VRAP - VETERANS RETRAINING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

VETERANS AFFAIRS POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND REFERENCE GUIDE
READ CAREFULLY AND KEEP FOR YOUR RECORDS

Welcome to Central Piedmont Community College (CPCC)! We recognize and appreciate your contributions while serving in the US Military.

Please read the information provided in this Policies, Procedures and Reference Guide carefully and feel free to contact our office if you have any questions.

All Veterans' Affairs students seeking to use VA Educational Benefits are in the unique position of having to meet requirements as specified by both the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) and the NC State Approving Agency (NCSAA). Although CPCC's VA Office does not work for the Department of Veterans' Affairs, it is our job to work closely with them to ensure that your needs as a student are met. Our office strives to meet the DVA goals of "Putting Veterans First."

Eligibility for VRAP:

Congress passed, and the President has signed into law, the VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011. Included in this new law is the Veterans Retraining Assistance Program (VRAP). VRAP offers up to 12 months of training assistance to unemployed Veterans. The Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) and the Department of Labor (DOL) are working together to roll out this new program on July 1, 2012.

The VRAP offers 12 months of training assistance to Veterans who:

- Are at least 35 but no more than 60 years old
- Are unemployed on the date of application
- Received an other than dishonorable discharge
- Are not be eligible for any other VA education benefit program (e.g.: the Post-9/11 GI Bill, Montgomery GI Bill, Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Assistance)
- Are not in receipt of VA compensation due to unemployability
- Are not enrolled in a federal or state job training program

General Information about VRAP:

- An Individual who receives a Certificate of Eligibility for the Fiscal Year 2012, but doesn't use the program until Fiscal year 2013 does not have to reapply for VRAP benefits.
- Individuals eligible for VRAP will only be paid benefits through their program end date, entitlement exhaust date OR March 31, 2014, *whichever comes first.* Note: a student will be terminated for unsatisfactory progress just as with any other VA education benefit.
- Individuals using VRAP will not be permitted to change their program of study once a payment has been issued.
- As of the date of application for VRAP, individuals must be unemployed. However, employment thereafter is not prohibited while pursuing an educational goal.
- Individuals must be enrolled and maintain 12 credit hours to be eligible. Individuals who reduce their training below full-time (12 hours at CPCC) are no longer eligible and benefits will be terminated on the date of the reduction. VA will re-establish benefits if an individual increases his/her training time back to full-time effective that date.
- Individuals using VRAP benefits are not eligible for the VA Work-Study Program.
- VRAP provides up to 12 months of training assistance to unemployed veterans. If training program is three months then VA will pay three months of benefits. If training program is 18 months long, VA will only pay up to 12 months.
- VA will not take any adverse action against students who do not complete their program. Department of Labor (DoL) will offer students employment assistance when they stop training even if they didn't complete the program. For more information about the DoL's veterans' programs go to http://www.dol.gov/vets/.

Getting Started at CPCC:

All VA students must complete CPCC's admission steps and complete a VA Student Packet before an enrollment certification can be transmitted to the VA Regional Processing Office. The admission steps are listed on our website at www.cpcc.edu (see online catalog) and are listed below:

- ✓ Complete an Admissions Form either online or in person.
- ✓ Submit an official copy of your High School Transcript to Student Records (this will be waived if you have completed an Associates or Bachelor's Degree from an accredited college).
- ✓ Submit official copies of all previously attended colleges, military transcripts, and Member 4 copy of your DD 214 to Student Records. Request an evaluation of credits by submitting a request for evaluation through your My College.
- ✓ Meet with a Counselor to be admitted into a high demand occupation program. We can only certify courses required for one program of study and you can't change programs once certified under VRAP. The Veterans Resource Center (VRC) is located at the Central Campus, Terrell Building Suite 233. There are academic and personal Counselors located in the VRC and you must make an appointment by calling 704.330.6126.
- ✓ Take Placement Tests, if applicable. You may not be required to take these if you have transfer credits or recent test scores from another college. If you are planning on enrolling in remedial courses (MAT 080, ENG 090, etc), your Placement Test scores cannot be over two years old.
- ✓ Activate your CPCC email. All communication from the VA office will be emailed to that address.
- ✓ Apply for Financial Aid and Scholarships - VRAP students are responsible for paying tuition/fees and books/supplies up front.

Getting Certified for your VA Educational Benefits:

Your CPCC VA file must be complete before you can be certified for VA Educational Benefits. Once your file is complete and you have registered and either paid or have a sponsor such as financial aid, scholarship, etc., you can make an appointment to be certified by calling 704.330.6267 if your last name begins with letters A through I or 704.330.6699 if your last name begins with letters J through Z**.** A VA Request for Certification Form must be completed listing the courses that you are requesting for Certification of your benefits. Please access your "MyCollege" online service and run a Program Evaluation to confirm all courses are required for your Program of Study when you register as only required courses can be certified.

It is important that students not rely solely on VA checks for vital living expenses (rent, car payments, etc.) since CPCC can't guarantee the VA Regional Processing Office's timeframe in processing and making payments. Students can contact the VA Regional Processing Office to inquire about the status of their payments once they have been certified by CPCC's VA Certifying Official.

Each registration period, it is the student's responsibility to contact CPCC's VA Certifying Official as soon as they have officially registered and their tuition/fees are paid/secured to schedule an appointment for certification. Students are encouraged to register early and are sent an email notification listing their priority registration dates from the college before each registration period begins.

Note: Veterans receive priority registration dates at CPCC and are notified through their CPCC email account.

The DVA sends students an email confirming that they have received the enrollment certification once the VA Certifying Official transmits the information.

Getting Paid under the VRAP Program:

After the student has been certified by the CPCC Veterans' Affairs Office, the regional processing office's approximate processing time is 45 to 60 days. If the student has questions about the status of their benefits once the Veterans' Affairs Office has completed the certification, the student should call the VA Regional Office at 1-888-442-4551 after the above time period.

Training Rates:

Students utilizing the VRAP program receive twelve months of benefits paid at the same training rate as full-time chapter 30 benefits. While using VRAP benefits, students must maintain at least twelve credit hours to receive benefits. Part-time training rates do not apply. Students enrolled in less than twelve credit hours will not be eligible to receive VRAP benefits. **Current pay rates can be accessed at www.gibill.va.gov.**

WAVE - Verifying your monthly enrollment:

After the Veterans' Affairs Office has certified the students semester hours to the VA Regional Processing Office, the student will need to verify their enrollment. Students will do this the first of each month by calling 1(877) 823-2378 or by using WAVE (Web Automated Verification of Enrollment) through www.gibill.va.gov . **Students are responsible for notifying the VA Office immediately when changes are made to their enrollment and a VA Schedule Adjustment Form must be submitted**. The VA Office is responsible for transmitting all Changes of Enrollments immediately to the VA Regional Processing Office to avoid overpayments to students. Students are responsible for all debts that result in changes of enrollment.

Satisfactory Progress:

Students must be in good academic standing to be eligible for VA Certification. VA students must complete each semester with a GPA of at least 2.0 or above to remain in a satisfactory status. Failure to maintain a 2.0 or above will result in Probation the first semester and Suspension the second semester. Once on Suspension, students are not eligible to be certified for their VA Educational Benefits until their GPA is brought up to the minimum required standards of progress.

Students are notified via their CPCC email account once their academic status becomes Probation or Suspension. It is the student's responsibility to seek academic assistance to prevent losing eligibility for their VA Educational Benefits.

CPCC has free academic tutoring at all campus locations and we encourage students to seek assistance early in the term. Our Academic Counseling Department or the Veterans Resource Center offers mentoring sessions for any students who may need assistance with their academic plan.

Virtual Course Eligibility:

CPCC currently offers "eLearning" through distance learning courses offered online (web-based), telecourses broadcast on Time Warner Cable Channel 17 in Mecklenburg County, NC Information Highway courses and videoconference courses, and hybridcourses. Distance learning courses are designed for students who need reduced classroom time and greater flexibility with their schedule

It is important to read and understand the Virtual Course Guidelines/Eligibility Criteria Form included in this VA Student Packet. The option of receiving Veterans' Affairs educational benefits for Open Circuit Television courses or Internet courses is offered to students who have met specific criteria. If a student enrolls for Virtual Courses without meeting the specific criteria, the VA Office is not allowed to certify the course(s) for payment of educational benefits. **Remedial courses offered as Virtual Courses are not eligible for certification for VA educational benefits at CPCC.**

Eligible Courses for Certification:

It is extremely important that students follow the college catalog under which he/she was admitted to his/her program. Failure to do so may result in courses not being applicable for benefits. To ensure courses are in the student's program, he/she should run a "Program Evaluation" through the "MyCollege" online service for students or check with their program advisor or academic counselor. If a course will not count toward graduation credits at CPCC, the course cannot be certified by VA. (Example: audited courses, courses transferred in from previous colleges, etc.)

Please note: courses that are required by other colleges or universities but are not required for the student's program of study at CPCC are not eligible to be certified for benefits at CPCC.

Schedule Adjustments/Withdrawals/Attendance Issues:

It is the responsibility of the student who is receiving Veterans' Affairs educational benefits to **immediately** notify the Veterans' Affairs Office of any adjustments to his/her schedule (examples: withdrawals, attendance problems, absences of more than 5 consecutive days, changing courses **or** sections even if the adjustment does not change the registered credit hours, credits by examination, audits, etc.). Failure to do so will result in overpayment of Veterans' Affairs educational benefits to the student. The student, because he/she is aware of the number of credit hours that he/she is enrolled for and the classes that he/she is actively attending, is responsible for the occurrence of the overpayment. A VA Schedule Adjustment Form must be completed by the student as soon as their enrollment changes. If there are mitigating circumstances that they would like to submit, they must provide a signed letter with documentation along with the VA Schedule Adjustment Form within 5 business days of withdrawing.

The last date of attendance (LDA) must be verified for all withdrawals or any classes that the student stops attending before a reduction can be transmitted to the DVA. If the student has attended classes throughout the semester and receives a "W" as a grade, this non-punitive grade must be reported to the Department of Veterans' Affairs. The Department of Veterans' Affairs does not pay for courses where students receive a non-punitive grade (W) and this usually results in an overpayment of VA benefits.

If you fail to provide the Veterans' Affairs Office with signed documentation of withdrawal from classes, your file cannot be processed for further benefits until after the LDA can be conclusively determined. If attendance cannot be conclusively determined, then your LDA will be the first day of the semester of the class in question. Determination of attendance via this manner will result in an overpayment, and will impede the process of payment of benefits for the following semesters.

Important Note: **All changes in hours for students under VRAP must be reported to the VA Office immediately.** Because the VRAP Program is paid based a minimum of 12 credit hours of enrollment, we must terminate students immediately when they fall below the minimum required hours. Students are responsible for notifying CPCC's VA Certifying Official of all changes as soon as they occur. Overpayments of tuition and fees will be the responsibility of the student.

Remedial/Deficiency Courses:

Remedial courses and deficiency courses are those that are not credited toward the student's program, but are needed for the student to reach college level in certain areas. These can be certified for payment with the following documentation: Placement Test scores or documentation of rationale for the course is to be provided by the student's program counselor or academic advisor and entered in the student's computer file.

Note: Remedial courses must be taken in the classroom including labs, and not virtually, to be eligible for VA Certification.

Repeating Courses:

Only courses in which students received a grade of “F” may be repeated (one time only) and certified for VRAP benefits. Courses completed with a grade of “D” cannot be re-certified unless the Graduation Office confirms that the student must pass the course with a “C” for graduation purposes at CPCC. This must be documented in writing before another certification can be transmitted for the repeated course.

Course Substitutions:

Students can substitute a course outside of their approved program for one within their approved program if approved by the Department Head. The Department Head of the course in question must enter an official course substitution in the "Graduation Substitution Waiver Display" screen. **The course for which substitution is sought cannot be certified until the Student’s Program Evaluation has been updated.** The North Carolina State Approving Agency allows CPCC’s Veterans’ Affairs Office to accept only two substitutions per program curriculum.

Short Sessions (8 week terms within the 16 week term):

CPCC’s VA Office must report the dates of enrollment for Short Sessions separately. **Students are paid for those hours of enrollment during the dates that the class runs and not for the entire term so this may affect eligibility in meeting the 12 hour requirement.** Due to the courses being accelerated, the rate of pay is higher during those dates of enrollment. The accelerated pay is determined by the Regional Processing Office in Georgia and not by the college.

Changing Programs of Study:

VRAP students are not permitted to change their program of study once they are certified and a payment has been made per Federal Regulations.

Corporate and Continuing Education Courses:

Veterans’ Affairs educational benefits are not paid for courses taken within the area of Corporate and Continuing Education. CCE courses and programs are not approved for certification of VA education benefits at CPCC.

Financial Aid:

We encourage all students to apply for Financial Aid and Scholarships to assist with educational expenses. Individuals can apply for Federal aid by completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) online at http://www.cpcc.edu/financial_aid or www.fafsa.gov. Scholarship applications can be accessed online at http://www.cpcc.edu/financial_aid/assistance/scholarships.

Student Loans:

Student loans create debts and must be paid back as soon as 6 months after students are no longer enrolled in the minimum required hours. Please get detailed information about Student Loans before requesting those funds to prevent financial burdens.

Student Code of Conduct:

Students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with generally accepted standards of scholarship and morality. The purpose of the Student Code of Conduct (policies and procedures are located at www.cpcc.edu) is not to restrict student rights but to protect the rights of individuals in their academic pursuit. CPCC’s Counseling Department offers free Personal Counseling through their PCAP Program. Call 704.330.6433 for more detailed information.

Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (SOC):

Central Piedmont Community College has been designated as an institutional member of Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (SOC). As a SOC member, CPCC is committed to easing the transfer of relevant course credits and crediting education from appropriate military training. SCO has been developed jointly by educational representatives of each of the armed services, the Office of the Secretary of Defense, and a consortium of thirteen leading national higher education associations; it is sponsored by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities and the American Association of Community Colleges.

Contact Information for CPCC’s VA Office:

SANDEE PATTON
VA CERTIFYING OFFICIAL VRAP Students
CENTRAL CAMPUS, CENTRAL HIGH ROOM 206
PHONE 704.330.6267
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