



THE VETERANS' VIEW

ISSUE 18 • SUMMER 2021



HAPPY 245TH BIRTHDAY, AMERICA!

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

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EMPLOYERS GET A TAX BENEFIT FROM PAYING TOWARDS EMPLOYEES' STUDENT LOANS

BY JULIE SANDERS



Employers looking to entice prospective applicants or incentivize current employees to stay longer have a new option as of March 27th, 2020, provided by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act), Section 2206. It allows employers to pay up to a maximum of \$5,250 towards an employee's student loan balance in a year's time.

Prior to the CARES Act provision, employers could make contributions to their employees' student loans, but the payment was subject to payroll taxes and the employee had to report it as income. The provision changes this, so that now, employers will receive the benefit of a tax exclusion as long as it is provided as part of an employer's education assistance program. For employees, the benefit of having their student loan debt reduced is the most obvious perk, but the payment is exempt from income reporting. Another bonus is that the employer does not have to provide the payment directly to the loan originator; it can be paid directly to the employee.

Another great thing is that it's irrelevant whether the debt was incurred while person was employed by the company making the payments; employers can pay on debt previously incurred.

As with any federally-provisioned act, there are caveats and exclusions. For one, the employer must establish a written plan and communicate the terms of that plan to eligible employees. This plan cannot

discriminate in favor of Highly Compensated Employees (HCE's), or those whose compensation was above \$130,000 in 2020. Also, there regulations under Chapter 4 of IRS Publication 970 as to what will be determined as a Qualified Education Loan, but in general, the loans incurred must be for tuition and costs of attendance in pursuit of a "recognized educational credential."

Employers like the benefit not only for the tax exclusion, but for the opportunity to offer a competitive edge when competing for employees in a thin talent market. Employees can also use the provision as a negotiation tool when vying for promotions or salary increases. However, a person who is close to receiving student loan forgiveness may not see much benefit.

Originally slated to expire in December 2021, this benefit has been extended effective through 2025.

More Good News

Interest payments on federally funded student loans are suspended until

September 30, 2021.

You do not need to take any action to receive this benefit.



UNIVERSITIES CREATE A PLAN TO EMERGE FROM THE PANDEMIC WORLD, ENTICE ENROLLMENT

BY JULIE SANDERS

There is no question - enrollment is down, and universities are having to be innovative in their approach to bringing in more students and offering options that will fit a variety of needs and preferences.

What Will Change

There will be a myriad of additional options in online classes and hybrid classes. Many universities have developed several more fully-online Bachelors and Masters degree programs that require no time spent in class at all.

Tuition

If you thought universities might lower their tuition rates to gain the interest of more students, think again. Most universities are keeping tuition level, and many are actually raising it. However, many are either reducing or entirely waiving the fee for online classes. For instance, Wichita State University made the decision to eliminate the online fee of \$97.25 per credit hour for the 21-22 academic year. This will level the costs between traditional and online classroom settings and offer more options for students to plan classes around life and work schedules.

Masks and Vaccinations

Many states have lifted their mask mandates by now. Kansas lifted its State of Emergency status as of June 15, 2021, and now many universities in Kansas, while they strongly encourage masks, will not require them inside classrooms or on campus.

Vaccination for COVID-19 are strongly recommended at many universities for both faculty and students, and several offer vaccinations on campus at no charge. However, there are many universities across the nation that are requiring all faculty, staff and students to be vaccinated in order to have campus presence. The [Chronicle of Higher Education](#) identified in an [article](#) 570 public and private universities as of July 1st that will require vaccination in some form.

Change for the Positive

Despite the struggles of the past year, COVID-19 has pushed forward many initiatives that have been in slow development in higher education to give students more flexibility in the ability to tailor their college experience to their needs. It's a welcome change.

Tutoring stipend from VA

Veterans enrolled half-time or more can receive a \$100/month and \$1200 maximum benefit to cover costs of tutoring.

The classes for which you receive tutoring must be part of your educational program, and your instructor must write a recommendation for your tutoring and submit it to your school's VCO.

Learn more by visiting the VA's website at:

<https://www.va.gov/education/about-gi-bill-benefits/how-to-use-benefits/tutor-assistance/>





NEW FACES IN THE RANKS



DEBBIE NELSON
ADMIN ASSISTANT

Welcome Debbie Nelson to the position of Administrative Assistant! Debbie brings a wealth of experience in supporting and administrative roles and is a organizational genius. She will soon be whipping our office into the kind of shape that Drill Sergeants dream about.

When you call our offices, it's her voice you'll hear. You can reach Debbie for all your VUB questions at: (316) 978-6742 | Deborah.Nelson@Wichita.edu



MIMI BURNSHIRE
PROGRAM SPECIALIST

Veterans Upward Bound welcomes Mimi Burnshire to the position of Program Specialist! Mimi is a military spouse and spent time as the Child Youth Service Leader at Ft. Riley and as the Family Readiness Group Leader with the 635th Army National Guard. Mimi holds a Bachelors in Political

Science from University of Jordan in Amman and a graduate certificate in administrative science and human resources from Central of Michigan.

If you're a current VUB program participant, you'll be seeing Mimi's face around our offices a lot. If you're a veteran in need of services, know someone who could benefit from VUB, or you're a community member who'd like to partner with VUB, reach out to Mimi at: (316) 978-7369 | Mumenah.Burnshire@wichita.edu



BRADY MARZOLF
VA CERTIFYING OFFICIAL

New VA Benefits Coordinator at Wichita State University



if you're enrolling at WSU, Brady Marzolf is the guy you'll see to get your GI Bill benefits kickstarted. Brady is a part of WSU's Military and Veteran Services department and is housed at the Student Veterans Center in Grace Wilkie Hall. Brady previously served in the same capacity at Southwestern College and brings a high level of expertise for military veterans and military connected students at WSU. Brady holds a Masters Degree in Educational Psychology from Wichita State University. Reach out to Brady at (316) 978-3009 | brady.marzolf@wichita.edu

VUB Video Web Series Dealing With Worry

Now available on our [YouTube Channel](#)



Click [here](#) to access or search YouTube for Veterans Upward Bound Wichita State University

Our Web Series videos are a free resource for anyone in need.

Coming this Fall:
"Choosing the Right School"



VETERANS CAN VISIT BLUE STAR MUSEUMS FOR FREE THIS SUMMER



Several Museums around the country have partnered with Blue Star Museums to offer free admission to the nation's active-duty military personnel and their families, including National Guard and Reserve Saturday, May 15, 2021 until Labor Day, Monday, September 6, 2021. In the Wichita metro area, participating museums are Botanica, Exploration Place, Wichita Art Museum, Wichita-Sedgwick County Historical Museum, and the Cosmosphere in Hutchinson.

Going on vacation? See what museums are partnering by visiting the [Blue Star Museum website](https://www.arts.gov/blue-star-museum-map) and clicking on your vacation destination state.

<https://www.arts.gov/blue-star-museum-map>

VFW Post 112 Revitalizing the Building and the Atmosphere

Post Commander Martin Garcia and his team are busy enacting their plans to bring about a new vision for VFW Post 112, the "Over There Post." The vision they hope to create will revitalize the dusty old atmosphere and draw in new vets who will see membership as a value-add to their lives.

Remodels are underway, but there are still opportunities to come to the post for fellowship, such as Post dinners every Tuesday and Thursday. There are also two support groups facilitated by a clinician. Grief group meets every Thursday from 4:30 – 5:30pm, and PTSD support group every Friday from 4:30 – 5:30pm. Check out their calendar for more events at: <https://vfw112.org/di/vfw/v2/default.asp?pid=83989>



VFW POST 112
1560 S. TOPEKA



The 2021 Kansas Veteran and Family Reunion was a Sizzling Success

The Kansas Veterans Family Reunion was able to return this year after skipping 2020. The event was held June 18-20 at their usual spot on Veterans Point at El Dorado Lake. Over 300 veterans and their families showed up to participate



despite the 100-degree heat, and the car show broke a record with 67 entries and 17 trophies awarded for various classes. Saturday's events also included a pinup show, live music, vendors for veterans interests, and a fireworks display. Make plans to attend next year, June 17-19, 2022!






Choose Dole VA

Veterans are encouraged to make an appointment by signing up via the link below or by phone for. This clinic is for Civil Legal questions or if you are in need of Legal Advice. Appointments are available in-person or via tele-video. *This clinic is not for criminal issues.*

**2021
LEGAL AIDE CLINIC**

Robert J. Dole VA Medical Center
Bldg. 5B, Rm 166 | By Appointment
Walk-Ins welcome, but are not guaranteed a time slot

TYPES OF ASSISTANCE OFFERED:

- Record Expungement
- Bankruptcy
- Elder Law
- Child Support
- Divorce
- Guardianship/ Conservatorship
- Individual Rights

Clinics will be held in the Robert J. Dole VA Medical Center, Bldg. 5B, Room 166 from 8:30 to 12:30

July 19th, 2021

To reserve your appointment, please visit <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/70a0d44a9ad22aaff2-2021> or by phone, please contact Linda Gracey at (316) 685-2221 Ext. 57967
Last day for reservations is July 12th, 2021

For additional information involving criminal justice issues or the VJO Program, Please contact the Veterans Justice Outreach Coordinator:
Nicholas Milligan, LSCSW, LCAC
(316) 685-2221 Ext. 57887

VA DISCLAIMER:
The Department of Veterans Affairs assumes no responsibility for the professional ability or integrity of the organization(s) whose name(s) appear on this flyer. This clinic does not constitute an endorsement or recommendation by VA

The VA is offering free legal aid and advice to veterans in an appointment-only clinic on July 19th. Consultations will occur in-person at the Robert J. Dole VA center in Building 5B. Appointments can be made online or by calling 316.685.2221 ext 57967.

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/70a0d44a9ad22aaff2-2021>

Veterans suffering from food insecurity can find relief this year through a partnership between the VA and the DAV, and United Methodist Open Door. Veterans who meet the income criteria can have a food box filled with dry goods, produce, and a limited amount of meat up to twice a month delivered to their address.

Veterans can register during any appointment at the VA, or by calling 316.685.2221 ext 41017. A valid ID as well as proof of income and address will be required.



FOOD BANK DELIVERY

A Program Partnership with
Robert J. Dole VA Medical Center &
Disabled American Veterans Organization

☐ Do you have problems accessing food each month?

☐ Do you lack transportation to get to a food pantry?

☐ Do you meet the income guidelines below?

If you answered **YES** to all these questions, you might be eligible to receive a food box delivery.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTS:

- Proof of Gross Monthly Income
- Proof of Address
- Identification

To Register: You can request to meet with a Social Worker while at any upcoming appointment at the VA or you can schedule by calling the triage Social Worker at **(316) 685-2221 Ext. 41017**

Registration begins April 5th, 2021. Don't forget to bring the documents listed above!

HOUSEHOLD SIZE	MAXIMUM MONTHLY GROSS INCOME
1	\$1,383
2	\$1,868
3	\$2,353
4	\$2,839
5	\$3,324
6	\$3,809
7	\$4,295
8	\$4,780
FOR EACH ADDITIONAL FAMILY MEMBER	\$486



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AN INDEPENDENT DISTRIBUTION CREATED BY:
VETERANS UPWARD BOUND AT WICHITA STATE UNIVERSITY
BRENNAN HALL I, CAMPUS BOX 0137
PHONE: (316) 978-6742 | FAX: (316) 978-3676
EMAIL: VETERANS.UPWARDBOUND@WICHITA.EDU
WEBSITE: WWW.WICHITA.EDU/VUB
EDITOR: JULIE SANDERS
VUB STAFF:
STACIA LYDAY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
DEBORAH NELSON, ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT
JULIE SANDERS, PROGRAM SPECIALIST
MUMENAH BURNISHIRE, PROGRAM SPECIALIST

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KANSAS CITY, MO 64106
TELEPHONE: 816-268-0550
FAX: 816-268-0599; TDD 800-877-8339
EMAIL: OCR.KANSASCITY@ED.GOV

OFFICE FOR CIVIL RIGHT, NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS:

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS
LYNDON BAINES JOHNSON DEPT. OF EDUCATION BLDG.
400 MARYLAND AVENUE, SW
WASHINGTON, DC 20202-1100
TELEPHONE: 800-421-3481
FAX: 202-453-6012; TDD: 800-877-8339
EMAIL: OCR@ED.GOV