



## College Applications & Enrollment

We want your college experience to be an exciting one, full of possibilities and new opportunities! The application and enrollment process is the crucial first step of this journey. It involves understanding requirements, meeting deadlines, and discerning which options are best: skills you have likely already developed in your military career.

To make things a little easier, we've broken this document down into the big areas you need to tackle.

### We'll cover:

- ★ Admissions Requirements
- ★ Accreditation and Degrees
- ★ Career Choice
- ★ Applications
- ★ Environment

At the end of each section, you'll find a checklist. Throughout the document, we've also highlighted website links that you may find valuable as you make your way through the process of researching and applying to schools.

### ADMISSIONS REQUIREMENTS

Every institution of higher learning has their own set of admissions requirements—which include the applications you need to fill out, the tests you may need to take, and the deadlines you need to meet. Depending on whether you are a first-time student, an adult *with* prior college experience, or an adult *without* prior experience, the requirements may be different. Some schools may have different requirements for active duty military and/or veterans.

A great place to start is the college or university's website—specifically, their admissions page. You can always contact the admissions office directly, or if available, the school's veterans' services office.

Some colleges, such as trade and technical colleges, as well as community colleges and some four-year universities, accept students wherever they are on their academic journey. Others require that you show your readiness for college-level work, through submitting official high school transcripts, military transcripts (e.g., the Joint Services Transcript), and/or taking entrance exams like the **SAT** or **ACT**. In addition, you may want to consider **CLEP** tests which give you college credit for what you already know and place you in higher level courses where appropriate.

The tests you need to take are specific both to the program, and to your prior experience—either as a student, in the military, or as a professional working in the field.

Veteran Coordinators at Illinois Public Universities and Colleges are tasked to be the central point of contact for all veterans, service members and dependents. To obtain a list, with contact information, for the 2014-2015 academic year, follow this link: <http://www2.illinois.gov/veterans/benefits/Pages/education.aspx>.

If you served in the Army, Navy, Marine Corps or Coast Guard, your transcript is provided through the Joint Services Transcript and may be obtained at: <https://jst.doded.mil/official.html>. If you served in the Air Force you may order your transcript through the following link: <http://www.au.af.mil/au/barnes/ccaf/transcripts.asp>.

**A few things to keep in mind about tests:**

- Although most schools that require standardized test scores will accept either the ACT or SAT, a few will only accept one or the other. They may also have an overall score needed to gain acceptance, as well as minimum subject score requirements. If it has been a while since you took the test, ask about rules on dates.
- The Department of Veterans Affairs GI Bill® provides for reimbursement of fees for many national application tests.
- Taking **practice assessments** can help you build confidence and identify areas you may need to brush up on before the test.

Find out if your test is approved for reimbursement by going to the VA's National Testing Program page: [http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/national\\_testing.asp](http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/national_testing.asp). Fees may be required for other placement testing and if the test is through a national service, such as CLEP, the VA may reimburse your costs. Once you learn which placement exam you are required to take, visit the following page for a full listing of exams that are applicable for reimbursement: <http://inquiry.vba.va.gov/weamspub/buildSearchNE.do>

<http://CompassTestOnline.com> is a useful site for practice materials. You can take tests using Accuplacer: <https://accuplacer.collegeboard.org/students>.

**Admissions Checklist:**

- Determine if you need to take the ACT, SAT, or other admissions tests.**
- Consider whether you have enough knowledge in certain subject areas to pass a CLEP placement test.**
- Check the VA website to see which tests are reimbursed.**
- Search the website or ask the school about other items you need to submit to show college readiness.**

**APPLICATIONS**

While some institutions have an application that is specific to them (many of which can be accessed online), others may require that you submit a standardized application known as the Common Application. The **Common Application** is an online standardized application that you can submit to multiple institutions. Simply complete it once, and send to several schools.

**Some other things to keep in mind about applications:**

- If schools will require supplemental information or essays, you will be prompted for that information before you can submit the application.
- Most institutions charge an application fee, but these fees may be waived for veterans, so make sure to check for that.

If you don't meet the admissions requirements of your preferred school now, that doesn't have to be the end of the story! Consider reapplying at a later date. For example, you may not have high enough ACT scores today to be accepted at a major university, but after taking some courses at a community college, you may become a better candidate. If that is your goal, be sure to find out about the school's **transfer policies**. Some schools allow certain courses to transfer back for credit; some may guarantee that your entire program will transfer for credit into their institution; and others may even guarantee admissions into their school once certain hurdles are cleared in specific ways or if you earn a specific degree/credential from a partner institution.

**Application Checklist:**

- Check if the schools you are interested in accept the Common Application.**
- Determine if the application requires you to complete supplemental information.**
- Find out if there is an application fee and if it is waived for military.**
- Ask about the school's transfer policies.**

## ACCREDITATION AND DEGREES

**Accreditation** means that a third party has certified that a school or program is meeting standards for academic quality. It's important to make sure your school or program has the right accreditations, because you may have trouble transferring to another school otherwise. Plus, future employers may not consider hiring candidates with degrees earned from institutions or programs that lack appropriate accreditation. This is especially important for health care careers.

Also, if you want to use your veterans benefits to fund your education, make sure to find out whether the federal government has approved your particular program. It's also a good idea to ask if the school has signed the **Principles of Excellence**. This 2012 Executive Order, signed by President Obama, is designed to ensure service members, veterans, and their dependents have the information needed to make informed decisions concerning their military and veterans' educational benefits.

The **type of degree or credential** that you're able to earn at that particular school (or in that particular program) may influence the kinds of jobs available to you after graduation. Here is a list of types of degrees, and the typical time it takes to earn (attending full-time):

- ★ Certification: 6 months to 2 years
- ★ Associate degree: 2 years, typically at a community college
- ★ Bachelor's degree: 4 years at a university without earning an associate degree or 2 years after earning an associate degree, if the degree transfers into the bachelor's program you select
- ★ Master's degree: 2 - 3 years after earning a Bachelor's degree, depending on the degree sought
- ★ Doctorate: 3 - 8 years and after earning a Master's degree, depending on the degree sought

Finally, review the **educational plan** for the program. It will break down the courses you need to take, estimate how long it will take you to earn the degree, and may also show the order in which you have to take those courses. That matters, because some courses are only offered one time per calendar year, and you'll want to know the required sequencing upfront.

### Accreditation and Degree Checklist:

- Make sure the school is accredited.**
- Investigate whether you can use your veterans benefits to fund your education at this particular school/program.**
- See if the school has signed The Principles of Excellence.**
- Determine how long it will take to earn the degree/certification.**

Regional accrediting bodies recognize institutions that meet specific educational quality standards. You can find a list of accredited institutions in by visiting the following links:

- [Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools](#)
- [New England Association of Schools and Colleges](#)
- [North Central Association of Colleges and Schools](#)
- [Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities](#)
- [Western Association of Schools and Colleges](#)
- [Southern Association of Colleges and Schools](#)

[ExploreHealthCareers.org](#) and [CAAHEP Accredited Program Search](#) are great resources to help you understand accreditation requirements and accredited programs.

If you want to use your veterans benefits to help fund your education, see if your program is approved by searching for the school of choice at the following webpage: <http://inquiry.vba.va.gov/weamspub/buildSearchInstitutionCriteria.do?sessionId=qtMbSxQFpzyL7GpnOrtnNGv6G9CGOQvb2YqM9Cvw3vB2pv2IXhfJ!-1531379871> and then clicking programs on the school page. If you do not see your program listed, please contact your school of choice to understand more.

## ENVIRONMENT

When researching schools and programs, don't forget to explore the school's environment and services to students—such faculty-to-student ratios, advising and tutoring services, disability services, and job placement services. These things can determine a great deal about your academic life and future job success.

### Faculty-to-student ratios

Although faculty-to-student ratios can vary greatly from class to class within a single institution, these numbers—especially in core program classes—may help you understand what your academic life will be like. It gives you an idea how easy it might be to access your program instructors and if you'll get personalized attention.

If you will have a clinical rotation as part of your program, you may want to understand not just the faculty-to-student ratio, but also who supervises the clinical. At some schools, the hospital supervisor, who may or may not have insight into your military experience and resulting strengths, supervises clinical rotations.

### Advising and tutoring

While in school, you may need help with deciding which courses to take. Learn what kind of advising the school or program offers. You may also need help with coursework in certain subjects. Find out what kind of assistance the school offers, such as one-on-one tutoring, group tutoring sessions, and/or computerized services.

### Student support services

Illinois Public Universities and Colleges have a designated central point of contact for all veterans, service members and dependents. If you attend a private school be sure to seek out their central point of contact to learn about eligibility for education benefits, benefit application processes, academic counseling, financial aid counseling, and student support services.

### Academic accommodations for disabilities

If you have a service-connected disability or any other need for an accommodation, schedule an appointment with the designated office for students with disabilities. You may qualify for academic accommodations such as additional time for testing and/or use of adaptive equipment. Make sure you know what documentation is required and how long it can take to get that information. Do not hesitate to explore accommodation options for a disability—they are intended to even the playing field, not to give you an unfair advantage.

### Job placement services

How does the school connect students with employment opportunities? Do they offer things like resume writing help, internship/job placement services, and/or interviewing skills workshops? What are their statistics around job placement and average salary after graduation? Either call or pay a visit to the school's Career Services office and the Veterans Services office.

### Environment Checklist:

- See if the student-to-faculty ratio fits your needs.
- Find out what tutoring and advising services are offered.
- Determine what documentation is needed to get accommodations for a disability.
- Look at the specific ways the school helps with job placement.
- Pay a visit to the designated office for student veterans.

## CAREER CHOICE

As you are narrowing down your career choice, it's a great idea to investigate the local labor market outlook for your field. Finding out things such as anticipated number of job openings and expected salary can be very helpful.

Finally, find out what national tests are required to be employed in your field. It might be helpful to know things like the pass rate and how often the test is offered. Does the school offer specific preparations for the test? Just as the Department of Veterans Affairs GI Bill® provides for reimbursement of many national applications exams, it also covers the costs for many licensing certification exams.

To learn more about the healthcare career cluster labor market demands in our region visit <http://www.onetonline.org/find/career?c=8&q=Go>.

The Department of Veterans Affairs GI Bill® covers the costs for many licensing certification exams. Learn more about this benefit: [http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/licensing\\_certification.asp](http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/licensing_certification.asp)

### Career Choice Checklist

- Determine what the local labor market is like for your particular field.
- Find out what national tests are required for your field.
- Check to see if you can get reimbursed for any required tests.

GI Bill® is a registered trademark of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). More information about education benefits offered by VA is available at the official U.S. government Web site at <http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill>.



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