

**The Florida Senate**  
**BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

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Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Education

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BILL: SB 442

INTRODUCER: Senator Lee

SUBJECT: Postsecondary Education for Certain Military Personnel

DATE: March 11, 2019

REVISED: \_\_\_\_\_

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Graf	Sikes	ED	<b>Favorable</b>
2.	_____	_____	MS	_____
3.	_____	_____	AP	_____

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**I. Summary:**

SB 442 promotes uniformity in the application of military experience, training, and education toward academic college credits by public postsecondary educational institutions; and establishes a fee waiver for active duty members and honorably discharged veterans of the United States Armed Forces. Specifically, the bill:

- Requires the Board of Governors of the State University System of Florida (BOG) and the State Board of Education (SBE), in consultation with the Chancellor of the State University System and the Chancellor of the Florida College System (FCS), to adopt regulations and rules, respectively, which create a uniform system that enables eligible servicemembers or veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces to earn academic college credit for experience, college-level training, and education acquired in the military. The bill specifies the requirements that the BOG regulations and SBE rules must address at a minimum, and requires each public postsecondary educational institution to participate in the uniform system.
- Requires a state university, an FCS institution, and a technical center to waive the transcript fee for an active duty member and an honorably discharged veteran of the United States Armed Forces; and specifies related reporting and rulemaking requirements.

The bill may result in a minimal loss of revenue to public postsecondary education institutions.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2019.

**II. Present Situation:**

The Florida Legislature has enacted laws to provide members of the United States Armed Forces access to public postsecondary education in the state.

## College Credit for Military Training and Education Courses

The Board of Governors of the State University System of Florida (BOG) is required to adopt regulations and the State Board of Education (SBE) is required to adopt rules that enable eligible servicemembers or veterans of the United States Armed Forces to earn academic college credit at public postsecondary educational institutions for college-level training and education acquired in the military.<sup>1</sup> The regulations and rules must include procedures for credential evaluation and the award of academic college credit, including, but not limited to, equivalency and alignment of military coursework with appropriate college courses, course descriptions, type and amount of college credit that may be awarded, and transfer of credit.<sup>2</sup>

## Fee Waivers

Florida law provides fee waivers to students including, but not limited to, veterans and active duty members of the United States Armed Forces who meet specified criteria.<sup>3</sup> Some fee waivers are mandatory,<sup>4</sup> while others are permissive.<sup>5</sup> For instance, a state university, an FCS institution, a career center operated by a school district, or a charter technical career center must waive tuition for undergraduate college credit programs and career certificate programs for each recipient of a Purple Heart or another combat decoration superior in precedence if the recipient meets the criteria specified in law.<sup>6</sup> An FCS institution may waive any portion of the student activity and service fee, the financial aid fee, the technology fee, the capital improvement fee, and any other fees authorized in law<sup>7</sup> for a person who is an active duty member of the Armed Forces of the United States using military tuition assistance provided by the United States Department of Defense.<sup>8</sup>

## III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

SB 442 promotes uniformity in the application of military experience, training, and education toward academic college credits by public postsecondary educational institutions; and establishes a fee waiver for active duty members and honorably discharged veterans of the United States Armed Forces. Specifically, the bill:

- Requires the Board of Governors of the State University System of Florida (BOG) and the State Board of Education (SBE), in consultation with the Chancellor of the State University System (SUS) and the Chancellor of the Florida College System (FCS), to adopt regulations and rules, respectively, which create a uniform system that enables eligible servicemembers or veterans of the United States Armed Forces to earn academic college credit for experience, college-level training, and education acquired in the military. The bill specifies the requirements that the BOG regulations and SBE rules must address at a minimum, and requires each public postsecondary educational institution to participate in the uniform system.

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<sup>1</sup> Section 1004.096, F.S.; *see also* Board of Governors, Regulation 6.013 and Rule 6A-14.0302, F.A.C.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> Section 1009.26, F.S.

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*, at (5), (7)-(8), (12)-(14).

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*, at (1)-(4), (6), (9)-(11), and (15).

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*, at (8).

<sup>7</sup> Section 1009.23, F.S.

<sup>8</sup> Section 1009.26(15), F.S.

- Requires a state university, an FCS institution, and a technical center to waive the transcript fee for an active duty member and an honorably discharged veteran of the United States Armed Forces; and specifies related reporting and rulemaking requirements.

### **College Credit for Military Training and Education Courses**

The bill specifies modifications to the BOG regulations and the SBE rules regarding the application of academic college credit for experience, college-level training, and education acquired in the military. Specifically, the bill:

- Requires the BOG and SBE to consult with the SUS Chancellor and the FCS Chancellor to adopt regulations and rules to create a uniform system that enables eligible servicemembers or veterans of the United States Armed Forces to earn academic college credit for experience acquired in the military, in addition to the existing ability of such servicemembers or veterans to earn academic college credit for college-level training and education acquired in the military.
- Specifies that the BOG regulations and SBE rules must include, at a minimum, the following:
  - Procedures for the evaluation of military credentials and experience and the award of academic college credit based on such credentials and experience, including, but not limited to, equivalency and alignment of military coursework and experience with appropriate college courses and course descriptions.
  - A list of courses for which academic college credit must be awarded for specified military credentials and experience. Academic college credit must be offered for required coursework based on military credentials and experience, when appropriate.
  - Use of the American Council on Education's "Guide to the Evaluation of Educational Experiences in the Armed Services,"<sup>9</sup> or a similar resource if such guide is discontinued, when determining which military credentials and experience must be applied toward the award of academic college credit.
  - A policy for the mandatory transfer of academic college credits awarded between public postsecondary educational institutions.
  - The minimum number of academic college credits each public postsecondary educational institution must offer for qualifying military credentials and experience; however, a public postsecondary educational institution may offer additional academic credits for such credentials and experience, when appropriate.
- Requires each public postsecondary educational institution to participate in the uniform system.

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<sup>9</sup> American Council on Education's (ACE's) Military Guide presents credit recommendations and detailed summaries for formal courses and occupations offered by all branches of the military. These credit recommendations appear on the service member's Joint Services Transcript (JST). All recommendations are based on ACE reviews conducted by college and university faculty members who are actively teaching in the areas they review. The team assesses and validates whether the courses (over 5,000) or occupations (3,507) have the appropriate content, scope, and rigor for college credit recommendations. The Military Guide includes all evaluated courses and occupations from 1954 to the present. New courses and occupations are continually being evaluated by ACE, and these entries are added on a daily basis. ACE only reviews courses and occupations selected by the military services. American Council on Education, *Guide to the Evaluation of Educational Experiences in the Armed Forces*, <https://www.acenet.edu/news-room/Pages/Military-Guide-Online.aspx> (last visited Feb. 6, 2019).

The uniform system may provide assurance to the eligible servicemembers and veterans of the United States Armed Forces regarding the type and the minimum number of academic college credits that such members and veterans will be guaranteed to receive at a public postsecondary educational institution, regardless of the type of institution, for the experience, training, and education acquired in the military. Current BOG regulation<sup>10</sup> and the SBE rule<sup>11</sup> are similar, with some exceptions. For instance:

- The BOG regulation requires the policy and process adopted by each state university board of trustees (BOT) to utilize the American Council on Education's Guide to the Evaluation of Educational Experiences in the Armed Forces (ACE Guide) to determine equivalency and alignment of military coursework with appropriate university courses.<sup>12</sup> The SBE rule does not require the policy adopted by each Florida College System (FCS) institution BOT to include the utilization of the ACE Guide to determine equivalency and alignment of military coursework with appropriate FCS institution courses.
- The BOG regulation requires that the state university BOT policy and process specify that college credit will be granted to students with military training or coursework that is recognized by the ACE, subject to state university transfer practices or limitations on the transfer credit amount, level, or other criteria.<sup>13</sup> In comparison, the SBE rule does not specify similar limitations on the transfer of credit.<sup>14</sup>

### **Fee Waivers**

The bill requires a state university, an FCS institution, and a technical center to waive the transcript fee<sup>15</sup> for an active duty member and an honorably discharged veteran of the United States Armed Forces. Additionally, the bill:

- Requires each state university, FCS institution, career center, and charter technical career center to report to the BOG and the SBE, the number and value of transcript fee waivers granted annually.
- Requires the BOG and the SBE to adopt regulations and rules to administer the transcript fee waivers.

The transcript fee waiver may further assist with making higher education more affordable for active duty members and honorably discharged veterans of the United States Armed Forces.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2019.

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<sup>10</sup> Board of Governors, Regulation 6.013.

<sup>11</sup> Rule 6A-14.0302, F.A.C.

<sup>12</sup> Board of Governors, Regulation 6.013(1)(a)2.

<sup>13</sup> Board of Governors, Regulation 6.013(1)(a)1.

<sup>14</sup> Rule 6A-14.0302(1)(a)1., F.A.C.

<sup>15</sup> Each district school board, for workforce education, and Florida College System institution board of trustees are authorized to establish fee schedules for transcript fees. Such fees must not exceed the cost of the services provided and must only be charged to persons receiving the service. Sections 1009.22(9), 1009.23(12)(a), F.S. Each state university board of trustees is authorized to establish fees for transcripts, not to exceed \$10 per item. Section 1009.24(14)(f), F.S.; *see also* Board of Governors, Regulation 7.003(2)(d).

**IV. Constitutional Issues:**

## A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

## B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

## C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

## D. State Tax or Fee Increases:

None.

## E. Other Constitutional Issues:

None.

**V. Fiscal Impact Statement:**

## A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

## B. Private Sector Impact:

Students with qualifying military experience may experience a cost savings by receiving academic college credit for military experience and through the transcript fee waiver.

## C. Government Sector Impact:

The requirement to award academic college credit and waive the transcript fee may result in a loss of revenue for postsecondary institutions. However, this loss of revenue is expected to be minimal.

**VI. Technical Deficiencies:**

None.

**VII. Related Issues:**

None.

**VIII. Statutes Affected:**

This bill substantially amends the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 1004.096 and 1009.26.

**IX. Additional Information:**

A. **Committee Substitute – Statement of Changes:**

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

B. **Amendments:**

None.

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This Senate Bill Analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill's introducer or the Florida Senate.

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