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**The Office of Veteran Affairs at the University of Florida would like to welcome you to the September edition of our Monthly Veterans Newsletter.**

**-UF VA TEAM**



## Fall Certification Update

The UF Office of Veterans Affairs has started processing certifications for Fall 2009 and Spring 2010. If you are eligible to receive GI Bill Benefits as a Veteran or Dependand, you must complete an Enrollment Certification Request to receive your benefits. Please stop by 222 Criser Hall, or go to <http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/va/PostCert.pdf> if you have applied and been approved for Post-9/11 GI Bill, or <http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/va/GeneralCert.pdf> for any other category. It is imperative that you request certification as soon as possible because there may be delays in initial payments this semester due to the Post 9/11 GI Bill.

Post 9/11 GI Bill Recipients: Due to a large volume of applications for the fall semester, veterans receiving Post-9/11 GI Bill should expect a delay of at least 90 days before receiving their payments. As long as you submitted an enrollment certification request prior to the end of the Drop/Add period, your tuition will be automatically deferred until November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2009. For those that are eligible for the Basic Housing Stipend (BAH), your first payment may be several months late due to the delay but you will be paid from the first day of the fall semester. You will receive a separate check for your books and supplies stipend if you are eligible. Due to this anticipated delay, all benefits recipients are advised to budget accordingly. If you have any questions, stop by or call the Office of Veterans Affairs. For more information, read the article at <http://chronicle.com/article/GI-Benefits-Checks-Could/48024/>.

## More Financial Aid Available for GI Bill students

As per the Higher Education Act (HR 1777) enacted this past July, federal veteran education benefits are excluded from consideration for financial assistance, making you **eligible** for more financial aid. This applies to veterans as well as to dependants. Stop by the Office of Financial Affairs to review your aid status.

## Should You Switch to the New Post-9/11 GI Bill?

Veterans that served on active duty - other than for training - for more than 90 aggregate days *after* September 10, 2001 may be eligible for the Post-9/11 GI Bill, also known as Chapter 33. If you are still receiving other benefits, such as Chapter 30, 31, 1606, or 1607, and have not received counseling on whether to switch or not, please stop by the Office of Veterans Affairs at 222 Criser Hall. We can review your specific situation and make a recommendation on which program may best meet your individual needs. No appointment is necessary.

## Veteran Bridge Scholarship Available for New Veterans

The UF Collegiate Veteran Society, in a combined effort with Santa Fe College's Collegiate Veteran Society, has established several scholarships under the Veteran Bridge Scholarship Program. Each scholarship, which pays the veteran \$1500, is intended to help new veterans pay for expenses while they wait for their GI Bill application to go through. For more information, contact a Collegiate Veteran Society officer (contacts can be found at the bottom of the newsletter).

## Are You Aware of All Your Benefits?

There are many benefits offered by the Department of Veterans' Affairs that you may be unaware of. These benefits include:

- Free medical coverage at the VA Hospital for up to 5 years after discharge for all Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) veterans.
- Low-cost medical coverage (for non-OIF and OEF veterans) and pharmacy at the VA Hospital
- Disability and Service-Related Injury Compensation
- VA Home Loan Guarantee, where the VA will guarantee your loan to your lender, often lowering rates and may even waive the requirement for a down payment
- Life Insurance - you can convert your Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (SGLI) into Veterans Group Life Insurance (VGLI), a low-cost life insurance policy
- Work-study opportunities

The Florida Department of Veterans Affairs (FDVA) also offers some other benefits for which you may qualify. The FDVA's benefits brochure can be found at: <http://www.floridavets.org/pdf/fvbg.pdf>. For more information on any of these benefits, please stop by the VA office in 222 Criser Hall.

## Dependant Benefits-Scholarships and CHAMPVA

The State of Florida provides scholarships for dependants of veterans who have died as a result of service-related injuries or disabilities, as well as dependants of veterans with a disability rating of 100%. Applicants must submit a completed Florida Financial Aid Application by April 1 and ensure that the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs certifies the applicant's eligibility. The scholarship pays for tuition and fees for up to 2 semesters a year, up to 132 credit hours. For more information access: <http://www.floridastudentfinancialaid.org/SSFAD/factsheets/CDDV.htm>

The Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs (CHAMPVA) is a program in which the VA shares the cost of covered health care services and supplies with eligible beneficiaries. Please note that this is not the TRICARE program for which dependants of active duty or retired military are eligible. However, in some cases, you may be eligible for both programs on paper. Please visit the following website for more comprehensive information:

<http://www.va.gov/hac/forbeneficiaries/champva/champva.asp>

## New Proposals for VA Budget

The Department of Veteran Affairs' new budget for FY2010 has been proposed at \$113 billion, an increase of 15%. Some proposals include:

- Allowing medical retirees with less than 20 years service who are rated 90% or more disabled to receive full military and VA benefits.
- Helping to reduce the time it takes to process benefits claims.
- Increasing the services available to Iraq and Afghanistan veterans.
- Improving the VA's electronic records system.

The budget will be voted on by October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009. Also, the VA has increased the eligibility for what is known as Priority 8 veterans i.e. those who have no service-connected conditions. For more information access: [www.va.gov/healtheligibility](http://www.va.gov/healtheligibility).

## Collegiate Veterans Society Begins New School Year

The University of Florida's Collegiate Veterans Society (CVS) is gearing up for another active year. CVS is looking to build upon last year's accomplishments, which included the completion and dedication of the Veterans Memorial at the Reitz Union, the expansion of the Veterans Bridge Scholarship, and serving as advocates for student-veterans' concerns to eight US Congressmen in Washington, DC.

This fall we will be helping run the Bikers on Parade event in November. We also will be holding our biannual veterans retreat, a deep-sea fishing trip on August 29<sup>th</sup>, 2009. Funds have been approved, so please contact an officer of CVS if you are interested. You can access us through email, our Facebook group, or you can stop by the Office of Veterans Affairs (2 of our officers work in the office). Email addresses are provided below.

The Collegiate Veterans Society is open to all veterans and anyone who is pro-veteran. Not only do we promote our veterans and the school through these projects, but we provide an outlet for veterans who would like to meet other veterans, or who are looking for help in transitioning to school life. If you would like more information, contact one of our officers.

## Student Veteran Organizations

### Collegiate Veterans Society

**Meeting Time:** Fridays at 12:00 p.m.

**Meeting Place:** 2<sup>nd</sup> floor Conference Room at Tigert Hall. Please be on time. Normally, we meet at the Office of Veterans Affairs about 15-20 minutes before and then go to Tigert Hall.

**Contact:** Justin Levine, President [jblevine@ufl.edu](mailto:jblevine@ufl.edu)

Ernesto Rencel, Vice President [enrencel@ufl.edu](mailto:enrencel@ufl.edu)

Andres Martinez-Alegria, Secretary and Treasurer [kubeenyets@ufl.edu](mailto:kubeenyets@ufl.edu)

Website - <http://grove.ufl.edu/~veterans>

### Omega Delta Sigma - Veterans Fraternity

**Meeting Time:** Tuesdays at 5:30 p.m.

**Meeting Place:** ROTC Building, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor

**Contact:** Ben R. Farias [farias1@ufl.edu](mailto:farias1@ufl.edu)

Website - <http://grove.ufl.edu/~omegadel>

For archived newsletters, please visit: <http://registrar.ufl.edu/va/news.html>