



Roadmap to Your Degree:

How to Transition from Military Service to College



NATIONAL
UNIVERSITY

A Private Nonprofit University Serving the Public Good™

Take the First Step

With your discipline and character, imagine what you could accomplish by combining your military experience with a college degree. A degree will prepare you for today's competitive workplace so you can excel whether you are continuing in the military or embarking upon a civilian career.

However, it can be tough to complete the coursework required for a degree when you're subject to deployment, unplanned moves and irregular schedules. You need a way to earn your degree and attend classes without disrupting your duties. Even if you're no longer on active duty, the chances are good that you're working and need to plan your education around the demands of both work and home.

This guide shows you how to do exactly that.

- Get tips on choosing a military-friendly college
- See what educational benefits you qualify for
- Find out how to you can draw on those benefits
- Explore financial aid options in case your benefits don't cover all costs

Roadmap to Your Degree



Map Your Path to College ▶



Find the Right School ▶



Get the Most Out of Your Educational Benefits ▶



Other Ways to Pay for College ▶



Map Your Path to College

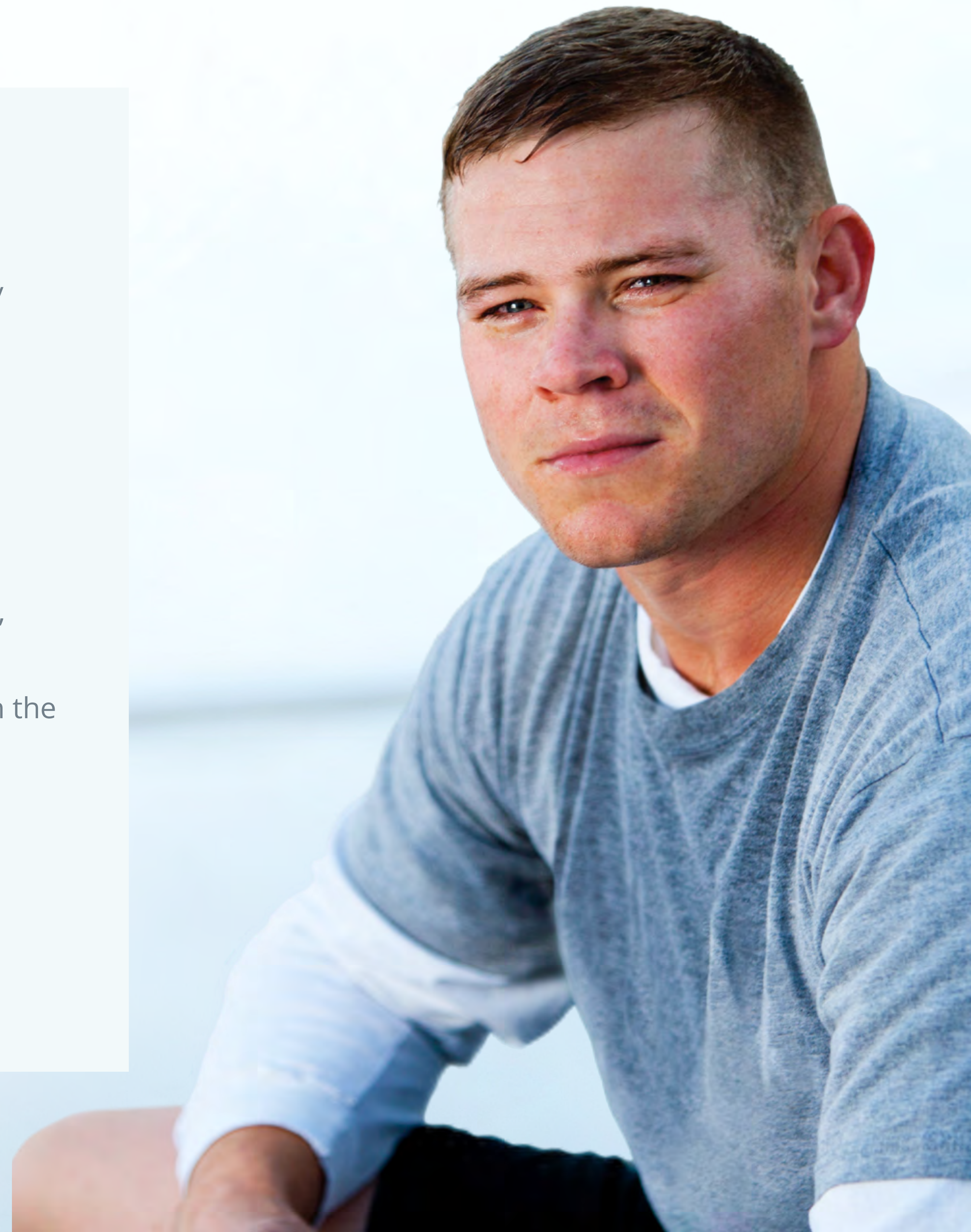
Choose your path

To make the most of your college experience, it is best to determine the career you want to pursue, and then plan your education to support that choice. Ask yourself what you are truly interested in, considering work you did before and during your time in the military.

Unsure what to pursue?

1. Check with military career counselors and Education Service Officers about a career skills and interest assessment
2. Focus on the career options that match your experience, skills, and personal interests
3. Ask for career counseling and employment assistance through the Department of Veterans Affairs
4. Visit [CareerScope](#) and check out their interest and aptitude assessment tool at no cost to eligible benefit recipients

Serving as a single point of contact, your **National University** military advisor will assist you from the day you begin until you graduate.





Find the Right School

What is a military friendly college?

A college that is military friendly offers more than just discounted tuition for military students. The list of things a school may offer to military students can be extensive, but they all add up to one thing: a school that fits your life and helps you get the most out of your benefits.

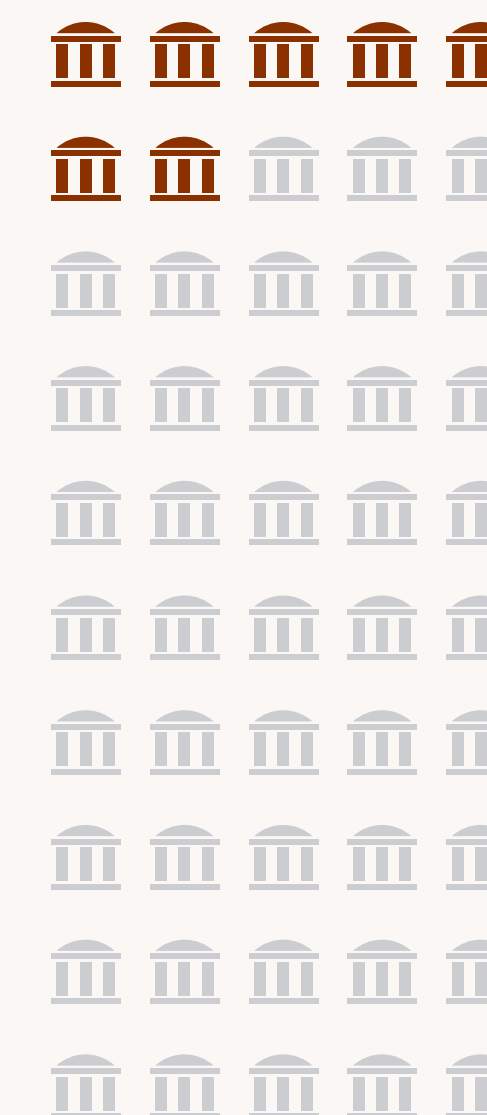
That may mean the school has a program in place to recognize the hard work you've done while in military service so you don't have to repeat it in school. The school may offer classes on your base, or offer online alternatives to those who can't make it to a campus because of distance or deployment. A military friendly school will also have admissions counselors and dedicated staff focused on providing servicemembers and veterans guidance and assistance in getting the education they want and need.

Military Friendly Stats



1,900

SCHOOLS PARTICIPATE IN **SERVICEMEMBERS OPPORTUNITY COLLEGE¹**



APPROXIMATELY

1,700
OUT OF
12,000

SCHOOLS THAT ARE AUTHORIZED BY THE DEPT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS ARE DESIGNATED MILITARY-FRIENDLY.¹ **THAT IS ONLY 14 PERCENT.**



Indicators of a military friendly college:

1. Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges

Look for a school that shows its commitment to military students by being a member of the Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (SOC). SOC was created in 1972 to provide education to those in the service who often have a difficult time completing their college degrees simply because they may change residence or deploy at any time. The SOC works with a variety of higher education associations as well as the DoD to expand and improve voluntary education opportunities for servicemembers around the world.

The SOC Consortium consists of roughly 1,900 schools that enroll servicemembers in associate's, bachelor's, and graduate-level degree programs on school campuses, armories and military installations within the United States and overseas, as well as through a variety of distance learning methods. SOC Consortium members are prepared to deliver specific associate's and bachelor's degree programs to servicemembers and their families through subgroups that include: SOCAD (Army), SOCNAV (Navy), SOCMAR (Marines) and SOCCOAST (Coast Guard). See [SOC](#) for more information.

2. Flexibility in the case of move or deployment

The right academic institution will have policies and processes in place that recognize the unique lifestyle of active duty military and their families. The option of online and on-campus classes, or especially campuses located on or very near to military bases, show a strong commitment to military students.

Universities that are members of the Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (SOC) allow students to more easily transfer their courses for credit as geographical locations change. The SOC network program also allows active-duty personnel the opportunity to earn an undergraduate degree from colleges and universities even if they are transferred before the completion of their required coursework.

3. Dedicated advisors and a military support program

The school should provide a centralized resource for services helpful to veterans and active military, with a dedicated military advisor team. These experts have special training in counseling, strategies and tools to ease the transition from military service to campus life. Find out what resources the school has to help you complete your education, achieve your career goals and improve your life with education.

The [Center of Excellence for Veteran Student Success](#) at National University offers a one-stop referral center to provide guidance and assistance for veterans.



Indicators of a military friendly college:

4. Reduced tuition and fees

When speaking to a college admissions advisor, request an exact breakdown of the per-credit tuition cost, lab fees, administrative fees and any other special fees. This is especially important if you are planning to use military [Tuition Assistance \(TA\)](#) as these programs often have limits to the types of fees that are covered. And although they may pay up to 100 percent of tuition costs, in most cases TA is capped at \$250 per semester credit hour and \$4,500 per year. Ask if the school offers scholarships, discounts, fee waivers, or book and tuition vouchers. Many schools offer special programs to help military and veteran students take advantage of their benefits.

5. Getting credit for military training and experience

You should be able to apply some of your prior education, military training and experience toward your degree at the school you choose. This will include

coursework from other accredited institutions, professional or technical certifications, and military training and experience.

Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES), American Council on Education (ACE) and others

The first step to claiming the credits you have earned is to request a transcript from your military service (request yours at [Military Transcripts Online](#)). Each service will provide unofficial personal copies and send schools an official copy of your transcript at no charge. Each service branch has their own system for recording your military education and experience credits. Find out more from [The American Council on Education](#).

College Level Examination Program (CLEP)

Helps you earn college credit for knowledge you have acquired during your military service through independent study, prior course work, on-the-job training, professional development, cultural pursuits, or internships. CLEP exams test your mastery of college-level material; exam-takers include adults just entering or returning to school, military servicemembers, and traditional college students. Find out more online at [CLEP](#).

Serving as a single point of contact, your **National University** military advisor will assist you from the day you begin until you graduate.



Indicators of a military friendly college:

6. Accreditations and associations

When speaking to a college enrollment or admissions advisor, ask about the school's accreditation. A school must be either regionally or nationally accredited to be eligible for the GI Bill and Tuition Assistance.

Ask if the school belongs to the SOC (Servicemembers Opportunities Colleges) or is listed in the DANTES distance learning catalogs. These associations show a commitment to servicemembers and veterans. If you are planning to use your GI Bill, be sure to ask if the VA has certified the program you want for GI Bill eligibility. You can confirm this by visiting the [VA website](#).

Programmatic accreditations are necessary for some career paths, including physical therapy, paralegal, nursing and others. It is critical that you verify the education and certification requirements for your chosen career field to ensure the program you are enrolling in meets those programmatic accreditations before you enroll. When speaking to a college admissions advisor, be specific about your goals and ask if your chosen field requires special accreditation.

You can earn your degree quickly following the intensive, accelerated format provided by **National University**.



Get the Most Out of Your Educational Benefits

Don't leave your benefits behind

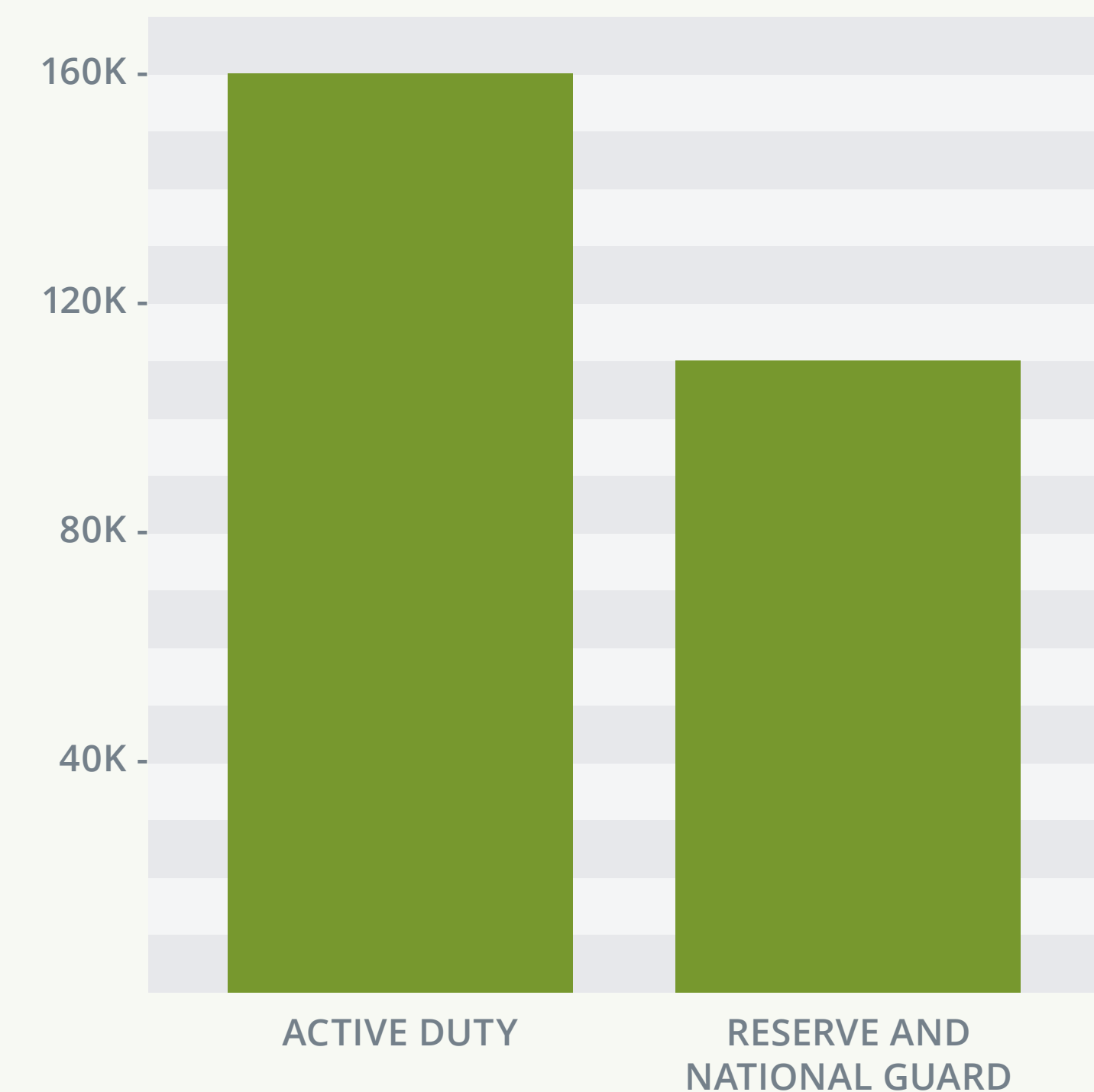
If you're leaving the military, you're in good company. Estimates are that 160,000 active duty and 110,000 reserve and National Guard members separate from the military every year. Unfortunately, 32,000 will join the ranks of nearly a million already unemployed veterans.²

The current unemployment rate for veterans hovers around 10 percent. Reasons that make this number so high include disabilities and lack of civilian work experience, which you can't really change. However, another lack is education and training³; you can overcome this with the help of your military benefits.

The good news is that the Obama administration has expanded programs like the Veterans Retraining Assistance Program (VRAP) and VOW to Hire Heroes Act. These programs aim to increase job opportunities, education and training for military members and their families. The goal is to help people like you adjust to academic and civilian life and developing a more educated and productive workforce.⁴

These are not empty promises but are backed by real money. In 2012, the Department of Veterans of Affairs paid out \$10,081,150,978 in education benefits. The Post-9/11 GI Bill is the most widely used education benefit, with over 100,000 first-time beneficiaries in 2012.⁵

More Military Stats



ESTIMATES ARE THAT **160,000 ACTIVE DUTY** AND **110,000 RESERVE AND NATIONAL GUARD** MEMBERS SEPARATE FROM THE MILITARY EVERY YEAR.



What benefits are you entitled to?

As a former or current member of the armed services, you are entitled to a range educational benefits that put your college degree within reach. See the chart below to learn what benefits you qualify for.

	ACTIVE DUTY	RESERVE	VETERAN	SPOUSESPOUSE	DEPENDENT (CHILD)
Tuition Assistance	<input type="radio"/>				
Tuition Assistance Top-Up	<input type="radio"/>				
The Montgomery GI Bill	<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>		
Chapter 1606 Montgomery GI Bill-Selected Reserve		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
\$600 Buy-up Program	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		
Military Spouse Career Advancement Accounts (MyCAA)				<input type="radio"/>	
Chapter 1607 Reserve Educational Assistance Program (REAP)		<input type="radio"/>			
The Post-9/11 GI Bill (Chapter 33)	<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Yellow Ribbon Program	<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Chapter 31 Vocational Rehabilitation	<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>		
FRY Scholarship					<input type="radio"/>

KEY: ACTIVE DUTY = AD RESERVE = R VETERAN = V SPOUSE = S DEPENDENT (CHILD) = D



Military discounted tuition is available from many colleges and universities to offset the costs of tuition and reduce out-of-pocket expenses not covered by education benefits.

- Qualified students include active duty members, their spouse and dependents, Department of Defense (DoD) employees, military retirees, active and inactive military reserve members, and civilian contractors working on a military base.
- Proof of status will be required and is available for programs taken online or at a U.S. military installation.
- Check with the school's administration to verify military tuition discounts and policies to determine your eligibility.

Tuition Assistance **AD**

The DoD's Tuition Assistance (TA) program provides financial assistance for voluntary off-duty education programs in support of servicemembers' professional and personal self-development goals. The TA policy for each fiscal year (October 1 to September 30) allows active duty servicemembers to receive tuition assistance of \$4,500 per year. Unlike a student loan, TA is based on your service and does not have to be repaid. Usually tuition is paid directly to the school by your branch of service.

Some service branches have specific guidelines or limits for their members that do not mirror the standard policy. As of January 1, 2014, the federal tuition assistance program added new policies that affect active duty members who plan to use TA.⁶ Please check with your Education Services Officer to determine the benefits available to you. For more information on Tuition Assistance, visit the [DANTES](#) website.

Tuition Assistance Top-Up **AD**

Using Top-Up benefits may be an option if you plan to use Tuition Assistance (TA) to complete a degree program while on active duty and don't plan to continue your education after service. Top-up can also be helpful for just taking a few courses with TA while on active duty. To receive Top-up, you must be eligible for Chapter 30 or 33 benefits and also receive some amount of TA from your military branch for the courses pursued. Learn more about the [Tuition Assistance Top-Up](#) program online.

National University offers reduced tuition rates for military personnel, retirees and their dependents taking on-base and online classes.



The Montgomery GI Bill **AD,V**

The Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB) program provides up to 36 months of education benefits. This benefit may be used for degree and certificate programs, flight training, apprenticeship, on-the-job training, and correspondence courses. Remedial, deficiency and refresher courses may be approved under certain circumstances. Generally, benefits are payable for ten years following your release from active duty. This program is also commonly known as Chapter 30. Learn more at [Veterans Affairs](#).

Chapter 1606 Montgomery GI Bill-Selected Reserve **R,V**

This reservist benefit is for military personnel on active drilling status with an obligation to serve for a period of not less than six years after June 30, 1985. He or she must have a high school diploma or equivalent, have completed Initial Active Duty Training (IADT) and have maintained satisfactory participation. Click here to learn more about the [MGIB-Selected Reserve](#) online.

\$600 Buy-up Program **AD,R,V**

Some servicemembers may contribute up to an additional \$600 to the GI Bill to receive increased monthly benefits. For an additional \$600 contribution, you may receive up to \$5,400 in additional GI Bill benefits. The additional contribution must be made while on active duty. For more information contact your personnel or payroll office or visit [Military.com](#).

Military Spouse Career Advancement Accounts **S**

The Military Spouse Career Advancement Accounts (MyCAA) program provides up to \$4,000 of financial aid over two years for military spouses pursuing degree programs, licenses or credentials leading to employment in portable career fields—those that are in demand in many regions. Spouses of active duty servicemembers in pay grades E1-E5, W1-W2, and O1-O2, as well as the spouses of activated National Guard and Reserve members within those ranks may be eligible. Spouses of National Guard and Reserve members must be able to start and complete their courses while their sponsor is on Title 10 orders (active duty). Learn more at [Military.com](#).

With your Tuition Assistance and/or the Post-9/11 GI Bill, along with other programs offered by the VA, DoD and the DoE, you can earn your degree while keeping your budget in check.



Chapter 1607 Reserve Educational Assistance Program (REAP) **R**

REAP is a benefit for a member of the ready reserve that has served on active duty after September 11, 2001 in support of a contingency (federal) operation for 90 consecutive days or more. The amount of monthly rate is dependent on how long that person was active and can come in increments of 40 percent, 60 percent or 80 percent of CH30 monthly rate. Learn more about this program by visiting [REAP](#) online.

The Post-9/11 GI Bill (Chapter 33) **AD,V,D,S**

Depending on your award level, the Post-9/11 GI Bill can pay all resident tuition and fees for a public school. It can also pay actual tuition and fees that do not exceed the [national maximum](#) per academic year for a private school. An exception to this exists for students enrolled in private schools in Arizona, Michigan, New Hampshire, New York, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, or Texas. In these cases the Post-9/11 GI Bill will pay the tuition and fees as long as they do not exceed public in-state undergraduate tuition and fees.

This benefit also pays a monthly housing stipend (i.e., MHA/BAH) at the rate of an E-5 with dependents. The amount received depends on your award level, how many credits

you are taking, how many days the course encompasses and whether the class is onsite or online. To get details on the program, visit the [U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs](#).

Yellow Ribbon Program **AD,V,D,S**

Institutions of higher learning (degree-granting institutions) may elect to participate in the Yellow Ribbon Program to make additional funds available for your education program without an additional charge to your GI Bill entitlement. Institutions that voluntarily enter into a Yellow Ribbon Agreement with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) choose the amount of tuition and fees that will be contributed. The VA will match that amount and issue payment directly to the institution. To find out if the school you are interested in is part of this program and to get more information, visit the [Yellow Ribbon Program](#).

National University serves the military with convenient locations in San Diego and San Bernardino counties in California and in Hawaii, Nevada, and Virginia.



Chapter 31 Vocational Rehabilitation **AD,V**

Chapter 31 Vocational Rehabilitation is a benefit for military personnel with discharge that is other than dishonorable and that has either a service-connected disability rating of at least 10 percent, or a memorandum rating of 20 percent or more from the Department of Veteran Affairs (VA). For specific requirements visit [Chapter 31 Vocational Rehabilitation](#).

FRY Scholarship **D**

FRY Scholarships benefit the children of servicemembers who died in the line of duty after Sept. 10, 2001. The benefit became effective August 1, 2009; the same day the Post-9/11 GI Bill took effect. Eligible children attending school may receive up to their full tuition and fees for a public school or a statutory annual maximum amount for a public school, plus a monthly living stipend and book allowance under this program. The recipient may be married and over age 23, but if eligible under CH 30, 1606, or 1607, must relinquish eligibility under one program to receive benefits. Learn more at [Fry Scholarship eligibility](#).



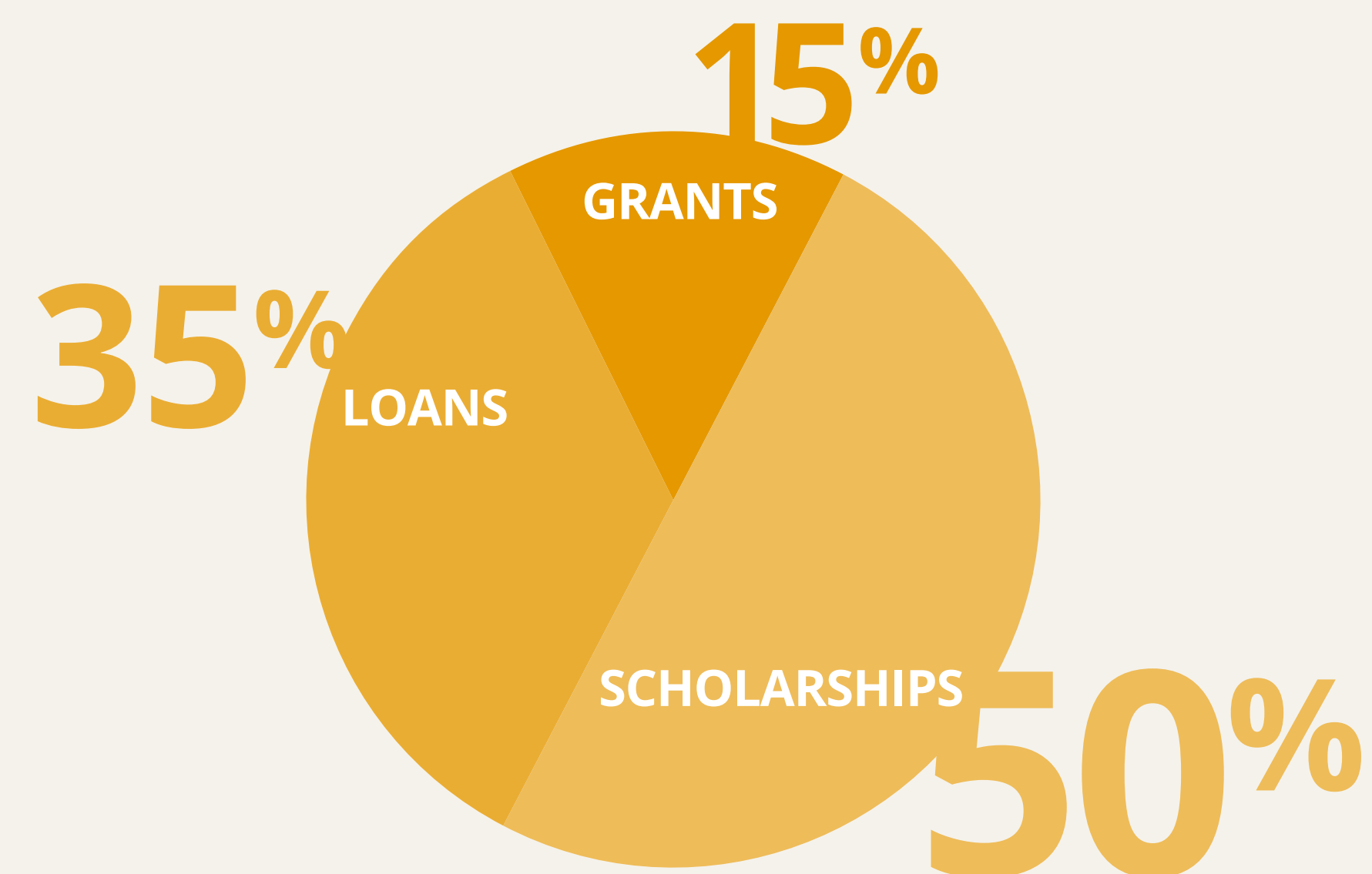


Other Ways to Pay for College

Most college students pay for their education with **grants**, **scholarships**, **loans**, or a combination of the three. If you have explored all your military benefits and still need additional funding, here is an overview of the options:

- **Grants** are a great way to fund your education because, unlike loans, they never have to be paid back. Grants are essentially free money, though each will have unique qualifiers that must match your situation.
- **Scholarships** are usually awarded based on merit or other specific requirements. Sometimes those requirements may be based on minority status, athletic ability, or may even be awarded to students that win academic competitions. Scholarships may be awarded to students at all levels, and like grants, do not need to be repaid. You can learn about scholarships in many ways, starting with contacting the admissions office at the school you plan to attend. Another good place to find scholarship information is the U.S. Department of Labor's [scholarship search tool](#).
- **Loans** come in all sizes and varieties and differ from grants and scholarships in that they must be paid back. Some loans may be subsidized while others are offered unsubsidized. The difference is that the U.S. Department of Education pays the interest on a Direct Subsidized Loan when you are in school, and you are responsible for paying the interest on a Direct Unsubsidized Loan.

FINANCIAL AID UTILIZATION





Generally speaking, you must demonstrate financial need for a majority of the federal student aid programs. This need is typically defined by the difference between the cost to attend a school and your expected contribution to the cost.

To be eligible for federal aid, you must:

- Be a U.S. citizen or an eligible non-citizen
- Have a valid Social Security number
- Have a high school diploma or General Educational Development (GED) certificate
- Be enrolled or accepted to a college
- Be registered for Selective Service if you are a male between the ages of 18 – 25
- Have filled out, signed, and submitted a Free Application for Federal Student Aid application (FAFSA)

For a complete list of criteria, check the government website, studentaid.ed.gov. You can also speak with a financial aid advisor at the school you are interested in attending for answers about specific criteria.

To be Eligible for Federal Aid You must:

BE A U.S. CITIZEN OR AN ELIGIBLE NON-CITIZEN

HAVE A VALID SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER

**HAVE A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA
OR GENERAL EDUCATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT (GED) CERTIFICATE**

BE ENROLLED OR ACCEPTED TO A COLLEGE

**BE REGISTERED FOR SELECTIVE SERVICE
IF YOU ARE A MALE BETWEEN
THE AGES OF 18 – 25**

**HAVE FILLED OUT, SIGNED, AND SUBMITTED
A FREE APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL STUDENT
AID APPLICATION (FAFSA)**



Getting Started

You've worked hard in military service and you deserve all the benefits you are entitled to. Use this guide to help you exercise them wisely and you will find your way forward to the education you want and need. Use the links below to get started.

Helpful links:

- [American Council on Education](#)
- [CareerScope](#)
- [CLEP](#)
- [DANTES](#)
- [Fry Scholarship](#)
- [U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs](#)
- [Yellow Ribbon Program](#)
- [MyCAA](#)
- [Military.com](#)
- [Military Transcripts](#)
- [Montgomery GI Bill](#)
- [REAP](#)
- [Post-9/11 GI Bill](#)
- [Scholarship Search Tool](#)
- [Student Financial Aid](#)
- [Tuition Assistance Program](#)
- [Tuition Assistance Top-Up](#)
- [Vocational Rehabilitation](#)

References

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5. "Annual Benefits Report Fiscal 2012," U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Affairs Administration, n.d., accessed February 10, 2014, http://www.vba.va.gov/REPORTS/abr/2012_abr.pdf.
6. Mackensie Moore, "Federal Tuition Assistance Changes Affect Active-Duty Military Students," Iowa State Daily, February 4, 2014, accessed February 12, 2014, http://www.iowastatedaily.com/news/article_d52c22e8-8d21-11e3-9da6-0019bb2963f4.html.

About National University:

Dedicated to educational access and academic excellence, National University provides challenging and relevant programs that are student-centered, success-oriented, and have a proven balance of theoretical and practical attributes. National University has five schools and one college, including:

- School of Business and Management
- School of Education
- School of Engineering, Technology and Media
- School of Health and Human Services
- School of Professional Studies
- College of Letters and Sciences

National University is approved by the Department of Defense for the training of active duty servicemembers, veterans and reservists and for government service civilians; it is also authorized to process active duty tuition assistance contracts, and for government service civilians. Memberships and participations include Yellow Ribbon Program, Principles of Excellence, and Servicemember Opportunity Colleges (SOC) Consortium.

National University has established the [Center of Excellence for Veteran Student Success](#) to serve as a one-stop referral center to provide guidance and assistance in directing veterans to the services they need. The Center provides military peer-to-peer mentoring to assist with academic achievement, with the aim to increase graduation rates for veterans, and help them achieve higher job placement, lower unemployment and higher success rates.

National University offers the following services for active military students, veterans and their families:

- [US Army](#)
- [US Air Force](#)
- [US Navy](#)
- [US Marine Corps](#)
- [US Coast Guard](#)
- [Department of Defense](#)
- [Center of Excellence for Veteran Student Success](#)

FAQ

Frequently asked questions for military students from National University

Q: Can I enroll in courses at any time?

A: Yes, National University has regular enrollment cycles and students can begin taking classes at the beginning of any month, year-round for your convenience.

Q: Will I be assigned an advisor who can help me whenever I have questions?

A: All National University students are assigned an academic advisor to guide them through course completion and answer any questions they may have during their studies. Also, if you are active duty or a reservist, your Education Service Officer will be able to assist you in matters pertaining to your advanced education pursuit.

Q: Will military training and courses taken at other colleges convert to credit at National?

A: Yes. As a member of the Servicemembers Opportunity College (SOC), National University agrees to accept non-traditional credit earned by servicemembers. Military training courses will be regionally accredited if the courses are recommended by the American Council of Education (ACE).

Q: Do I have to own a computer to do distance learning?

A: While it is not required to have your own computer for your distance learning pursuits, it is recommended. As long as you have access to a computer with an Internet Service Provider (ISP), an active email account, and Internet Explorer, or a recent version of Netscape, you will be able to participate in the online courses. View the [online technical requirements](#) for more information about online course requirements.

Q: Can I take CLEP and other tests for credit toward a degree?

A: National University recognizes that many people have gained relevant knowledge and experience that can be applied to an academic curriculum. We will help you apply the maximum credit possible to your degree program, including previous coursework, exams and military training documented by your service branch and approved by ACE.

Personnel who want to accelerate their academic programs may want to consider course-challenge examinations or the standardized examinations available through:

- College-Level Examination Program (CLEP)
- Regents College Examinations (formerly ACT/PEP)
- DANTES Subject Standardized Tests (DANTES/SST)

Q: Can I continue my degree while in the field or at sea?

A: Yes. As long as you have an Internet service provider (ISP) for the computer you will be working on and an active email account, you should be able to continue your degree while in the field or at sea.

Q: How many courses can I take at a time?

A: Due to the intensive one-month long course schedule, we recommend that students take only one course at a time. There are exceptions that will be made but for the most part, students take one course at a time.

Q: Will tuition assistance cover the costs for studying at National?

A: Yes. In addition to the military tuition discount, there are also scholarships for military students that can be found in the [financial aid section](#), and there are many Federal resources available like the GI Bill. Please note that the amount of tuition assistance is limited by the amount available per year and will be reset with the advent of the next fiscal cycle.

Q: Where do I start to apply for Financial Aid or Tuition Assistance?

A: If you are active duty or in the reserves the best place to start is by talking to your Education Services Officer (ESO), who can direct you to the proper forms and application processes for Federal loans and qualifying for TA. A National University Enrollment Services representative can also provide information about your tuition assistance options. If you are a veteran, visit [Veterans Affairs](#) and [Financial Aid](#) for additional information.

Q: Can dependents of active duty military receive discounts when taking studying at National?

A: Yes, active duty military and their dependents are eligible to receive discounted rates when they take courses online or on-base.

Q: How do I use my VA benefits?

A: Start by registering on the eBenefits website where you can apply for and check on your educational benefits. You may also visit the [Veterans Affairs website](#) for specific information about how to apply your VA benefits to advance your education at National University.