

VA STUDENT HANDBOOK

BLADEN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

INSTITUTIONAL MISSION STATEMENT

Bladen Community College is dedicated to the educational and cultural enrichment of the people of Bladen and surrounding counties. As a constituent institution of the North Carolina Community College System, the College is committed to quality teaching, to higher-order learning, to enhancing opportunities, and to providing a safe, sustainable learning environment through the following:

- literacy, occupational and curriculum instructional programs;**
- support for economic development with training services to business and industry;**
- training in and use of educational technology; and**
- services which improve the cultural, educational and economic quality of life for our diverse communities.**

Revised: April 2011

DIVISIONAL MISSION STATEMENT

Student Services shall assist all adults seeking to further their education by helping them establish sound educational goals.

Student Services shall provide guidance and counseling to all students which will assist them in educational and societal achievement.

Student Services shall function as an integral part of the total institution in assuring that students will be recognized as individuals with needs, interests, and abilities.

DEPARTMENTAL MISSION STATEMENT

Veterans' Services shall treat all veterans and their dependents with the tolerance, compassion, dignity, and understanding we would expect to receive ourselves in similar circumstances;

Veterans' Services shall assist veterans in correctly completing Veterans' Administration forms, and applications for educational benefits;

Veterans' Services shall assist all veterans and their dependents with benefit claims and to serve as a liaison with the Veterans' Administration;

Veterans' Services shall function as an integral part of the Student Services division and of the total institution in assuring that students will be recognized as individuals with needs, interests, and abilities.

The role of the Veteran's Services Department at Bladen Community College is to assist the student in pursuing their educational, professional or vocational objectives. The VA Coordinator is available to answer questions about educational benefits, to certify enrollments for the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) and monitor student degree plans and academic progress.

BCC's VA Coordinator is Mr. Tommy Rains. He can be reached Monday thru Friday during regular college hours. Mr. Rains' office is located in Building 2 Room 118. Contact information for Mr. Rains is 910-879-5565 or email trains@bladencc.edu.

Although BCC works to ensure DVA regulations are satisfied, the College has no authority to make judgments regarding benefit status. The eligibility of individuals for veteran educational benefits and approval of payment of benefits is made solely by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The National Toll-Free number for the Department of Veterans Affairs for educational benefits is **1-888-442-4551**. All other VA inquiries should be directed to **1-800-827-1000**.

Contact information for local Veterans Service Officers is as follows:

Bladen County Veterans Service Office	(910) 862-6950
Columbus County Veterans Service Office	(910) 640-6638
Cumberland County Veterans Service Office	(910) 677-2970
Lumbee Tribe Veterans Service Office	(910) 522-2210
Robeson County Veterans Service Office	(910) 671-3070
Sampson County Veterans Service Office	(910) 592-2862

How to Get Started

Before claiming your benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs, please be sure to complete the application process in the Bladen Community College Student Services Building. Submit official transcripts from high school or other colleges, official copies of GED scores or Adult High School diploma to the admission's department. Once your application for admission has been submitted, see Mr. Tommy Rains to schedule and complete the placement test. After your placement test, you will meet with your counselor/advisor to discuss class requirements.

Military Credit

Any courses completed during the student's military service that the student wishes to be considered for college credit may be submitted to the Enrollment Specialist at Bladen

Community College's Admissions Office. The transcripts must be official copies in a sealed envelope.

Military websites for transcript requests:

Sailor and Marines – SMARTS Registry Transcript System -- <https://smart.navy.mil>

Army and National Guard Reserve – AART Transcript -- <https://aartstranscript.army.mil>

VA Benefit Programs and Requirements

The Department of Veterans Affairs has different programs which are determined by the veteran's military service. The application process for these programs may vary.

Chapter 30 – Montgomery GI Bill

Individuals entering military service on or after July 1, 1985, and elected to have their basic pay reduced by \$100 per month for 12 months of their service may be eligible for this program.

Chapter 31- Vocational Rehabilitation

This benefit is designed to assist veterans with a service-connected disability in obtaining and maintaining employment. A service-related disability rating of 20% or more is required as part of the eligibility requirements.

Veterans should apply for vocational rehabilitation through the County Veterans Service Office and must follow guidelines from the Vocational Rehabilitation and Counseling Division of the DVA regarding application and admission requirements.

Chapter 33- Post 9/11 GI Bill

Individuals who have served at least 90 aggregate days on active duty after September 10, 2001 may be eligible for this program. Individuals who were in the selected reserve component and served on active duty on or after September 11, 2001 for at least 90 consecutive days may be eligible for this program.

Be Aware: Once you apply for (or switch to) the Post 9/11 GI Bill, you cannot go back to the Montgomery GI Bill. You may want to exhaust your Montgomery GI Bill, then apply for Post 9/11 benefits. This will gain up to an additional 12 months, totaling 48 months of benefits.

Chapter 35 – Survivors and Dependent's Educational Assistance

Surviving spouses and children of veterans who meet the following criteria may be eligible for this program:

- Suffered a service-related death,
- Died as a result of a service-related disability or
- Receive a 100% permanent and total service-related disability.

1606 – Selected Reserve Educational Assistance Program

Individuals who have agreed to serve six years, on or after July 1, 1985, or extended an enlistment for a period of at least six years in the selected reserve may be eligible for this program.

1607 – Reserve Educational Assistance Program

Individuals in a selected reserve component who served on active duty on or after September 11, 2001 for at least 90 consecutive days may be eligible for this program.

Chapter 33 - TOE – Transfer of Entitlement

Individuals who served on active duty or as a member of the selected reserve for at least six years and agreed to serve four more may transfer their basic educational benefits to:

- The individual’s spouse
- One or more of the individual’s children, or
- A combination of both.

Note: You may qualify for more than one benefit. Determine which program would be more beneficial for you. The DVA website can help with your decision regarding which benefits to use. Visit www.gibill.va.gov, select “Apply for Benefits” then choose “Road Map for Success”. Programs may be used consecutively for a total of 48 months.

How to Apply For Veterans Educational Benefits

To apply online, visit the Department of Veterans Affairs at www.gibill.va.gov. Before attempting to complete the online application you will need to gather your personal information. This includes your DD214, transcripts for all periods of education after high school, Kicker Contract, and a routing or transit number for your bank account in the event that Direct Deposit is available. The online application will require approximately 30 minutes.

Once the webpage is accessed, select the option to “Apply for Benefits”. In the drop down box, select “Apply Online (VONAPP)”. Under the picture choose Launch VONAPP and Apply for Benefits. If you have never used VONAPP, select I Am a New VONAPP User. Read each screen carefully then select “continue”. You will be asked “Do you have a DOD Self-Service Logon (eBenefits Account)? If you are registered in DEERS, you are eligible for a DS Logon. Once you have a DS Logon, it is valid for the rest of your life. Choose the appropriate option

and follow the directions listed. Before proceeding to the next screen, carefully check the information you have entered and select “continue” at the bottom of the screen.

If the benefit you are applying for is not listed as an option on the VONAPP form (REAP Chapter 1607 for example) check unsure for the benefit type and use the remarks section of the application to indicate which benefit you wish to apply for.

Fill in all questions accurately and completely in order to ensure that your application is processed quickly.

DO NOT file for the same claim by mail and online. When you apply online you will receive a confirmation number for your application. If you are unsure whether or not your claim was submitted, e-mail the VONAPP mailbox at VONAPP@vba.va.gov.

If you have application questions you may call **1-800-827-1000** for assistance.

Once you receive your Certification of Eligibility from the Department of Veterans Affairs, you will need to submit a copy to Mr. Rains at Bladen Community College.

NOTE: VA Educational Benefits are non-taxable.

Other Financial Aid

Check with the Bladen Community College Financial Aid Office for both federal and state financial aid programs which may be available to assist you with your educational expenses. The Free Application for Federal Financial Aid (FASFA) is used to determine financial need for all forms of federal aid, as well as most scholarships. If eligible, you may receive both VA and financial aid funds during the same semester.

Certifying Enrollment

Certification is the process by which the college verifies to the VA a student’s dates of attendance, degree program, and number of credit hours taken. **The VA will NOT pay any student without receiving this certification.** Therefore, **YOU** must bring your schedule to Mr. Rains in the VA office at BCC upon the completion of registration for **each** semester.

NOTE: All courses taken must be in your selected program. VA students will not be certified for, nor paid by the VA, for courses that are not in their program, audited classes, withdrawals, or non-required classes. Continuing Education courses are only eligible when they are required for the student’s Program of Study. For example, although the CNA I course is a Continuing Education class, it will be covered **if** the student’s program of study is Practical Nursing or ADN.

Monthly Enrollment Verification for Chapters 30, 1606, & 1607

Students receiving the GI Bill under Chapter 30, 1606, or 1607 must verify enrollment with the VA at the end of every month they attend class. Chapter 35 recipients are not required to certify with the VA unless enrolled in a Non-College Degree (NCD) program measured in vocational/clock hours. To verify enrollment, students can call **1-877-823-2378** or access the VA's website at www.gibill.va.gov and click on "Verify Attendance". Next, select "Launch W.A.V.E" and log-in. (First time users can follow instructions highlighted in blue.) Once you have logged in, select "Verify Monthly Enrollment Status".

Initial VA Benefit Check for First Time Students

The monthly VA educational award may be prorated if necessary. For example, if the first term of your enrollment begins on the 15th of the month, the monthly rate will be divided by 30 (days in a standard month) and the daily rate is multiplied by the number of days you attended class that month. This is the amount of your check for the first month of attendance. It may take 8 to 12 weeks after classes begin to receive the first check.

Payment is made at the beginning of each month for the previous month's attendance.

Standard Spring or Fall Semester (16 weeks)

<i>Credit Hours</i>	<i>Training Time</i>	<i>Monthly Rate of Pay</i>
12 or more	Full time	Maximum allowance
9-11	$\frac{3}{4}$ time	75% of maximum
6-8	$\frac{1}{2}$ time	50% of maximum
5 or less	below $\frac{1}{2}$ time	tuition and fees

Summer Semester (10 weeks)

<i>Credit Hours</i>	<i>Training Time</i>	<i>Monthly Rate of Pay</i>
7 or more	Full time	Maximum allowance
5 or 6	$\frac{3}{4}$ time	75 % of maximum
3 or 4	$\frac{1}{2}$ time	50 % of maximum
1 or 2	below $\frac{1}{2}$ time	tuition and fees

Changes to Your Schedule

All add/drop changes should be reported by the student to Mr. Rains as soon as possible. Withdrawing or adding classes may change the eligible monthly rate received by the student, and if not reported in a timely manner, could lead to an under- or over-payment of benefits. If an over-payment occurs, the student will be responsible for its repayment.

In the event that the student must drop a class due to mitigating circumstances, please see Mr. Rains **immediately**. In some cases, Mr. Rains may be able to assist the student so that he/she is not held liable. Evidence must be provided to support claims. The VA defines mitigating circumstances as “the unanticipated and unavoidable events that interfere with the student’s pursuit of a course.” Examples the VA may accept are:

- Prolonged illness or serious injury.
- Severe illness or death in the student’s immediate family.
- Unscheduled changes in the student’s employment that are beyond the student’s control.
- Unanticipated difficulties with child care arrangements made for the purpose of allowing the student to go to school.
- Recall to active duty or deployment.

Changing Your Program of Study

Students must report a change of their Program of Study to Mr. Rains when this change occurs. Students will be required to complete a change of program request, either VA Form 22-1995 for Chapters 30, 33, 1606, and 1607 or VA Form 22-5495 for Chapter 35.

Standards of Satisfactory Progress

Students must maintain satisfactory academic progress and conduct to continue to receive VA education benefits. An eligible person is placed on academic warning if the student’s GPA falls below a 2.0 in any semester. Education benefits will be suspended for failure to achieve academic progress if their GPA falls below 2.0 for a second consecutive semester. Benefits will be suspended until the student completes one semester without VA education benefits and attains a minimum GPA of 2.0.

Benefits will not be paid for repeating classes in which a passing grade (‘D’ or above) is received. An exception to this rule is if the course requires a ‘C’ or higher to successfully complete the course.

Students must regularly attend classes. Bladen Community College requires that a student miss no more than 20% of class time in order to remain enrolled in the course. If a student misses more than 20% of class time, the student will be withdrawn from the course. If the student is withdrawn from the course, the last day of attendance will be reported to the VA, affecting their education benefits.

Tutoring

In some cases, the VA will pay for tutorial services to be provided. Benefits can be paid for up to \$100.00 per month, for a maximum benefit of up to \$1200.00. This policy is based on the specific Chapter a person filed under and funding that is available. In all cases, the person must pay for the service first and then be reimbursed by the VA. There are rules and regulations pertaining to who can be approved for the purpose of tutorial services, so it is advised to check with Mr. Rains before hiring a tutor. All Bladen Community College students, currently enrolled, are eligible for tutoring at no charge through the Learning Enhancement Center.

Extending Your VA Benefits

If the student is using Chapter 30, 33, or 35, they may be eligible for an extension of their benefits. If the student has at least one day of benefits remaining at the beginning of any new semester, they may request an extension of their benefits from the VA Regional Office.

Work Study Program

The Department of Veterans Affairs Work Study Program permits eligible veterans to perform services for DVA in return for monetary allowance equal to the higher of State or Federal minimum wage. The maximum number of hours a student may work will be based upon 25 times the number of weeks in the student's enrollment period. Work study services may be performed at:

- DVA Regional Offices
- DVA Medical Facilities
- Educational Institutes
- National cemeteries
- Other organizations approved for outreach activities

The Work Study service must be DVA related. To be eligible, the student must be pursuing programs of education or training at $\frac{3}{4}$ time rate or more. Chapters 30, 31, 32, 35, and 1606 are eligible. Note: VA Work Study allowances are non-taxable.

VA Student Agreement for BCC

I understand that to be certified and receive VA Educational Benefits the following steps must be taken and procedures complied with:

- 1) I must choose a major/program and meet all admission criteria established by BCC for that program as well as meeting all VA requirements. These include:
 - An **official** high school transcript or GED (to be official it must be in a sealed envelope)
 - **Official** transcripts of **all** colleges attended and an **evaluation for transfer credit**
 - Completion of any required **placement testing**
 - Completion of VA 1990 or 5490 (if you have used VA before a VA 1995 (5495) replaces the VA 1990 or a Certificate of Eligibility)
 - Copy of DD 214 (prior active duty) or NOBE (Notice of Basic Eligibility for guard/reserve)

NO CERTIFICATION CAN BE MADE UNTIL ALL THE ABOVE ARE COMPLETED

- 2) Once application/admission steps are made I must make satisfactory progress toward my goal and meet all academic standards of progress for BCC. **Only classes that meet specific requirements for my program can be certified for VA benefits.** VA will not pay for:
 - Any **class previously passed** (D or better); any **class for which transfer credit was given**; any **audited class**
 - Any **optional remedial class**; or any class that does **not meet specific requirement for my VA approved curriculum**
- 3) For normal Spring and Fall sessions **full benefits** will be paid for **12** or more credit hours, $\frac{3}{4}$ **for 9-11** credit hours, and $\frac{1}{2}$ **for 6-8** credit hours. Unless specifically requested, no certification will be made for less than $\frac{1}{2}$ time (1-5 credit hours in a standard term). For Summer or any other non-standard term, VA will compute payments based on credit hours and term length. For BCC's Summer session (10 weeks) seven hours is full-time. Mini-sessions (5 or 8 weeks) will change this computation.
- 4) It is **my responsibility to notify the VA certifying official of any changes** that may affect my VA benefits; changes such as **adding or dropping a class**. I must also notify Student Records, the VA certifying official, and the VA of changes of address and telephone number.
- 5) I am aware that a **program change must be done in writing** with the VA certifying official and will require an official evaluation of all previous credits before I can be certified in the new program. Note: dual majors are currently not allowed.
- 6) **Class attendance is essential**, failure to attend may result in a W or WF by the instructor, which will mean a change in VA entitlement and may result in over-payment. For Chapter 30 (prior active duty) and Chapter 1606 (guard/reserve), **I must verify attendance each month at www.gibill.va.gov/wave (WAVE) or by calling 877-823-2378. This can be done the last day of the month.**
- 7) These requirements and procedures involve only certification and continuation in a VA approved program at BCC and does not relieve me of **my responsibility** of complying with other VA rules and procedures covered in appropriate laws, regulations, and VA pamphlets. If there is any doubt or question, ask!!!

By signing below, I agree to **all** terms and conditions listed above.

Printed Name: _____ Signed Name: _____ Date: _____