Dear Veterans and Active-Duty Military Taking Classes at PCC,

Like many of you, I am extremely disappointed that the shutdown of portions of our federal government could impact your ability to further your education at Pima Community College. As Pima’s chancellor, my promise to you is that the College will do everything it can to assist you during this potentially difficult period.

The College currently has more than 200 members of the active-duty military who benefit from the Defense Department’s Military Tuition Assistance program. As a result of the shutdown, this program has been suspended for enrollments in classes after Oct. 1. Fortunately, most of our active-duty military enrolled before that date.

Should the shutdown persist, I have instructed the College’s Students Accounts Office to delay billing any active-duty member of the armed forces for tuition charges until the end of the Fall 2013 term. I will not allow Washington gridlock to stand in the way of any man or woman who is serving their country from pursuing a higher education.

The College has received information from the Department of Veterans Affairs that veterans’ benefits will be funded through the end of the month. In the event of a prolonged shutdown, we understand that the processing and payment of claims will be suspended when funds are exhausted. Here, too, I have directed our Students Accounts Office to delay until the end of the term billing any veteran attending Pima with GI Bill benefits.

However, it is important that both active-duty military and veterans using GI Bill benefits follow guidance provided by the Air Force or your branch of the armed forces, or the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Beyond that, I recognize the larger challenge to improve support for the more than 1,400 student-veterans who attend PCC each year. We will increase hiring of competent and compassionate employees to oversee delivery of services to veterans. We are working with Downtown Campus vets who have identified campus space better suited to their needs and concerns, so that we can provide an area where they can feel secure and grounded.

In closing, please know that PCC values the unique skills, experiences and perspectives that military and veteran students bring to our campuses, and that I and the Governing Board will do our best to support the pursuit of your education goals.

Lee D. Lambert,
Chancellor