

## **Active Duty and Veteran Pathways to Engineering Higher Education**

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# **Active Duty and Veteran Pathways to Engineering Higher Education**

## **Abstract**

The number of veteran enrollments in American colleges and universities is at a level not seen since the Vietnam War era. Most of these veterans use the Post-9/11 GI Bill, an educational assistance plan for eligible veterans, but many more programs are available to veterans and active duty military members. This paper presents an overview of many of these education assistance programs available to this growing population. With no end date for the Post-9/11 GI Bill and the demand for engineering degrees in an increasingly technical job market, large numbers of veterans will continue to enroll in higher education institutions. Likewise, active duty military members will be part of the engineering education landscape to support the current demand for technical expertise in the military. Every student has different needs and challenges, and all still need information and access to resources that will help them succeed and link them to the campus community, so that they feel more fully part of the learning environment and can meet their educational goals. A continuous stream of student veteran and active duty populations requires higher education faculty, advisers, staff, and administrators to both understand their strengths and challenges and to include their funding pathways for an engineering education.

Scholarships and grants provide a pathway and can ease the financial burden for many students. Similarly, the educational benefits earned by the veterans and active duty military members provide great opportunities but have limitations and different applications. This paper attempts to highlight some of the major educational benefit programs available to veterans and active duty military members and inform those who interact and advise with this population.

## **Intent and Implications**

This paper attempts to explain some of the main educational benefit programs that service members may use in higher education. This paper will focus on the Post-9/11 GI Bill and not previous versions of the GI Bill. Likewise, the student population in this paper refers to student veterans, active duty, and reservists (not their family members). Higher education and the nation's effort to support military-connected students is at times limited by an insufficient understanding of this diverse student population.

Academic advising is more than navigating curricula. Faculty advisers and professional advisers play a key role in student success and their active engagement with students promote intellectual development. Advisers advocate for students as needed while empowering them to be self-directed learners. This partnership between advisers and students requires both to be cognizant of opportunities (education benefits) and restrictions, expected standards of achievement, and intervention as needed. Nearly all of the education benefits have time limits, financial limits, and proof of satisfactory academic progress for accountability and stewardship of resources. Many campuses may have a Veterans Affairs and Services Office, but they offer many services in addition to education benefits, such as Military Appreciation Events, Campus Information, Child Care, etc. Additionally, the centralization of this knowledge and services in one building may be

inconvenient to some students, especially on large campuses. Some large campuses offer short courses aimed at instructors to promote awareness of challenges military and veteran students may face; however, specific awareness of the breadth of education benefits appears to be centralized to the staff at the campus Veterans Affairs and Services Office or to a few service-connected individuals in the academic units. Professional advising staff often focus on traditional students and the set curricula, and this population of professional advisers is often fluid with more frequent turnover. This paper provides a concise reference for faculty or professional advisers, university administration, financial aid offices, and potential students, highlighting many of the current education programs available.

## **Methods**

A brief literature review of the history and context of military-related education benefits is provided for completeness and reveals the needs of society, the needs of a population returning from deployments, and the specific needs of the different service components. The information in this paper is drawn from current sources, and the different military service branches may introduce new programs or phase out others. As education benefit opportunities and limitations evolve based on funding levels and needs of the military workforce (active duty), a review of branch specific websites (e.g. search for “Navy education benefits”) for education benefits revealed the most common and longstanding programs that are highlighted in this paper.

## **History / Background**

Since its inception in 2009, the Post-9/11 GI Bill has been a transformative investment of more than \$53 billion to support the post-secondary education of more than 1.4 million service members, veterans, and their families [1]. Prior to World War 1, there was little to none in the provision for veterans’ participation in higher education. It seems the only compensation was in the form of pensions for some disabled veterans following the Revolutionary War. This compensation continued into the next century through the Civil War [2]. However, the origins of specific, veteran education assistance programs can be traced to more than a century ago, aligning with World War 1. Federal programs were created to aid people with disabilities in an effort to support the rehabilitation and reintegration of disabled veterans in the workforce.

In 1916, the National Defense Act provided an opportunity for soldiers to receive instruction to facilitate their return to civilian life. It marked the first time legislatively the US enacted regulation to assist persons injured in service to their country. In 1917, the Smith-Hughes Act established the Federal-State Program in vocational education and created a Federal Board of Vocational Education with the authority and responsibility for the vocational rehabilitation of disabled veterans. Recognizing a greater need for disabled veterans returning from World War 1, the Smith-Sears Veterans Rehabilitation Act in 1918 expanded the role of the Federal Board of Vocational Education to provide services for the vocational rehabilitation of veterans. It was commonly known as the Soldier’s Rehabilitation Act. By 1920, the federal government expanded rehabilitation programs to civilians through the Smith-Fess Act, also known as the Civilian Vocational Rehabilitation Act, and modeled it after the Soldiers Rehabilitation Act [3]. The Smith-Fess Act was also less restrictive in assistance to veterans. The *Penn State Collegian*, dated September 21, 1920, reported that veterans who had been refused return to work or

vocational training because of their disability were now eligible to reapply for placement services and training in agriculture and industry [4].

At the conclusion of World War 2 with the return of millions of service personnel, the US government established the ‘original’ GI Bill, or the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944, which established a comprehensive series of benefits and programs to help ease veterans back into American society without overwhelming the American workplace. The most prominent benefit of the GI Bill was the educational component, but Servicemen’s Readjustment Act included unemployment benefits, business loans, home loans, and training opportunities. After World War 2, student veterans used the GI Bill to pursue higher education and contributed to the diversity of university and college campuses. Since 1944, there have been six GI Bill educational programs. The most recent program is known as the Post-9/11 GI Bill, which was implemented in the fall of 2009 [2].

The Post-9/11 GI Bill and the drawdown of military personnel after the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have contributed to a significant increase in the number of service members and veterans who use their earned educational benefits to enroll in U.S. postsecondary education [1]. The Post-9/11 GI Bill also allows educational benefits to be transferred to family members.

### **Why: Motivation For College**

Active duty and veterans go to college primarily to improve their economic status and prepare for a possibly better career after college. These are similar motivations for most non-military people. However, the cost of college is the primary obstacle for most civilians and veterans. However, education benefits like the Post-9/11 GI Bill may eliminate the cost barrier or significantly reduce it, paying for tuition, mandatory fees, and books while providing a living allowance based on the local economy [2]. The wars in the middle east may no longer be daily news or popular, but respect for veterans is much more positive when compared with the Vietnam War era. With no end date for the Post-9/11 GI Bill, many more military service-connected members will continue to use their earned VA/DoD educational benefits to pursue a postsecondary credential in the coming years. Aside from the cost of college as a barrier, other adjustments (new normal, physical disability, anxiety of higher education) contribute to the reluctance of entering higher education [2]. Social needs and differences between the broad population of military connected individuals and the traditional students are discussed in other sources [1-2], [5]. Much of the current literature on military-connected students examines the undergraduate level. The military-connected graduate student population is a much smaller subset of students and studies [2]. Many of the students who identify as military-connected and pursuing graduate degrees are active duty completing their degrees to return to a service academy or to an active-duty assignment of their service branch. However, many of the education benefits discussed in this paper are applicable to graduate education, as well. Appendix A is a Quick Reference Table of Major Military-Connected Education Benefits, current as of January 2023.

## **Who: National Guard, Reservists, Active Duty individuals, and Veterans**

Several differences exist in terms of military obligations and between available VA or DoD education benefits for members of the National Guard, reservists, active duty individuals, and veterans, so short definitions are presented [6].

- Active duty - full-time service members
- Veterans - former active duty members who completed their service obligations and met length-of-service requirements
- National Guard - have a unique state and federal dual-service function, which is why Guard members serve for both state emergencies and federal deployments (i.e., active duty service).
- Reservists - can only be ordered for full-time active duty service, not state emergencies.

Members of the National Guard and reserves typically spend two weeks per year and one weekend per month training, commonly called "drilling period." They can be classified as veterans for purposes of receiving VA benefits if they have fulfilled their active duty service and the full period for which they were called upon to serve [5].

## **How: Education Benefits Programs For all Services**

### ***Post-9/11GI Bill***

The GI Bill helps current and former service members pay for college, trade school, technical school, licensing, certification programs, on-the-job training, online schooling, and more. The Post-9/11 GI Bill provides benefits for those who served on active duty or in the Selected Reserve for 90 or more days after Sep. 10, 2001.

The main benefits include:

- Four academic years (36 months) of educational tuition benefits for an approved program up to the cost of the most expensive in-state undergraduate public tuition in the state the Veteran enrolls. The minimum requirement is service of at least 90 days.
- Additional tuition at more expensive private schools under the "Yellow Ribbon" program allows participating institutions to share the cost (usually, one to one) with the federal government up to 100% of the expense.
- A monthly living allowance based on housing costs of the zip code of the learning institution. Veterans attending schools online or through correspondence will receive a partial benefit if their entire enrollment is in distance or online learning. The veteran will be entitled to the stipend if at least one course is classified as "in-residence".
- If service ended before January 1, 2013, the benefit eligibility period is 15 years after leaving active duty (compared to 10 years in the current Montgomery GI Bill). If service ended on or after January 1, 2013, benefits will not expire due to the Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act, a law called the Forever GI Bill.
- International education programs outside the US are eligible.
- An annual stipend to cover other education costs (e.g., books, supplies, fees) of up to \$1,000.
- Up to \$2,000 towards one-time licensing or certification test, not charged against the 36-month entitlement [7].

### ***Yellow Ribbon***

The Yellow Ribbon Program can help service members pay for higher out-of-state, private school, foreign school, or graduate school tuition and fees that the Post-9/11 GI Bill doesn't cover. The school must: 1) be an institution of higher learning; 2) offer the Yellow Ribbon Program; 3) hasn't offered the Yellow Ribbon benefit to more than the maximum number of students in their agreement with the VA; and 4) has certified the service member's enrollment with the VA and provided Yellow Ribbon Program information [8].

### ***Chapter 31: Veteran Readiness and Employment (formerly Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment)***

This program is for eligible active duty service members and veterans with service-connected disabilities. It is very similar to the Post-9/11 GI Bill but with more flexible timelines. Active duty must have a documented service-connected disability rating of 20% or greater and apply for vocational rehabilitation services. Veterans must have received, or eventually receive, an honorable or other-than-dishonorable discharge, have a VA service-connected disability rating of 10% or more, and apply for services. There is a 12-year basic period of eligibility in which services may be used, which begins on the separation from active military duty date or the date the veteran was first notified of a service-connected disability. Typically, participants have 48 months of program entitlement to complete an individual vocational rehabilitation plan. This program promotes the development of suitable, gainful employment by providing vocational and personal adjustment counseling, training assistance, a monthly subsistence allowance during active training, and employment assistance after training. Independent living services may also be provided to advance vocational potential for eventual job seekers, or to enhance the independence of eligible participants who are presently unable to work. In some cases, members with a "serious employment handicap" will generally be granted an exemption from the 12-year eligibility period and may receive additional time as necessary to complete approved plans [9].

### ***Tuition Assistance***

The Tuition Assistance (TA) Program provides financial assistance for voluntary off-duty civilian education programs in support of a service member's professional and personal self-development goals. Courses and degree programs may be academic or technical and can be taken from two- or four-year institutions on-installation, off-installation, or by distance learning. The institution must be recognized by the Department of Education. The service branch pays tuition directly to the school. Tuition assistance may be used for the following:

- Vocational/technical programs
- Undergraduate programs
- Graduate programs
- Independent study
- Distance-learning programs

All four service branches and the U.S. Coast Guard offer financial assistance for voluntary, off-duty education programs in support of service members' personal and professional goals. The program is open to officers, warrant officers, and enlisted active-duty service personnel. In addition, members of the National Guard and Reserve Components may be eligible for TA based on their service eligibility. To be eligible for TA, an enlisted service member must have enough time remaining in service to complete the course for which he or she has applied. After the

completion of a course, an officer using TA must fulfill a service obligation that runs parallel with – not in addition to – any existing service obligation.

Tuition assistance will not cover the following expenses:

- Books and course materials
- Flight training fees
- Taking the same course twice
- Continuing education units, or CEUs [10]

### ***Reserve Officer Training Program (ROTC)***

ROTC is a group of officer training programs to prepare commissioned officers of the US Armed Forces. These programs are located on college and university campuses [11]. Traditional ROTC students have had no exposure to military service. However, some military service branches have educational programs for their active duty or reserve members and administer these programs through their ROTCs.

## **Service Specific Programs**

### Air Force

Air Force ROTC offers three enlisted commissioning programs available to enlisted members: ASCP, SOAR, and POC-ERP (defined below). The Air Force allows members from other services to apply for ASCP and POC-ERP. For each of these programs, the Air Force provides a monthly stipend and a fixed book allowance. ROTC cadets earn a commission upon graduation from college and do not attend Officer Training School.

*ASCP*: The Airman Scholarship and Commissioning Program (ASCP) offers active duty enlisted personnel the opportunity to earn a commission while completing their bachelor's degree as an Air Force ROTC cadet. Those selected separate from the active duty Air Force, join an Air Force ROTC detachment, and become a full-time college student with a 2-4 year scholarship.

*SOAR*: Similar to ASCP, the Scholarships for Outstanding Airman to ROTC (SOAR) allows enlisted personnel to separate from active duty, receive a 2-4 year scholarship while joining an Air Force ROTC detachment, and become a full-time college student [12].

*POC-ERP*: The Professional Officer Course-Early Release Program (POC-ERP) offers active duty enlisted personnel who can complete all bachelor's degree and commission requirements within two years an opportunity for an early release from active duty to enter Air Force ROTC. Those selected separate from active duty, join an Air Force ROTC detachment, and become a full-time college student. Applicants are not authorized to seek an additional bachelor's or a graduate degree [13].

### Army

#### *Tuition Assistance*

Although Tuition Assistance applies to all services, each one has limitations on its programs. For the Army, some restrictions are detailed here without comparing to the other services. Eligible Soldiers can receive up to \$250 per semester hour and up to 16 semester hours per fiscal year—totaling \$4,000 annually to help pay for school or professional training. When an

educational institution's tuition and fees are \$250 or less per semester hour (or equivalent), the Army will pay 100 percent of the amount charged by the institution for up to 16 semester hours of TA-funded courses per fiscal year. When an institution's tuition and fees exceed \$250 per semester hour, the Army will only pay \$250 per semester hour (or equivalent) of credit. Current Army policy limits TA to 130 semester hours of undergraduate credit or baccalaureate degree, whichever comes first and 39 semester hours of graduate credit or master's degree whichever comes first. The 39 semester hour limit applies to all credits taken after completion of a baccalaureate degree.

Officers who use TA incur a service obligation. Active Duty officers incur an Active Duty Service Obligation (ADSO) of two years, and Reserve Component officers incur a Reserve Duty Service Obligation (RDSO) of four years. The ADSO/RDSO is calculated from the date of completion of the last course for which TA was used [14].

### *Green to Gold*

Green to Gold helps active-duty Soldiers cover school costs to finish a four-year baccalaureate program or a two-year graduate program while earning a commission (through a campus Army ROTC) as an Officer. Several options in the Green to Gold program allow participants to leave the service or remain on active duty. Soldiers selected to participate in this program will continue to receive their current pay and allowances while in the program [15].

### Marine Corps

*MECEP*: The Marine Corps Enlisted Commissioning Education Program (MECEP) is an enlisted-to-officer commissioning program designed to provide outstanding enlisted Marines the opportunity to serve as Marine Corps officers. The MECEP is open to all active duty and active reserve (AR) Marines who meet the eligibility requirements. MECEP is not intended to serve as a commissioning program for Marines who are better suited to serve as warrant officers. Selected Marines will be eligible to receive a commission after successful completion of Officer Candidate School (OCS) and a baccalaureate degree. They will be ordered to attend The Basic School (TBS) upon commissioning. MECEP requires applicants to have demonstrated academic proficiency to participate. The minimum education requirements are: 1) must be a high school graduate; and 2) must have college credits of three credits of entry-level math or science, three credits of entry level English, and six credits of other college classes [16].

*MCP-R*: Meritorious Commissioning Program – Reserve (MCP-R) is an enlisted-to-officer commissioning program designed to provide outstanding enlisted Marines the opportunity to serve as Marine Corps officers in the SMCR (Selected Marine Corps Reserve). The MCP-R program affords exceptionally qualified enlisted Reserve Marines who possess an associate's degree or 75 semester hours to attend OCS and commission without a baccalaureate degree. Newly commissioned second lieutenants must possess a degree prior to being promoted to captain. This program is not intended to serve as a commissioning program for Marines who are better suited to serve as staff noncommissioned officers or warrant officers. Selected Marines will be eligible to receive a commission after successful completion of OCS and will be ordered to attend TBS. MCP-R applicants must have satisfactorily earned an associate-level degree or completed 75 semester hours or more of college work at a regionally or nationally accredited college or university prior to applying for the program [16].



## Navy

In the past, there were ten or more different programs for Sailors to become commissioned officers while obtaining a higher education degree, Seaman to Admiral being just one of them. This wide mix of programs lacked uniformity in benefits, selection procedures, educational opportunities, and program requirements. This created a very confusing array of program applications, deadlines, and choices for fleet applicants and was very cumbersome for the Navy to manage and administer. Consequently, there were countless Sailors in the fleet who would make outstanding commissioned officers, but due to program restrictions, educational background, or financial concerns, they did not apply.

This eventually led the Navy to combine most of these current commissioning paths into one consolidated program that preserves the Seaman to Admiral name, which was made popular by Admiral Boorda: Seaman to Admiral-21 (STA-21). The STA-21 Commissioning Program is designed to meet the human resource goals of the Navy in the 21st Century, while at the same time create a fair and equitable system for active duty Sailors to receive a superior college education and become commissioned officers.

### *STA-21*

The following fleet commissioning programs were combined to create the STA-21 Program:

- Seaman to Admiral
- Enlisted Commissioning Program (ECP)
- Aviation Enlisted Commissioning Program (AECP)
- Nuclear Enlisted Commissioning Program (NECP)
- Civil Engineer Corps Enlisted Commissioning Program (CECECP)
- Fleet Accession to Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps (NROTC)
  - (Includes Nurse Option)

Alignment of all the programs into the STA-21 Program resulted in fairness to the Sailor. Some of the previous enlisted commissioning programs required Sailors to pay their college tuition by themselves. Others removed the student from active duty status, thus taking away any source of income and benefits. The STA-21 Program allows all participants to remain on active duty at their current enlisted pay grade. Therefore, they receive all the pay, allowances, benefits, and privileges they currently enjoy and will still be eligible for enlisted advancement while in the program: Time spent in school does not count towards retirement; however, it does count towards pay purposes. Sailors receive up to \$10,000 per year to cover tuition, books, and fees and the STA-21's pay costs above \$10,000 per year [17].

### *Baccalaureate Degree Completion Program (BDCP)*

Designed to assist current college students, the Baccalaureate Degree Completion Program (BDCP) not only pays for the degree, books, rent, and food but also provides full-time Officer pay and benefits while in college and a guaranteed job upon graduation. This program is open to civilians, enlisted Navy Reserve Sailors, and those inactive in other branches. Applicants must: be enrolled or accepted at a four-year accredited college or university with no NROTC Program; be a full-time student; have completed 60 semester hours; and maintain at least a 2.8 GPA [18].

### *Specialized College Programs*

This Navy education program seeks students interested in certain degrees and offers different incentives. These require no uniforms, no drilling (weekend training) and no service obligation until graduation. Two that are relevant to engineering are:

#### *Civil Engineer Collegiate Program (CECP)*

Graduates will be commissioned in the Navy's Civil Engineer Corps and work on projects around the world.

#### *Nuclear Propulsion Officer Candidate Program (NUPOC)*

This highly competitive program prepares graduates for the following career fields.

- Submarine Officer
- Nuclear Surface Warfare Officer
- Naval Reactors Engineer
- Nuclear Power School Instructor
- Nuclear Power Training Unit Instructor [18]

### Coast Guard

Service members from the Coast Guard make up the smallest number of veterans. Most Coast Guard veterans use Tuition Assistance or the Post-9/11 GI Bill. However, the Coast Guard has the Coast Guard College Student Pre-Commissioning Initiative.

*CSPI:* The Coast Guard College Student Pre-Commissioning Initiative (CSPI) is a scholarship program, open to students of all races and ethnicities. The program pays up to two academic years of college tuition at Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs). MSIs are colleges and universities where at least 25% of the student population is composed of underrepresented minority students. MSIs demonstrate a history of service to first-generation college graduate, underserved, and lower-income students. While enrolled in school, a CSPI candidate is enlisted in the Coast Guard. The students receive a salary, allowances, entitlements, and the benefits of being an active duty service member. Upon graduation from college, the student transitions to an officer trainee and completes Officer Candidate School to receive a commission as an ensign [19].

### **Best Practices for Faculty, Advisers, and Administrators**

With general agreement among researchers that student veterans are nontraditional students, faculty and fellow student in-class interactions with student veterans' are increasingly important for student veteran persistence and success [20, 21]. Faculty, Advisers, and Administrators should have a basic understanding of the different military-connected populations (veterans, National Guard, reserves, and active duty). There is no expectation that one can keep an accurate database of all the educational programs rules (Post-9/11 GI Bill, Tuition Assistance, the various service-specific programs) up to date, but the student veterans and active duty will probably expect faculty, advisers, and administrators to understand and work with them within their constraints (timelines, financial aid cap, etc.). For administrators, examining points of similarity and difference help to develop a better background on service members and veterans in higher education, and decreases the likelihood of advancing inadequate policies and practices. Organizations should assess what training is available for staff, faculty, and administrators on the

differences between military-connected students, their unique needs, and if they are adequate [1]. Appendix A is a Quick Reference Table of Major Military-Connected Education Benefits, current as of January 2023.

## Future Student Veteran Research

This paper is a primer for ‘How Active Duty and Student Veterans attend institutions of higher learning’ for faculty, advisers, and administrators. These short descriptions of some education benefits programs and services show the breadth and complexity that many of the student veterans and active duty must navigate in addition to their campus transition, sense of belonging, etc. One can easily see that many of the programs overlap, creating changeable options, especially for the reserve component. Service members must connect to multiple sources to gather education benefits that are available to them at different times of their military service [22]. The significance of appreciating the various education funding streams and their limitations is straightforward. First, it will allow higher education institutions and stakeholder communities to reflect on which support systems and policies meet the needs and characteristics of these individuals. Second, such reflection and assessment may guide the next steps in policy and practice that address thematic barriers to college attendance and attainment for this population.

Future work may include an examination of active duty and student veteran graduate students. There has been a growing body of work with a focus on undergraduate student veterans and active duty. However, a subset of this population has and will continue to seek graduate degrees and professional credentials beyond the undergraduate level. An examination of how student veterans and active duty think about and approach a graduate degree now will serve as a benchmark for important services and studies in the future.

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Appendix A: Quick Reference Table of Major Military-Connected Education Benefits (as of January 2023)

Branch	Program	Benefit Highlights
<b>All Services</b>	Post 9/11 GI Bill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4 Academic Years (36 mo)</li> <li>• Monthly Living Allowance</li> <li>• \$1000 / yr books</li> <li>• \$2000 one time licensing or certification test</li> </ul>
	Yellow Ribbon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pays for higher out-of-state, private school, foreign school, or graduate school tuition and fees that the Post-9/11 GI Bill doesn't cover</li> </ul>
	Chapter 31: Veteran Readiness and Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service members and veterans with service-connected disabilities</li> <li>• Similar to the Post-9/11 GI Bill but with more flexible timelines</li> <li>• Typically, 48 months of program entitlement</li> </ul>
	Tuition Assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial assistance for voluntary off-duty civilian education               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vocational/technical programs</li> <li>• Undergraduate programs</li> <li>• Graduate programs</li> <li>• Independent study</li> <li>• Distance-learning programs</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
	Reserve Officer training Corps (ROTC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Officer training programs to prepare commissioned officers of the US Armed Forces.</li> <li>• Traditional ROTC students that have had no exposure to military service</li> </ul>
<b>Air Force</b>	ASCP: The Airman Scholarship and Commissioning Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2-4 year scholarship for active duty enlisted personnel</li> <li>• Earn a commission while completing a bachelor's degree as an Air Force ROTC cadet</li> </ul>
	SOAR: Scholarships for Outstanding Airman to ROTC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2-4 year scholarship for enlisted personnel</li> <li>• Separate and earn their bachelor's degree as an Air Force ROTC cadet</li> </ul>
	POC-ERP: The Professional Officer Course-Early Release Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early release for active duty enlisted personnel</li> <li>• Enter Air Force ROTC</li> <li>• Complete all bachelor's degree and commission requirements within two years</li> </ul>

Branch	Program	Benefit Highlights
<b>Army</b>	Tuition Assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional restrictions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Up to \$4000 / yr</li> <li>• Service obligation for officers</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
	Green to Gold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Four-year baccalaureate program or a two-year graduate program</li> <li>• Earn a commission</li> <li>• Continue to receive their current pay and allowances</li> </ul>
<b>Marine Corps</b>	MECEP: The Marine Corps Enlisted Commissioning Education Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 48 months to obtain a baccalaureate degree through a Naval Reserve Officers Training Corps (NROTC)</li> <li>• Obtain a commission in the Marine Corps</li> <li>• Undergraduate education only</li> </ul>
	MCP-R: Meritorious Commissioning Program – Reserve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicants must have satisfactorily earned an associate level degree or completed 75 semester hours or more of college work to earn a commission</li> </ul>
<b>Navy</b>	Seaman to Admiral -21 (STA-21)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remain on active duty at current enlisted pay grade</li> <li>• Receive all the pay, allowances, benefits, and privileges</li> <li>• Up to \$10,000 per year to cover tuition, books, and fees</li> </ul>
	Baccalaureate Degree Completion Program (BDCP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pays for the degree, books, rent, and food</li> <li>• Provides full-time Officer pay and benefits while in college and a guaranteed job upon graduation</li> </ul>
	Specialized College Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civil Engineer Collegiate Program (CECP)</li> <li>• Nuclear Propulsion Officer Candidate Program (NUPOC)</li> </ul>
<b>Coast Guard</b>	CSPI: The Coast Guard College Student Pre-Commissioning Initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pays up to two academic years of college tuition at Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs)</li> <li>• Receive a salary, allowances, entitlements, and the benefits of being an active duty service member</li> </ul>