

Veterans to 'raq up free tuition at CUNY

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[Orley Pacheco](#) doesn't have to worry anymore about how he'll pay for college.

The [Iraq](#) war veteran will get his full tuition paid at the [Borough of Manhattan](#) Community College under a new state program that gives veterans a free ride at city colleges.

Pacheco, 24, served with the [U.S. Marines](#) for five years. Now he's building a life for himself in the civilian world - and sees college as his ticket to success.

"Transition is a very hard thing," said Pacheco, a business major from the [Bronx](#). "Without a degree, you're just entry level, pushing papers."

Veterans can get tuition paid at any of the 23 campuses of the [City University of New York](#). Tuition for full-time CUNY students is about \$2,800 a year.

Those at [State University of New York](#) schools also will get more college aid as part of the state's 2009 budget.

Veterans applauded the move, but also urged [President Bush](#) to sign the new G.I. Bill, which is expected to reach a vote in the Senate this week. It passed the House last week as part of a \$162 billion war funding package.

The new G.I. Bill would cover the cost of the most expensive in-state public university. It also would let soldiers who serve a certain number of years transfer unused college money to immediate family members.

"It's outstanding that [New York](#) has stepped up to get education benefits for veterans, but the federal government needs to step up and follow their lead," said [Paul Rieckhoff](#), an Iraq war veteran who founded the [New York City](#)-based Iraq and [Afghanistan](#) Veterans of [America](#). "New York is definitely showing leadership."

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