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March 26, 2020

Subject: VA Notification Regarding COVID-19 Guidelines for Post-Secondary Institutions

Dear Students:

We hope this notification finds you, as well as your loved ones, safe and healthy during the ever-changing situation. The purpose of this message is to share recent policy guidance provided to the College from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) following the recent transition to fully online instructional formats via distance education. Please know we are distributing this information as soon as possible after the VA reviewed the new law and communicated with colleges and universities their interpretation on March 25, 2020.

The President of the United States signed into law S. 3503, which clarifies how the VA should treat in-person courses of study that convert to distance learning formats due to health-related situations and other emergencies.

The interpretation by the VA was the following:

- Students who were certified for courses that have been converted from face-to-face or hybrid instruction to fully online formats via distance education, in response to the novel coronavirus (i.e., COVID-19) pandemic, will not experience any adjustments to their enrollment certification provided to the VA for currently enrolled terms.
- Post 9/11 GI Bill beneficiaries will continue to receive their monthly housing allowance rate, and previously reported tuition and fees will continue to be paid to educational institutions without adjustment.
- Students who are enrolled in remedial or deficiency courses (i.e., developmental sequences), in addition to Continuing Education training courses that were approved by the State Approving Agency, that were converted to fully online formats via distance education will continue to be certified for currently enrolled terms.
- Students who become ill due to COVID-19 and cannot continue will still be subject to attendance and withdrawal policy guidelines.
- The law only authorizes this special authority from March 1, 2020 to December 21, 2020.

Please do not hesitate to contact the dedicated staff of the Veterans Programs Department with any questions regarding the ramifications of this policy announcement, as well as any mitigating circumstances that may impact your enrollment and ultimate success. Likewise, if you are experiencing any financial hardship or have questions about available student support services and/or community support services, please do not hesitate to contact the Veterans Programs Department by calling (910) 938-6860 or e-mailing veterans@coastalcarolina.edu. In addition, you may contact Debbie Lucas, Veterans Success Coach, by calling (910) 938-6338 or emailing lucasd@coastalcarolina.edu.

The College also has a website with important resources pertaining to COVID-19 available at: <https://www.coastalcarolina.edu/news/article/coronavirus-resources/>. Another link, *Aunt Bertha*, which is a care network that connects people seeking help and verifies social care providers, is accessible by visiting: <https://nccommunitycolleges.auntbertha.com/>. *Aunt Bertha* has valuable information about free or reduced cost services (e.g., food, housing, goods, transit, health, money, care, education, etcetera), and it is searchable by zip code.