

CHAPTER 176

AN ACT establishing a Troops to College Grant Program and amending P.L.2009, c.125.

BE IT ENACTED by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:

1. Section 2 of P.L.2009, c.125 (C.18A:3B-42) is amended to read as follows:

C.18A:3B-42 Troops to College Grant Program.

2. a. The Secretary of Higher Education, in consultation with the Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs, shall establish the Troops to College Program. The purpose of the program shall be to assist New Jersey's institutions of higher education in coordinating the provision of a comprehensive array of services to assist veterans in making the transition into the college classroom. The services may include, but need not be limited to, assistance in applying for State and federal student financial aid, counseling resources, a campus veterans' assistance officer to provide a single point of contact for information on the institution's benefits and programs for veterans, and an online resource to consolidate pertinent information specifically for veterans attending that institution.

b. The secretary in implementing the Troops to College Program shall include on its Internet site information to assist veterans in accessing the higher education opportunities that exist in the State. The information shall include, but need not be limited to:

(1) contact information for the campus veterans' assistance officer at each of the institutions of higher education; and

(2) information on the array of programs and services available to veterans at each of the institutions of higher education.

c. The secretary, in consultation with the department, shall establish a Troops to College Grant Program. Under the program, the secretary shall annually select up to three institutions of higher education to receive a \$150,000 Troops to College grant. In order to receive a grant, an institution shall demonstrate that it is providing a comprehensive array of services, benefits, and programs for veterans attending the institution. In awarding a grant to an institution, the secretary shall consider the following factors:

(1) the total number of self-reporting veterans enrolled in the institution;

(2) the existence of a veterans' affairs office at the institution and the number of staff assigned to the office;

(3) whether the institution has entered into the Department of Defense Voluntary Education Partnership Memorandum of Understanding;

(4) whether the institution's tuition and fees are at or below the minimum limits established by the "Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008," Pub.L.110-252 (38 U.S.C. s.3301 et seq.);

(5) whether the institution participates in the Yellow Ribbon Program of the "Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008," Pub.L.110-252 (38 U.S.C. s.3301 et seq.);

(6) whether the institution waives its application fee and offers priority registration to veterans;

(7) the level of academic and staff support provided to veterans enrolled in the institution;

(8) the number and type of extracurricular activities designed for and offered to veterans enrolled in the institution;

(9) the amount of institutional funds allocated to support veterans enrolled in the institution, including the number of scholarships offered to veteran students;

(10) whether the institution offers veteran housing or provides an area on campus where veteran students may meet and discuss issues of common interest;

(11) the course completion rate of self-reporting veterans enrolled in the institution;

(12) the institution's retention and graduation rates for self-reporting veterans enrolled in the institution;

(13) the student loan default rate for self-reporting veterans enrolled in the institution; and

(14) the employment and salary status of self-reporting veterans six years following graduation from the institution.

2. This act shall take effect in the first full academic year following enactment.

Approved July 22, 2021.