

**16 V.S.A. Sec. 2857. Vermont National Guard Tuition Benefit Program
Legislative Report – 2023-2024 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 of Chief Operating Officer, VSAC
Brig. Gen. Henry U. Harder, Jr., Vermont National Guard

Date: January 15, 2025

Re: Vermont National Guard Tuition Benefit 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 Vermont State University or the University of Vermont. It provides up to the cost of tuition at the University of Vermont 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 must report to the Vermont National Guard and VSAC regarding the number of Guard members enrolled at their 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 the Vermont National Guard are required by 16 V.S.A. Sec. 2857(g)(2) to 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 the 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. Since then, the program has covered a full academic year – July 1 through June 30th.

Spending Outcomes:

The General Assembly appropriated \$1,319,834 for the program in FY24 and through the end of FY24 VSAC disbursed \$1,056,368.39 for Guard members attending seven Vermont schools and three out of state schools. As in prior years, the unspent funds are being carried forward for use in the FY25 Program year.

Vermont State University had the largest number of Guard members enrolled (27), followed by Norwich University (26) and the University of Vermont (23).

Institutional Information on numbers of members enrolled, funds disbursed, and programs in which members enrolled are as follows:

Institution	# Recipients	\$ Disbursed	Average Award	Yearly Tuition	Enrolled Programs
Champlain College	19	\$83,240	\$4,381	\$47,400	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accounting • Business Management • Computer & Digital Forensics • Cybersecurity • Economic Crime Investigation • Health Care Administration • Information Security • Information Technology • Management Information Systems- • Master of Business Administration • Software Development
Community College of Vermont	7	\$8,700	\$1,243	\$8,400	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business • Continuing Education • Environmental Studies • Liberal Studies
Middlebury College	1	\$7,605	\$7,605	\$67,100	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language

Norwich University	26	\$337,232	\$12,970	\$46,860	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biology • Civil Engineering • Computer Science & Information Systems • Computer Security Information Assurance • Construction Management • Criminal Justice • Criminology • Cybersecurity • Health Science • Leadership • Management • Nursing • Political Science • Psychology • Strategic Studies
University of Vermont	23	\$311,323	\$13,536	\$16,280	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biochemistry • Biological Science • Biology • Business Administration • Civil Engineering • Engineering Management • Forestry • Health Sciences • Linguistics • Mechanical Engineering • Nursing • Psychological Science • Sustainability, Ecology and Policy

VT Flight Academy	3	\$30,581.39	\$10,194	\$20,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi Engine • Private Pilot • Instrument Rating
Vermont State University	27	\$249,837	\$9,253	\$10,344	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Administration (BS) • Business Administration Management (BS) • Construction Management (BS) • Criminal Justice (BS) • Dental Hygiene (BS) • Diesel Power Technology (AAS) • Electrical Engineering (AE) • Electromechanical Engineering Tech (BS) • Engineering Technology (AE) • Kinesiology (BS) • Literature & Writing (BA) • LPN (CT) • Nursing (AS) • Nursing (BS) • Outdoor Education Leadership (BS) • Professional Pilot (BS) • Respiratory Therapy (AS) • Secondary Education

					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social Studies (BA) • Software Engineering (BS) • Software Engineering (MS)
Out of State	3	\$27,850	\$9,283	Varies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business, Science • Biomedical Sciences
Total	109	\$1,056,368.39			

Achievement of Goals of the Program (submitted by Brig. Gen. Henry U. Harder, Jr., Deputy Adjutant General, Vermont National Guard):

The Program continues to be a critical tool in recruiting and retaining members of the Vermont National Guard, both Army and Air. From the academic year of 2021-2022 to this past academic year of 2023-2024 we have seen a 24% increase in the usage of this vital entitlement program. Last academic year we had 109 Soldiers and Airmen take advantage of this program to further their education and professional development. Our members use the program to earn associate's, bachelor's, and master's degrees. The Program is also used for certificate programs.

Additionally, we saw more than a 50% increase in members pursuing master's degrees this past academic year. This point is critical, as the language in the current statute will have the benefit of the second bachelor's degree and master's degree portions of the program sunsetting at the end of this current State Fiscal Year (June 30th, 2025). We sincerely hope the Vermont State Legislature will make the second bachelor's and master's programs a permanent part of the Program.

Overall, the Vermont National Guard Tuition Benefit Program is achieving its goal of helping add and keep members in our ranks so we can respond to both State and Federal missions when called upon.