

# Wyoming Community College Commission

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## Memo

To: Governor Matt Mead, Wyoming State Legislature  
From: Amy Brockel  
Date: February 6, 2017  
Re: Overseas Combat Veterans, Surviving Spouses and Orphans Education Benefit  
Annual Report as per Wyoming Statute 19-14-106 (e)—Revised

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## OVERVIEW:

As a result of the 2006 legislative session, Wyoming Statute 19-14-106 was expanded to allow for 10 semesters of free tuition and fees for overseas combat veterans, surviving spouses and orphans. The Community College Commission was tasked to implement the benefit and reimburse the University and the community colleges. During the 2007 legislative session, the statute was amended to include reimbursement for Vietnam veterans.

The following is a report of the program's usage at the University of Wyoming and Wyoming's seven community colleges from June 30, 2014 through July 1, 2016.

House Bill No. 76 (2006 Session Laws) contained an original appropriation of \$200,000, which was not sufficient to provide educational benefits for the full 2007-2008 biennium. There was a supplemental budget appropriation of \$200,000 added to fund the program through June 30, 2008. The funding still was not adequate to cover the requests from the eight institutions and additional funding had to be supplemented at the end of the biennium to cover the Spring 2008 semester. \$169,000 was added to the OCV budget from another program to fully cover the requests. The appropriation for the 2009-2010 biennium was \$800,000 with a 5 percent budget cut applied to the program. That brought the available funding to \$760,000 which was not adequate to fully fund the program. The program was supplemented by \$172,046. The supplemental funding came from the projected surplus that was in the health insurance fund for the colleges.

The Community College Commission submitted a biennial budget request for \$760,000 and an exception request of \$240,000 to meet the anticipated growth in the program in the 2011-2012 biennium. Both requests were approved by the Governor and appropriated by the legislature, bringing the total funding for the 2011-2012 biennium to \$1,000,000. The use of the 2011-2012 biennium funds began with the summer 2010 semester and continued through the spring 2012 semester. It was projected that with the requests from the seven community colleges and the University of Wyoming the program would again face a shortfall of funds to finish out the biennium. Permission was sought from the Budget Division and denied by the Governor's office

to transfer \$250,000 from the surplus health insurance to cover the previously projected deficit in this program. The necessary \$250,000 was ultimately transferred from the University of Wyoming's Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) budget to fully fund the program through the 2011-2012 biennium.

The biennial standard appropriation for the 2013-2014 biennium was \$1,000,000. An additional \$200,000 was added with an exception request. The exception request was needed because the Community College Commission anticipated continued growth of the program over the biennium. The exception request was approved for a total 2013-2014 biennial budget of \$1,200,000. Toward the end of the biennium, for unknown reasons, the program seemed to level off and is no longer continuing the growth previously seen in the three preceding biennia. So unused funds were reverted back to the general fund.

The biennial budget for 2015-2016 was \$1,250,000 and below is a summary of usage from the start of the 2015-2016 biennium through the final semester paid from that budget. There was money remaining in the budget at the end of the biennium and those remaining funds were reverted back to the general fund.

In total this program has assisted 874 Wyoming veterans since the first semester in the fall of 2006 through the Spring of 2016. This includes the Vietnam era veterans as well as the Overseas Combat Veterans recipients. As of Fall 2016 there have been 69 veterans that have exhausted their benefit (using all 10 semesters) and 155 veterans have accessed the benefit but their window to use the benefit has expired (8 academic years after they first used the benefit has lapsed).

**SUMMARY:**

Vietnam Veteran & Overseas Combat Veteran, Surviving Spouse or Orphan Tuition Reimbursement Program 2015-2016 Biennium Usage			
Semester	University of Wyoming	Community Colleges	Total Participants per Semester
Summer 14	20	20	40
Fall 14	77	80	157
Spring 15	65	83	148
Summer 15	15	35	50
Fall 15	61	101	162
Spring 16	59	106	165
Summer 16	26	34	60
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>323</b>	<b>459</b>	<b>782 semesters paid out</b>
Average Tuition & Fees per semester	\$2,044.26	\$1,132.67	--
<b>Total Reimbursement</b>	<b>\$660,296.88</b>	<b>\$519,895.10</b>	<b>\$1,180,191.98</b>

Wyoming Community College Commission, February 6, 2017