Streamlining Your Veterans Certification Process

Great Lakes Conference 2013

Kimberly Blair-Chambers, Associate Registrar
Michigan State University
November 8, 2013
Michigan State University

**MSU Campus**
- 5,200 acres with 2,100 in existing or planned development
- 17,500 acres throughout Michigan used for agricultural, animal, and forestry research

**Academics**
- 200 program of undergraduate, graduate, and professional study
- 17 degree granting colleges (includes College of Law affiliation)

**Global**
- More than 275 study abroad programs on all continents in more than 60 countries
Michigan State University

Student Enrollment – Fall 2013

- 49,343 students enrolled: from all 83 counties in Michigan, all 50 states and more than 130 countries
- 37,278 undergraduate, 10,310 graduate & professional, and 1,755 non-degree
- 52% women, 48% men
- 16.1% students of color, 13.5% international
- Approximately 529,000 living alumni worldwide
Veteran Statistics

Fall 2013 Certifications = 439 Students

- Chapter 33 = 295
  - Dependents = 127
  - Service Members = 168
  - Guest = 5
- Chapter 31 = 11
- MSU DVAP = 5
- Chapter 30 = 7
- Chapter 1606/1607 = 49
- Chapter 35 = 72
What is Process Mapping?

Process mapping is a technique for documenting activities in a detailed, compact, and graphic form to help managers understand processes and highlight areas for potential improvement. (Hartley, Melnyk, Swink, & Cooper, 2010)
Goal – Assist Michigan State University in becoming more efficient with the certification process

*Process Mapping* by the Orion Development Group

- Selected team members
- Overviewed process
- Looked at current process (work flow)
- Identified gaps
- Started mapping the process
Process Mapping

- System Map
- Top down flow chart
- Block Diagram
- Activity Chart
- Workflow diagram
- Cross functional flow chart
Why Process Mapping?

- MSU processing has not been reviewed from start to finish in many years
- As new chapters, processes, and reporting needs have changed, we have modified our process, but have been unable to review the process as a whole
- Look at staffing needs and realistic expectations for staff
- Assure partnerships with other MSU departments
- Provide excellent Customer Service to our Veterans
Process Mapped

- Enrollment Certification and student tuition payments for students utilizing Department of Veterans Affairs Educational Benefits.

- Of the over 400 students each semester using VA Educational Benefits. MSU receives tuition payments directly from the Department of Veterans Affairs for 75% of students certified.

- With changing legislature pertaining to VA Educational Benefits, it was important for MSU to exam our certification process to the Department of Veterans Affairs as well our internal units contributing to certification. The Office of the Registrar and Controllers Office work collaboratively reporting tuition to VA, processing payments to student accounts, reviewing for overpayments, and processing debt.
Map of the Process - Overview

Veterans Certification

Chapter 30
   - Student Information
   - Back Billing

Chapter 31
   - Student Information

Chapter 33
   - Student Information
   - Constant Change

Chapter 35
   - Student Information
   - Timing of VA funds received
   - Not knowing when benefits are exhausted
   - Determining Tuition & Fees
   - Deterring Residence or Distant Learning

Chapter 1606/1607
   - Student Information
   - VA File #

DVAP
   - Student Information
Customer/Supplier Map

Veteran Certification

Gaps:
Student & Parents - lack of required doc.
VA - guidelines, training, bills, tuition & fees
Controller - payment discrepancies, refund checks, data reports, tuition & fees
Financial Aid - tuition & fees specific awards, data reports
Academic Units - program information

Gaps:
VA - understanding changing regulations, bill backs
Controller - accurate information, updates, bill backs, training
Registrar - Provide training, disseminating information
Academic Units - training
Top-Down Flow Chart

Registrar
- Initial Contact from student
- Gather Documentation
- Supply student with VA guidelines
- Answer student questions
- Add student to the VA Once System

Registrar
- Run internal reports
- Identify additional information required
- Update shadow system
- Give CO list of students
- Review enrollment
- Update VA Once
- Add tracking in SIS

Registrar
- Review weekly reports
- Update VA Once if
- Inform CO of any changes
- Manual file flip
- Review enrollment
- Review tuition assessment
- Report tuition & fees in VA Once
- Determin Aid to use
- Yellow Ribbon
- Enter Award in SIS
- Update shadow system

Controller
- Receive ACH payment
- Deposit funds to students accounts
- Review received funds
- Contact RO regarding received funds
- Create refund check
- Refund check mailed by RO

Registrar
- Run end of term reports
- Verify course completion or last day of attendance
- Notify student of reported last day of attendance
- Report punitive grades, recess &
- Report Academic standing of Probation on RNW
- Report Graduation
Michigan State University
Office of the Registrar
Veteran Enrollment Certification Request

Last Name: ___________________________ First Name: ___________________________ Middle Initial: ___
Social Security Number: ___________________________ MSU PID: ___________________________
Address: ___________________________ State: ______ ZIP Code: ______
Local Telephone Number: ___________________________ MSU Email: ___________________________
Degree Program: ___________________________ Currently Active Duty Military?  Yes  No

Please check GI Bill benefit:

- Chapter 1606  Montgomery GI Bill – Selected Reserves
- Chapter 1607  Reserve Educational Assistance Program (REAP)
- Chapter 30  Montgomery GI Bill – Active Duty
- Chapter 31  Vocational Rehabilitation  Name of VA Counselor
- Chapter 33  Post-9/11 GI Bill  ______ Service Member  ______ Dependent  ______ % of Benefit
- Chapter 35  Survivors’ & Dependents’ Assistance – Service Member Name

VA File Number ___________________________ Service Member SSN: ___________________________

If receiving other aid specifically for paying tuition (examples – Federal Tuition Assistance, Graduate Assistantship, Fellowship, MSU Faculty/Staff course fee courtesy), please indicate below.


- It is my responsibility to ensure that I have enrolled in the proper courses in accordance with my degree program.
- Enrollment in an unauthorized repeat course(s) will not be certified with the VA.
- It is my responsibility to promptly notify the Veteran Certification Office of any registration changes. Any reduction or termination of my enrollment may create a debt with the VA.
- I understand that MSU certifies enrollment based on dates of the course and attendance. Any unofficial withdrawal prior to the end of the term resulting in a failing grade of 0.0 will be reported to the VA with the last date of attendance indicated by the Instructor of the course.
- I understand that I must report the receipt of federal tuition assistance to the Veteran Certification Office.

My signature below confirms that I understand and agree to abide by the guidelines printed above as have been provided with MSU’s VA Enrollment Guidelines.

Signature ___________________________ Date ___________________________

Submit completed form to the Veteran Certification Office, Hannah Administration Building, 426 Auditorium Road, Room 150, East Lansing MI 48824, fax (517) 432-3347, telephone (517) 355-5032.
Certifying Official Timeline

- Changes after our compliance visit
Debt Repayment Process

- Review VA file
- Contact VA for additional information
- Contact Controller’s office for funds received
- Determine if the debt is a true debt
  - If not, write a letter to the VA
- Request check from Controllers Office
- Mail check to VA
# Recommendations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>#1 Veteran Data</th>
<th>#2 Chapter 33</th>
<th>#3 VA Debt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy/Practice</td>
<td>Updated application</td>
<td>Controller’s office has VA Once access</td>
<td>Registrar’s &amp; Controller’s office working together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Actions to Improve the Process</td>
<td>Added student email in VA Once</td>
<td>Controller’s office views enrollment data in VA Once</td>
<td>Registrar’s office provides details of any changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constraints to Remove that Require Help</td>
<td></td>
<td>Creating a common system for Registrar &amp; Controller’s offices</td>
<td>Timing of information from the VA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Required Stakeholders</td>
<td>Registrar, Controller, and Tech Support</td>
<td>Registrar &amp; Controller</td>
<td>Registrar and Controller</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office to Lead this Process</td>
<td>Registrar</td>
<td>Registrar &amp; Controller</td>
<td>Registrar</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lessons Learned

- The MSU external customers are well served.
- Look carefully when formulating the work group to assure that key individuals who can make decisions/changes are around the table.
- Increased positive communication and collaboration between the Office of the Registrar and the Controller’s Office.
  - Initial change not necessarily the best.
  - Continuing to review for best utilization of staff time.
References


Questions?

Kimberly Blair-Chambers
Associate Registrar
Michigan State University
blairch4@msu.edu
517-355-9675