

Is College in Your Future?

So, you've decided to go to college. Congratulations! As with any major investment of time and money, you want to make the best possible college choice. Explore these suggestions for choosing the community or four-year college that is the best fit for you.

- Explore occupations in which you're interested. Use the **College Navigator** at www.nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator to find out whether colleges you want to attend offer diplomas in one or more of these occupations. If you have several occupations in mind, choosing a college that has majors for more than one of these careers may help you avoid transferring to another college if you decide to change your major.
- Check <http://department-of-veterans-affairs.github.io/gi-bill-comparison-tool/> to locate GI Bill-approved programs and to calculate your benefits.
- Ask the colleges that interest you if they follow the American Council on Education's **Military Guide** for awarding credit for military training. Receiving credit for the skills you learned during your service in the military may shorten the time for and reduce the cost of completing a credential.
- Research education outcomes. Ask colleges to give you written documentation of graduates' job placement rates and salaries. Compare salary data from the college with information from **MyNextMove for Veterans** (www.mynextmove.org/vets) to see if the college information makes sense. You can also check occupations' growth rate and other information on this site.
- Make sure you understand all costs and financial aid possibilities. While you may be eligible for VA benefits, you will likely have expenses that these benefits don't cover. Tuition is an obvious cost, but you should also ask about items such as books, lab fees and graduation fees. Explore www.studentaid.gov for student aid programs that will probably offer lower interest rate loans than you can find from other lenders.
- Check the accreditation status of the colleges. To ensure that future employers value your diploma, you need to go to an accredited college. At <http://ope.ed.gov/accreditation>, the federal Department of Education has a database of accredited colleges.
- Take the time you need to be sure about the decision you make. Some colleges pay recruiters based on the number of people they enroll, so they may pressure you to enroll in their colleges.
- See if the colleges you want to attend are military and veteran "friendly." A supportive environment can go a long way toward helping you achieve your educational goals. Talk to staff in Veterans Affairs offices to learn about available services. You may also be able to get feedback from members of the Student Veterans of America chapters that exist on many North Carolina campuses. Visit <http://www.studentveterans.org/index.php/chapter/directory> to locate these organizations.



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- For additional college choice resources, go to **Factors to Consider When Choosing a School: A Guide Before Using the GI Bill** at http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/docs/factsheets/Choosing_a_School.pdf.