

**SC National Guard College Assistance Program (SCNG CAP)
Review/Evaluation Committee Meeting
Main Conference Room
May 14, 2014
10:00 a.m.**

SC Army National Guard

Major Sean Egnew
Spec. Robert Gibbon

CHE Staff

Mr. Michael Brown
Ms. Lorinda Copeland
Dr. Karen Woodfaulk

SC Air National Guard

SMSgt. Ceomara Timmons

Institutional Representatives

Ms. Ellen Green, Trident Technical College
Ms. Cindy Peachey, USC Columbia
Ms. Michelle Upchurch, Limestone College

1. Introductions/Minutes

Mr. Michael Brown stated the minutes from the January 21, 2014 meeting were for information purposes and asked the committee for corrections if needed. The minutes were accepted as submitted.

2. Proposed Regulation Changes for FY 2014-2015

Mr. Brown has been meeting with CHE staff and the National Guard. The proposed revisions for academic year 2015-16 were as of April 18, 2014. Mr. Brown will be forwarding the regulations/procedures for academic year 2014-15 to the institutional point of contacts before July 1 and gave an overview of the law changes for academic year 2014-15. Military members now have to complete basic training/AIT before they can receive CAP eligibility, the academic year maximum award will be determined based on the appropriation, and CAP will not be subject to mid-year budget reductions.

3. 62-252 Program Benefits and Maximum Assistance

a. Effective 4/7/14, the annual maximum Grant will be determined prior to the beginning of each academic year based on the amount of available program funds.

Mr. Brown stated the maximum annual award for the Army National Guard is \$4,500 and \$9,000 for the Air National Guard. The expenditures are not matching the appropriation which may change next year. Mr. Brown stated one thought is increasing the annual maximum which is not appropriated because tuition has increased since 2007. SMSgt. Ceomara Timmons stated the Air National Guard would have to double the annual award. Ms. Cindy Peachey responded the maximum amount would have to be increased if the annual award is increased because the member would get more up front but receive less years. Mr. Brown stated that would have to be changed in the law. Major Egnew stated he would support an increase and agrees with Ms. Peachey because the student would only have the benefit for two years. Ms. Peachey asked if the current academic year maximums of \$4,500 and \$9,000 are changed, who would set the new amount each year and when. Mr. Brown responded CHE along with the Guard. Ms. Peachey

asked if they would know by August 1 and Mr. Brown responded yes. Ms. Ellen Green asked if the Air National Guard would be the same increase as the Army National Guard and SMSgt. Timmons responded no. Mr. Brown stated this was a suggestion because within the next month the Guard may see their numbers increase and feel comfortable letting the current annual maximum remain. Major Egnew responded the Army National Guard members receive more educational benefits than the Air National Guard. Army National Guard Members receive Federal Tuition Assistance in addition to the GI Bill and many attend school free. Major Egnew thinks it's worth discussing and would rather have a float versus little money. SMSgt. Timmons stated they can review and asked how much money is available. Mr. Brown stated the appropriation will probably remain at 4.5 million and Dr. Karen Woodfaulk responded the variation would be the number of students. Mr. Brown stated the Air National Guard would need to determine if the cost is covered and if so, there would be no need to increase. Major Egnew stated one negative is that the number of students will decrease if the annual maximum increases. Mr. Brown stated he doesn't want to see a fluctuation of the annual amount from year to year because it would be difficult for the institutions and members.

b. 130 CAP hours from the time of Initial eligibility

Mr. Brown asked if hours not funded by CAP (spring 2013 or summer) should be counted towards the 130 hour maximum. Major Egnew responded the difficulty for the Army National Guard is that AR621-5 restricts members to 130 semester hours. If the member continues after 130 semester hours, they pay out of pocket which is to discourage the life-time student. Major Egnew stated there could be confusion if the federal maximum is 130 and the state has another maximum. Mr. Brown asked if the 130 hours was based on federal funding or when they reach 130 hours and Major Egnew responded when they reach 130 hours. Ms. Peachey stated on the institutional side they have no way to track, would have to keep an individual database which would be manual, and stated it would be better to count from the initial date of eligibility assuming the date in the database is correct. Ms. Michelle Upchurch agreed with Ms. Peachey because the hours are difficult to track and stated the hours need to be from the date of initial eligibility whether cap funded or not. Major Egnew responded it would be a bookkeeping nightmare to maintain. Ms. Upchurch stated the database needs to stay accurate because the dates keep changing. Dr. Woodfaulk asked if the accuracy without a new database would be from the time of initial eligibility and Ms. Upchurch responded yes. Dr. Woodfaulk stated we wouldn't know if CAP was used or not and Mr. Brown responded yes and would only know the hours and the student would reach the maximum at \$18,000 or 130 hours. Mr. Brown stated this would have to be addressed in procedures because it is not clear in the regulations. Ms. Ellen Green stated for the LIFE scholarship when you start college the clock starts ticking and with CAP when you start college your hours start building toward your 130 regardless of whether you receive CAP. Ms. Peachey stated the only difference is that LIFE starts when the student starts college but CAP does not start until the student joins and completes basic training/AIT. Ms. Green stated she disagrees because it doesn't make any difference if the student did not start receiving CAP benefits until their sophomore semester because they already have 25 or 30 hours which goes toward the 130 hours. Dr. Woodfaulk responded the problem is making the determination regarding transfer hours and hours earned before initial eligibility and how to track. Dr. Woodfaulk stated she was in agreement with not penalizing the student but now is hearing that the problem is how to track and count all credit hours. Dr. Woodfaulk stated hours may or may not be transferred and doesn't know how to track in terms of a database.

Ms. Green stated the wording would have to change to state 130 hours of college level work. Ms. Green asked what would happen if a student is a junior in college and joins the Guard. Mr.

Brown responded the clock starts when they join and completes the requirements. Mr. Brown stated if the student is making SAP, the student will graduate within two years before maximum funding is used. Ms. Green asked Ms. Peachey if a student has two years of CAP funding and has attempted 18 hours, does she pull the plug when a degree is obtained. Ms. Peachey responded yes and stated she agrees with Ms. Green and would love to see the regulations changed to initial college enrollment. Ms. Peachey stated each semester from the time of initial eligibility is counted. Dr. Woodfaulk asked if this was an issue and Ms. Peachey responded it is because can't say the student has attempted 130 credit hours because student didn't become eligible until 80 credit hours and the only way to know is to maintain a manual database. Ms. Upchurch stated her IT department created a report and when students get close to 130 credit hours the process is more manual because she hasn't found an easy fix. Mr. Brown responded when the Guard is recruiting and a student receives eligibility as a junior it will be hard to tell them they can't get any funds. Major Egnew stated that's not an issue because they receive bad news all the time and SMSgt Timmons responded they will be ok. Major Egnew stated the biggest thing with them was when the rule changed to completion of AIT/TT which was one of the best changes because members were receiving money and not graduating from AIT/TT and leaving the Guard. SMSgt. Timmons stated she thinks this is why there is a surplus of funds because eligible numbers were decreased. Dr. Woodfaulk asked if the institutions ran a report upon initial eligibility into CAP and identified transfer hours/ hours earned and get a signature from the guard member that they will not exceed 130 credit hours, would the burden be taken away from the institutions to account for hours the student earned and may not report for one reason or another. Dr. Woodfaulk doesn't want to put an additional burden on the institutions because they can only report what they know. Ms. Peachey stated the issue is not what they know or don't know but can't start with the initial college enrollment and have to back out hours and manually determine CAP hours. Ms. Peachey stated she understands what the regulations say but her concern is the inconsistency that this is not what the Guard is doing with their federal funds and may need to evaluate for academic year 2015-16 and if done would it hurt the Air Guard. SMSgt. Timmons responded she doesn't see where it would.

Dr. Woodfaulk asked if the recommendation is to be consistent with the Army National Guard which is initial college enrollment and Ms. Peachey responded yes. Mr. Brown stated the conversation would continue with the Guard and would have to communicate with legislators who wrote the law and Ms. Peachey responded may want to explore for future years. Ms. Peachey wanted clarification whether the interpretation is to count all hours since the time of initial eligibility regardless of whether CAP funding was used. Ms. Upchurch asked if hours would be counted for spring 2013 because for their fall 2013 request these hours were subtracted and should these hours be subtracted for spring 2014 request. Mr. Brown responded based on the conversation and the direction headed, spring 2013 hours would be counted towards the 130 hours. Ms. Lorinda Copeland asked if the spring 2013 hours should not be counted until all invoices were processed for academic year 2013-14 to be fair. Ms. Peachey responded finish out academic year 2013-14 and going forward can successfully tell the student new interpretation of the regulation and all hours from the time of initial eligibility count. SMSgt Timmons asked if students would be able to file an appeal if changed and Ms. Copeland responded not counting the hours allowed students to be eligible. Mr. Brown stated a military member can file an appeal if they reach 130 hours and haven't used all of their funding. Mr. Brown also stated this may be tricky because a student may say they had hours remaining and now hours that didn't count are counted. Ms. Peachey stated all hours from the initial date of eligibility into CAP will be counted effective fall 2014 and not change the procedure for this current academic year. Ms. Greene asked if the 18,000 was the maximum eligibility and not that the student would receive the full amount and Mr. Brown responded correct.

Mr. Brown asked if the initial date of eligibility is when funding started or when the member became eligible. Ms. Peachey stated it would be whatever date the guard uses. Mr. Brown asked the Guard what date they use and Major Egnew stated he would verify with Chief Deborah Glenn but his short answer would be the date of application. Ms. Upchurch stated if the initial date of eligibility changes it changes the credit hours. Ms. Peachey stated the date can't change every year. Major Egnew stated he likes August 1 because this date keeps it clean. Ms. Upchurch stated their fall term starts July 1 but if not eligible until August 1 would they be eligible for the July class. Major Egnew stated a student attending Limestone should submit their application by June. SMSgt Timmons asked if the initial date of eligibility can be the date graduated from basic training/technical school. Mr. Brown stated the initial date of eligibility can be different as long as before August 1st Major Egnew stated his only fear is that members will say they thought they had until August 1st although classes started in July. Ms. Peachey asked if the initial date of eligibility was the date requirements completed and not the application date and Major Egnew responded correct. Mr. Brown stated the student may be eligible but did not complete application because thought had until August 1. SMSgt. Timmons stated she can communicate this in a newsletter and Major Egnew stated will handle on the army side. Ms. Peachey asked if the application is not submitted until August 1 but the eligibility date is prior to start date can the student be retroactively awarded and Ms. Upchurch stated this is what she is asking. Major Egnew stated if there is no issue with retroactive payments he has no issue. Mr. Brown stated the eligibility date and application has to be prior to August 1.

c. 62-256 Military Mobilization

Mr. Brown thought 62-256 D. needed to be reviewed because the statement was a contradiction. Ms. Peachey stated these hours should not be counted against the member and Ms. Greene asked why. Ms. Peachey stated this would be consistent with the LIFE Scholarship and Ms. Green responded LIFE is different when it comes to military mobilization. Dr. Woodfaulk asked if using AR621-5 which restricts credit hours to 130, and if students are not penalized for going on military mobilization, the student may exceed 130 credit hours and what would happen. Major Egnew stated he would have to research because Army members can you FTA wherever they are because it is online. Ms. Greene stated if the full verbiage of the law is reviewed she thinks it refers to not penalizing students if they have to be mobilized but if the student is taking classes online while mobilized the hours will count toward the 130 hours. Dr. Woodfaulk stated students would be penalized for taking credit hours but not for withdrawal due to mobilization. Mr. Brown stated the verbiage would be revised for clarification.

4 Other Business for Discussion

Ms. Green asked regarding section 62-258 H. if institutions were responsible for obtaining their own information and stated students may have attended other colleges which they do not have to list. Dr. Woodfaulk asked Ms. Green if she was concerned about hours not declared by a student and Ms. Green responded yes. Dr. Woodfaulk asked if other students sign something stating they agree to submit all transcripts of all credit hours earned and Ms. Green responded no and that none of the technical colleges require students to submit transcripts from other colleges and wouldn't know if they have attended another school unless they received CAP at that school. If students don't want to retake a class the vast majority do submit transcripts.

Ms. Upchurch responded she goes by the database for other institutions and add the hours for the home institution. Ms. Upchurch stated they require transcripts whether earned credit or not and thought it was federal regulation to receive all transcripts. Ms. Green responded no and that SAP is based on the home institution. Dr. Woodfaulk stated will have to review. Mr. Brown

told Ms. Greene whatever she is doing is her official certification for her institution. Dr. Woodfaulk stated the official transcript is required for LIFE and do students certify and she responded correct. Dr. Woodfaulk asked if the same language can be added to the CAP program. Ms. Peachey responded if added anywhere add to the application that they are submitting all transcripts and schools are covered if students don't do what they are supposed to do. Mr. Brown stated can be added in procedural language. Major Egnew stated the change shouldn't be made until after the current CAP application submission because members have already downloaded the application. SMSgt. Timmons stated she would have time to revise. Major Egnew and SMSgt. Timmons will discuss.