

Santiago Canyon College

GENERAL INFORMATION & RESPONSIBILITIES

For Veterans and Dependents/Spouses using VA Educational Benefits

ADD THE FOLLOWING EMAIL ADDRESSES TO YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS BOOK

The Santiago Canyon College (SCC) Veterans Resource Center (VRC) emails important information about policies and certification that may affect your benefits. Don't let these important messages get placed in your junk mail. Please add the following contact information to your email address book.

VRC Email: vrc@sccollege.edu | **Website:** www.sccollege.edu/vrc

SCC Certifying Officials:

Primary – Elizabeth Bergara | Bergara_Elizabeth@sccollege.edu

Secondary – Steven Stenersen | Stenersen_Steven@sccollege.edu

VRC TRiO PROGRAM:

Contact – Adam McManamy | McManamy_Adam@sccollege.edu

Student Service Specialist:

Eric Mejia – Mejia_Eric@sccollege.edu

APPLYING FOR VA BENEFITS

You may call the VA regional office (1-888-442-4551) or visit their website (www.gibill.va.gov) to determine which of the following benefits you may be eligible for: Chapter 33 (Post 9/11 GI Bill®), Chapter 30 (MGI Bill), Chapter 35 (Dependent/Spouse Educational Benefits), 1606 or 1607 (Reservist) and Fry Scholarship. Students using benefits for the first time must apply online by visiting <https://www.va.gov/education/how-to-apply/>

After the application has been submitted online, we recommend that a copy of the confirmation is provided to the VRC along with other required forms.

PROCESSING AT SANTIAGO CANYON COLLEGE

Please check with VRC staff for the forms you will need to fill out and/or documents that are required. Typically for veterans using benefits the following forms are required:

- VRC Enrollment Form (Online-submitted each academic year)
- VRC Certification Request Form (Online-submitted each term using benefits)
- DD214-member 4
- Military Orders (Active Duty ONLY)
- VA Certificate of Eligibility (COE)
- Current Educational Plan
- Authorizations/Approvals via Tungsten for Ch. 31 Vocational Readiness (formerly Voc Rehab)
- Academic Transcripts – if attended another college
- Joint Service Transcript – JST (as applicable)

Dependents/Spouse Forms:

- VRC Enrollment Form (Online-submitted each academic year)
- VRC Certification Request Form (Online-submitted each term using benefits)
- Certificate of Eligibility (COE)
- Current Educational Plan
- Academic Transcripts – if attended another college
- Cal-Vet College Fee Waiver – Official College Waiver Authorization Letter (eligibility required)

The processing time for certification can take up to 3 business weeks or longer during peak periods. Once certified, the Department of Veterans Affairs Regional Processing Office in Muskogee, OK will continue to process. It can take 2-6 business weeks for the Regional Processing Office to complete your certification. Please note that during peak periods, the processing time could be longer.

CERTIFICATION REQUEST FORM

Once the student is registered in required classes according to his/her educational plan, he or she must complete the Certification Request Form online. **The certification request form must be submitted for each semester/term in which benefits will be used. If this request form is not submitted, the VRC will assume that the student no longer wishes to use VA education benefits at SCC.**

GUEST CERTIFICATION REQUEST FORM

Students that are considered "guests" at SCC must submit a Guest Certification Form online. You are considered a guest student if your primary (parent) school is **NOT SCC**. A **Parent Letter is still required for any guest student – no exceptions. Certification of enrollment for guest students will not be submitted if both forms have not been provided directly to SCC-VRC.**

PAYMENTS

All payments are sent directly to the student through direct deposit or a check by postal mail. This includes monthly stipends for Chapter 30, 1606, 1607, 35, and basic allowance for housing (BAH) and book stipends for Chapter 33. Payments are made during the 1st week of each month for training pursued the previous month (contact the VA for more information regarding your pay). If there are delays on payment, retro-active payments are made up to the beginning of the eligible term. If you did not provide direct deposit information to the VA, it is important that you contact the VA directly by calling 1-888-442-4551 and update your record.

Chapter 33 BAH eligibility: In order to receive BAH, students must be certified/enrolled in more than half time status throughout the entire term. You must also have at least one class **on campus/in-person** during the period of your eligible enrollment for the regular BAH stipend. If all classes are online, the BAH will be based on 50% of the national average. BAH is based on how many units you take and will be paid to the nearest 10th in percentage. Please call the VA Regional Office for more information on payment rates: 1(888) 442-4551.

TUITION AND FEE PAYMENTS

Mandatory IN-STATE tuition and fee reimbursement for Chapter 33 (Post 9/11), and Chapter 35 recipients (less than half-time enrollment) are sent directly to SCC from the VA. It can take the VA 4-6 weeks to send these payments to the SCC cashier's office for verification. Any tuition and fees received will be credited to the student's account. Reimbursements are not processed until after the refund date has passed for that term. Any reimbursements owed to the student will be based on how fees were paid. A refund may not be issued if the student did not pay fees out of pocket and the VA Tuition and Fees payment were applied to pay the fees owed. Students using Chapter 33 (Post-9/11) benefits who are **not eligible at 100%**, must pay the difference of all mandatory fees directly to the Cashier's Office. *(Example: A student eligible for 80% is billed \$100 for mandatory fees, the VA pays \$80 directly to the school and the student owes the difference of \$20 directly to the school)*

IMPORTANT NOTE: The Veterans and Transition Act of 2018 allows students utilizing Chapter 33 or Chapter 31 VA benefits to stay enrolled in courses of education pending receipt of tuition and fees assistance from the department of Veteran Affairs. The VA does not send Tuition and Fees payments until 3-6 weeks after certification (which also requires verification by the Certifying Official). **The district policy for non-payment of fees applies to all students including Chapter 33 students expecting Tuition and Fee payments from the VA.** However, the student must adhere to the 3-day non-payment drop policy to ensure that the classes are not dropped for non-payment. The student can either pay out of pocket, complete a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or apply for a CCPG (California College Promise Grant) fee waiver. If the student qualifies for the Waiver, the Certifying Official will only request the VA to pay for the mandatory remaining fees, such as the Health fees, and any material fees associated with the classes certified. Since parking fees and student ID fees are *not mandatory*, the VA will not pay for those fees. If the student does not apply for assistance or does not qualify under the fee waiver eligibility, a courtesy hold may be placed on a student record to avoid being dropped from a course. It is the student's responsibility to contact the VRC to have this hold applied to the student's account. For further assistance with paying the mandatory fees, contact the VRC.

VERIFYING ATTENDANCE

Students using Post-9/11 GI Bill® benefits Chapter 33, Chapter 35 Dependents' Educational Assistance (DEA) at an Institution of Higher Learning (IHL), are **required to verify enrollment at the end of each month to receive your Monthly Housing Allowance (MHA)**. By verifying that you are still enrolled in the same courses or training every month, you help avoid overpayments caused by changes to your training schedule and safeguard your GI Bill®/DEA entitlement by preventing entitlement charges for training you did not attend. Verification is done directly with the VA.

If you fail to submit enrollment verification for two consecutive months, your BAH payments will be stopped until you verify enrollment. Students are encouraged to opt into text messaging, which is a quick option for verifying monthly enrollment. For more information on enrollment verification, visit the following page: https://benefits.va.gov/gibill/isaksonroe/verification_of_enrollment.asp

An inactive duty veteran (Chapter 30) or selected reserve veteran (Chapter 1606 or Chapter 1607) are required to verify your attendance in course(s) to the VA Department on the last calendar day of the month. This will generate the payment of your monthly benefit. If you fail to contact the VA Department on the last day of the calendar month, you will have to wait until the following month to verify two months' worth of enrollment. Monthly enrollment verifications can be done by calling 1 (877) 823-2378 or logging on to the WAVES website: <https://www.gibill.va.gov/wave/index.do>

Students who are using Chapter 31 benefits do not have to call in monthly to verify enrollment. Changes in enrollment must be reported to the VRC however. See WITHDRAWALS, DROPS, CHANGES, ADDITIONS TO REGISTERED CLASSES below.

PRIORITY REGISTRATION

Upon submitting the VRC Enrollment Form, students that elect to utilize priority registration must provide required documents verifying veteran status.

SCC provides priority registration to active duty members and veterans of the Armed Forces of the United States who have been discharged for a character of service of *honorable* and *other than honorable* only. Veteran students who have received a dishonorable or bad conduct discharge are not eligible to receive priority registration. Dependents of veterans are also *not eligible* for priority registration.

New students must complete the matriculation process before receiving priority registration.

To receive priority registration, students must be in good Academic Standing by having a grade point average (GPA) of at least 2.0 and a completion rate of at least 50%. Students could **lose priority registration** if they: (1) are on academic or progress probation for 2 consecutive terms, and/or (2) have accrued 100+ units of degree applicable courses at SAC/SCC. Please refer to Admissions and Records' Priority Registration Policy for more information.

DEGREE OBJECTIVE

To be in compliance with VA regulations, all veterans and eligible dependents/spouse must be working toward **one** educational objective while attending Santiago Canyon College: Either an AA/AS degree, Transfer Program, or Certificate. This goal is declared on the Certification Request Form and must match the Educational Plan created by the counselor. An undecided major is accepted only if a student's objective is to enroll in a transfer program to a specific college (Ex: A student is completing general education requirements to transfer to California State University). However, electives won't be certified until a major is declared. You're welcome to take courses outside of your educational plan, but those courses will not be certified for payment.

APPROVED PROGRAMS

You must be enrolled in an approved program. You can check the GI Bill® Website for a list of approved programs by visiting the WEAMS Institution Search (<https://inquiry.vba.va.gov/weamspub/buildSearchInstitutionCriteria.do>) and typing Santiago Canyon College.

Click on "Programs" on the WEAMS Institution Search, and then "Non-College Degree" for approved Vocational Certificate Programs. If the program intended is not on any of the lists, then it is a program that is not approved or has yet to be approved. All A.A. degrees and Transfer program that SCC offers are approved. Visit Va.gov/education/gi-bill-comparison-tool/ for additional information.

EDUCATIONAL PLAN

To be in compliance with VA regulations, students using the educational benefits must have a current and complete educational plan on file. A complete educational plan is approved and signed by an academic counselor to help you attain your educational goal as reflected on the SCC catalog. Please schedule a counseling appointment by contacting the VRC at (714) 628-4793 or directly with the Counseling Office at 714-628-4800. Dedicated veteran Counselors can assist with completing an educational plan. Official academic transcripts from all previously attended colleges must be provided to your appointment for proper credit.

Submit a copy of your **completed educational plan** to the SCC VRC to be placed in your file. The VA will only pay for courses required to obtain your **one educational objective** as indicated on the catalog. To avoid delays in payment or possible overpayment, it is your responsibility to adhere to your educational plan.

CHANGING YOUR EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVE FOR CONTINUING SCC STUDENTS

If you elect to change your educational goal/program, you must notify the SCC VRC immediately. You will be required to provide a new educational plan to the SCC VRC. If your goal does not take effect until the next term, wait to submit your new education plan along with the Certification Request Form for the new term when fully registered in your new classes.

REMEDIAL COURSES

Remedial courses include non-degree or pre-collegiate basic skills classes in Math, English, Reading, Learning and Study Skills. Depending on the student's educational goals, remedial coursework may be required and indicated on an educational plan by an Academic Counselor. Remedial coursework *cannot* be certified for VA payment. Contact the VRC for further questions regarding remedial course options.

MILITARY CREDIT FOR DD-214 HOLDERS

When a veteran petitions for graduation from Rancho Santiago Community College District and needs these units for graduation purposes, the Graduation Office will verify a request for credit from the form DD-214. The SCC VRC may send a copy of your DD-214 to Admissions & Records, if you have not yet provided a copy previously. Admissions would apply the corresponding military credit(s). Please avoid taking courses under those areas if you have a DD-214. See the Academic Counselor for more information.

OFFICIAL ACADEMIC TRANSCRIPTS (NON-MILITARY)

Official academic transcripts from all prior colleges and universities must be evaluated at the Admissions and Records Office. Furthermore, transcripts are needed for Counselors to make an accurate educational plan. If you have satisfactorily completed courses and have elected to repeat them prior to transcript evaluation, **you may be at risk of overpayment by the VA**. The VA may stop or reduce your education benefits, and you will be required to return any overpayments to the VA. Overpayments may be retroactive to the beginning of any specific term up to 2 terms. Official academic transcripts are required to be submitted within the first two terms the student attends the college.

OFFICIAL ACADEMIC TRANSCRIPTS (MILITARY) – JOINT SERVICE TRANSCRIPT (JST)

Military transcripts are currently being accepted in Admissions & Records. It may be applied towards course equivalency. Official academic transcripts are required to be submitted during the first term the student attends the college. Current equivalency is being reviewed and will be applied towards a student's academic record.

WITHDRAWALS, DROPS, CHANGES, ADDITIONS TO REGISTERED CLASSES

All veterans and eligible dependents/spouses are required to report any changes of classes to the SCC VRC to avoid overpayment or underpayment. Students must submit the Add/Drop Form to the SCC VRC for any changes made from initial certification.

Post 9/11 GI Bill® (Chapter 33 students): If you drop to exactly 50% or less in rate of pursuit (usually, 6 units or less in a regular semester) during a term, you **will not be eligible** for BAH effective the day you withdrew from the class that made your unit status become 50% or less. Check with the VRC first before you drop any courses to see how it can affect your BAH payments. You may also owe the book stipend and tuition & fees for the applicable dropped course to the VA. If you completely withdraw from all of your courses during the semester, you may owe all or some of your benefits back to the VA. In addition, based on individual eligibility you may also owe the school any tuition and fees that have been previously applied to your account. Contact the VRC if you have mitigating circumstances for withdrawing so this can be added to the adjustment or termination of your certified courses. If no mitigating circumstances are provided, the Certifying Official is required to report drops/changes to the VA based on the official date of the student's official record. You can also contact the VA about mitigating circumstances and appeal the overpayment for BAH. Any tuition and fees overpayment will be processed by the school.

VA REPAYMENT POLICY

If you drop a course or if a grade of "W" or "NC" is earned in a course which lowered your payment status, the VA requires repayment for any payment a student receives. For example, if you drop a class and you reduce from a full-time schedule of 12 units to $\frac{3}{4}$ time schedule of 9 units, the debt will be the difference between the full and three-quarter time after the drop date and will be effective when the class was dropped. If you have special circumstances that were out of your control that contributed to the reduction of your units, you may be able to waive the debt (See Mitigating Circumstances below).

MITIGATING CIRCUMSTANCES

It is the student's responsibility to submit a mitigating circumstance explanation, if dropping your courses was out of your control and you can provide **proper documentation** to waive the debt. This is done by filling out Form 21-4138. Search for this form within the GI Bill® website. The statement you submit must be a situation you were unaware of when you registered for school. This must be an unexpected occurrence and must be DOCUMENTED (e.g. a letter from your employer regarding shift change or increased hours, a note from a doctor or medical bill, etc.). If the VA accepts your explanation, they may waive your debt. If you fail to submit an explanation, or if the VA does not accept your explanation, any money you received after the day of the drop for the class or classes will be considered an overpayment. Such overpayment is subject to immediate collection or deduction from your remaining benefits. Contact the VA for further instructions for mitigating circumstances.

DISTANCE COURSES: ONLINE AND HYBRID COURSES

Distance courses mostly affect students using Chapter 33 (Post 9/11 GI Bill ® benefits) and/or Ch. 31 students receiving housing. Students must be enrolled in **at least one in-person campus course** for the entire term to maximize the full BAH value. Some hybrid courses are considered distant courses if more than 50% of the work done is online however, if you are not sure of the definition of your course meeting in-person status, please contact the VRC for confirmation. Some hybrid courses may be defined as "*in-person*". Students that enroll in **all** distance courses in one term will receive BAH rate based on 50% of the National Average. Remedial distance courses **will not be** certified.

ENROLLMENT STATUS: Regular Full Semester Courses

In a regular semester term, full time is considered 12+ units, $\frac{3}{4}$ time is 9-11.9 units, $\frac{1}{2}$ time is 6.1-8.9 units, 5 units and below are less than $\frac{1}{2}$ time. For Chapter 33 students, **6.0** units or less is considered less than half time which is **ineligible for BAH**. Payments are based on the enrollment status during a period of enrollment.

ENROLLMENT STATUS: MINI COURSES INCLUDING SUMMER COURSES

Classes not beginning and ending within the regular semester calendar such as an 8-week course are certified only for the period of time that each course is active. The beginning and ending dates used for these types of classes will be determined as outlined in the class schedule. For short term courses including summer, you can calculate your own equivalent enrollment status by using this formula:

Units or Credits X 18 / Weeks of course/s = Credit Hour Equivalent / 12 = Rate of Pursuit Percentage

The enrollment status is based on the period your courses are in session. Ex: If you are taking 7 units total in a semester, where 4 of those units begin on 02/08/22 and end on 06/07/22, and the other 3 units begin on 03/03/22 and end on 05/15/22, then you will only be considered more than half time, but not $\frac{3}{4}$ time, between the time your 3-unit class is in session.

"F" GRADES, NO PASS, AND INCOMPLETE COURSES

Students who complete the term with all "F" grades and/or non-punitive grades, will have the actual last date of attendance reported for each course. For any certified courses, your VA benefits can continue if you receive an "F" grade or No Pass grade. However, your academic standings must remain satisfactory for certification purposes. Continuous "F" grades **will affect your future certification if you are placed on probation or are academically dismissed.**

If you receive an incomplete grade ("*I*"), it is your responsibility to complete that course and notify the VRC on the outcome grade of that course. See SCC's catalog for further instructions on incomplete grades. If you failed the class, the rules for "F" grades listed above will apply.

REPEATING CLASSES

You may repeat courses for VA benefits in the following situations:

1. A grade of "W" or "NP" was previously received.
2. A grade of "F" was received, and the class is listed in the catalog as a requirement for the major (which should also reflect your educational plan). Last day of attendance will be reported for all "F" grades.
3. A grade of "F" was received, and the class is a Basic General Educational Subject *required* for graduation. Last day of attendance will be reported for all "F" grades.
4. If the grade does not meet minimum requirements for graduation for a specific program.
5. Students can repeat a course up to three times to improve a substandard grade (D, F, NP, W). After the third attempt, the student cannot repeat the course at SCC or sister campus Santa Ana College (SAC).

You will not be eligible for VA benefits for the classes that fall under the following situations:

1. A grade of "A," "B," "C," or "D" * was received in a course. Some courses require a "C" or better.
 2. It does not fall into the above 4 categories.
- Rules apply to certified courses only.

SATISFACTORY PROGRESS

Students requesting educational benefits must maintain a positive grade point average (GPA) of at least a 2.0 or a "C" average, and after attempting 12 units, have a completion rate of at least 50%. If you do not maintain this Satisfactory Progress requirement as defined in the current RSCCD catalog, you will be placed on academic probation for **one semester**. Students who are placed on academic probation or progress may be required to attend a Counseling Intervention Workshop or other current process. Admissions & Records will notify the student by email. If you are still not meeting Satisfactory Progress the **second semester**, your unsatisfactory progress will be affected and can potentially prevent future certification. The VRC can still certify your eligible courses for VA benefits. However, you will *lose priority registration*.

If you are still not meeting Satisfactory Progress for the third semester, you will not be entitled to receive VA educational benefits until you regain Satisfactory Progress. You must schedule an appointment to see your Academic Counselor for a plan of action to regain Satisfactory Progress. See VRC for further details.

ADVANCE PAYMENT

Santiago Canyon College does not participate in the Advance Pay option.

GUEST STUDENTS

Students whose parent institution is other than SCC are welcome to take courses here at SCC and get certified for them. The SCC VRC will only need 2 things: 1) Parent Letter from the Parent School authorizing us to certify the approved courses, and 2) a completed Guest Certification Request Form. Certification Requests from guest students will be processed in dated order among SCC regular Certification Request Forms.

CONCURRENT ENROLLMENT WITH OTHER INSTITUTIONS

You may take courses offered at other colleges/universities while enrolled at SCC, in order to satisfy your educational objective. The course/s can be certified for benefits according to your educational plan by filling out a Parent/Primary School Certification Request (Parent Letter). The parent letter must be signed by a SCC academic counselor or dean. You will then return it to SCC's VRC for the Certifying Official signature. Once course is confirmed to meet the degree objective, a Parent Letter will be forwarded to the secondary institution for certification. SCC becomes the "parent school" and the other institution becomes the secondary school where the student is a guest student. Students who are not enrolled in any courses at SCC but enrolled in courses at another college, must still fill out the Certification Request Form and indicate the courses with at the other school along with the Parent Letter Request Form. The VRC will confirm with the Counselor for equivalency prior to providing a parent letter.

If you discontinue the class at the secondary school, you must notify the secondary school's VA Certifying Official. The secondary school will then adjust the certified units. When grades have been posted for the secondary school term, you must provide the SCC Admissions & Records with an Official Academic Transcript reflecting the grade/s you earned for the term. Failure to provide official transcripts may jeopardize future requests for secondary school certification and could affect your payment/s. Concurrent enrollment at another school may cause delays in monthly benefits. During peak periods, parent school certification requests could take approximately three to four weeks. **Courses taken at our sister college, Santa Ana College (SAC), do not require a parent letter or transcripts after completion of the courses. The SCC certifying official will internally send the Parent letter to them. Be advised that there will be delays in the certification of courses at SAC. You will be certified there as a guest student and must submit a separate request to them directly.**

ROUNDING OUT

The practice of "rounding out" is when the VA allows a school to certify courses for payment which are not part of the beneficiary's approved program of education in an effort to increase a beneficiary's training time or rate of pursuit. Rounding out is only allowed during the beneficiary's **FINAL** academic term and done **only once per program**. A student may round out with classes that are not offered as part of their program of education with any class offered by the educational institution only under the following circumstances:

- The student has taken (or is enrolled in) every class offered as part of the program
- The remaining course options in the student's program are not offered during the student's final term
- Courses must be specified by name in the approved program curriculum and not have been already completed

The VRC must determine if a student is eligible for rounding out. The student must request this by indicating on the Certification Request form upon registering.

VA DEPENDENT FEE WAIVER – CALVET (California Department of Veterans Affairs)

Dependents of veterans may be eligible for a Fee Waiver if attending a California Community College, or any UC or Cal State System in California. You must fill out the Veteran Dependent Fee Waiver Application Form and submit to the local Veterans Service Office for eligibility and processing. Once approved, the approval letter must be submitted to the VRC's Certifying Official for further processing. Make sure your SCC student ID is provided on this letter. Students eligible under Plan A will not be able to use Chapter 35 benefits. Students eligible under Plan B may be eligible for Chapter 35 benefits.

For additional information, contact the local VSO (Veterans Service Office):

Address: 1300 S. Grand Ave, Bldg. B, Santa Ana, CA 92705

Phone: (714) 480-6555

Email: ocvso@occr.ocgov.com

VOCATIONAL READINESS (CHAPTER 31)

Students interested in applying for this VA benefit can apply online by visiting the VA website (<https://www.va.gov/careers-employment/vocational-rehabilitation/>) or by filling out VA form 28-1900 (online). All students participating in this program must also submit a Certification Request Form each term and **must provide authorizations from his/her Vocational Readiness Counselor prior to certification**. Authorizations will include *dated* approvals (current term(s), current educational goal, tuition and fees, required books and limited supplies (Up to \$50) to be used at SCC's Bookstore. Students that have approvals that have expired **must request new authorizations** by contacting their Vocational Readiness Counselor. Certification **cannot be submitted** until authorizations are received. No exceptions.

After certification has been submitted, students will receive a voucher from the VRC outlining current course approvals. Students must then use vouchers at SCC's bookstore and show a valid student ID before receiving books/supplies. Guest students will also receive vouchers after authorizations and parent letter has been received from primary school. For further questions, contact the VRC.

DISAGREEMENT WITH POLICY

Any comments or complaints can be submitted to the VA through the GI Bill® Feedback System. You can access the Feedback System online at www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/feedback. You may also send suggestion or comments to the VRC through email (vrc@sccollege.edu).

Santiago Canyon College
Veterans Resource Center– A206
8045 E. Chapman Ave, Orange CA 92869
(714) 628-4793

vrc@sccollege.edu

Hours: Monday - Friday 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
(Subject to change without notice)

Summer Hours: Closed on Fridays during the summer sessions

"Assisting Veterans Transition from Soldiers to Scholars"