

State universities, community colleges and online degree programs all recognize the importance and benefit of working with military students. And while some do it better than others, there are a few things you should look for in any degree program you are considering.



Photo provided by JCCC/SINGH

Colleges Get Military-Savvy

by Jennifer G. Williams

Obviously, the first thing to look for is a program that offers coursework in your chosen field. From there, check out their accreditation (regional or national), as that may affect your ability to transfer credits you earn there to other institutions in the future. While you're at it, see what credit they can give you for past coursework or even military training and education. Also check on any timeline requirements for degree completion—as a service member, you may need a little extra time to finish coursework between deployments and being relocated.

Speaking of location, does the institution have any residency requirements, and would you be able to meet them? And what about scholarships? Many colleges and universities offer special scholarships to members of the military and their families, so seek out those opportunities.

And one last thing to remember: If the programs aren't spelled out for you — ask! Ask a school's admissions officer or a military liaison, if they have one—that's what they're there for! And it's a good idea to visit the education counselor on your particular installation, to get an idea of the scholarships or other programs for which you may qualify.

Traditional Campus Comes to You

Instead of waiting for military students to come to campus, the University of North Carolina at Pembroke brought its campus to Fort Bragg, with a satellite office that offers both undergraduate and graduate programs. The Ft. Bragg site does not offer 100 or 200 level courses, so students would have to attain those lower-level college credits elsewhere. Visit www.uncp.edu for more information.

The University of Kansas has partnered with the U.S. Army to allow wounded soldiers the opportunity to earn a master's degree at the school and then apply their cumulative knowledge as an instructor at the Army's Command and General Staff College or

Combined Arms Center at Fort Leavenworth. Depending on the success of the Wounded Warrior Education Initiative, officials said this pilot program may be expanded to include other civilian universities, other Army institutions of learning or even other branches of service. Visit www.ku.edu for more information on the University of Kansas and its programs.

Wireless Education

Coastline Community College started as primarily a distance education institution in 1977, targeting a military audience in 1983. With 1,253 military graduates in 2006/2007, and students today taking courses from Iraq and Afghanistan, this California-based college indeed caters to its military students. From offering accelerated eight-week Internet courses, CD-ROM courses and even PDA/handheld device courses, CCC tries to accommodate everyone's circumstances and schedules.

The school also offers free applications, and free SOC evaluations to get students started. And Coastline started a military spouses program, in which spouses of service members can earn credits at a reduced rate. Visit <http://military.coastline.edu> for more information on any of Coastline's programs and initiatives.

A Global Community

Florida Community College at Jacksonville is a two-year institution that serves the Armed Forces and their families. As a participating member of Service members Opportunity Colleges (SOC), a consortium of 1,550 colleges and universities dedicated to providing educational opportunities for service members and their families, FCCJ now offers several degree and certificate programs that can be earned online.

In addition to its online degree programs, FCCJ also offers classes at the Naval Air Station Jacksonville and Naval Station Mayport. Visit <http://opencampus.fccj.org/mei> for more information about FCCJ and its Military Education Institute. ●