

VII. STANDING COMMITTEES

A. Academic and Student Affairs Committee

Revising Tuition Waivers for Veterans and Members of the Washington National Guard

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

It is the recommendation of the Administration and of the Academic and Student Affairs Committee that the Board of Regents take the following actions under the authority granted in RCW 28B.15.621:

Establish a new veterans' tuition waiver for graduate and professional students who are: a) eligible veterans and Washington National Guard members; b) children and spouses of eligible veterans or Washington National Guard members determined to be prisoners of war or missing in action; and c) children and spouses of eligible veterans or Washington National Guard members who became totally disabled or deceased while engaged in active federal military or naval service.

This veterans' tuition waiver for eligible graduate and professional students will be established at an amount equivalent to 50% of resident tuition and fees of their student tuition category. The tuition waiver will only be available to graduate and professional students pursuing their first advanced degree, including degrees transferred from other institutions of higher education. The waiver is also limited to those graduate and professional students attending full time. Additionally the recipient would not be eligible if they have previously received an undergraduate veterans' waiver under RCW 28B.15.621.

BACKGROUND:

The purpose of this action item is to expand the tuition waiver framework for selected veterans and members of the Washington National Guard that the Board of Regents has previously implemented under the new legal structure imposed by Substitute House Bill (SHB) 1174.

In the 2005 State legislative session, SHB 1174 passed unanimously by the legislature and was signed by the Governor. SHB 1174 revised provisions in State law related to tuition waivers for veterans and members of the Washington National Guard. The provisions of SHB 1174 became effective on July 24, 2005. RCW 28B.15.621 permissively authorizes veterans' tuition waivers for "eligible veterans or national guard members," which the statute defines as follows:

For the purposes of this section "eligible veteran or national guard member" means a Washington domiciliary who was an active or reserve member of the United States military or naval forces, or a national guard member called to active duty, who served in active federal service, under either Title 10 or Title 32 of the United States Code, in a war or conflict fought on foreign soil or in international waters or in another location in support of those serving on foreign soil or in international waters, and if discharged from service, has received an honorable discharge."

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In response to this change in State law, in October 2005 the Board of Regents approved a revised tuition waiver structure for undergraduate veterans and members of the Washington National Guard; this change was effective starting Autumn Quarter 2005.

A number of the students at UW who are veterans or members of the Washington National Guard who have been deployed internationally are graduate or professional students rather than undergraduate students. As the revised tuition waiver structure for veterans and members of the National Guard was initially implemented, these graduate and professional students are not eligible for the tuition waiver. This action item extends the tuition waiver to veterans and members of the Washington National Guard who are graduate or professional students as specified in the “recommended action” section above.

It is difficult to precisely estimate the cost of this proposed expansion of the tuition waiver as the UW does not have complete data on the number of graduate and professional students who are veterans or members of the Washington National Guard. Based on the limited information that is available, the Office of Planning and Budgeting estimates that approximately 50 graduate and professional students would make use of the revised tuition waiver for veterans and members of the National Guard which on an academic year basis would result in approximately \$297,000 in additional tuition being waived than under the current waiver provisions.

Implementation Time Line and Process

The Board of Regents must affirmatively act to implement its waiver authority granted under RCW 28B.15.910. Implementing revisions to existing waivers or the addition of new waivers also requires that the university adhere to the Washington Administrative Code (WAC) process as part of the Regent approval process. The WAC process requires the University to: 1) formally publicize the proposed rule changes; 2) hold a rule-making hearing at which the university receives public comment regarding adoption of said rule or rules; and 3) file the “Rule Making Order” with the Washington State Registrar. The entire process time can vary due to mandated public comment periods. These comment periods may only be held during the academic year when all students and faculty are present.

If the Board of Regents agrees with the proposed waivers and approves the action item, a WAC revision process will be initiated immediately. Under procedures authorized in the Washington Administrative Code, the President will enact the tuition waiver revisions on an emergency basis effective Spring Quarter 2007. Upon completion of the WAC process, the Regents will adopt the WAC revisions in a separate action item.