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May 1, 2015

Enclosure 9d2.
May 6, 2015.

To: Members of the Council of Postsecondary Education

From: Commissioner Jim Purcell, Ed. D.

Re: **POLICY ON PRIORITY REGISTRATION FOR COMBAT VETERANS**

Background

Rhode Island General Law § **30-30.2-3(2)** requires combat veterans to be granted priority registration at our public postsecondary institutions. In response, the Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner has developed a priority registration policy for combat veterans. The Office worked in conjunction with the Adjutant General of the Rhode Island National Guard and in consultation with the Associate Director of Veterans Affairs for the state of Rhode Island to develop the language and requirements for this policy.

The new policy identifies combat veterans as any individual who has:

- Served in the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, or Air Force during any foreign war, expedition, campaign, or Military Operation Other than War (MOOW) and;
- Received an in-theater campaign medal
- Received an honorable discharge from service

Combat veterans will be required to self-identify to a designated veterans representative at each campus by providing a copy of their DD-214 or deployment orders/award citation. Qualifying veterans will then be allowed to register on the first day of priority registration for any given term.

Detailed definitions of military terminology, a listing of the qualifying medals, and further instructions about required documentation are included in the text of the policy.

The legislation cited in the development of this policy requires a preference ranking to be determined among combat veterans with respect to their tours of duty and service medals awarded. All parties involved agreed that any combat veteran who registers on the day of priority registration will likely gain access to the classes of their choosing, thereby negating the need for an elaborate

preference ranking. However, if an occasion should arise where there is in fact limited availability in a particular course, the schools have been instructed to grant access to the combat veteran with more tours of duty. If that is insufficient to determine preference, the schools will determine which student has received a higher ranking medal for their service.

The public postsecondary institutions were invited to comment on the policy and their feedback has been incorporated. The policy was also reviewed by the Board of Education counsel and has been endorsed by the Rhode Island Veterans Education Committee and the VetSuccess on Campus Coordinator.

This policy was introduced for discussion at the April 1st Meeting. Council members are invited to discuss the policy further and hold a vote for approval at today's meeting.

Therefore I recommend

***THAT** the Council of Postsecondary Education (CPE) approves the Policy on Priority Registration for Combat Veterans.*

Attachment

POLICY ON PRIORITY REGISTRATION FOR COMBAT VETERANS

Council on Postsecondary Education
State of Rhode Island

Adopted: **May 2015 (TBD)** **Legal Citation: RIGL§ 30-30.2-3**

Amended:

Rationale

As part of Rhode Island's continuing efforts to recognize the men and women of our Armed Forces, and pursuant to **§ 30-30.2-3(2)** of the R.I. General Laws[1], the Council on Postsecondary Education establishes this policy which supports veterans and service members in achieving their academic and career goals without delay. The General Assembly has directed the prior Board of Education (now the Council on Postsecondary Education) to adopt policies or regulations that require each public higher education institution to grant priority registration for enrollment to combat veterans noting that, "The people of the state have a deep debt of gratitude for the sacrifices made by these men and women who as combat veterans placed their lives in harm's way to protect and defend our nation from all foreign enemies and terrorist threats." As directed by the General Assembly, the Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner has worked in consultation with the Adjutant General of The Rhode Island National Guard to develop this policy.

Policy: Priority registration for combat veterans

In response to the directive in Rhode Island General Law **(§ 30-30.2-3 (2)**, all combat veterans of the United States Armed Forces, the National Guard, the Reserves, and the United States Coast Guard shall have priority course registration at any of the Rhode Island public institutions of higher education.

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[1] R.I.G.L. **§ 30-30.2-3 Academic credit for military training and coursework.** –The state board of education shall ensure:

(1) Enrolled students are awarded education credits based upon their military training or service when academically appropriate; and
(2) Establishment of a preferential class registration process for all state institutions, which shall be reviewed and approved by the board of education to allow combat veterans to register first for all classes at any state-run institution of higher education. In developing rules and regulations, the office of the commissioner of higher education, in consultation with the adjutant general of the Rhode Island national guard, shall determine individual preference ranking among combat veterans, including, but not limited to, the number of combat tours served, service awards, and any other such criteria deemed appropriate by the adjutant general.

Please note that **§ 30-30.2-3 (1)** is addressed by Council policy S 13.0, *Policy on Academic Credit for Military Service and Training.*

Definitions

For the purposes of this policy, the words and phrases used will have the meaning given to them in this section unless the context clearly indicates otherwise.

"Combat veteran" will be understood to be an individual who meets the following criteria:

1. Service in the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, or Air Force of the United States during any foreign war, expedition, campaign, or Military Operation Other than War (MOOW)[2] and;
2. Received an in-theater campaign medal[3]
3. Received an honorable discharge from service

"Priority registration" will be understood to mean that combat veterans will be able to register on a first priority basis on the first day registration opens for any semester, including summer or winter terms if applicable.

Implementation Guidelines

1. The process of determining the eligibility for priority registration and the priority registration status within the class of combat veterans will be facilitated through the designated veterans' campus contact.

2. Combat veterans wishing to obtain priority registration status must self-identify to the campus veterans' contact. Veterans seeking priority registration will submit the following items to demonstrate eligibility:

   - DD 214 (Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty) which annotates service in a combat theatre of operation including notation of medals awarded for service.[4]
   - Service members currently on active duty who do not have a DD214 must present award citation and copy of deployment orders that demonstrated service in a combat theatre of operation.

   Documentation must be submitted no later than fifteen business days prior to the first day of priority registration for a given term.

3. The priority registration policy and the means for participating will be widely communicated. Information on the priority registration policy, procedure, eligibility deadlines and any needed forms will be available on each of the public postsecondary institution's websites.

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[2] Military Operations Other than War (MOOW) includes the use of military capabilities across a range of operations that fall short of war, have specific duration, and more restrictive rules of engagement than in war.

[3] Service medals will include any of the following: Medal of Honor; Silver Star; Navy/USMC Medal/Purple Heart; Navy/USMC Combat Action Ribbon; U.S. Army Combat Infantry Badge; USAF Combat Action Medal; Korean Service Medal; ROK Korean War Service Medal; Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal; Vietnam Campaign Medal; U.S. Vietnam Service Medal; RVN Gallantry Cross; Saudi Arabian Liberation of Kuwait Medal; Kuwait Liberation of Kuwait Medal; Iraq Campaign Medal; Afghanistan Campaign Medal.

[4] Specifically, Page 4 or Page 8 of a DD-214 will display all relevant information required for making a status determination.

4. Institutions shall determine and communicate widely the name and contact information of the college official who will answer questions and assist veterans in applying for priority registration.

5. Veterans eligible for priority registration shall meet institutional requirements for priority registration which may include matriculation into a degree or certificate program or scheduling an appointment with an academic or financial aid advisor.

6. In instances where there are space limitations, priority among combat veterans will be determined by the number of tours of active duty completed during any foreign war, expedition, campaign, or Military Operation Other than War. If this is insufficient to determine priority among the candidates, the institutions may determine preference according to service awards received in the order of ranking determined by the government of the United States.

7. Guidelines for receiving priority registration at the postsecondary institution must be established and submitted to the Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner for review no later than July 1, 2015.