Attendance & Absence Policies for Military Students  
Prepared by Veteran's Services  
Division of Student Affairs  
University of Nebraska at Kearney  
April 1, 2013

The Current Situation
There are three relevant policies for both the University of Nebraska system and the University of Nebraska at Kearney relating to absences for military purposes. The UNK Student Attendance Policy, UNK’s policy on Activation of Reserve and National Guard Forces and the University of Nebraska system guidance on activation of military members. The three policies are attached as addendums to this paper. The last revision to the attendance policy at UNK was February of 2011.

Gaps in the Current Policy:
Civilian employees of the Department of Defense are not currently covered under the University policy. The armed services and other federal agencies responsible for safety and security have privatized many positions that can include "deployment" overseas. For example Fall of 2012 a current UNK student who is employed by the DOD was given deployment orders to Afghanistan. This student is a psychologist and was deployed to assist soldiers serving on the front line. The current policy did not apply to his situation and the Registrar's Office did not choose to grant him exemption and instead recommended the student go through the exceptional withdrawal appeal process. The appeal was approved and the student did receive a waiver of his tuition. However he had to jump through an additional administrative hoop.

The current student attendance policy does not provide guidelines or parameters for faculty when students have to miss classes for military training or duties. This semester a UNK student (Army reservist) was activated to provide security at the Presidential Inauguration. One of her faculty was unwilling to work with the student to make up assignments and was going to penalize the student by lost percentage for each day of absence. When Veteran Services made an inquiry with the instructor regarding this situation, the instructor indicated department policy mandated that the situation be handled in this way. However another instructor in the same department was contacted by Veteran Services and she indicated that she would excuse the absence and assist the student in making up lost assignments. Clearly there was a lack of understanding at the departmental level over what was policy and what wasn't.

Finally Executive Memorandum 23 is narrow in its interpretation of military activation. It does not address military training. Often such training might occur in the summer when the student would be less likely to enroll. But this is not always the case. This memo also had conflicting information over the 100% withdrawal rate, citing in one area full reimbursement and in another area only partial reimbursement.

Best Practices:
After contacting schools like UNL, UNO, Fort Hays, Wayne State, Chadron, Emporia, University of Maryland, Texas Universities, University of Washington, and a few others I found the following information. In our system UNL does have military duties written into their Class Attendance Policy but it is not defined or explained. In addition UNO does not mention military in the attendance policy but
does have a section about Civil Leave for jury and similar duties. The deployment policy at UNO has a link that leads to Executive Memorandum 23 which is not only outdated but contradicts itself in paragraph three. Very friendly schools like University of Maryland, not only have policies written for attendance, but they include concessions for field operations, short term missions and various other military events. Fort Hays offers full refunds for student-soldier deployments or activations as well as unused balances for housing and food charges. Emporia provides full refunds, upon verification with orders as well as prorated refunds for room and board; they have no attendance policy except a board that will hear appeals for absences up to 60 days. Chadron is updating their policy as well and the proposal will allow incompletes for anything over two weeks missed, or a full refund, if it is less than two weeks; their proposal reads, "Faculty will be requested to allow these individuals ample time to meet the course deadlines."

Proposal:
Our proposal is: that the three polices be updated and broadened so that there is more guidance for the faculty and administrators at not only UNK but the University of Nebraska system. Each policy is attached in its original and revised format with changes italicized. Updating these polices to the current times we are in is not only vital to retention of our student-soldiers but also a way to increase our competitiveness with other schools, show our student-soldiers we support them, and increase our military friendliness. Only two examples are given of instances that these policies have come into question but many more could be provided. Our student-soldiers are a dynamic group that are dedicated to completing their degrees and bring a great deal of insight to their classrooms. With the current drawdown of the military forces as well as the economy more and more studentsoldiers will be looking to continue their education so that they may become employable. It would be a great disservice to us as a University and the military member to not make reasonable efforts to accommodate a simple update to attendance and activation polices.

UNK Student Attendance Policy (Original)

STUDENT ATTENDANCE POLICY STATEMENT

Students are expected to attend all meetings of classes for which they are registered, including the first and last scheduled meetings and the final examination period. Instructors hold the right and responsibility to establish attendance policies for their courses. Each instructor must inform all classes at the beginning of each semester concerning his/her attendance policies.

Participation in official University activities, personal emergencies, and religious observances are valid reasons for absence from classes. Instructors may request that such absences be verified by the Dean for Student Affairs. Students attending authorized off-campus functions or required activities shall be cleared through the Office of the Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs. Lists of students excused for official University activities will be maintained in the Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs Office. Students are responsible for informing their instructors about their absence from class and for completing assignments given during their absence. No adverse or prejudicial effects shall result to any student with excused absences for official University activities

ugradcatalog@unk.edu
**Students Called Into Military Service (ORIGINAL)**

In the event of a call-up of Reserve and National Guard Forces to active duty, UNK maintains a position of flexibility for students.

At the student's option, he or she may request a complete withdrawal from all courses at 100% refund of tuition and fees or the student may wish to remain enrolled in classes and discuss options for completing requirements or obtaining a grade of Incomplete with the instructor of each course.

**In all cases, a copy of the orders directing the student to report for active duty will be required to support waivers from our standard policies.**

In the event that the departure is sudden or of an emergency nature, the student may retroactively request consideration under this policy within 30 days of his or her return from active duty. This policy is in addition to and works in conjunction with existing policies, including Board of Regents Executive Memorandum 23 as listed below.

Students should contact the Registrar's Office, Founders Hall, 865-8527 to initiate a complete withdrawal or to address any questions about this process.

**Executive Memorandum No. 23 (Original)**

1. **GENERAL**

   This Policy shall be implemented in order that the University of Nebraska might provide equitable, consistent treatment to its students who are called into military service and to facilitate their ability to continue their education once that military service is completed.

2. **ELIGIBILITY**

   Students who are regularly enrolled in any or program offered by the University of Nebraska are eligible for the benefits described in this Policy, if they: (a) belong to a military unit that is called into active duty, or (b) are drafted and not eligible for deferment; such that the date upon which they are required to report to active duty prohibits them, as a practical matter, from completing the term in which they are enrolled.

3. **COURSE AND GRADE OPTIONS**

   An eligible student may elect to cancel registration in all classes in which he or she is enrolled at the time the call for duty is received. In such case, the student shall receive a full refund for all tuition and student fees paid on behalf of that student. In the alternative, the student may request his or her instructors to award a grade or an incomplete for all classes. If an incomplete is given, then the instructor shall file in the student's educational records and provide to the student specific instructions regarding the study and activities required to complete the course. If a grade and credit are awarded, then the instructor shall award a grade reflective of the student's performance, taking into consideration the quantity and nature of the curriculum through the time of the student's departure. Finally, the student shall have the option of withdrawing from selected courses, receiving a pro-rated refund of tuition and fees for those courses, while also opting to receive a grade or incomplete in other courses in which the student is enrolled.
4. STUDENTS RECEIVING FINANCIAL AID

Notwithstanding any provision to the contrary in this Policy, administration of financial aid with respect to any eligible student shall be consistent with federal and state law. Students otherwise eligible for these benefits and receiving financial aid should immediately contact the financial aid office on their respective campuses, where each case must be addressed individually based upon the particular rules applicable to the relevant student. The campus financial aid offices shall address these matters in such a way so as to minimize the financial hardships to the student, while complying with the applicable law and regulations.

5. PUBLICATION

This Policy shall appear in all student catalogs and placed on the websites of Central Administration and each Campus.

6. SYSTEM APPLICATION

This Policy applies to all administrative units of the University of Nebraska. Each campus may provide supplemental policy guidance consistent with this Policy, designed to implement the provisions herein, including guidance relating to fees associated with meal and housing, textbooks, parking, lab and course fees, as well as other ancillary fees.

Dated this 17th day of October, 2001.

STUDENT ATTENDANCE POLICY STATEMENT

Students are expected to attend all meetings of classes for which they are registered, including the first and last scheduled meeting and the final examination period. Instructors hold the right and responsibility to establish attendance policies for their courses. Each instructor must inform all classes at the beginning of each semester concerning his/her attendance policies.

Participation in official University activities, personal emergencies, religious observances, and Military duties to include Annual Training, and Civilian deployments in support of federal operations are valid and excusable reasons for absence from classes. For Service members in a Reserve and National Guard status weekend duty (drills) requirements should not interfere with normal school schedules; Drills that require Thursday and Fridays or Monday’s should be cleared through teachers as an excused absence with documentation from the unit. Instructors may request that such absences be verified by the Dean of Student Affairs, for military students the Veterans Services office should be contacted for verification purposes. Students attending authorized off-campus functions or required activities shall be cleared through the office of the Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs. For students participating in Reserve Officer Training Candidacy (ROTC), field operations shall be excused absences with a letter from the ROTC Commander. Lists of students excused for official University activities will be maintained in the Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs Office. Students are responsible for informing their instructors about their absence from class and for completing assignments given during their absence. No adverse or prejudicial effects shall result to any student with excused absences for official University activities or Military Duties.
UNK Policy on Activation of Reserve and National Guard and DOD Forces to Active Duty

In the event of activation of a Reserve, National Guard or DOD Employee student to active duty, UNK maintains the position of flexibility for students:

At the Student's option, he or she may request:
1. A Complete withdrawal from all courses at 100% refund of tuition and fees.
2. A withdrawal from one or more courses. Those courses from which the student withdraws would be refunded at 100% of Tuition and Fees.
3. Request through the teacher and department to receive incompletes and finish the course at a later time or develop a plan to complete the course online if available or in an accelerated format.

In all cases, a copy of the orders directing the student to report for active duty will be required to support a military withdrawal for 100% refund. Students must also coordinate with the VA rep at UNK to get a pre-deployment packet so that the student can be guided in the process. The VA rep will also help the student coordinate with the registrar's office, teachers, and unit to obtain orders and ensure the smoothest possible pre and post deployment experience at UNK. Late fees resulting in the activation would be waived in many of these situations. In the event that the departure is sudden or of an emergency nature, the student may retroactively request consideration under this policy within 30 days of his or her return from active duty. Student should also contact the UNK VA office to assist in this process. This policy is in addition to and works in conjunction with existing policies.

Upon notification of activation it is the student’s responsibility to contact the UNK VA Office at (308)-865-8649 located in the Financial Aid Office, and the registrar's office located in Founders Hall at (308)865-8527.

Students Activated into Military and Active Federal Service

Executive Memorandum no 23.

1. GENERAL

This policy shall be implemented in order that the University of Nebraska might provide equitable, consistent treatment to its students who are called into military service and to facilitate their ability to continue their education once that military service is completed

2. ELIGIBILITY

Students who are regularly enrolled in any class or program offered by the University of Nebraska are eligible for the benefits described in this Policy, if they: (a) belong to a military unit that is activated for military duty to include Annual Trainings (AT), State Missions, Disaster Aid and Military Schools/Trainings, (b) are drafted and not eligible for deferment, (c) are an employee of the Department of Defense (DOD) or other Branch of the Federal Government and put on orders or TOY (Temporary Duty for more than 30 days); such that the date upon which they are required to report to active duty prohibits them, as a practical matter, from completing the term in which they are enrolled.
3. COURSE AND GRADE OPTIONS

An eligible student may elect to cancel registration in all classes in which he or she is enrolled at the time the notification of Activation is received. In such case, the student shall receive a full refund for all the tuition and student fees paid on behalf of that student. In the alternative, the student may request his or her instructors to award a grade or an incomplete for all classes. If an incomplete is given, then the instructor shall file in the student's educational records and provide to the student specific instructions regarding the study and activities required to complete the course. If a grade and credit are awarded, then the instructor shall award a grade reflective of the student's performance, taking into consideration the quantity and nature of the curriculum through the time of the student's departure. Finally, the student shall have the option of withdrawing from selected courses, receiving a 100% refund of tuition and fees for those courses dropped, while also opting to receive a grade or incomplete in other courses in which the student is currently enrolled.

4. STUDENTS RECEIVING FINANCIAL AID

Notwithstanding any provision to the contrary in this Policy, administration of the financial aid with respect to any eligible student shall be consistent with federal and state law. Students otherwise eligible for these benefits and receiving financial aid should immediately contact the financial aid office on their respective campuses, where each case must be addressed individually based upon the particular rules applicable to the relevant student. The campus financial aid offices shall address these matters in such a way as to minimize the financial hardships to the student, while complying with the applicable law and regulations.

5. PUBLICATION

This policy shall appear in all student catalogs and placed on the website of Central Administration and each Campus.

6. SYSTEM APPLICATION

This policy applies to all administrative units of the University of Nebraska. Each campus may provide supplemental policy guidance, consistent with this policy, designed to implement the provisions herein, including guidance relating to fees associated with meals and housing, textbooks, parking, lab and course fees, as well as other ancillary fees.