

Getting Credit for Your Military Service

Today's service members have endless choices when it comes to pursuing higher education. Some institutions advertise granting credits for military service, but how do you know what will transfer?

AmeriForce Publishing spoke with Doug Barling, Senior Director of Military Relations for Ashford University, about this issue facing service members worldwide.

If a service member is thinking of going back to school, and is unsure what, if any, of his or her military service can count for college credit, what are the first steps he or she should take to find out?

Ashford University's dedicated military admissions team — most of whom are military veterans — possess a solid understanding of the AARTS, SMARTS, CCAF, and Coast Guard transcripts. Ashford's military academic counselors discuss those transcripts with each prospective service member student, how credits are applied and how to obtain them.

Is there a central governing body (such as ACE) that determines a uniform standard of how many credits for each

type of military experience? Or do individual schools make their own determinations? If it is up to the individual school, how does that work?

As Ashford University's Senior Director of Military Relations, I do not presume to know what other institutions are doing. However, at Ashford, we follow the American Council on Education (ACE) approvals and recommendations. In addition, the ACE has spent a good deal of time evaluating military training and because of this, we do not see any need in trying to reinvent the wheel. At Ashford University, we believe it is important to have and follow a standard for both fairness and consistency and ACE provides us that standard.

What are the most common college-credit-worthy military experiences? What types of college credit do these experiences most often count towards? Are there certain military experiences that translate better into college credits (in other words, for those still serving, are there things they can do to improve their number of eligible college credits)?

Service members have many kinds of experiences and the ones that are relevant here can be defined as training. A good deal on military training has been evaluated by the American Council on Education (ACE). What is important to understand about these credits

— or the training that transfers in as credit — is that it is typically related to the service member's MOS, AFSC or rating (occupation in service). Often times, the more technical the job, the more credit granted by the ACE.

The original GI Bill influenced an entire generation of returning service members to attend colleges and universities, and enrollments skyrocketed. Are you seeing a similar type of influx with this new, Post-9/11 GI Bill?

Service members need to be aware of the story behind the original GI Bill. I would advise readers to do their research and begin with the Bonus Army. Only after one understands a specific episode in history and the reasoning behind it, can one truly understand the importance of the GI Bill — then and now. We have seen a very significant increase in the number of military students since the enactment of the Post 9/11 GI Bill. And it is hopeful that number will only continue to increase — irrespective of where the service members/veterans choose to study.

What advice would you give a service member who is thinking of going back to school?

"Go for it!" There is little in life that is as important as education. Do your research, find a college or university that best suits your needs and commit yourself to the task of learning. It will be the best decision you will ever make. ●