**COVID-19 Related VA Services and Benefits Updates**

**What do you need to know about your VA benefits?**

President Trump has signed into law a bill that allows students using VA benefits who have transitioned from in-person or hybrid to online instruction as a result of the declared national emergency to continue to receive their full VA benefits, including the in-residence housing allowance. UMBC is working with the VA to make any necessary updates to students’ certification record. No action is required by any UMBC student using VA educational benefits already certified by the university for the Spring 2020 term. For the Summer and Fall 2020 term, students are welcome to continue to enroll and submit their VA certification requests normally. (<https://registrar.umbc.edu/forms/veteran-affairs-forms/>)

**Monthly Housing Payments: What happens when a modality changes for enrollment terms due to COVID-19?**

Based on the new law, Post 9/11 GI Bill students who pursue in-person courses converted to an online modality solely due to COVID 19 will continue to receive the Monthly Housing Allowance rate (MHA) for resident training. The law only authorizes this special authority from March 1, 2020, to December 21, 2020.

Note: Other types of changes to the student’s enrollment status may affect payments. Non COVID-19 related changes must still be reported per normal requirements.

**Tuition and Fee Payments: Will there be any impact on tuition and fee payments when only the modality changes within a term due to COVID-19?**

Tuition and Fees reporting requirements will not change due to COVID-19 national emergency.

Only mandatory tuition and fees that students are being charged will be reported to the VA. Mandatory fees pro-rated or refunded by SBS will not be reported to the VA.

**What if I change my class to pass/fail? Are there any implications for VA benefits?**

Students who take Pass/Fail classes and receive a grade of F (fail) or who drop a course and receive a nonpunitive grade (W) should be aware that the rules about failing and nonpunitive grades have NOT changed and must be reported to the VA.

The VA does not typically make payments for classes resulting in fail or nonpunitive grades.

However, if COVID 19 is reported as mitigating circumstances for the student’s receipt of a nonpunitive grade, (i.e., Fail in a Pass/Fail class or a grade of W) the VA will pay for the class. Students who are experiencing mitigating circumstances must report this directly to both the VA and the [School Certifying Official](https://registrar.umbc.edu/RT/Veterans/).

**VA Debt Management Center Notice:**

In addition, The VA Debt Management Center (DMC) is offering temporary financial relief if you are unable to pay your GI Bill benefit debt during this crisis. For more information on this please visit <https://www.va.gov/debtman/>

**Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Statement:** (<https://www.fcc.gov/keep-americans-connected>)

The FCC has released a statement concerning their efforts to get broadband and telephone service providers to take the Keep Americans Connected Pledge. Under the pledge, the FCC is asking that broadband and telephone services providers pledge to waive late fees, open hot-spots, and refuse to cut off service due to lack of payment for the next 60 days.

As always, please don’t hesitate to reach out to us if you have any questions or concerns (<https://veterans.umbc.edu/contact-us/>)

Sincerely,

Tim Rochford
VA Certifying Official