



Minnesota
STATE COLLEGES
& UNIVERSITIES

Veterans Programs and Services

Overview

The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system has a long history of providing education and training to veterans, members of the Minnesota National Guard and service members on active duty. They seek to learn new skills, enhance existing skills and translate skills learned in the military for use in the civilian world. By 2011, 10,644 veterans and service members were enrolled in one of the system's 31 institutions, up 57 percent since 2008.

During the past 10 years, there has been a series of major initiatives to improve programs and services. In 2003, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities worked with the Minnesota National Guard to launch "Guard Online," an initiative that provided online courses for active service members involved in a major overseas peacekeeping deployment. The system also began amending policies and procedures to make it easier for veterans and active military to feel welcome on campuses and complete their educational programs.

Since the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, more than 25,000 members of the Minnesota National Guard have been deployed for active duty overseas, in addition to thousands of Minnesotans who have served overseas in the regular military branches.

Beyond the Yellow Ribbon program

In 2007, the governor charged state government with developing the "Beyond the Yellow Ribbon" program to assist returning service members in readjusting to civilian life. A Higher Education Task Force quickly concluded a systemic approach was necessary.

The system participated with the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs and the Minnesota Army National Guard in the program's Family Preparation Academies, Family Reintegration Academies, reintegration training at

demobilization, including those at military bases in other states and Kuwait as well as 30-day follow-up training for soldiers and their families. Many of the events were held on the system's campuses. The program has become a national model for supporting the successful reintegration of veterans.

Another outcome was to recognize organizations that achieved excellence in serving active duty service members and veterans. In January 2010, the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system was designated a "Beyond the Yellow Ribbon" organization by the governor.

Preparing for Minnesota's veterans

Meeting the needs of veterans returning to a campus is a complex undertaking. Some veterans face personal, relationship, education and employment issues on completing military duty.

Veterans' families also may need help while their loved ones serve overseas and when they return home. Working with the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs and the Minnesota National Guard, the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system office has provided additional training to counselors, student affairs staff, faculty and administrators on assisting veterans.

In addition, recent legislation has provided assistance and resources for developing veterans-friendly colleges and universities. The Minnesota GI Bill's "last dollar in" program provides additional benefits to veterans after other benefits have been exhausted.

Specific education-related benefits and services available to veterans include:

Services

- **Veterans centers** are open on nearly all 54 Minnesota State Colleges and Universities campuses.

- **Veterans Education Transfer System**, also known as VETS, is an online service available at www.mnscu.edu/military/transfer.html that helps past, present and future service members determine how their military training can count for credit at Minnesota State Colleges and Universities institutions.
- **MyMilitary GPS Life Plan** is an education and career planning tool available at www.gpslifeplan.org/mnscumilitary/ that helps veterans, service members and family members set goals and design education, career, finance and personal well-being plans that lead to success.
- **Online education information** is available at www.mnscu.edu/online/index.html. Service members can take an array of online courses and programs offered by Minnesota State Colleges and Universities while in the military.
- **A phone line for educational counseling and advising**, a service of mymilitaryeducation.org, is available from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Friday and from 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. on weekends for domestic and international calls. This line is hosted by the system and the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs.
- **A statewide campaign** informed and trained faculty and staff on what it takes to be military friendly. Faculty, administrators and staff who participate in this program can then display a "Military Friendly" decal.
- **Veterans Upward Bound** at Minneapolis Community and Technical College has operated continuously since 1972.

gPolicies

- **Students in the military have options** to complete their courses without adverse academic consequences if they are deployed during a semester.
- **College credit for military education and training** is granted to veterans using the American Council on Education guidelines and standards. Efforts are underway to systematically expand this benefit.
- **Nonresident soldiers, veterans and families pay in-state tuition rates.** This benefit has been extended to spouses and children of nonresident soldiers and veterans.
- **Veterans in college awaiting federal benefits can delay tuition payments without penalty.** A state college or university will not charge late fees or other late charges for veterans who are eligible or have applied to receive federal educational assistance.

Partnerships

- **All Minnesota State Colleges and Universities** have become Servicemember Opportunity Colleges, which help service members and their families overcome barriers to completing college degrees.
- **A network of 12 regional representatives** from the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs serves all higher education institutions in Minnesota. Eleven of the representatives are on state college and university campuses.

About Minnesota State Colleges and Universities

The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities serve more than 420,000 students across the state.

For more information, contact Melinda Voss, public relations director, melinda.voss@so.mnscu.edu or 651-201-1804.



30 7th St. E., Suite 350
St. Paul, MN 55101-7804

ph 651.201.1800
fx 651.297.5550

www.mnscu.edu

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Revised 2/12