

Westfield State University

Office of Student Services

SS007: Veterans Affairs and Military Student Support

Effective Date: August 15, 2023

Document Number: SS007

1. Mission and Purpose

The Veterans Affairs and Military Student Support office at Westfield State University is dedicated to fostering a supportive and welcoming campus environment for our military-connected students, including veterans, active-duty service members, reservists, National Guard members, and their families. Our mission is to facilitate a smooth transition from military service to academic life, to provide comprehensive support services that enhance educational success, and to empower our students to achieve their personal and professional goals. We are committed to recognizing the unique contributions and experiences of our military-connected students and ensuring they have the resources and support necessary to thrive at Westfield State.

2. Services Offered

We offer a wide range of specialized services to meet the unique needs of our military-connected students:

2.1. GI Bill® Certification

Our office is the primary point of contact for all GI Bill® and VA education benefit inquiries. We assist students with:

- **Benefit Counseling:** Understanding your specific VA education benefits, including the Post-9/11 GI Bill®, Montgomery GI Bill®, and others.

- **Application Assistance:** Guidance on the VA application process to obtain a Certificate of Eligibility (COE).
- **Certification:** Submitting enrollment certification to the VA each semester to ensure timely payment of benefits. To be certified, students must submit a copy of their COE and a completed Westfield State University “Request for Certification” form to our office each semester.

2.2. Military Credit Evaluation

Westfield State University recognizes the value of military training and experience. We offer a comprehensive evaluation of military transcripts for potential academic credit. To have your military experience evaluated, you must submit your official Joint Services Transcript (JST) or Community College of the Air Force (CCAF) transcript to the Office of Admissions. Our academic advisors will review your transcript and award credit based on American Council on Education (ACE) recommendations, where applicable.

2.3. Priority Registration

In recognition of their service, veteran and military-connected students are granted priority registration for courses each semester. This allows students to register for classes before the general student population, providing greater flexibility in scheduling and ensuring access to required courses. Eligibility for priority registration is automatically granted to students who have been identified as military-connected through their admissions application or by our office.

2.4. Veteran Resource Center

The Veteran Resource Center, located in the heart of campus, provides a dedicated space for military-connected students to connect, study, and relax. The center is a hub for camaraderie and support, offering:

- A comfortable lounge area
- Computer workstations with free printing
- A quiet study space
- Information on campus and community resources
- A kitchenette with complimentary coffee and snacks

2.5. Transition Support

We understand that the transition from military to civilian and academic life can be challenging. Our office provides a variety of programs and services to support students through this process:

- **New Student Orientation:** A specialized orientation program for military-connected students to introduce them to campus resources and services.
- **Peer Mentoring Program:** The “Vets for Vets” program connects new students with experienced student veterans who can provide guidance, support, and friendship.
- **Workshops and Seminars:** We host regular workshops on topics such as academic success strategies, career planning, and financial literacy.

3. Eligibility and Access

Our services are available to all Westfield State University students who are:

- Veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces
- Currently serving on active duty
- Members of the Reserves or National Guard
- Spouses or dependents of veterans or service members who are eligible for VA education benefits

To gain access to our services, students are encouraged to self-identify as military-connected with our office. Please bring a copy of your DD-214, military ID, or other proof of service to your first appointment.

4. How to Access Services

- **Location:** Student Services Building, Room 210
- **Hours:** Monday - Friday, 8:30 AM - 5:00 PM
- **Phone:** (555) 123-4567
- **Email:** veterans@westfieldstate.edu

5. Appointment Scheduling

Appointments are recommended to ensure that a staff member is available to meet with you. You can schedule an appointment in one of the following ways:

- **Online:** Visit our website at www.westfieldstate.edu/veterans to access our online appointment scheduling system.
- **Email:** Send an email to veterans@westfieldstate.edu with your name, student ID number, and a brief description of your needs.
- **Phone:** Call our office at (555) 123-4567 during business hours.

Walk-in appointments are available on a limited basis and are subject to staff availability.

6. Confidentiality

The Veterans Affairs and Military Student Support office is committed to protecting the privacy of our students. All student records and information are confidential and are protected under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Information will not be released to any third party without the student's written consent, except as required by law.

7. Related Resources and Referrals

We work closely with other campus and community partners to provide comprehensive support to our students. We can provide referrals to the following resources:

- **University Counseling Center:** For confidential personal counseling and mental health support.
- **Disability Resource Center:** For academic accommodations and support for students with disabilities.
- **Career Services:** For assistance with resume writing, job searching, and career planning.
- **Financial Aid Office:** For information on scholarships, grants, and loans.
- **Local VA Medical Center and Vet Center:** For healthcare and counseling services.

8. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Q: How do I start using my GI Bill® benefits at Westfield State?

A: First, you need to apply for your benefits through the VA website. Once you receive your Certificate of Eligibility (COE), bring a copy to our office and complete our “Request for Certification” form. We will then certify your enrollment with the VA.

Q: Does Westfield State accept military training for college credit?

A: Yes. You will need to submit your official Joint Services Transcript (JST) or Community College of the Air Force (CCAF) transcript to the Office of Admissions for a credit evaluation.

Q: I am a new student. Is there a special orientation for veterans?

A: Yes, we offer a specialized orientation for all new military-connected students. You will receive an invitation to this orientation after you have been admitted to the university.

Q: Is there a place on campus where I can connect with other student veterans?

A: Yes, the Veteran Resource Center in the Student Services Building, Room 210, is a dedicated space for military-connected students to gather, study, and support one another.

9. Revision History

Version	Date	Author	Summary of Changes
1.0	2023-08-15	J. Smith	Initial document creation

GI Bill® is a registered trademark of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). More information about education benefits offered by VA is available at the official U.S. government Web site at <https://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill>.