

**16 V.S.A. Sec. 2857, Vermont National Guard Tuition Benefit Program
Legislative Report – 2022-2023 Academic Year**

To: The Honorable Philip B. Scott, Governor; the House and Senate Committees on Education and the House Committees on Appropriations, and on Government Operations and Military Affairs

From: Patrick Leduc, Vice President & Chief Operating Officer, VSAC
Ken Gragg, Jr., Deputy Adjutant General, Vermont National Guard

Date: January 15, 2024

Re: Vermont National Guard Tuition Benefits Program Report

Introduction and Background:

The Vermont National Guard Tuition Benefit Program (the “Program”), started in 2019, provides full tuition to eligible Vermont National Guard members at all Vermont Public Colleges and Universities. It provides funding for up to the cost of tuition at Northern Vermont University for all other Vermont colleges, as well as funding for approved certificate (nondegree) programs both in and outside Vermont. Students may enroll as full or part-time students.

For each academic year of attendance under the Program, a Guard member must serve two years in the Guard to receive the full tuition benefit. If the member’s service with the Guard terminates before the member completes the service commitment, other than for good cause as determined by the Guard, the pro rata portion of the tuition paid under the program must be repaid to VSAC pursuant to the terms of an interest-free reimbursement promissory note signed by the member at the time of entering the Program. Funds recouped from loan repayments are added back into the program and given out as new awards.

On or before November 1 of each year, the President, Chancellor, or equivalent position of each educational institution that participated in the Program during the immediately preceding school year shall report to the Vermont National Guard and VSAC regarding the number of members enrolled at its institution during the school year who received tuition benefits under the program and, to the extent available, the courses or program in which the members were enrolled. On or before January 15 of each year, VSAC and Vermont National Guard shall report these data and other relevant performance factors including information pertaining to the achievement of the goals of this entitlement program and the costs of the program to date, to the Governor, the House and Senate Committees on Education and House Committees on Appropriations, and on Government Operations and Military Affairs.

Timeframe Covered:

In the inaugural year of the Program, Guard members were only eligible for funding for the spring semester as well as any summer classes that started in the May-June semester. Now, and going forward, the program covers a full academic year – July 1 through June 30th.

Spending Outcomes:

The Legislature appropriated \$1,319,834 for the program. From July 1, 2022, through June 30, 2023, \$1,200,150.00 was disbursed for Guard members attending eleven Vermont schools.

Norwich University had the largest number of Guard members enroll (31); followed by the University of Vermont (24), and Vermont Technical College (14).

Institutional Information on number of members enrolled, funds disbursed, and programs in which members enrolled:

Institution	# Recipients	\$ Disbursed	Average Award	Yearly Tuition	Enrolled Programs
Burlington Yoga	1	\$ 3,500	\$ 3,500	\$ 3,500	200 Hour RYT
Castleton University	8	\$ 67,145	\$ 8,393	\$11,832	Bachelor of Arts, Kinesiology, Master of Business, Nursing, Physical Education, Sports Management, and Wildlife & Forest Conservation
Center for Technology Essex	1	\$ 375	\$ 375	\$ 375	
Champlain College	11	\$ 63,169	\$ 5,743	\$43,800	Accounting, Business Management, Master of Business Administration, Computer & Digital Forensics, Cybersecurity, Information Security, Management Information Systems
Community College of VT	9	\$ 27,370	\$ 3,041	\$ 8,400	Behavioral Science, Business, Liberal Studies, Health Science, Medical Billing & Coding, Continuing Education
Northern Vermont University	3	\$ 28,509	\$ 9,503		Criminal Justice, Exercise Science
Norwich University	31	\$422,177	\$ 13,619	\$41,624	Architectural Studies, Biology, Chemistry, Civil Engineering, Computer Science, Computer Security, Criminal Justice, Construction Management, Health Science, International Business,

					Management, Political Science, , Strategic Studies
Stafford Technical Center	1	\$ 1,250	\$ 1,250	\$ 1,250	Welding
Vermont Technical College	14	\$175,124	\$12,509	\$14,712	Computer Software Engineering, Construction Management, Dental Hygiene, Electrical Engineering, Nursing, Practical Nursing, Professional Pilot, Undeclared
University of Vermont	24	\$345,531	\$14,397	\$16,392	Agroecology, Animal Science, Biology, Biological Science, Business Operations in Craft Beer, Civil Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Engineering Management, Forestry, Health Sciences, Master of Business Administration, Mechanical Engineering, Neuroscience, Nursing, Psychological Science, Sustainability Ecology & Policy, Wildlife & Fisheries Biology, Undeclared
VT Flight Academy	4	\$66,000	\$16,500	\$16,000	Multi Engine, Private Pilot
Total	107	\$1,200,150			

Achievement of Goals of the Program (submitted by Ken Gragg, Jr., Deputy Adjutant General, Vermont National Guard):

The reporting period covers the funding cycle for the Vermont National Guard Tuition Benefit Program (VTNGTBP) from 1 July 2022 – 30 June 2023. The benefits of the program being able to offer the education entitlement as a benefit continue to have a positive impact on the Vermont National Guard and its members going forward. As anticipated for this reporting period, the program rebounded substantially after having approximately 1,000 soldiers deployed during the previous reporting period.

Federal Tuition Benefits for all Air Guard members (except Active Guard reserve (AGR) members) were once again discontinued, which increased the average disbursement for Air Guard members in SFY 2023. In SFY 2022 there were 84 participants and \$789K compared to 107 participants and \$1.2M in SFY 2023. We anticipate that SFY 2024 will continue at the current level and possibly see a modest increase in enrollment and utilization, as members exercise the option for second bachelor's, master's degrees and funding at approved out-of-state schools for degree programs not available in Vermont. The data shows new recruits in the Army Guard and Air Guard along with prior service recruits continue to cite the education benefit as one of their top incentives for joining the National Guard with approximately 50% of new recruits in the Army Guard and 40% of new recruits in the Air Guard.