

Got VA?

By Theresa "Raey" Walker

Are you a student veteran or a dependent of a veteran utilizing or trying to apply for educational benefits through the Veterans Affairs? Have you become confused or frustrated in trying to figure out where your money is or why there has been a delay in receiving your benefits? Wondering if the classes you are taking will be approved? Well listen up! The Student Veterans Center at FSU in Bronco Square is here to help.

Many vets/dependents are confused by the process of "certification." Certification simply means the process in which a student has been verified to take specific classes and to receive paid-out benefits by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Cassandra Massey, Administrative Support Associate for the Veterans Center said "often times students come in and are at a level 10 in terms of frustration. After they realize that the process is not that complicated they calm down to a level one. Come in a sit down with a counselor or just speak with me, we will get you taken care of," Massey said.

"Each semester the student has to be recertified in order to continue his or her benefits. This is very important because many students assume that they will be automatically certified and are mad when they realize their classes have not been paid for and they did not receive any money in their bank accounts."

said Chelle Burgess a student veteran and counselor at the center.

Janet Polk is the certifying official at the center, she clicks the submit button for the paperwork to go up to "Big VA" in order for a student to receive benefits. "Once I click submit, the next step is to wait for Big VA to contact the student via letter and deposit money into their bank accounts" said Polk.

Many students have not done their research beforehand or rely on what another student with a different case has told them and are misinformed. To avoid any confusion here is a basic list of things a student must do in order to set themselves up for a smooth, successful transition to use or to keep using their benefits.

Here are a few tips to keep in mind if you plan on using your benefits:

1. **Do Research-** Become familiar with each educational benefit offered to service members, retirees, dependents, and separated members of the armed forces. Log on to www.gibill.gov and look at your options based on your qualifications. Call 1-800-827-1000 if you have any specific questions or if you are confused by the website or want to speak to a live person.

2. **Apply for Benefits-** You must apply for your benefits before you are able to receive any! Apply online, Google VONAPP or use eBenefits and search for the form applicable to you; fill out and submit electronically. Everyone will

not fill out the same forms so be sure to ask or stop by the office to get a copy of the cheat sheet. Applying for your benefits will allow VA to inform you of what you are eligible for, how long, and how much you are entitled to. A certificate of eligibility will come via mail and you should bring that to the VA office so the process can get started.

3. **Gather Paperwork-** For most service members you will need a copy of your DD 214, Certificate of Eligibility, acceptance letter to FSU, and copies (not originals) of transcripts. Make sure you keep a copy of all of your paperwork and never give away your original DD 214. To avoid any confusion or waste gas money call 910-672-1628 before you come and ask for specifics.

4. **Register for Classes-** VA recommends that you do pre-registration in order to start the process of certification more quickly and avoid being backlogged. Also, should there be any issues, they can be taken care of sooner rather than later to avoid a delay in payments of benefits. ENSURE THAT THE CLASSES YOU ARE TAKING ARE APPROVED CLASSES THAT ARE WITHIN YOUR DEGREE PROGRAM. OTHERWISE YOU WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE COST OF THOSE CLASSES!

5. **Request Certification-** You MUST send an email to cymassey01@uncfsu.edu EVERY

SEMESTER stating the following:

Subject Line: VA Certification-
Message- name Banner Number-
Please certify me for the following semester(s)
(Must be registered for any semester you are requesting certification for)

6. **Check Broncos email-** Broncos email is the primary email address that is used to convey messages; this includes the no reply email you will receive from the VA. To inform a student that they have been certified. Once certified, the FSU VA Center has no control over when payments are disbursed. A student must call 1-800-827-1000 or 1-888-GI-BILL-1 to inquire about any money.

7. **Start Classes and Pass-** While you are waiting for your benefits to kick in you can start taking your classes. Ensure that you are passing your classes with a C or better. If you feel the class is not right for you, you must drop the class before the drop/add period ends and submit the request through Banner and the VA office (a written request). Otherwise, you will be responsible for the cost of the class.

8. **Repeat Steps 5-7-** Each semester you must request certification otherwise VA will not certify you. If you are unsure of the classes you are required to take, look up your major on the FSU website and search for your major/minor and click on degree. A list of required classes will appear.

9. If there are any changes in your major/minor or you decide to leave the school indefinitely or take classes at another school for another semester, you must inform the VA office in writing and submit a VA-Form 1995 (veterans)/VA Form 5495 (only CH35 dependents) "Change of School/Institution."

Remember to be considered full-time during a 16-week semester it is required to take 12 or more credit hours, eight and four week semester is six or more credit hours.

The bottom line is this: if you are a student veteran/dependent the best thing you can do for yourself is be proactive about your own education and benefits; do the research, ask questions, don't wait until the last minute, and pass your classes. Also, try not to plan your life around receiving the benefits on time. Have a backup plan in case your benefits are not deposited to you on time. Many students find themselves in a scramble when there is a glitch and may not realize that the glitch may, in fact, have been caused by them.

The Center will start having mandatory briefings to help ensure that their students are getting the information they need to get the most out of their benefits. Check your Broncos email for news and information coming soon.

"The Culture of Giving"

By Barron Jamel Green

"What differentiates [saying] 'We need some money' from establishing a 'Culture of Giving?'" asked FSU Chancellor James A. Anderson to Getchel L. Caldwell, II, vice chancellor for the Institution of Advancement.

The "Culture of Giving" is a new fundraising campaign introduced by Caldwell, created through a combination of leadership, outreach, and engagement. The program is being marketed as a new brand in attempt to attract more alumni donors and those who would like to make significant donations to the university. The university hopes to raise \$25 million within six years. Caldwell has already met with the major alumni affiliates like the FSU National Alumni Association, selected alumni chapters, and athletic clubs to promote the proposed strategy.

After the drastic cuts in state funding the university's Board of Trustees were presented with the plan at their quarterly board meeting Sept. 20. Chancellor Anderson said he plans to officially announce to the campaign during homecoming week.

Prior to his appointment at FSU, Caldwell served for four years as vice president for advancement at Tuskegee University in Alabama. While there, he was responsible for planning, organizing, directing, and implementing all fundraising, marketing, and alumni activities for the university. His many accomplishments include working with the president, board of trustees, alumni, faculty, staff, students, friends, and volunteers to close out \$9 million toward an unfinished \$175 million capital campaign. He has also man-

aged the oversight of federal dollars with more than \$40 million in research and development grants toward Tuskegee.

The term "six figure gift" floated around the room quite frequently as a way of expressing the donations. A "six figure gift" is a donation of at least \$100,000. A "six figure gift" could go toward funding needed for 2012 FSU choir students to attend a trip to Carnegie Hall to showcase the universities raw talent. Due to recent budget cuts, it has become more challenging to finance some activities and programs.

Caldwell also met with all FSU deans to begin a discussion about school-based fundraising to increase program funding.

"Do you have enough people for the job?" asked Board of Trustee's active Chair Terrence Murchison.

Caldwell explained that within a new internal budget for the Institution for Advancement was the need for four new employees to assist in the campaign. Two new faculty members for the institution to assist in handling the workload are already being sought.

Alumni and current students can donate any amount of money to the university at any time. The institution for advancement promotes their "Text to Give" program, which utilizes text messages to donate a set \$10.00 amount to select departments simply by texting the number 27722 and typing in the message box "Broncos".

For additional information please contact the Institution for Advancement at (910) 672-1661 or visit the office located in the Continuing Education Building.

Congratulations!

TO THE WINNERS OF THE P.I.L.E.-O.N CONTEST

Britt, Byron L.; Durden, Christopher F.; Johnson, Robert; Johnson, Tonya; McDonald, Tamika; Sanders, Tarimur; Taylor, Charles; Thomas, Kreele

International Social Mixer
"Cupid Shuffle"

Voice Photo By Jennifer Lucas, Editor in Chief
American and International students while mixing on the lawn of Lloddy V. Hackley Honors Hall dance to the Cupid Shuffle and other music provided by Bronco-iRadio on Sept. 14.