**General**

**What changes is Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), Education Service (EDU) making?**
VBA EDU is modernizing its operations to provide world-class customer services that enable timely and accurate management of GI Bill education benefits with a digital solution.

VBA EDU has contracted with Accenture Federal Services (AFS) to provide and operate a single solution for GI Bill students, external partners and internal stakeholders that can share information. In addition to the new solution, VBA EDU is modernizing the way it operates which will bring new policies, processes and procedures. These changes will transform how VBA EDU delivers and manages educational benefits.

**What is “Digital GI Bill” or DGIB?**
The DGIB will modernize the majority of GI Bill benefit claim service and customer service functions by providing a single technology platform. The technology platform will provide direct, online, one-stop access to GI Bill benefits and information. It will provide online portals and automated services to beneficiaries and external partners, as well as digital access to EDU staff through a single solution.

**Why is VBA EDU making these changes?**
VA is currently operating multiple legacy Information Technology (IT) solutions and manual processes that create inefficiencies in processing claims, do not allow for timely responses to legislative or policy changes, and lack comprehensive reporting and forecasting capabilities.

Current IT support solutions do not have the capacity to handle the expected increase in processing volume. Additionally, these solutions lack the ability to meet demands/service expectations of GI Bill students, EDU employees, and external stakeholders (School Certifying Officials (SCOs), State Approving Agencies (SAAs), Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs), Congress).

While EDU has improved timeliness of claims processing, the new solution will offer benefits such as real-time decisions, notifications, and communications.

**What are the benefits of DGIB?**
Overall, the new digital solution will allow users direct access to a single platform with real-time communications, and integrated access to records. It will also automate many of the previously manual tasks involved in claims process and having to switch between computer systems. VA will be able to call, email, text and chat with GI Bill benefit recipients, respond to questions from colleges and universities in real-time and grant VA immediate access to beneficiary records, as well as provide robust reporting and forecasting capabilities.

**Benefits to EDU:**
- For managers and leaders, it will bring robust, new business intelligence reporting capabilities to inform planning and management.
- Provides real-time claims status availability and claims volume forecasting abilities.
- Provides a flexible architecture that will provide the ability to pivot rapidly in response to emerging legislative changes.
- Provides automated reporting on student matriculation, monthly attendance records, and provide data-driven decision-making tools.
Internal VA Use Only

- Ensures proper compliance and oversight of GI Bill programs through more robust and comprehensive data.
- Enables real-time communications with beneficiaries through electronic communications (via the student portal) that will decrease the volume of post mail.
- DGIB will eventually reduce the need to work across multiple solutions and manual tasks.

Benefits to GI Bill students:

- Online claims with live processing of eligibility and enrollments and one-stop access to records and benefits information through an online portal.
- Services that enable timely and accurate delivery of payments, and first-contact resolution.
- New communication channels that enable GI Bill students to engage with VA about their earned benefits through electronic means, such as email, phone and chat for on-the-spot service.
- Ability for GI Bill students to maintain their own profile information.
- Improved GI Bill student experience that will help students be able to more time on their education, and rest assured that their benefits are accurate, on time and accessible.

Benefits to schools:

- Dedicated digital portal for schools that provides centralized and real-time access to information.
- Increased timeliness for payment processing.
- Direct access to records and information and that will provide updated history and confirmations of student enrollment.
- No need to maintain student profile information because students have direct access through the portal.

This information is high level. When will we hear more details?
We are still in the early stages of the program and don’t have all the answers. AFS will be building a roadmap that will outline milestones and impacts, such as impacts to legacy solutions.

Who is involved in DGIB?
EDU leadership is primarily responsible for overseeing the DGIB effort. DGIB has a Unified Program Integration Office which is comprised of EDU and Office of Information and Technology (OIT) leadership, MITRE and AFS, as partners, and subject matter experts drawn from across EDU and OIT.

How will we ensure that DGIB meets EDU’s needs?
The way the contract was written, EDU defined requirements and AFS proposed a solution. We will need broad participation to document today’s practices and future requirements to ensure that the solution meets our needs. It will take our collective knowledge, skills and expertise to design and build the new solution, with input from subject matter experts detailed to the project, users involved in user acceptance testing and knowledge sharing sessions with the managed service provider. Importantly, the program is using a Human Centered Design (HCD) approach that takes into account the experience of EDU, students, schools, and other external partners to design a solution that best meets their needs.

Technology

Is DGIB going to replace all of the legacy solutions?
Yes, eventually over the course of the next 10 years. The exception is FAS which will be replaced by a new solution that is not part of DGIB. All other legacy solutions will be replaced over time. Some solutions will be replaced by the new DGIB solution by the end of September 2021 and the other legacy
solutions will be decommissioned through a phased approach after that. AFS is developing a roadmap that will outline a schedule for impacts to other solutions.

Will legacy solutions be updated before the data is transferred to DGIB?
Some solutions will be updated and some will be completely replaced by DGIB over time. We will engage in substantial efforts to clean up data before it is incorporated into DGIB.

How will DGIB affect the user experience?
The user experience will be significantly improved for students, schools, external partners, as well as internal users. In general, the user experience will be more like what we experience in our personal lives. Students and beneficiaries will have direct service, immediate notifications, and real-time communications. Schools will have information at their fingertips. Veterans Claims Examiners will experience significant improvement through using a single solution, rather than multiple solutions.

Will schools and partners experience downtime as legacy solutions are decommissioned?
EDU will operate in parallel with legacy processes and systems until the new solution is implemented. There will be a short freeze on legacy solutions during any transition that will be communicated in advance.

Operational Impacts

Is VBA outsourcing its claims processing?
VBA EDU will oversee and manage the claims operations and process. AFS will provide new expertise and technologies to VBA EDU that will help it achieve next generation capabilities. Many routine tasks will be automated, though we expect claims examiners to continue to be involved in inherently governmental functions, as well as processing exception scenarios, more complex claims, and quality management.

How will my job be impacted?
The degree and type of impact the change will have on jobs, will vary by role. EDU and OIT leadership will support staff and communicate in more detail about the changes, as impacts are identified. The way work is performed will change, including policies, processes and procedures. The solution will allow EDU to do some of the things it hasn’t had the capacity to do because of the limitations of our current operating environment. EDU will be able to “reimagine” how it provides educational benefits.

DGIB may enable us to introduce new and different roles and ways to support the VBA mission. Training will be provided to everyone whose role might be affected or who might move into a new role. More detailed information will become available once AFS maps out the timeline and new capabilities.

Will there be training?
Yes. Technical training on the new solution will be provided by AFS while EDU will provide training on new policies, procedures, and processes.

How does DGIB affect other ongoing efforts in EDU, such as compliance with the Isakson and Roe Act?
DGIB will encompass many of the other efforts in VBA EDU. For example, there are ongoing requirements sessions to design DGIB to account for the Isakson and Roe Act, so that education claims are processed in accordance with the new legislation. EDU will be working to consolidate initiatives and meetings.
How are we managing solutions and operations in the interim, before DGIB is fully implemented? EDU will operate in parallel using the legacy systems and processes throughout the transition to DGIB to prevent disruption of service.

AFS will integrate/process most Ch. 33 claims by the end of September 2021, and most non-Ch. 33 claims by the end of the following year. In the interim, we will need to document our current state before we look at the future state. EDU wants to change the way it does benefits.

Will schools and partners experience downtime as legacy systems are decommissioned? EDU will operate in parallel using the legacy processes and systems until the new solution is fully implemented. AFS will ensure all automation and in-process transactions are complete and perform testing to make sure that the solution is fully operational in the new environment before transition. There will be a short freeze during any transition.

Other

How can I learn more and keep informed? EDU leadership and the DGIB team are committed to providing relevant and timely information about the program. Although we might not have all the details yet, we will share what we know and provide updates as they are available. If you have any questions or feedback, you can submit a comment to What’s on Your Mind - Subject (va.gov).

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