

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.)

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs and Space

BILL: SB 442

INTRODUCER: Senator Lee

SUBJECT: Postsecondary Education for Certain Military Personnel

DATE: March 25, 2019

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	<u>Graf</u>	<u>Sikes</u>	<u>ED</u>	Favorable
2.	<u>Brown</u>	<u>Caldwell</u>	<u>MS</u>	Pre-meeting
3.	_____	_____	<u>AP</u>	_____

I. Summary:

SB 442 adds military experience to the list of qualifying bases for which servicemembers and veterans may earn academic college credit from a public postsecondary educational institution. The bill requires the Board of Governors of the State University System of Florida (BOG) and the State Board of Education (SBE) to adopt regulations and rules, respectively, which create a uniform system for the awarding of academic credit based on military experience, training, and education. Specific information is required to be included in the adopted rules and regulations.

The bill additionally provides active duty servicemembers and honorably discharged veterans a fee waiver on a transcript from a state university, Florida College System institution, career center operated by a school district¹, or a charter technical career center². Each of these institutions must annually report to the BOG and the SBE the number and value of transcript fee waivers granted.

Fiscal impact is unknown.

II. Present Situation:

Florida provides a number of educational benefits specifically to servicemembers and veterans.

¹ The term "career center" refers to an educational institution under the control of the district school board which offers terminal courses of a technical nature, and courses for out-of-school youth and adults, pursuant to s. 1001.44(3)(a), F.S.

² The term "charter technical career center" refers to a public school or a public technical center operated under a charter granted by the district school board or FCS institution board of trustees or a consortium, including one or more district school boards and FCS institution boards of trustees, that include the school district in which the facility is located, that is nonsectarian, and that is managed by a board of directors, pursuant to s. 1002.34(3)(a), F.S.

Academic College Credit for Training and Education Acquired in the Military

Florida law requires the Board of Governors of the State University System (BOG) and the State Board of Education (SBE) to enable, through regulation and rule, eligible servicemembers and veterans to earn academic college credit at public postsecondary educational institutions based on college-level training and education acquired in the military.³

In adopting regulations and rules, the BOG and the SBE must include procedures to evaluate credentials and the award of academic college credit, including providing for the:

- 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.⁴

Tuition and Fee Waivers

Florida law provides tuition and fee waivers to students, in certain circumstances, including veterans and active duty members of the USAF who meet specified criteria.⁵ Some waivers are mandatory,⁶ while others are permissive.⁷

The following fee waivers apply to current or former members of the U.S. Armed Forces or U.S. Reserve Forces:

- An honorably discharged veteran of the USAF, the United States Reserve Forces, or the National Guard who resides in-state while enrolled in the program; or who uses the educational assistance provided by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is eligible for, and must receive an out-of-state fee waiver from a state university, a Florida College System institution, a career center operated by a school district, or a charter technical career center.⁸
- An active duty member of the USAF residing or stationed out-of-state is eligible for, and must receive an out-of-state fee waiver from a state university, Florida College System institution, career center operated by a school district, or charter technical career center.⁹
- An active duty member of the USAF using military tuition assistance provided by the United States Department of Defense is eligible for, and may receive a waiver of any portion of the student activity and service, fee, the financial aid fee, the technology fee, the capital improvement fee, and any other fees otherwise authorized in law from a Florida College System institution.¹⁰
- A recipient of a Purple Heart or another combat decoration superior in precedence who is currently or was at the time of the military action a resident of the state is eligible for, and must receive a tuition waiver for an undergraduate or career certificate program from a state

³ Section 1004.096, F.S.; *see also* Board of Governors, Regulation 6.013 and Rule 6A-14.0302, F.A.C.

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ Section 1009.26, F.S.

⁶ Section 1009.26 (5), (7)-(8), (12)-(14), F.S.

⁷ Section 1009.26 (1)-(4), (6), (9)-(11), and (15), F.S.

⁸ Section 1009.26(13)(a), F.S.

⁹ Section 1009.26(14)(a), F.S.

¹⁰ Section 1009.26(15), F.S.

university, a Florida College System institution, a career center operated by a school district or a charter technical career center.¹¹

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

Academic College Credit for Training and Education Acquired in the Military

SB 442 adds military experience to the list of qualifying bases (currently consisting of college-level training and education acquired in the military) for which servicemembers and veterans may earn academic college credit from a public postsecondary educational institution. The bill requires the Board of Governors of the State University System (BOG) and the State Board of Education (SBE) to adopt regulations and rules, respectively, which create a uniform system for the awarding of academic credit based on military experience, training, and education. In establishing a uniform system, the BOG and the SBE must consult with the Chancellor of the State University System (SUS) and the Chancellor of the Florida College System (FCS).

This bill requires the BOG to specifically include in the regulations and rules:

- Military credentials and experience as new bases for the award of academic credit;
- A list of courses for which academic college credit must be awarded based on military credentials and experience. In determining which military credentials and experience qualify for credit, institutions must use the American Council on Education's "Guide to the Evaluation of Educational Experiences in the Armed Services,"¹² or a similar resource if the guide is discontinued.
- 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, as appropriate, offer additional academic credits for credentials and experience.

Under the bill, each public postsecondary educational institution is required to participate in the uniform system.

Current BOG regulation¹³ and the SBE rule¹⁴ address some of the provisions in the bill, although inconsistently. For instance:

¹¹ Section 1009.26(8), F.S.

¹² 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 March 18, 2019).

¹³ Board of Governors, Regulation 6.013.

¹⁴ Rule 6A-14.0302, F.A.C.

- The BOG regulation requires the policy and process adopted by each state university board of trustees (BOT) to use the American Council on Education’s Guide to the Evaluation of Educational Experiences in the Armed Forces (ACE) to determine equivalency and alignment of military coursework with appropriate university courses.¹⁵ The SBE rule does not, however.
- 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.¹⁶ In contrast, the SBE rule does not limit the transfer of credit.¹⁷

Requiring the BOG and the SBE to adopt a uniform system, and include specified criteria in BOG regulations and SBE rules on the award of academic credit for military experience could provide greater consistency to active duty servicemembers and veterans who seek the award of academic credit at different institutions.

Fee Waivers

The bill provides active duty servicemembers and honorably discharged veterans a fee waiver on a transcript from a state university, FCS institution, career center operated by a school district, or a charter technical career center. Each of these institutions must annually report to the BOG and the SBE the number and value of transcript fee waivers granted.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2019.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

The bill does not appear to require cities and counties to expend funds or limit their authority to raise revenue or receive state-shared revenues as specified by Article VII, Section 18 of the State Constitution.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

D. State Tax or Fee Increases:

None.

¹⁵ Board of Governors, Regulation 6.013(1)(a)2.

¹⁶ Board of Governors, Regulation 6.013(1)(a)1.

¹⁷ Rule 6A-14.0302(1)(a)1., F.A.C.

E. Other Constitutional Issues:

None identified.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

Qualifying servicemembers and veterans may save money by receiving academic college credit for military experience and through the transcript fee waiver.

C. Government Sector Impact:

The Board of Governors (BOG) and the State Board of Education (SBE) may incur fiscal costs from the bill, based on the provisions that require the BOG and the SBE to amend or adopt new regulations and rules.

Additionally, institutions will have to waive the transcript fee for active duty servicemembers and honorably discharged veterans, and annually report the number of waivers to the BOG and the SBE.

Fiscal impact from these requirements is unknown.

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.

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