Date: October 25, 2011

To: Chief Student Services Officers

From: Linda Michalowski
Vice Chancellor, Student Services and Special Programs

Subject: Implementation of Senate Bill 813 and Updated Requirements for Priority Registration for Members of the Military and Recent Veterans

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide updated information to community college districts on the implementation of registration priority for members or former members of the Armed Forces of the United States. There have been a series of legislative bills signed into law that require California’s community colleges to provide priority registration for specific student groups. Our office released an advisory letter when Senate Bill (SB) 272 was signed into law in 2007. Subsequent legislation modified Education Code 66025.8 to expand the student groups eligible for priority registration, clarify requirements, and extend the eligibility timeframe for veterans (SB 361 and SB 813). Based on our review of current law and the recent changes made by SB 813, please be advised that four military groups are entitled to priority registration:

1. Current members of the armed forces;
2. Former members of the armed forces for any enrollment period that begins within four years of their date of separation from state or federal active duty;
3. Former students called to active duty during a period of enrollment; and
4. Current members or former members of the State Military Reserve.

In 2009-10, Senate Bill 361 further specified that priority registration was to be provided to “any member or former member of the Armed Forces of the United States who has received an honorable discharge, a general discharge, or an other than honorable discharge. The law specifies that a former member of the Armed Forces of the United States or the State Military Reserve who received a dishonorable discharge or bad conduct discharge is not eligible for registration priority. In addition, Education Code 66025.8 defines member or former member of the Armed Forces of the United States as including the Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marine Corps, National Guard, Naval Militia, Navy, and the reserve components of each of those forces.

Recent changes enacted through SB 813 have again modified the language on priority registration for members and former members of the Armed Forces by extending the eligible time period from two to “within four years of leaving state or federal active duty” and requires California residency. The changes
to Education Code 66025.8 made by this legislation become effective January 1, 2012. Colleges should also be aware that the Governor signed another bill (Assembly Bill 882) that conforms state law to federal law by providing residency to active duty military and dependents for tuition purposes. It is also important to note that current law does not specify any additional conditions on current members of the military or veterans to receive enrollment priority, such as completion of student education plans, orientation, and assessment. Additionally, colleges are reminded that while state law establishes specific enrollment priorities, a local community college trustee board has the authority under title 5 section 58108 to establish a priority system that is consistent with all applicable state laws and that may include expanded enrollment priorities to meet local needs.

Please note that another new law has just been enacted (AB 194) that requires districts to provide priority registration for foster youth and emancipated foster youth. Existing title 5 regulations also grant priority registration to EOPS students and students with disabilities. There is nothing in law that defines the relative priority of the four groups identified in Education Code and title 5 regulations. As such, we are advising districts that all four groups should have equal and first opportunity to enroll in courses for terms that begin after January 1, 2012. While the provisions of SB 813 become effective January 1, 2012, to the extent that colleges are able to reprogram student information system changes in time for spring 2012 registration we encourage colleges to do so. The goal is to have the revised enrollment priority requirements established by SB 813 fully implemented and operational for summer 2012 registration at the latest.

For reference, the complete text of the legislative bills related to priority registration for veterans can be found at the following link: http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/.

If you have any further questions about these enrollment priority issues, please contact Sonia Ortiz-Mercado, Dean of Matriculation, at sortiz@cccco.edu or (916) 322-6817 or Dr. Chuen Chan, Matriculation Specialist, at cchan@cccco.edu or (916) 322-7988.

cc: Admissions and Records Officers
Matriculation Coordinators
Veterans Program Coordinators
Foster Youth Success Initiative Liaisons
EOPS/CARE Coordinators
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