

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS SERVICES

2008 ANNUAL REPORT

TO

GOVERNOR TIMOTHY M. KAINE

AND

THE VIRGINIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

ON THE

**VIRGINIA MILITARY SURVIVORS
AND DEPENDENTS EDUCATION PROGRAM**

October 30, 2008



Virginia Department of Veterans' Services

Serving those who served.

**Department of Veterans Services
2008 Annual Report on the
Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program**

Background

Under the Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program (VMSDEP), tuition and required fees are waived at Virginia public colleges and universities for the qualified survivors and dependents of certain military service members. Through the Virginia Military Survivors and Dependent Education Fund (VMSDEF), a stipend is provided to offset the costs of room, board, books, and supplies.

“Qualified survivor and dependent” is defined as the spouse or child between the ages of 16 and 29 of a military service member who, while serving as an active duty member in the United States Armed Forces, United States Armed Forces Reserves, the Virginia National Guard, or Virginia National Guard Reserve, during military operations against terrorism, on a peacekeeping mission, as a result of a terrorist act, or in any armed conflict subsequent to December 6, 1941, was killed or is missing in action or is a prisoner of war, or of a veteran who, due to such service, has been rated by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs as totally and permanently disabled or at least 90 percent disabled, and has been discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable. Domiciliary requirements also apply, and are detailed in the Code of Virginia.

As required by the Code, the Commissioner of the Department of Veterans Services must report annually to the Governor and the General Assembly on the agency’s policies and strategies relating to dissemination of information about the Program. The report must include the number of current beneficiaries, the educational institutions attended by beneficiaries, and the completion rate of the beneficiaries.

Information Dissemination

A full-time communications officer was hired in June, 2006 resulting in increased communication activities for this program. During the past year, hundreds of bookmarks and an FAQ sheet were distributed, and information was posted on the DVS website.

Other activities included:

- A dialog was established with the Virginia Association of Secondary School Principals to educate them about the VMSDEP program.
- Personnel in DVS’ State Approving Agency for Education and Training were provided training about the program and bookmarks and FAQ sheets to distribute at outreach events.

- DVS claims examiners review all new rating decisions promulgated by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) Roanoke Regional Office. Based on the review, our benefit services representatives are notified that a claimant may be eligible for VMSDEP. They communicate this information to the claimant and assist the claimant with the application process if appropriate.
- Updated bookmarks and FAQ sheets were provided to the manager of the phone and personal contact unit at the VA Regional Office in Roanoke.

Current Beneficiaries and Institutions Attended

A total of 696 unique students used VMSDEP benefits during the Fall 2007 and Spring 2008 semesters. Of the 696 students, 284 (40 percent) attended a four-year institution, while 421 (60 percent) attended a two-year college or community college. Of the four-year institutions, Virginia Commonwealth University had the highest participation (58 students), followed by Old Dominion University with 48 students. Tidewater Community College led all schools with 146 students. Thomas Nelson Community College was second among community colleges with 41 students. More detailed information is presented in Appendix A.

Completion Rates

The Department of Veterans Services continues to work with the State Council of Higher Education (SCHEV) to accurately define and quantify the completion rate of beneficiaries. In previous years, DVS focused solely on tracking benefits eligibility, regardless of whether the student had completed his/her degree program prior to exhausting his/her VMSDEP eligibility. After agreeing on a standard definition of completion rate, DVS and SCHEV will put in place the procedures to accurately track completion rates.

APPENDIX A

Educational Institutions Attended by VMSDEP Beneficiaries – as of May 15, 2008

	Fall		Spring		Total		Unique Unduplicated Students
	Awards	Dollars	Awards	Dollars	Awards	Dollars	
Four-Year Publics							
Christopher Newport University	5	2,357	7	4,351	12	6,708	8
College of William & Mary	8	6,000	9	6,750	17	12,750	9
George Mason University	17	11,500	15	11,000	32	22,500	17
James Madison University	12	8,750	14	10,250	26	19,000	14
Longwood University	9	6,236	9	6,750	18	12,986	10
Norfolk State University	21	15,250	27	19,436	48	34,686	28
Old Dominion University	38	28,000	43	29,500	81	57,500	47
Radford University	28	20,750	23	17,125	51	37,875	30
University of Mary Washington	7	4,750	8	5,250	15	10,000	9
University of Virginia	9	6,750	9	6,750	18	13,500	10
University of Virginia's College at	9	6,750	7	5,250	16	12,000	9
Virginia Commonwealth University	45	33,500	54	39,000	99	72,500	58
Virginia Military Institute	2	1,500	1	750	3	2,250	2
Virginia State University	6	4,250	6	4,500	12	8,750	8
Virginia Tech	25	18,000	19	14,000	44	32,000	26
Four-Year Public Total	241	\$174,34	251	\$180,662	491	\$355,005	284

	Fall		Spring		Total		Unique Unduplicated Students
	Awards	Dollars	Awards	Dollars	Awards	Dollars	
Two-Year Publics							
Richard Bland College	2	1,500	1	750	3	2,250	2
Two-Year Public Total	2	\$1,500	1	\$750	3	\$2,250	2

	Fall		Spring		Total		Unique Unduplicated Students
	Awards	Dollars	Awards	Dollars	Awards	Dollars	
Community Colleges							
Blue Ridge Community College	12	7,000	11	7,250	23	14,250	13
Central Virginia Community	13	7,000	16	9,000	29	16,000	17
Dabney S. Lancaster Community	2	1,500	1	750	3	2,250	2
Danville Community College	2	1,250	1	250	3	1,500	3
Eastern Shore Community College	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Germanna Community College	8	5,000	13	8,750	21	13,750	16
J. Sargeant Reynolds Community	7	4,500	6	4,250	13	8,750	9
John Tyler Community College	12	7,250	8	5,750	20	13,000	14
Lord Fairfax Community College	9	5,000	6	3,250	15	8,250	9
Mountain Empire Community	20	13,750	21	14,250	41	28,000	23
New River Community College	10	7,250	8	5,750	18	13,000	12
Northern Virginia Community	9	6,250	13	8,750	22	15,000	15
Patrick Henry Community College	5	3,250	6	4,250	11	7,500	7
Paul D. Camp Community College	5	3,500	6	4,000	11	7,500	6
Piedmont Virginia Community	4	2,500	4	2,750	8	5,250	5
Rappahannock Community College	5	3,000	5	3,250	10	6,250	6
Southside Virginia Community	11	7,750	13	8,500	24	16,250	14
Southwest Virginia Community	13	9,500	14	10,250	27	19,750	16
Thomas Nelson Community	39	23,750	36	21,750	75	45,500	41
Tidewater Community College	106	68,750	125	80,000	231	148,750	146
Virginia Highlands Community	15	10,250	16	10,250	31	20,500	18
Virginia Western Community	13	7,902	12	8,000	25	15,902	16
Wytheville Community College	11	8,000	13	9,250	24	17,250	14
Community College Total	331	\$213,902	354	\$230,250	682	\$444,152	419
Total	574	\$389,745	606	\$411,662	1,167	\$801,407	696

Source: State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV)

APPENDIX B

Code of Virginia, § [23-7.4:1A](#)

§ [23-7.4:1](#). Waiver of tuition and certain charges and fees for eligible children and spouses of certain military service members, eligible children and spouses of certain public safety personnel, and certain foreign students.

A. There is hereby established the Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program. Qualified survivors and dependents of military service members, who have been admitted to any public institution of higher education or other public accredited postsecondary institution granting a degree, diploma, or certificate in the Commonwealth of Virginia, upon certification to the Commissioner of the Department of Veterans Services of eligibility under this subsection, shall be admitted free of tuition and all required fees.

The Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program shall be implemented pursuant to the following:

1. For the purposes of this subsection, "qualified survivors and dependents" means the spouse or a child between the ages of 16 and 29 of a military service member who, while serving as an active duty member in the United States Armed Forces, United States Armed Forces Reserves, the Virginia National Guard, or Virginia National Guard Reserve, during military operations against terrorism, on a peacekeeping mission, as a result of a terrorist act, or in any armed conflict subsequent to December 6, 1941, was killed or is missing in action or is a prisoner of war, or of a veteran who, due to such service, has been rated by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs as totally and permanently disabled or at least 90percent disabled, and has been discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable. However, the Commissioner of the Department of Veterans Services may certify dependents above the age of 29 in those cases in which extenuating circumstances prevented the dependent child from using his benefits before the age of 30.

2. Such qualified survivors and dependents shall be eligible for the benefits conferred by this subsection if the military service member who was killed, is missing in action, is a prisoner of war, or is disabled (i) was a bona fide domiciliary of Virginia at the time of entering such active military service or called to active duty as a member of the Armed Forces Reserves or Virginia National Guard Reserve; (ii) is and has been a bona fide domiciliary of Virginia for at least five years immediately prior to the date on which the admission application was submitted by or on behalf of such qualified survivor or dependent for admission to such institution of higher education or other public accredited postsecondary institution; (iii) if deceased, was a bona fide domiciliary of Virginia on the date of his death and had been a bona fide domiciliary of Virginia for at least five years immediately prior to his death; (iv) in the case of a qualified child, is deceased and the surviving parent had been, at some time previous to marrying the deceased parent, a bona fide domiciliary of Virginia for at least five years or is and has been a bona fide domiciliary of Virginia for at least five years immediately prior to the date on which the admission application was submitted by or on behalf of such child; or (v) in the case of a qualified spouse, is deceased and the surviving spouse had been, at some time previous to

marrying the deceased spouse, a bona fide domiciliary of Virginia for at least five years or is and has been a bona fide domiciliary of Virginia for at least five years prior to the date on which the admission application was submitted by such qualified spouse.

3. From such funds as may be appropriated and from such gifts, bequests and any gifts, grants, or donations from public or private sources, there is hereby established the Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Fund for the sole purpose of providing financial assistance for board and room charges, books and supplies, and other expenses at any public institution of higher education or other public accredited postsecondary institution granting a degree, diploma, or certificate in the Commonwealth of Virginia for the use and benefit of qualified survivors and dependents.

Each year, from the funds available in the Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Fund, the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia and its member institutions shall determine the amount and the manner in which financial assistance shall be made available to beneficiaries and shall make that information available to the Commissioner of the Department of Veterans Services for distribution.

The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia shall be responsible for disbursing to the institutions the funds appropriated or otherwise made available by the Commonwealth of Virginia to support the Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Fund and shall report to the Commissioner of the Department of Veterans Services the beneficiaries' completion rate.

The maximum amount to be expended for each such survivor or dependent pursuant to this subsection shall not exceed, when combined with any other form of scholarship, grant, or waiver, the actual costs related to the survivor's or dependent's educational expenses allowed under this subsection.

4. The Commissioner of the Department of Veterans Services shall designate a senior-level official who shall be responsible for developing and implementing the agency's strategy for disseminating information about the Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program to those spouses and dependents who may qualify. The Department of Veterans Services shall coordinate with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs to identify veterans and qualified survivors and dependents. The Commissioner of the Department of Veterans Services shall report annually to the Governor and the General Assembly as to the agency's policies and strategies relating to dissemination of information about the Program. The report shall also include the number of current beneficiaries, the educational institutions attended by beneficiaries, and the completion rate of the beneficiaries.