

Colleagues,

Almost a year ago, on April 27, 2012, President Obama signed Executive Order 13607, designed to provide information to and protect Veterans, Service members, and their families when they attend school. This Executive Order created the Principles of Excellence which are designed to help Veterans and their families make *informed* choices when using one of the most valuable benefits of military service: the educational opportunities offered by the GI Bill.

As most of you know, the Post-9/11 GI Bill offers Veterans, and potentially their dependents, the opportunity to reach an educational, vocational, or professional goal. The reliable funding of the GI Bill is good for business, and as a result some Veterans find themselves dealing with folks who may not be interested in helping them find the BEST program that fits their needs.

Institutions that agree to adhere to the Principles of Excellence are committing themselves to providing the information necessary for Veterans and their dependents to make the best decisions regarding their educational future. These institutions agree to provide students with:

- A personalized form covering the total cost of an educational program, pre-enrollment program costs, student debt estimates, and financial aid options
- An educational plan (also called an academic plan) for all military and Veteran students
- Accommodations for Service members and Reservists absent due to service requirements
- Designated points of contact for academic and financial advising
- Accreditation of all new programs prior to enrolling students
- Institutional refund policies aligned with those under Title IV

Another facet of the Principles of Excellence we are implementing is the development of a centralized interagency system for military and Veteran students to register complaints about schools not complying with the Principles. This system is a collaborative effort between VA, the Department of Education, and the Department of Justice along with the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. This will help us to identify and address fraudulent activities, aggressive and deceptive recruiting practices, as well as other illegal or improper activities.

So far, what are the results? Thousands of schools (more than 6,000) have agreed to participate, and the list continues to grow. We have a map on the GI Bill website Veterans can use to search for schools that have signed on to be Veteran advocates. Make sure the potential student Veterans you know are aware of the schools that have signed on, and encourage them to choose a school that has their best interests in mind.

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If you have any questions, or if you know of a school that would like to commit to upholding the Principles of Excellence, please email my staff at [principles.excellence@va.gov](mailto:principles.excellence@va.gov).

The GI Bill is a tremendously valuable benefit with a lifelong impact. The Principles of Excellence are intended to ensure educational institutions are helping maximize the value of our Veterans' well-earned benefits.

V/R

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