

Keep Your Education on Track

Courtesy University of Maryland University College (UMUC)

While relocations and frequent deployments are a fact of military life, there is no need to put your education goals on hold. Here are some tips to help you continue your studies without interruption, no matter where your service takes you.

Before you enroll, carefully examine your educational options

Ideally, you should choose a college or university that offers you the ability to complete coursework no matter where you are located. If there are several institutions offering programs at your current location, you should ask their representatives how you could continue your program in the event of a deployment or PCS.

For example, University of Maryland University College (UMUC) offers classes at 150 sites worldwide. "I was deployed four times in eight years, and UMUC was always there for me," said U.S. Air Force Technical Sergeant Kirk Clear, a 2003 graduate of UMUC. During his undergraduate studies, he attended classes at UMUC locations in Maryland and Europe.

Choose online education for maximum flexibility

Not even the largest universities can offer on-site classes in every location, so many service members choose to earn their degrees online. In an online class, you can log in and complete coursework at any time of day or night, from any place in the world. In 2002, when Clear was deployed to Kuwait, Oman, and Afghanistan, he was able to continue his studies online. "I came back from the desert with six credits, not wasting that semester," he said. If you plan to earn your degree entirely online, make sure that all the courses you need to finish your program are available online.

Consider other sources of credit

You may be able to accelerate your progress by earning credit for your previous education, military training, or on-the-job learning. Before you enroll in a new college or university, check to see if your previous credits can be transferred to your new program. In addition, some universities allow you to earn credit for learning gained through work, military service, or other activities.

Keep track of your academic progress

As you progress through your studies, keep a careful record of the courses you have completed and check your degree requirements regularly to see which courses you still need to complete. This is good advice for any college student, but especially for on-the-go military students. This will make it easier to select appropriate courses once you arrive at your new location.

Consult with your advisor—before and after your relocation

Maintaining good communication with your academic advisor is the key to keeping your studies on track during a relocation. Before you move, your advisor can help you identify the classes and services that will be available to you at your new installation. Once you arrive, your advisor can help you with registration and other important issues, such as applying for veterans' benefits or other sources of financial aid. ●

For more than 60 years, UMUC has been dedicated to serving the educational needs of military and other adult students. Last year, the university enrolled more than 90,000 students worldwide, including 41,000 active-duty service members. UMUC offers more than 120 graduate and undergraduate degree and certificate programs. For more information, visit www.umuc.edu

Five Factors Military Personnel Should Consider When Choosing a University

Whether you plan to advance in the military or begin a new career, higher education is the key to success. Because it can be challenging to pursue an education while coping with the demands of military life, you need a university that delivers the advantages you need.

1. Academic Excellence.

First and foremost, you deserve a quality education from a university that is recognized and respected within the military community and in the private sector.

2. Program Choices.

Career success requires specialized knowledge in your chosen field. Look for a school with a variety of degree programs, as well as a wide selection of courses in your specific field.

3. Portable Education.

You need a university that can keep pace with your mobile lifestyle. Look at class availability online or at satellite sites, and also at a school's transfer policies.

4. Convenient Classes and Services.

You need the flexibility to plan your studies around your busy workload and unpredictable schedule. Look for options to include evening and weekend classes and online programs, which are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

5. Affordable Education.

Cost is a concern for most adult students, so be sure to consider all your financing options, especially your military education benefits. Look for special financing and/or benefits available to members of the military.