Upcoming Post-9/11 GI Bill Changes

By Mindy Boenning, Fort Drum Unit

As most veterans already know, some important changes to the Post 9/11 GI Bill will take effect soon. Three of the most relevant for SUNY Empire State College students are:

BAH Linked to Rate of Pursuit

As of Aug. 1, Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) rates will be prorated to the number of credits of enrollment (“rate of pursuit”). In the past, veterans enrolled part time were getting the full-time BAH payment; that will stop on Aug. 1. The rate of pursuit will be rounded to the nearest 10th. For example, students entitled to 100 percent BAH who are enrolled in 8 credits per term (.66) will get 70 percent of the monthly BAH. The only way to get full-time BAH is to enroll in at least 12 credits per term, at least 1 credit of which must be “in-residence,” with the correct number of face-to-face contact hours between the student and instructor.

Break/Interval Pay Discontinued

As of Aug. 1, break/interval pay will stop. When there is a break between the end date of one term and the start date of another, veterans won’t get BAH during that break. Exceptions include: when the president of the United States issues an executive order or there is a natural disaster or emergency.

BAH for Distance Learning Courses

As of Oct. 1, BAH will be available for students enrolled in distance learning courses, which includes any combination of SUNY Empire State College’s online, independent study or residency courses; none have to be “in residence.” The BAH rate will be $673.50, which is half of the national average and may be prorated if the student is enrolled part time.

For current information about GI Bill policies, go to the V.A.’s GI Bill website at http://www.gibill.va.gov/benefits/post_911_gibill/Post911_changes.html.

TV Documentary About Veterans Produced by Student Wins Prestigious Award; Copies Available

By Helen Edelman, Office of College and Government Relations

““Our Veterans and Their Families: 21st Century Challenges,” a television documentary written and produced by Peter Spartano, a Vietnam veteran, and a SUNY Empire State College student working toward a degree in Cultural Studies, has won a regional Edward R. Murrow Award. Spartano is vice president of broadcasting for WCNY-TV in Syracuse.

“Our Veterans” tells the compelling stories of veterans and their families and the unique challenges they face in this new century. The one-hour documentary focuses on issues such as post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, special needs of injured veterans, reconnecting with family and friends, the stress of redeployment and the hardships faced by female veterans.

“War tears away at the fabric of families, separating them by thousands of miles and forcing them into desperate realities,” said Spartano. “Viewers meet soldiers and their families, and their words define their experiences and offer guideposts for those who follow.”

To purchase the DVD, go to www.wcny.org and click “Shop.”

Got News?

Contact Desiree Drindak at Desiree.Drindak@esc.edu.
Overview: Army National Guard Transition into GoArmyEd Portal

From the Briefing at the Council of College and Military Educators Conference

By Mindy Boenning

Army National Guard (ARNG) students attending college soon will be switching to a new system to receive their educational benefits. ARNG members will be able to use $4,500/year in federal Army Tuition Assistance (TA) funds through the GoArmyEd system. With this change, all Army soldiers (active duty, Reserves, National Guard) will be using the same program for their educational benefits.

The GoArmyEd Web portal will have to be used for all registrations, drops, applications to colleges, reporting of grades and invoicing. TA pays for up to $250/semester hour of tuition and fees, and Empire State College's rates fall below that cap. But if a college's rates are above that cap, ARNG members can cover the remaining bill with their GI Bill or other V.A. benefits through a “top-up” process.

ARNG members will need to coordinate registration processes with their home college as well as the GoArmyEd portal. Classes are visible and ready for registration in the portal two calendar months before the semester start date. Soldiers will be given specific instructions in the portal for their college's registration process. All students also should check with their college about other important deadlines, including drop/withdraw dates, requests for incompletes and when final grades will be issued.

Transition Timeline

• June 6, 2011: ARNG soldiers can set up GoArmyEd accounts at www.GoArmyEd.com. Click the “Register/Activate Account” link, and then the “Request TA” tab at the top of the page to start the process.

• Aug. 1, 2011: ARNG soldiers can request TA for courses that start on or after Oct. 1 and ARNG funding used for any other courses.

• Oct. 1, 2011: ARNG soldiers, Army education personnel and schools use GoArmyEd portal for all college registration activities.

Each state will become a “geographic education center” in the GoArmyEd portal for its ARNG students. Procedures have not been finalized, but the state’s current point of contact for voluntary education probably will be in charge of portal activities. For more information, go to www.goarmyed.com and click “National Guard News.”

Join the Student and Veterans Military Club

For more information contact ESCmilitaryclub@esc.edu or www.esc.edu/Veterans-Club.

Student Kiandra McCain Attends Student Academic Conference

By Mindy Boenning

Kiandra McCain’s husband is on active duty.

Where are you in your studies at Empire State College and what are your goals?

After this semester (May term), I will be 12 credits away from completing my B.A. in Human Development through a unit at the Central New York Center.

How did you hear about the 2010 Student Academic Conference?

I saw an advertisement about the Student Academic Conference on the Empire State College website and it caught my interest. I asked Mindy Boenning (communication and development coordinator) about it and she gave me a better understanding. (To contact Boenning, email Mindy.Boenning@esc.edu or call 315-773-6139.)

What made you decide to do a presentation at the conference?

First, I thought it would look good on my graduate school application for further study in social work. Second, I wanted to get the word out about child abuse and I thought the conference would be a perfect opportunity to let people know how horrific child abuse is and to educate them so they can take action.

What were you most nervous about before your actual presentation?

I was scared that my presentation would not be interesting to others and that my video attached to my PowerPoint presentation would not play. I also was afraid that my presentation would be too long and I would go over my time slot.

What do you know now that you wish you knew about the conference or about presenting?

I would start working on my presentation further in advance.

What was the best part about doing your presentation?

Feedback. It was so rewarding to know that people did get something out of it and it made them want to go out and do something about child abuse. That was my main goal.

Student Academic Conference 2011

Coast Guard Mutual Assistance Program
Serving the men and women of the U.S. Coast Guard since 1924
By Chuck VanVorst, Office of Veteran and Military Education

The Coast Guard Mutual Assistance Program is a nonprofit organization designed to provide vital services to all Coast Guard members and their families. This program helps many families in financial need. Assistance is provided through counseling; short-term, interest-free loans and financial grants; referrals and other means in a wide range of conditions and situations involving everyday essentials such as emergency housing, medical and dental care; debt-management or quick loans; and layettes for newborns.

For more information, call CGMA-HQ at 800-881-2462 or go to http://www.cgmahq.org/.

Council of College and Military Educators Scholarships
By Bill Yaeger, Office of Veteran and Military Education

The Council of College and Military Educators offers several $1,000 scholarships each year to United States service members and spouses of service members who are working towards the completion of higher-education degrees.

Details and deadlines will be posted at www.ccmeonline.org as they are confirmed.

Eligibility Requirements
CCME Joe King Scholarship and CCME Spouse Scholarship

Applicants must:
• for King Scholarship, be a uniformed service member;
• for Spouse Scholarship, be the spouse of a uniformed service member.

For all scholarships:
• be enrolled currently in an educational program at a regionally or nationally accredited institution that is a member of CCME (SUNY Empire State College is a member institution).
• have a minimum of 12 or more hours (units) with a cumulative GPA of 2.0 (undergraduate); or a minimum of 12 or more hours (units) with a cumulative GPA of 3.0 (graduate).
• submit an unofficial college or university transcript.
• submit two letters of recommendation to be completed by individuals not related to the applicant, who will attest to their motivation, character, integrity and educational pursuit.

Essays will be judged on written content and writing skills, and should be 200-300 words in length. Applications that are incomplete or from individuals that do not qualify will not be considered.

Public Speaking Course Offered to Distance Learners
By Bill Yaeger

SUNY Empire State College is offering Fundamentals of Public Speaking (COMM-X201) as a collegewide, online study group through the Central New York Center. The course is usually offered in September and January each year. Students will participate in the online format in September, and in the residency in January (with capability to complete via Skype). The course fully meets the SUNY general education requirement in basic communication; and, for Air Force students, fully meets the Community College of the Air Force general education requirement in oral communication.

The purpose of this study is to provide students with a foundation in public speaking. Students will create and deliver three to four speeches to audiences, record the speeches and submit them online for review by the instructor and other students. Students will explore how public speaking differs from other forms of communication, types of speeches, organization of content and delivery. Students will communicate with the instructor and other students online and with the instructor via telephone, as needed. For more information, contact the instructor, Marie Pennucci, at Marie.Pennucci@esc.edu.

All military, veteran and family member students are welcome to enroll and complete the course. Questions concerning registration should be directed to Susan Voutsinas, coordinator of student services, at 315-460-3152 or Susan.Voutsinas@esc.edu. Course information is on Empire State College’s Annual Learning Opportunities Inventory at http://empire1.esc.edu/CoursesESC/learningops/loihome.nsf/lois?OpenForm under “Communications and Media.” Air Force students may complete the course through the General Education Mobile (GEM) platform or may take it as a stand-alone course. Details are at www.esc.edu/GEM.

General information is available through the Office of Veteran and Military Education at 800-867-5941 or Military.Programs@esc.edu.

Check us out on Facebook!

Get news and updates from OVME and connect with other students www.esc.edu/MilitaryFanPage.
Upcoming Events

Discounts for Veterans/Military Students and Families for The Philadelphia Orchestra at SPAC

The Office of Veteran and Military Education is offering discounted lawn tickets to Empire State College military families for the Philadelphia Orchestra, “Cirque de la Symphonie, Magical Tales,” Friday, Aug. 5, 8 p.m., at the Saratoga Performing Arts Center, Saratoga Springs, N.Y. $10 per person; kids under 12 free! Space is limited; tickets are on a first-come, first-served basis and must be purchased by July 25. Pack a picnic and come early for entertainment on the lawn, including jugglers, contortionists and trapeze artists. For information or to purchase tickets, contact Susan Bruce at Susan.Bruce@esc.edu or 518-587-2100, ext. 2748. Checks payable to Empire State College Foundation c/o Susan Bruce, Office of Veteran and Military Education, 1 Union Ave., Saratoga Springs, NY 12866-4391.

Veterans and Military Residency: Topics in Wellness, Creativity and Reintegration

New in the September 2011 term is a Veteran and Military Residency at Empire State College’s Central New York Center in Syracuse. In this course, students will examine issues of wellness and reintegration related to the impact of their military service on daily life. Creative approaches to healing will be explored through writing, storytelling, literature analysis and methods of promoting wellness, enabling students to process their military experience, share it with other students in the study and build a stronger connection to their families and community. Meeting dates: Sept. 13, 27, Oct. 11, 25, 8, 22, Dec. 6 – 4:45 - 7 p.m. For more information, please contact Deborah McEligot, residency coordinator, 315-460-3181, Deborah.McEligot@esc.edu.