

Office of Veterans & Military Services

Veteran & Military Affiliated Student Handbook



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*******Note, anything underlined in blue indicates a hyperlink*******

Office of Veterans & Military Services (OVMS)

The [OVMS](#) is committed to assisting student veterans, active duty personnel and their dependents to achieve their educational goals. We are here to ensure a smooth transition from service to school from admissions to academic planning, connecting with resources for success, as well as understanding and certifying VA Education Benefits.

All veteran students are urged to contact the OVMS to take advantage of the guidance and services available. You served your country honorably, now let us serve you! GI Bill® is a registered trademark of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)

Services Offered in the OVMS

- Educational Counseling for all military connected students
- GI Bill Benefits Processing and Information
- Computer lab with free printing
- Student lounge/study area
- Discounted snacks to support veterans club
- Workshops and celebratory events
- Assistance with navigating college and referrals to campus/community resources

Points of Contact

The OVMS can serve as your point of contact throughout your enrollment at OCC. We can provide referrals to on and off campus resources as well as assist you in accessing information regarding your veterans benefits.

Veterans Coordinator:

Lisa Mooney

Email: l.b.mooney@sunyocc.edu

Phone: (315) 498-2787

Assistant Director of Veterans Affairs:

Steve White

Email: s.p.white21481@sunyocc.edu

Phone: (315) 498-2293

OVMS Front Desk

315-498-2200

veterans@sunyocc.edu

Steps to Utilizing GI Bill Benefits at OCC

1. Contact the OVMS to complete new student intake/ schedule counseling appointment.
2. All enrolled students must provide official transcripts from all previous colleges attended as well as any AP credit. Students must also provide official military transcripts ([JST](#), CCAF transcripts) as well as transcripts from all accredited military programs such as the Defense Language Institute and DLPT test scores.
3. Students must [apply for GI Bill benefits](#) and selecting apply for education benefits. If you have used benefits at another college, you will need to go on and make an update to your claim and add OCC as your new school
4. Meet with your school Navigator or OVMS to set up your schedule. Any changes to schedule or degree program must be discussed with the OVMS.
5. Submit a [request for certification](#) form for each term you wish to receive benefits.
6. Notify the OVMS of all changes to your schedule including adds/drops, changes may negatively impact your MHA, financial aid, or on campus residence.
7. **Mandatory Verification of Enrollment:**
Students utilizing **Ch30, CH33, 1606, and CH 35** benefits must verify their enrollment on the last day of each month when enrolled in classes
Step 1: Opt in to text verification (VA will send you a text once an enrollment is received, reply "yes" to opt in)
Step 2: Verify (reply yes to verify your enrollment within 6 days)
Step 3: Payments (If you fail to verify for 2 consecutive months your MHA and/or kicker will be placed on hold).
[How to verify enrollment for GI Bill students video](#)
*Other ways to verify, online through Ask VA, email or via phone at 855-442-4551.

Cost of Attending

OCC is one of the most affordable ways to start a degree or a new career — especially when compared to attending other private and public colleges in Upstate New York .

The table below is for informational purposes only and may not reflect your true cost of attendance. Please note that tuition and fees are subject to change without your prior notice.

College Costs	Full-Time	Part- Time
Tuition	\$2,700	\$255/credit hour
Student Activity Fee	\$65/semester	\$40/semester
Technology Fee	\$1,200+	\$1,200+
Recreation & Wellness Fee	\$125/semester	\$85/semester
Books & Supplies/ Additional Fees	(see notes)	(varies)
Total Estimated Cost (based on 12 credits): \$3,364/semester- \$6,728/year		

Notes: Students will be billed \$24.00 per registered credit for "Box of Books" charge. All required textbooks/access codes will be made available to students prior to the first day of classes. Detailed information on the Box of Books program is available on the Box of Books Website. ***Students receiving Post 9/11 GI Bill or CH 31 benefits must opt out of Box of Books, VA will not cover this fee!***

What does GI Bill cover?

Each chapter of the GI Bill covers different fees associated with attending college. Below is a breakdown of fees that are generally covered by each Chapter of the GI Bill:

[Chapter 30-Montgomery GI Bill](#)

Under the Montgomery GI Bill students receive a monthly stipend that is sent directly to your bank account. This GI Bill does not cover any tuition costs paid directly to the school or books and supplies. Students are given the monthly stipend to help defray the cost of college attendance.

[Chapter 31- Veterans Readiness and Employment \(VR&E Formerly Vocational Rehab\)](#)

Students utilizing VR&E are entitled to have tuition costs covered by the VA for courses that are required for their program of study. Courses not required for the program of study will not be

covered without prior approval from your VR&E Counselor. VR&E will also cover the full cost of your books and certain school supplies to be purchased through the campus bookstore.

Chapter 33-Post 9/11 GI Bill

If you are eligible at the 100% rate for the Post 9/11 GI Bill the VA will pay 100% of your tuition and fees costs for courses that are required for your program of study. However, Math and English support courses will not be covered by the GI Bill, so you will need to pay those costs out of pocket or via financial aid. If you are eligible for the GI Bill at a lower percentage, the VA will pay tuition costs at whatever percent you are eligible. For Example, if you are at the 60% rate and your tuition costs are \$2,700 the VA will pay \$1,620 ($2700 \times .60$) leaving you with \$1,080 in cost that you will be responsible for paying to the College. You are entitled to a book stipend under this GI Bill that will also be paid at a rate proportional to your eligibility percentage. For students participating in programs that require special equipment (EMT, surgical technology, nursing etc.) the VA will cover section fees associated with these courses but will not cover costs such as uniforms and protective equipment.

Chapter 35

Under Chapter 35, students receive a monthly stipend that is sent directly to your bank account or via check. This chapter does not cover any tuition costs paid directly to the school or books and supplies. Students are given the monthly stipend to help defray the cost of college attendance.

Chapter 1606-Montgomery Select Reserve

Under the Montgomery GI Bill students receive a monthly stipend that is sent directly to your bank account. This GI Bill does not cover any tuition costs paid directly to the school or books and supplies. Students are given the monthly stipend to help defray the cost of college attendance.

What is not covered?

- Recommended courses/books: VA will not pay for recommended courses/books, only required ones.
- Repeated courses: VA will pay for repeated courses if you received certain grades on your original attempt.
- Non-mandatory fees: VA will not pay for fees such as commitment deposits, meal plans, housing, parking permits, tuition refund insurance, fraternity/sorority dues, athletic events, etc.
- Non-punitive grades such as "W" or "UF" that do not count towards your GPA
- Travel costs: The VA will not pay for travel or lodging fees if you choose to register in elective study abroad classes

Financial Aid (formally shopping sheet)

The College Financing Plan is a consumer tool that institutions use to notify students about their financial aid package **after** they have completed a FAFSA application (plan will be emailed). It is a standardized form that is designed to simplify the information that prospective students receive about costs and financial aid so that they can easily compare institutions and make informed decisions about where to attend school. **We encourage everyone to complete the FAFSA as you may be eligible for grants that do NOT have to be paid back. For example if you get Post 9/11 GI bill benefits at 70% grants may cover your remaining 30% of costs.**

Below is a sample of what the college finance plan looks like:

University of the United States (UUS)		MM / DD / YYYY
Undergraduate College Financing Plan		
Student Name, Identifier		
Total Cost of Attendance 2021-2022		
	On Campus Residence	Off Campus Residence
Tuition and fees		\$X,XXXX
Housing and meals	\$X,XXXX	\$X,XXXX
Books and supplies		\$X,XXXX
Transportation		\$X,XXXX
Other education costs		\$X,XXXX
Estimated Cost of Attendance	\$X,XXXX / yr	\$X,XXXX / yr
Expected Family Contribution		
Based on FAFSA As calculated by the institution using information reported on the FAFSA or to your institution.		X,XXXX / yr
Based on Institutional Methodology Used by most private institutions in addition to FAFSA.		X,XXXX / yr
Scholarship and Grant Options		
Scholarships and Grants are considered "Gift" aid - no repayment is needed.		
Scholarships	Grants	
Ment-Based Scholarships	Need-Based Grant Aid	
Scholarships from your school	Federal Pell Grants	\$X,XXXX
Scholarships from your state	Institutional Grants	\$X,XXXX
Other scholarships	State Grants	\$X,XXXX
Employer Paid Tuition Benefits	Other forms of grant aid	\$X,XXXX
Total Scholarships	Total Grants	\$X,XXXX / yr
College Costs You Will Be Required to Pay		
Net Price (Cost of attendance minus total grants and scholarships)		\$X,XXXX / yr
Loan and Work Options to Pay the Net Price to You		
You must repay loans, plus interest and fees.		
Loan Options*	Work Options	
Federal Direct Subsidized Loan (x.xx% interest rate)(x.xx% origination fee)	Work-study	\$X,XXXX / yr
Federal Direct Unsubsidized Loan (x.xx% interest rate)(x.xx% origination fee)	Hours Per Week (estimated)	XX / wk
Private Loan (check with your lender on interest and fees)	Other Campus Job	\$X,XXXX / yr
Institutional Loan (x.xx% interest rate)(x.xx% origination fee)	Total Work	\$X,XXXX / yr
Parents may also apply for the following:	For More Information	
Parent Plus Federal Loan (x.xx% interest rate)(x.xx% origination fee)	University of the United States (UUS)	
Total Loan Options	Financial Aid Office	
	123 Main Street	
	Anytown, ST 12345	
	Telephone: (123) 456-7890	
	E-mail: financialaid@uus.edu	

Types of Financial aid offered at OCC

TAP (Tuition Assistance Program)

New York State residents planning to attend OCC should apply for the New York State Tuition Assistance Program (TAP). TAP provides grant funding to eligible students enrolled in 6 or more credit hours per semester in an approved degree program. Most students can apply for TAP through their FAFSA application. Annual TAP awards can be up to \$5,665, depending on your NYS net taxable income and other eligibility factors. Since TAP is a grant, it does not need to be repaid.

Pell Grant

A Federal Pell Grant, unlike a loan, does not have to be repaid. Pell Grants are awarded usually only to undergraduate students who have not earned a bachelor's or a professional degree. Pell Grants are considered a foundation of federal financial aid, to which aid from other federal and nonfederal sources might be added. Students apply for the Pell Grant by submitting the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

You may only receive Pell Grant for six full-time equivalent years (600%). For example, if you received a Pell Grant at full-time status for four semesters and at 1/2 time status for one semester, you will have used 2 1/4 years or 225% of your eligibility. It is extremely important that you make good use of your eligibility and plan well so that you can achieve your academic goal before exhausting your Pell Grant eligibility.

OCC Foundation Scholarships

Scholarships are a source of money available to students who meet certain eligibility requirements that do not need to be paid back. They are typically awarded based on merit, such as academic performance, leadership, or community service involvement. Complete the General Scholarship Application to be automatically considered for scholarships you may qualify for based on your academic achievements, program of study, financial need, and other criteria.

Excelsior Scholarship

Allows eligible New York State residents with a household income of up to \$125,000 to attend a SUNY or CUNY college tuition-free. Apply through NYS Higher Education Services Corporation (HESC). If you meet HESC requirements, your application will be forwarded to SUNY OCC for final review. SUNY OCC will review your transcripts, current financial aid awards, and any required documentation. If you meet all criteria, you'll receive confirmation from OCC detailing your award amount and eligibility.

Loans

Direct Stafford Loans, from the William D. Ford Federal Direct Loan Program, are low-interest loans for eligible students to help cover the cost of higher education at a four-year college or university, community college, or trade, career, or technical school. Eligible students borrow directly from the U.S. Department of Education at participating schools. You must first complete a [FAFSA](#), and your financial aid eligibility must be determined before applying for a loan.

MERIT Scholarship (Dependents of Veterans)

Covers the cost of attendance, not to exceed the average cost of attendance charged to NYS resident students at a state operated-SUNY college. You must be in good standing (a non-default status) on a student loan made under any NYS or federal education program or on the repayment of any NYS award.

Who is eligible?

MERIT Scholarships provide financial aid to children, spouses, and financial dependents of members of the United States Armed Forces or state-organized militia who provided eligible military service while New York State residents and who:

- Died as a result of injury or illness suffered or incurred while performing their military duties, whether in combat or not; or are classified as missing in action; OR:
- Became severely and permanently disabled as a result of injury or illness suffered or incurred while performing their military duties, whether in combat or not, and a doctor of medicine or osteopathy, licensed to practice in a state, has determined that they are unable to engage in any occupation for remuneration or profit due to their disability.
- MERIT is also available to members of the United States Armed Forces or state-organized militia who provided eligible military service at any time while New York State residents and who became severely and permanently disabled as a result of injury or illness suffered or incurred while performing their military duties, whether in combat or not, and a doctor of medicine or osteopathy, licensed to practice 7 in a state, has determined that they are unable to engage in any occupation for remuneration or profit due to their disability.

Edith Rogers Science Technology Engineering Math (STEM) Scholarship

allows eligible Veterans using the Post-9/11 GI Bill or dependents using the Fry Scholarship to get added benefits. This scholarship provides up to 9 months (or \$30,000) of benefits for training in high-demand fields. Must be enrolled in an undergraduate STEM degree program or qualifying dual-degree program, or you've earned a post-secondary degree or a graduate degree in an approved STEM degree field and are enrolled in a covered clinical training program for health care professionals, or you've earned a post-secondary degree in an approved STEM degree field and are working toward a teaching certification.

Veterans Tuition Award

For veterans with at least four years of active duty service and combat veterans pursuing an undergraduate, graduate degree or vocational training program. Available to students pursuing a PT or FT undergraduate or graduate degree or an approved vocational training program in NYS. Must be a legal resident of NYS and have resided there for 12 continuous months prior to the beginning of the term.

Deferred Billing

Effective August 1, 2019, any student using Ch. 31 (Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment benefits) or Ch. 33 (Post 9/11 GI Bill®) is protected from any penalties imposed by the College while waiting for the VA to make tuition and fee payments. Under this policy, the College:

- Cannot deny a student access to classrooms, libraries, or other institutional facilities
- Cannot make a student borrow money to cover costs while waiting for payment
- Cannot charge a student a late fee or penalty

Protection begins when the student provides the school with a Certificate of Eligibility (COE) or a Statement of Benefits. The College can require the student to submit: The COE or Statement of Benefits no later than the first day of the program written request to use the benefits or other necessary certifications. The coverage period ends when the VA makes payment or 90 days after the date the College certifies tuition and fees. For more information regarding this policy, contact your School Certifying Official (SCO).

Credit for Prior Learning

Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) is an opportunity for students to earn credit for courses based on an assessment of their experiences outside of a traditional classroom.

Military Credits

- Students may be eligible to earn credit for military experience as recommended by the American Council on Education (ACE).
- Students seeking credit for military experience should request their official transcripts through Joint Services Transcript (JST), CCAF or Air University and have them sent to the Office of Registration & Records at transfereval@sunyocc.edu.

Portfolio, Professional Experience and Proficiency

If your prior learning does not fall into one of the categories above, the academic departments at OCC also offer individual assessments of your portfolio or professional credentials. Required materials are determined by the department and may vary by course.

To earn credit, please submit a [Credit for Prior Learning Request form](#). For most courses, there is a cost of \$19 for each credit requested. This means that one 3-credit class will cost \$57.00. For practicum and clinical courses, there is a cost of \$33 for each credit requested. Once credits are awarded, they will be on your record as "Prior Learning Credit" with a grade of "TR" in the "My Progress" section of Student Planning.

Graduation Rates

- To see up to date graduation rates for students at Onondaga Community College at the [US Department of Education College Score Card](#)

Residency Requirements & In-State Tuition for Veterans (Military)

In certain situations, Active Duty, Veterans, and their dependents are eligible for in state classification for residency purposes.

Military Members and Dependents

A student who is the natural or adopted child, stepchild, or spouse of a member of the Armed Forces of the United States stationed in New York State on active duty shall be entitled to resident classification. If the active-duty member is transferred on military orders outside this state where the member continues to serve in the Armed Forces, or has retired as an active member, the student dependent shall not lose their residence classification. A student who is stationed in New York State on active duty is entitled to resident classification for purposes of determining the amount of tuition and fees for the duration of their attendance at a community college. If that member transfers on military orders to a place outside this state where the member continues to serve in the military, he or she shall not lose his or her resident classification so long as he or she remains continuously enrolled at that community college.

Veterans and other "Covered Individuals"

On January 5, 2021, legislation changes resulted in eligibility for in-state tuition. Those considered to be covered individuals include:

- Those receiving Chapter 30 (Montgomery GI Bill) and Chapter 33 (Post-9/11 GI Bill) educational assistance; or
- A Veteran who is eligible for rehabilitation under 38U.S. code § 3102 pursuing a course of education with education assistance from the Training and Rehabilitation for Veterans with Service-Connected Disabilities (Chapter 31) education benefits program.
- Anyone using Chapter 33 - Transfer of Entitlement (TOE) benefits; or
- Surviving Spouses or Children under the Fry Scholarship; or
- Individuals who remain continuously enrolled after initially meeting the requirements and continue to use Chapter 30 or Chapter 33 benefits

Any student who is classified as an out of state student but meets the criteria for in state-tuition as listed above will need to obtain a Certificate of Residency from the county of your permanent residence.

Military Withdrawal and Re-admissions Policy

Students who are called to active military duty or who have a change in duty assignment that prevents them from being able to complete their course requirements must officially withdraw from their registered courses to be considered for a waiver of tuition and fee charges for the semester. Once courses have been withdrawn the student must complete the "Tuition and Fee Appeal Form" and submit documentation and/or copies of their military orders to be approved for a waiver of tuition and fee charges.

Any credit balance that results from a waiver of tuition and fee charges will be returned to the Department of Defense up to the amount approved and paid for the student's tuition and fees for that semester.

Changes of Assignment

Military personnel who must withdraw from any program or term because of a change of assignment beyond their control will incur no liability for related tuition and fees.

Readmission of Service Members

The College will grant students who are members of the National Guard or other reserve component of the armed forces of the United States or of a state who are called to Active Duty a military leave of absence from the College while they are serving on Active Duty and for one year after the conclusion of their service. Upon conclusion of a military leave of absence, a student will be entitled to return to the educational status that they held prior to being ordered to duty. The student will be entitled to credit for all academic credit earned, scholarships or other grants awarded, and tuition and other fees paid prior to the commencement of Active Duty.

Overpayments and Debts

An overpayment of benefits occurs when there are changes to a student's schedule that affects their rate of training or the amount of tuition and fees owed to the college.

Student Debt

Student debts are debts to the VA that you are responsible for paying back to the VA. Debts typically occur when students make changes to their schedules that affect their training time such as dropping a course, being dropped from a course by the instructor or switching from full term to short term courses. Please note that if you drop a course or withdraw from all your courses after the drop period ends and you earn a "W" grade, the VA will reduce benefits effective to the first day of the term. For example, if you are using the Post 9/11 GI bill and the monthly full time BAH rate is \$2,049 and you enrolled in 12 credits but drop a 3 credit course with a "W" grade 2 months into the semester VA will now calculate your BAH at the 3/4th time rate which would be ($\$2,049 \times .75 = \$1,536.75$). In this example the VA would have overpaid you by \$512.25 for BAH for those first 2 months of the semester. In addition, since you dropped the course, the VA may request all or some of the book stipend to be returned as well. You would owe this money back to the VA, unless there are mitigating circumstances. Mitigating circumstances are circumstances beyond the student's control that prevent the student from continuing in school or that cause the student to reduce credits.

Examples are:

- *An illness or injury afflicting the student during the enrollment period.*
- *An illness or death in the student's immediate family.*
- *An unavoidable change in the student's conditions of employment.*
- *An unavoidable geographical transfer resulting from the student's employment.*
- *Immediate family or financial obligations beyond the control of the claimant that require him or her to suspend pursuit of the program of education to obtain employment.*
- *Discontinuance of the course by the school.*
- *Unanticipated active military service, including active duty for training.*
- *Unanticipated difficulties with childcare arrangements the student has made for the period during which he or she is attending classes.*

If the student has already been paid for the course or courses, VA will create an overpayment from the beginning of the term, quarter, or semester. Students who have a mitigating circumstance should speak with the OVMS to see if you are eligible for an excused withdraw prior to dropping your courses.

Please note that dropping courses could also result in a debt to OCC if the VA requests back the tuition and fees that they paid and it creates an outstanding debt with the college you will be responsible for the debt to the College. Debts to the college should be paid in a timely manner to avoid holds that prevent registration and possible referral to a collections agency. Students who cannot pay their debt in full have the option of setting up a [NELNET payment plan](#) online through your student account.

School Debt

A school debt is created when the VA determines that it has overpaid the college for tuition and fees or when a student drops a course after the drop date, the VA will request a pro-rated amount of tuition and fees back from the college. Please note that a school debt can also result in a student debt to the OCC.

Avoiding and/or mitigating VA Overpayments

The best way to avoid or mitigate overpayments with the VA is to notify the OVMS of any drops or changes in your schedule (adding/dropping a class, course cancellations, selecting a different section of the same course) immediately. While you may not be able to avoid a debt completely, timely notification can mitigate the amount of overpayment you end up with.

It is also a good practice to meet with a representative of the OVMS prior to dropping a course so you can discuss the possible implications for your situation. Remember that dropping courses after the drop date and earning a W grade can not only affect your benefits, but it can also affect financial aid eligibility or admissions to certain programs. The counselor can also assess if there are any additional resources you can access to avoid dropping a course.

Veteran Resources

On Campus

- [Counseling and Community Care Hub](#)- (315)498-2675, Gordon G230
Provides mental health counseling, case management, and assistance with housing and food insecurity. *This office runs a Student Veteran Transition Group that is facilitated by Jimmy Anderson, LMSW, MAJ (Ret. US Army)*
- [Office of Accessibility Resources](#) (OAR)- (315)498-2245, Coulter Hall C104
Assists with setting up classroom accommodations to ensure your success if you encounter barriers due to illness, injury or a disability related issue (physical, mental or cognitive).
- [The Learning Center](#)- (315)498-2103, Gordon G202
Provides in person and online after hours tutoring in course specific subject areas, as well as writing and study skills, basic math and ESL.

Community

- [Syracuse VET Center](#)- (315) 478-7127, 109 Pine St. Syracuse, NY
- [Syracuse VA Medical Center/Behavioral Health](#)- (315) 425-4400
- [Onondaga County Veterans Services](#)- (315)435-3219 421, Montgomery St
Syracuse assists with applying for local, state or federal benefits
- [NYS Division of Veteran Affairs](#) (888) 838-7697 (Benefits, mental health, housing, employment, education and burial)
- [Clear Path for Veterans](#)- (315) 687-3300, 1223 Salt Springs Rd. Chittenango, NY
Helps with veteran, active-duty and military family transition
- [Catholic Charities Supportive Services for Veteran Families](#) (SSVF)-
(315-378-4054), 1654 West Onondaga Street Syracuse, NY 13204 -Serves low-income veterans and their families who are homeless or who are at risk of losing their homes. We provide outreach, case management, and assistance in obtaining benefits
- [Department of Labor/CNY Works](#), Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialists (DVOPs)/Local Veterans Employment Representative (LVER)-
(315)473- 8250, 960 James St, Syracuse, NY 13203
- [Syracuse University Free Veterans Legal Clinic](#)- (315) 443-9533, SU College of Law 950 Irving Ave. Syracuse NY