

Yellow Ribbon GI Education Enhancement Program

Program Update

July 1, 2009

Overview

The Yellow Ribbon GI Education Enhancement Program (YR) is a provision of the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008. This program allows degree granting institutions in the United States to voluntarily enter into an agreement with VA to fund tuition and fees that exceed the VA's base benefit. The Post-9/11 GI Bill pays a base benefit of **up to** the highest public in-state undergraduate tuition. Early in the drafting process the VA identified the highest single **per-term** figure available to veteran students attending California postsecondary institutions under the new Chapter 33 is \$6,585.54 or \$13,173.08 for the academic year. In the final version, however, the VA identified \$0 benefit for veterans attending California postsecondary institutions because UC's charge "Fees" rather than tuition.

As currently configured, the Post 9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act provides no base benefit to veterans attending California institutions. This is being vigorously opposed in Washington but the VA has not been willing to modify their position. Thus, veterans attending institutions in California are only eligible for YR benefits. Under YR, the institution can provide grants for **up to** 50% of the remaining tuition and fees and VA will match the amount 100%.

Institutions that voluntarily enter into a Yellow Ribbon Agreement with VA choose the dollar amount of the grant per student and the maximum number of eligible students. VA will match the institutional grant and issue payment directly to the institution.

USC's Aid to Veterans

Veterans enrolled at USC are generously supported by the university's financial aid policies and practices. The Office of Financial Aid reports the following for **2008-2009**:

- 111 veterans currently enrolled at USC
- 101 of these veterans receive gift aid
- 67 undergrads receive an average of \$39,125 in gift aid (including Pell, SEOG, UG, Cal Grant, scholarships and sponsored agency awards)
- 34 graduate students receive an average of \$18,126 in gift aid (departmental awards, sponsored agency, scholarships)
- 59 of the total 111 enrolled veterans are also receiving veteran's benefits, for an average of \$8,800, which is included in the gift aid figure.

USC's Current Participation for 2009-2010

USC has applied to the VA to participate in YR as follows:

1. Grants of \$2,500 for up to 20 eligible undergraduates.
2. Grants of \$10,000 for up to 10 eligible graduate students in the USC School of Social Work.
3. Grants of \$10,000 for up to 10 eligible graduate students in the USC Rossier School of Education.

Selection of Applicants to the Yellow Ribbon Program

The VA requires schools to offer participation in the Yellow Ribbon Program to students on a “first come, first served” basis. The VA specifically did not provide detailed guidance to colleges about the details of their "first-come, first-served" policies. The policy that USC will use to determine “first come, first served” is the following:

The transaction date that the VA prints on the veteran’s Certificate of Eligibility will determine the order in which the university awards Yellow Ribbon Program funds. The earliest date will receive the first award and continue on until all of the university awards are exhausted or until the first day of classes, whichever comes first. The selection process will take place each year prior to the beginning of the Fall semester.