

Steve Kime
Director
Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges

Dear Colleague:

President Bush has issued the largest Reserve and National Guard call up since the Persian Gulf War in response to the recent terrorist attacks. Roughly one-fourth of those called to active duty will be college and university students.

Students called to active duty will have their academic progress disrupted. In previous call ups, institutions responded with policies that returned tuition, provided for course completion at later dates, and otherwise showed flexibility to ensure that no servicemember suffered a loss of funds or educational opportunity because he or she was called to serve.

On September 24, 2001, the U. S. Department of Education directed lenders and colleges and universities to provide relief from student loan obligations by postponing student loan payments for borrowers during the period of the borrower's active duty service. Additionally, the Department urged colleges and universities to provide full refund of tuition and other institutional charges and encouraged flexible re-enrollment options for affected students. Student aid recipients who withdraw from school because they are called to active duty, or are otherwise affected by mobilization or terrorist attacks, will not be required to return financial aid funds they received for books and living expenses.

We know that virtually all of our Nation's colleges and universities have already implemented these recommended policies. However, even a few unfortunate examples may be all that is necessary to prompt congressional action to compel colleges and universities to take specific actions regarding refunds of tuition and fees, the enrollment status of these students, and the awarding of academic credit for work that is in progress.

We are convinced that both the students and academe are best served by positive, voluntary actions from our Nation's colleges and universities. We encourage you to review your policies regarding students who are called to active duty, and to consider revising those policies if necessary to assure they are more than fair to students who are asked to serve their country at this critical time.

Sincerely,

Constantine W. (Deno) Curris
President,
American Association of State Colleges and Universities