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**SECTION 9. CHAPTER 7, SECTION 2, SESSION LAWS 2014**

Overseas Combat Veterans, Surviving Spouses and Orphans Education Benefit

Annual Report as per Wyoming Statute 19-14-106 (e)

**OVERVIEW:**

As a result of the 2006 legislative session, Wyoming Statute 19-14-106 was expanded to allow for ten semesters of free tuition and fees for overseas combat veterans (OCV), surviving spouses and orphans. The Community College Commission was tasked to implement the benefit and reimburse the University of Wyoming and the seven 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 UW and the seven colleges from July 1, 2013 through June 30, 2014. Also included in these numbers are the Vietnam era veterans (service from August 5, 1964 to May 7, 1975) for which UW and the colleges were reimbursed starting the Spring semester of 2007.

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. In 2007, there was a supplemental appropriation of \$200,000 intended to fund the program through June 30, 2008. The funding was still not adequate to cover the requests from the eight institutions, so additional funding had to be added at the end of the biennium to cover the Spring 2008 semester. A total of \$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 again insufficient to fully fund the program. That time, the program was supplemented by \$172,046. The additional 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 the requests from the seven community colleges and UW would again face a shortfall. 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 UW'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 seen in the three preceding biennia. Below is a summary of usage from the start of the 2013-2014 biennium through the final semester paid from that budget.

DEPARTMENT COMMUNITY COLLEGE COMMISSION

DEPT 057

In total, this program has assisted 716 Wyoming veterans since the first semester in the Fall of 2006 through the Spring of 2014. This includes the Vietnam era veterans as well as the Overseas Combat Veterans recipients.

**SUMMARY:**

Vietnam Veteran & Overseas Combat Veteran, Surviving Spouse or Orphan Tuition Reimbursement Program 2013-2014 Biennium Usage			
Semester	University of Wyoming	Community Colleges	Total Participants per Semester
Summer 12	26	30	56
Fall 12	79	91	170
Spring 13	69	95	164
Summer 13	22	15	37
Fall 13	79	80	159
Spring 14	64	88	152
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>339</b>	<b>399</b>	<b>738</b>
Average Tuition & Fees per semester	\$2,051.70	\$1,055.16	--
<b>Total Reimbursement</b>	<b>\$695,526.36</b>	<b>\$421,007.60</b>	<b>\$1,116,533.96</b>