SOWELA Veterans Questions and Answers – COVID-19

1. Will my monthly VA payments for spring 2020 be affected if my classes transitioned to an online modality due to COVID-19?
   Based on recently passed legislation (Senate Bill 3503, signed into law on March 21, 2020), veterans will continue to receive the same monthly payments for resident training. The law only authorizes this special authority from March 1, 2020, to December 21, 2020, or until the school resumes normal operations of resident training.

2. Will my monthly VA payments for spring 2020 be affected if my classes are currently paused?
   No. It is the hope of SOWELA that life will return to normal very soon and that students will be able to return to campus and complete their classes by the end of the Spring semester. However, if by this time, the student is unable to complete the course, a grade of “incomplete” will be assigned. Students will be allowed additional time to complete the course.

3. How long will I have to complete the classes for which I received an incomplete grade?
   The current policy would allow students until the end of the summer 2020 semester. If the closure extends, SOWELA may need to change this policy. We will know more as time progresses and will work to accommodate our students.

4. Will I receive my VA monthly benefits during the time that I am working on completing the “incomplete” classes but not enrolled in new courses?
   Under current VA guidelines, the student would not be eligible to receive monthly benefits during this time. VA may ask to have new legislation passed if the issue prolongs. This rule is in statute so would require legislative action to change. Students would receive their benefits as usual throughout the Spring 2020 semester.

5. What happens if I become ill due to COVID-19 and cannot continue training while the educational institution continues to offer course training, what steps should I take?
   - You should contact your School Certifying Official and inform them that you will be withdrawing from school due to an illness from COVID-19. Ms. Rebecca Amy is the school certifying official for SOWELA and can be contacted via email at rebecca.amy@sowela.edu.
   - The School Certifying Official should report the withdrawal as mitigating circumstances due to COVID-19. The effective date will be reported as your dropped date. In these situations, the law does NOT allow VA to continue payments beyond the dropped date.

6. Who do I contact if I have a debt with Debt Management, and I am having trouble paying due to COVID-19?
   Contact Debt Management Center at 1-800-827-0648 to request assistance.

7. Who should I contact if I have a specific question about my VA benefits?
   - You can contact the Education Call Center at 1-888-442-4551 between 8:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday-Friday.
   - You can view information on the VA website www.gibill.va.gov.
   - SOWELA’s school certifying official is Ms. Rebecca Amy. She can be reached at rebecca.amy@sowela.edu or by phone at 337-421-6956.

8. Where can I receive updated information about SOWELA notifications and advisories for COVID-19?
   You can view the SOWELA website or click on the following link https://www.sowela.edu/student-life/student-services/health-center/coronavirus/. Updates are also regularly posted to the SOWELA Facebook page and are sent via your student email address.
SOWELA Technical Community College does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, disability or age in its programs or activities. The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the non-discrimination policies:

Title: Compliance Officer
Address: 3820 Senator J. Bennett Johnston Ave, Lake Charles, LA 70616
Telephone No: 337-421-6565 or 800-256-0483
Email: complianceofficer@sowela.edu