources for veterans and military families in your area at www.beconnectedaz.org.
 - Check out Yavapai College's new [Student Assistance Program](#). You now have access to excellent mental health and personal support services 24 hours / 365 days a year. Explore online wellness resources, or access free counseling services via phone, chat, or videoconference.

We're here to support you, so stay in touch.

Sincerely,

Your VET Services Team