

September 11-12, 2019

ITEM 184-101-R0519

Revision to BOR Policy 940.13 – Tuition Waivers and Discounts

THAT

The Board of Regents revises BOR Policy 940.13 - Tuition Waivers and Discounts, to include a new mandatory tuition waiver for members of the Montana National Guard.

EXPLANATION

This new mandatory tuition waiver will augment existing GI Bill and Tuition Assistance entitlements for Montana National Guard members, allowing them to receive financial aid packages that cover 100% of the cost of tuition in the Montana University System. OCHE developed this proposal in partnership with the Governor's Office and the Montana National Guard based on the following elements:

Recruitment & Retention

The mandatory tuition waiver will serve as an effective tool to help recruit new Montana Soldiers and Airmen, retain those who currently serve, and enhance the Guards ability to remain a viable resource to the citizens of Montana. The Montana National Guard cannot compete with states who offer full tuition assistance programs, to include the bordering states of ID, WY, ND, WA, CO and UT. There are currently 40 states who provide full tuition waivers to National Guard members through a variety of processes with various benefits, some in addition to tuition covering the entire cost of attendance. Incorporating a tuition waiver for Montana will allow the Montana National Guard to compete more favorably with students who might otherwise chose to attend an out-of-state college. It would also allow the National Guard to offer a benefit that active duty recruiters cannot. Increasing the strength of our National Guard will not only enhance their resources in times of need, but also increase enrollment in Montana educational institutions, maintain force structure (National Guard units), and full-time jobs. In addition, it will help maintain the \$434 million dollars the National Guard brings to our Montana communities every year. The new benefit will increase recruits, keep students in Montana, and help retain Soldiers and Airmen in the Montana National Guard.

Ensuring Affordability

This new program will complement existing funding sources which are currently available to members of the Montana National Guard and through their combined application extend free college tuition. It will also align approaches with the federal Choice Act that requires in-state rates for all active duty military. The federal tuition assistance program, along with the GI Bill, help offset tuition costs for enrolled members and the state-funded scholarship program, currently funded at \$414,724 per biennium, offers scholarships on a first-come-first serve basis. Despite these benefits, they do not completely cover the total costs of tuition. The new tuition waiver will cover the additional costs of education that are not covered by the existing program.

Operational Feasibility

Tuition waivers will be applied as last dollar awards, meaning all other grants and scholarships received by National Guard members will be applied toward the cost of tuition first before waivers are applied. There are approximately 150 guardsmen currently attending the MUS with a projection that this number will double once the new waiver is in place. Implementation of the waiver will produce an annual cost to the MUS of \$200,000, after federal and state scholarships are awarded.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment #1: Draft Revision to BOR 940.13