



Education that Deploys *with* You

By Tom Graves

SO many colleges are looking to further service members' educations that you can take your pick of universities in which to enroll. With the possibilities of online education growing every year, seeking higher education while deployed is as close as your networked laptop computer.

Colleges want the kind of disciplined, goal-oriented students that make service members attractive students. Their admissions managers know that service members want to give back to their country, their communities and their colleges, and many have service member alumni as counselors and teachers for current or interested students to consult.

At public colleges, U.S. service members can enroll in distance learning courses at reduced tuition, typically 20 to 25 percent off the standard tuition for civilians.

One thing you'll notice is that once you start researching colleges online, the possibilities are practically endless and it can seem overwhelming. With a specific goal in mind, your best first step is to consult with an academic advisor on base.

But if you're exploring education possibilities prior to a specific goal, you'll find that Service member Opportunity

Colleges, American Military University, sites like GoArmyEd.com and any college that offers distance learning courses will open your eyes to possibilities for your future that you may not have previously considered.

Also, you may have achieved, or be closing in on the equivalent of an Associate of Arts degree through the coursework of your military training.

"University of Phoenix acknowledges that many service members have already achieved an education equivalent to an associate degree through college coursework, military training, and national testing programs," states the University of Phoenix website. "The ... Associate of Arts Degree through Credit Recognition allows service members to fulfill most of their degree requirements by recognizing approved college-level learning no matter where service members are located throughout the world."

The core of college choices for U.S. service members includes specialized training at military schools such as AMU. Outside that circle are programs pertaining to military subjects at public colleges that offer distance learning. But even schools

SURFING THE SCHOOLS

Service member Opportunity Colleges: www.soc.aascu.org

GoArmyEd.com: The College of the American Soldier works in conjunction with this website and colleges whose degrees participate in the Career Noncommissioned Officer (NCO) Degrees Program.

American Military University: www.amu.apus.edu

University of Maryland, University College: www.umuc.edu

Allied Schools: www.alliedschools.com

University of Phoenix: www.phoenix.edu

SERVING THOSE WHO SERVE

The American Council on Education (ACE) launched www.acenet.edu/STWS Serving Those Who Serve: Higher Education and America's Veterans," an initiative to promote access to higher education for more than two million service members and their families eligible for expanded benefits under the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008.

Serving Those Who Serve is a multi-year effort to effect major changes in how veterans learn about their education benefits and postsecondary options and how institutional leaders can build capacity to serve veterans on their campuses. The agenda will include competitive grants to veteran-friendly institutions, a college planning website and outreach campaign to inform veterans about accessing and utilizing their education benefits, research-based publications, and regional meetings to ease implementation of the new GI Bill benefits.

The goals of the Serving Those Who Serve initiative are to better understand the factors that affect veterans' decisions about pursuing higher education; to identify institutions that are helping veterans succeed academically and socially and to spread these promising practices to other campuses; to compile reliable demographic information about the veteran population; and to assist colleges and universities in navigating the process of administering those benefits.

ACE implemented a competitive grant program, the ACE/Wal-Mart Success for Veterans Institutional Awards, to identify and reward institutions that operate model programs advancing access and success in higher education for veterans and their families. Recipient institutions are required to provide technical assistance to other institutions in order to extend these promising practices. Twenty grants of \$100,000 each were awarded this spring. For details, visit www.acenet.edu.

that only offer standard civilian curriculum for distance learning often have discounted tuition for service members, their family members and veterans.

AMU's ever-expanding programs cater to specific career goals for U.S. service members. One example is their Bachelor of Arts degree in Military Management and Program Acquisition.

"The degree is appealing to government contractors and other professionals involved with the military or civilian defense establishment," AMU's website states. "Graduates of this program typically go on to executive employment with the military, government or corporate environments."

Allied Schools administers a variety of post-military online career training programs with paid tuition benefits of up to \$4,500 for qualified service members.

Its Army Vocational/Technical (AVOTEC) Pilot Program is available to active-duty Army, Army Reserve and National Guard soldiers who can acquire technical, vocational or advanced training and retraining skills with tuition fully or partially paid for through military benefits.

Qualified service member training can be supported with fully-paid tuition assistance. Under the Military Spouse Career Advancement Initiative, education costs can be covered using Career Advancement Accounts. Scholarships are available for spouses who are not eligible for CAA.

The University of Maryland, University College has distance learning Academic Advisors all over the world, including some stationed on OCONUS bases.

In Asia, UMUC offices can be found in Japan, Korea, Okinawa, Guam and the Marshall Islands. UMUC's arrangement with the Department of Defense includes DSN phones and fax numbers at UMUC offices.

"UMUC's agreement with military services requires military students to see an Academic Advisor and to develop a degree plan after completion of six credit hours with UMUC," the college catalog states. "Students who are enrolled in the Community College of the Air Force (CCAF) or who have SOCAD, SOCMAR, SOCNVA or SOCCOAST agreements already have degree plans and are exempt from this requirement."

Those acronyms stand for Servicemember Opportunity Colleges' branch-specific programs for Army (Degree), Marines, Navy and Coast Guard.

The SOC consortium of colleges formed in 1972 specifically to address the education needs of service members who needed to complete degrees while mobilizing for active duty or making a PCS.

"Today SOC is a consortium of www.soc.aascu.org/socgen/Coll_UnivList.html more than 1,800 colleges and universities that provide educational opportunities for servicemembers and their families," states the SOC website. "SOC is cosponsored by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities www.aascu.org/ and the American Association of Community Colleges www.aacc.nche.edu/, in cooperation with 13 other educational associations, the Military Services, the National Guard, and the Coast Guard."

Just as SOC keeps growing, so do the ranks of colleges that are eager to attract U.S. service members as students and faculty. For deployed service members and spouses on the home-front, there is no reason to let distance to a college campus stop you from furthering your education goals. 