Standard Operating Procedure: Return of Tuition Assistance Benefits for Incomplete Course

1. Purpose The purpose of this Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is to provide guidelines for the return of tuition assistance benefits in the event that a student, who is a veteran, is unable to complete a course at Otero College. This SOP ensures that the process is transparent, efficient, and in compliance with the regulations set forth by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

2. Scope This SOP applies to all veteran students enrolled at Otero College who receive tuition assistance benefits through the VA and are unable to complete a course for reasons beyond their control.

3. Responsibilities

   3.1 Veteran Student - The veteran student is responsible for notifying the Veterans Benefits Certifying Official (VBCO) at Otero College as soon as they become aware of their inability to complete a course. They must provide the necessary documentation to support their claim.

   3.2 Veterans Benefits Certifying Official (VBCO) - The VBCO is responsible for processing the return of tuition assistance benefits for the incomplete course. This includes verifying the student's eligibility, reviewing documentation, and coordinating with the appropriate VA offices.

4. Procedure

   4.1 Student Notification

      4.1.1 The veteran student must promptly notify the VBCO in writing or through an official email of their inability to complete a course.

      4.1.2 The notification should include a detailed explanation of the circumstances preventing course completion and any supporting documentation, such as medical certificates or official documents.

   4.2 Verification of Eligibility

      4.2.1 The VBCO will review the student's eligibility for tuition assistance benefits, ensuring that they meet all the VA requirements.

4.2.2 The VBCO may request additional documentation or information from the student if necessary to validate their claim.

4.3 Documentation Review

4.3.1 The VBCO will review the supporting documentation provided by the student to ascertain the legitimacy of their inability to complete the course and will use the following as a guideline for calculating the amount of Tuition Assistance to be returned:

Prior to or during weeks 1-2        100% return

During weeks 3-4                        90% return

During weeks 5-6                        75% return

During weeks 7-8                        50% return

During week 9-10                        40% return (60% of course completed)

Weeks 11 - 16 of classes.          0% return

Note: Institution's week of instruction is counted as 5 days.  Otero's traditional semester is 16 weeks.

4.3.2 The VBCO may consult with appropriate college staff or medical professionals if further clarification is required.

4.4 VA Notification and Benefit Return

4.4.1 Upon verifying the student's eligibility and reviewing the documentation, the VBCO will prepare a package to be submitted to the appropriate VA office.

4.4.2 The package will include a cover letter explaining the circumstances and the student's request for the return of tuition assistance benefits.

4.4.3 The VBCO will ensure that all required forms, such as the Department of Veterans Affairs Form 22-1999, are completed accurately and included in the package.

4.4.4 The VBCO will maintain a copy of the package and all related documentation for record-keeping purposes.

4.5 Follow-Up and Communication

4.5.1 The VBCO will maintain regular communication with the student, keeping them informed about the progress of the return of tuition assistance benefits.

4.5.2 The VBCO will notify the student once the VA has made a decision regarding the return of benefits.

4.5.3 If the VA approves the return of benefits, the VBCO will provide instructions to the student on any additional steps they need to take.

5. Documentation Retention - The VBCO will retain all records related to the return of tuition assistance benefits for a minimum of three years, as per the college's document retention policy.
6. Training and Awareness - The VBCO will ensure that all staff involved in the certification process are trained on this SOP and the related VA regulations. Additionally, the VBCO will provide information to veteran students about the process for returning tuition assistance benefits in the event of an incomplete course.
7. Review and Update - This SOP will be reviewed periodically to ensure compliance with the latest VA regulations and any updates to college policies and procedures. Any necessary revisions will be made to this document accordingly.