

The New Britain Herald (newbritainherald.com), Serving New Britain, Conn., and surrounding areas

News

State universities sign on to tuition program

Sunday, June 28, 2009 10:07 PM EDT

By JENNIFER ABEL
Staff writer

Military veterans going to college in Connecticut should get a break on tuition now that the board of trustees of the state university system has voted to participate in the federal Yellow Ribbon GI Education Enhancement Program.

“With the Post 9/11 GI Bill, a veteran can get the highest in-state undergraduate tuition and fees [reimbursed] ... the Yellow Ribbon program says to private colleges and universities, if you want to, you can waive part of the difference and the VA will match it,” said Bernard Kavalier, assistant vice chancellor for public affairs for the Connecticut State University System (comprising Central, Southern, Western and Eastern Connecticut state universities).

Here’s how it works (with numbers kept deliberately low for simplicity’s sake): suppose the University of Connecticut has the highest tuition of all state universities, charging \$500 per semester for in-state students. Suppose that Yale, meanwhile, charges \$1,000 tuition per semester. Under the old program, a veteran going to Yale would be reimbursed \$500 — equal to the cost of attending UConn — and have to pay the extra \$500 out-of-pocket.

With the Yellow Ribbon program, Yale might choose to waive \$200 of the veteran’s tuition, and the VA would match that \$200, thus reducing the veteran’s out-of-pocket expenses to \$100.

This shows how veterans would benefit by attending private colleges that participate in the Yellow Ribbon program, but doesn’t explain why the Connecticut State University System enrolled in the program, since tuition at state colleges is already covered under the GI bill.

“It’s a combination of tuition and fees,” Kavalier said. “Let’s say our tuition is lower than UConn, but our fees are higher.” By participating in the Yellow Ribbon program, the schools will enable veterans to offset some high fee costs. However, Kavalier suspects such people will be only a tiny minority of Connecticut Yellow Ribbon recipients.

“For our state university system, we’re not anticipating a large number of [in-state] service personnel. Most are likely to be out-of-state students,” referring to veterans who do not qualify for in-state Connecticut tuition rates.

In addition to students attending private or out-of-state institutions the Yellow Ribbon program can also be applied to work toward a graduate degree.

In addition to the CSU system and Yale, Briarwood, Saint Joseph, Goodwin and Trinity colleges are participating as well as the University of Bridgeport, University of Hartford and University of New Haven.

Visit gibill.va.gov for additional information.