

STARS  AND STRIPES[®] CHERRY POINT | Spring 2021

Servicemember's Guide to

EDUCATION and TRANSITION

**PREPARE FOR
TOMORROW,
TODAY**

**YOUR EDUCATION AND TRANSITION
JOURNEY STARTS HERE**

**TOP 10
THINGS TO
KNOW ABOUT
USING YOUR**

GI BILL IN 2021

EDUCATION PROGRAM SERVICES ABOARD MCAS CHERRY POINT

By Cynthia Bouie, Education Services Specialist, MCAS Cherry Point

Photo courtesy of marines.mil

EDUCATION ACADEMIC ADVISEMENT

In today's challenging economy, it is vital to promote education and training to stay competitive in the job market. Not only are education and knowledge highly valued in the workplace but they also help strengthen our nation's communities and economy. The Education Office personnel provide a broad range of academic and career advice, including how to choose a school, how to enroll, how to select a program of study, and how to find a job that is complementary to an individual's personality and behavioral tendencies, financial options, and more.

We also have many additional programs and services that help servicemembers, their families and civilians aboard the installation achieve their personal and professional goals. Among these services are the Tuition Assistance Program (TA), Military Academic Skills Program (MASP), Marine Corps Credentialing Opportunities Online (MCCOOL), the United Services Military Apprenticeship Program (USMAP) and a full range of testing services.

We understand that everyone is not college oriented. Therefore, the Marine Corps has implemented the United Services Military Apprenticeship Program and the Marine Corps COOL program to help military members earn civilian certificates and credentials related to their Military Occupational Specialty (MOS). Not only do these programs aid in promotion potential, but they also provide a competitive advantage for those transitioning.

EDUCATION TESTING

Military Classification Tests such as the Armed Forces Classification Test (AFCT), Defense Language Proficiency

Test (DLPT), Defense Language Aptitude Battery (DLAB), and Aviation Selection Test Battery (ASTB) are available for servicemembers. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) tests are available at no cost to eligible active-duty, Guard, and reserve servicemembers, retirees, military dependents, DoD civilians and Department of Homeland Security civilians. The ACT and SAT are available for active-duty personnel only.

Also, we offer free proctoring services for the entire military community. Through a partnership with Craven Community College's National Testing Center, we offer DSST tests and CLEP tests free for active-duty; tests are available for the rest of the community at a fee. These examinations are available in more than 70 subject areas and are similar to end-of-course tests offered by colleges and universities. A tester who passes an exam may earn college credits toward a degree, depending on the school's credit acceptance policies.

MILITARY ACADEMIC SKILLS PROGRAM (MASP)

The Military Academic Skills Program is available to improve reading, mathematics, communications, and writing skills. The three-week course is free to active-duty; it strengthens attendees' foundations and builds confidence to start a college course or complete required career testing. It can also fulfill requirements for TA participation.

MILITARY TUITION ASSISTANCE (TA)

The Marine Corps makes available \$4,500 per year for tuition assistance fees to Marines. MCO 1560.25 provides rules and regulations regarding TA usage.

First-time students must complete the online Higher Education Preparation (HEP) course via Joint Knowledge Online (JKO) at <https://nemesi.jten.mil>. The course number is HEP-US001. Before using TA, the course must be completed. Servicemembers must have a minimum time in service of 24 months, a minimum General Technical (GT) score of 100 or a minimum TABE score of 10.2 and must complete Marine Corps Institute (MCI) Personal Financial Management (Course ID 3420G).

Other government funding programs include the Montgomery GI Bill, the Post-9/11 GI Bill and the Marine Corps College Fund. These education benefits extend well beyond active duty and are awarded based on the number of years served and the specific education program in which you enroll. In some cases, the benefits may also be transferred to your spouse or child.

UNITED SERVICES MILITARY APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM (USMAP)

The USMAP is the largest apprenticeship program sponsor registered with the United States Department of Labor. It is a formal military training program that provides active-duty Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard servicemembers the opportunity to improve their job skills and to complete their civilian apprenticeship requirements while on active-duty. From the program's inception, nearly 20,000 Marines and sailors have completed their certificates of apprenticeship for free from more than 120 trades. For more information about USMAP, visit usmap.cnet.navy.mil or contact one of the USMAP registrars in the Education Office.

MARINES CORPS COOL

Marine Corps COOL is a web-based catalog hub that provides detailed information on occupational credentials, including certifications, licenses, apprenticeships, and growth opportunities correlating with every enlisted Marine Corps Military Occupational Specialty (MOS). You will find "how to" instructions for pursuing these credentials, links to credentialing organizations, and referrals to programs that may help pay for credentialing fees such as the COOL vouchers and the Montgomery or Post-9/11 GI Bill. Visit www.cool.navy.mil/usmc or contact the Education Office to learn more.

Joint Services Transcript (JST), formerly SMART, is an academically accepted record validated by the American Council on Education (ACE). The primary purpose of JST is to assist servicemembers in obtaining college credit for their military experience. Visit <https://jst.doded.mil> to create an account to view your JST or contact the Education Office to learn more.

Education services can be costly and time-restricted in the civilian sector, so take advantage of these services now while on active duty. Please call or visit the Education Office to meet with education technicians or career and education specialists today.

More information:
Contact the Personal and Professional Education Office in Building 4335 C Street, Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, NC or call 252-466-3500 from 0700-1630 Monday through Friday.

STARS AND STRIPES

ADVERTISING OFFICE

633 3rd Street, NW, Suite 116,
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703-399-5059

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PUBLISHER
MAX D. LEDERER, JR.

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MULTIMEDIA ADVERTISING, CONSULTANTS
FABRIZIO DANOVA, COREY HENDERSON,
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CONTENT DESIGNER**
ALYSSA MCBETH

**PUBLISHING & MEDIA DESIGN,
VISUAL INFORMATION
SPECIALISTS**
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EDUCATION ASSISTANCE AT CHERRY POINT

The Education Advisers at the Education Center are available to assist personnel in starting or completing their journey toward their education and career goals by offering the following services:

- Financial aid advising
- Military Academic Skills Program (MASP)
- Apprenticeship program information
- Joint Services transcripts and corrections
- Education and career advising and information for active-duty, retirees, family members, and DoD affiliated personnel
- Information on credentialing and certification
- Military and Civilian Testing Office

For more information, contact:
Cherry Point Education Office
Jerry W. Marvel Training and Education Center
C Street, Building 4335, Room 109

252-466-3500 | www.mccscherrypoint.com
Monday - Friday 0700-1630



Photo courtesy of marines.mil

EXPLORE YOUR OPPORTUNITIES

The Air Force Reserve offers great part-time opportunities for service members transitioning from active duty, as well as those who have previously separated. It gives you the time and financial support to further your education, or begin a civilian career, while continuing your military service toward retirement. As a Reservist, you can continue to do the extraordinary and maintain the camaraderie experienced while serving in the military.

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ADVENTURE**



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COLLEGE CREDIT *FOR* MILITARY TRAINING



**DID YOU KNOW YOUR MILITARY EXPERIENCE MIGHT
BE WORTH COLLEGE CREDIT?**

Photo courtesy of marines.mil

Colleges and universities are becoming more and more military friendly. This means the addition of campus veteran centers, school military liaisons, and more transferring of military training into college credits.

How do you get these credits? The American Council on Education (ACE) is the nation's leading higher education association with a mission to promote, protect, and advocate for students, faculty, and administrators in higher education. ACE provides recommended credits for formal courses and occupations offered by all branches of the military. All recommendations are based on reviews conducted by college and university faculty members who are actively teaching in the areas they review (<https://www.acenet.edu>).

Once a servicemember decides on a school, they send an official copy of their Joint Services Transcripts (JST) to the appropriate school personnel to have an evaluation conducted. This person is usually the academic advisor. The registrar's office then decides which courses will count as transfer credit into their program. It is the sole discretion of each educational institution to determine if they will accept these credits, however, many of them will transfer at least a few credit hours. ACE has even gone as far as to create an ACE CREDIT College and University Network, which is a group of more than 2,000 institutions of higher learning that

considers ACE credit. This list can be viewed at <http://www2.acenet.edu/CREDITCollegeNetwork/>.

Both active-duty servicemembers and veterans can access their JST by visiting <https://jst.dodedmil/> and creating an account which allows them to electronically send an official copy to their school. The Marine Corps Voluntary Education Offices also have the capability to send official transcripts and submit any needed corrections to the document. Not all schools accept these credits, but it is worth the minimal time it takes to submit a copy to the college or university and see what credits await you.

Education Office
Bldg. (4335), Room 109
Ph. 252-466-3500

<http://mccs.cherrypoint.com/programs/personal-professional-development/education-programs/>

- Courtesy of MCAS Cherry Point



A GUIDE TO THE DANTES KUDER CAREER AND TRANSITION SYSTEM

Photo courtesy of marines.mil

There are a variety of tools and strategies available to help individuals create a career plan. One tool specifically designed for servicemembers is the Dantes Kuder Career and Transition System, which allows servicemembers to explore their interests, skills, values, create a portfolio, and save educational and career research.

TO CREATE AN ACCOUNT

1. Visit: <https://dantes.kuder.com/>
2. Select "Create an Account" in the upper right corner.
3. Select "I am a veteran or active member in the military."
4. Complete Step 1 of 4, which requires basic information regarding your military service.
 - a. Assigned to Joint Base? No
 - b. Region: Armed Forces Americas
 - c. Ed Center Location: MCAS Cherry Point
5. Complete Step 2 of 4, which requires basic demographic information.
6. Complete Step 3 of 4, which requires a username, password, and security question.
7. Complete Step 4 of 4, which requires demographic information and review and acknowledgement of terms and conditions and data storage.

AVAILABLE ASSESSMENTS

Kuder Career Interests Assessment

This assessment explores what you like to do. After rating how much you like or dislike an activity, you will

receive a Holland Code that connects your interests to six different categories: Realistic, Artistic, Investigative, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional. Kuder can then recommend a list of possible careers and majors you can explore.

Pro-Tip: You can control the list of jobs by adjusting your current or anticipated education level, expected job growth, and median state salary.

Kuder Skills Confidence Assessment

This assessment helps you think about what you are good at. After rating your confidence in your ability to complete a variety of activities, you will receive a second Holland Code and a list of careers that require your top skills.

Super's Work Values Inventory-Revised Or Other Assessments

This assessment helps you identify what is most important to you in a work environment. After rating questions about the type of work you do, your work environment, co-workers, and more, you will receive a ranking of your most important values and a list of occupations to explore.

EDUCATION AND CAREER RESEARCH

Using your assessment results, you can search occupations that match your interests, skills, and values. Each occupation has an information page that provides the following information:

- An overview of the occupation, which typically includes a video and basic statistics about the occupation.
- Tasks and conditions associated with that job.
- Education and experience required to enter that career. From this page, servicemembers can explore possible majors and instructional programs and search for schools offering the major across the country.
- Salary and outlook at the national, state and regional level.
- Other related occupations to consider, which can be a great tool for exploring lesser known career paths.
- Additional resources including professional organizations and licensure requirements.

From the Dantes Kuder platform, you can save occupations and majors to explore later. Education specialists are available to help you navigate the system as well and interpret and build upon your assessment results.

— Courtesy of MCAS Cherry Point

FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION (FAA) IMPROVES AIRMEN CERTIFICATE TESTING



Photos courtesy of marines.mil

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) launched a new and improved way to test all applicants for an FAA airman certificate starting on Jan. 13, 2020. This applies to all certified pilots of manned and unmanned aircrafts.

One of the most important changes is the requirement for applicants to obtain an FAA Tracking Number (FTN) by creating an Integrated Airman Certification and Rating application (IACRA) profile prior to registering for a knowledge test. IACRA is the web-based certification/rating application that guides the user through the FAA's airman application process. The process enables the agency to rely on the name in the profile for all actions associated with that applicant.

The FTN enables the applicant and any certifying officer to pull up airman information in a consistent format, leaving little room for errors associated with an applicant's name. Previously, name inconsistencies could lead to returned files and lengthy delays in the certification process.

The new Airman Certificate Testing Service (ACTS) contract provides a comprehensive, best practice approach to enhance the overall quality of FAA Airman Knowledge Testing. The ACTS vendor supports the FAA in development, assessment, maintenance, and delivery of airman knowledge tests. The vendor also enhances knowledge test items, knowledge tests, and supplementary material with automated state-of-the-art technology and academic expertise.

Why the Change?

The reliance on a piece of paper can be burdensome to all those involved in the certification process when it is lost. All knowledge test data will be sent electronically to IACRA immediately after the conclusion of a knowledge eliminating lost test results.

The implementation of the FAA Tracking Number (FTN) for Knowledge Testing allows for standardization enhancements to the knowledge test portion of the certification process, enabling the FAA to better track an airman consistently throughout the entire certification process and collect better data to support risk-based decision making.

Currently, when applicants take a knowledge test each candidate must provide the testing center a valid form of ID, which must include ALL of the following: name, date of birth, and physical/residential address if it differs from the name provided on the electronic or paper application. If not, it can lead to returned files and lengthy delays in the certification process. These and similar problems can be reduced by utilizing the FAA Tracking Number generated when an applicant creates a profile in the Integrated Airman Certification and Rating Application (IACRA) system.

As of Jan. 13, 2020 all applicants for FAA certification are required to obtain an FTN in IACRA prior to taking a knowledge test. The IACRA is an FAA web site that allows applicants to apply for new Airman Certificates, or to upgrade their existing certificates. The entire application process takes place on the website, including electronic signing of applications, and at the end of the process, all the necessary

documents will be sent electronically to the Airman Registry. The process will significantly reduce the number of returned files, saving FAA resources and encouraging the use of IACRA to allow for future expansion of the electronic application process.

The following steps will walk you through the login or registration process as an applicant: Go to <https://iacra.faa.gov/IACRA/Default.aspx>. Once there, follow the instructions provided to acquire your FTN (FAA Tracking Number). If you have an account, but do not remember your password, you may call their Help Desk at 1-844-FAA-MYIT (322-6948) to have your password reset.

What has changed?

The changes that occurred on Jan. 13, 2020, include no more telephone registration and no need for the embossment or raised seal. Also, the printed FTN on AKTR replaced the Applicant ID number. The applicant now has the ability to reprint lost/destroyed AKTRs from the testing vendor's website. For all knowledge tests taken before January 13, 2020, applicants must contact the FAA Airmen Certification Office (AFB-720) for replacement, embossed copies of lost/destroyed AKTRs. Airman Certification Standard (ACS) codes are provided instead of learning statement codes for ACS based tests. ACS codes provide better information to help applicants understand exactly what they need to study and why they missed a particular question. Each task element in the ACS includes a unique ACS code and each test question is mapped to an ACS code.

To schedule a Federal Aviation Administration

(FAA) exam at MCAS Cherry Point, please follow the instructions below:

Each candidate will need to access the website <https://faa.psiexams.com/FAA> and register for an account or login. Be sure to view the Test Authorization Requirements so you are aware of what will be needed in order to take your elected test.

Once you login, select your desired test. You will then be able to search for available test centers. Input the zip code 28533, and search within a 10 mile radius. You will see Testing Center of Personal and Professional Development appear for MCAS Cherry Point. A message will appear warning that access is restricted to authorized applicants.

DoD Installations, check yes. You will then see our seat availability times. Select the date you desire and follow the on screen instructions to complete your registration. You will need your FTN number in order to complete this process.

- After you receive a message stating you are registered, you are all set until your testing day and time. Please check in at least 15 minutes before your testing time in Room 109 at the Jerry Marvel Training & Education Center, located on C Street in Building 4335 aboard Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point (from the front gate at MCAS Cherry Point, proceed to the first stoplight and turn right onto C Street. Our building is the first building on the right).

If you have any questions, please feel free to call our office at 252-466-3500.

- Courtesy of MCAS Cherry Point

HOW TO PURSUE HIGHER EDUCATION AS A MILITARY SPOUSE

Have you thought about going back to school or starting your post-secondary education? Merely the thought of starting something new seems overwhelming. You may have questions about who to call first, what tests are needed for entry or even how you are going to afford to pay for it all. You may even question your career choice or have no idea what it is that you really want to pursue. The good news is your local education office can help you with all of these concerns and more!

Choosing a career can be intimidating. We often think about choosing a career as a lifelong commitment, and for some, it is. For others, however, choosing a career path is a learning experience that helps us discover our true passions. You may ask how do we discover what it is that we want to do when we have no idea of where to start? Your Education Office knows just how to help with this!

Through a variety of interest inventories, you may be able to narrow your career choices. One of the first places to start is O*Net Online at <https://www.onetonline.org/>. Here, you can take the interest inventory "My Next Move" and discover careers you may be interested in that fit your personality and goals. You can also peruse this site to learn about the careers that the inventory matches with your interests.

Funding your education is high on the priority list for most spouses, but it's not as challenging as you may think! You have an abundance of opportunities to help including grants, scholarships, and loans. Grants are essentially free money that you do not have to repay. The grant that most people think about first is the Pell Grant. This is a "needs based" grant that you apply for at www.FAFSA.GOV (Free Application for Federal Student Aid). The best part of receiving a Pell Grant is that once your tuition is paid in full, if there are funds left over, you are able to use those on other college expenses like books, transportation, or housing. Because this is a "needs based" grant, you may not get offered enough to cover all of your costs. Don't let that discourage you from accomplishing your career goals!

There are other ways to fund your education and some possibilities include receiving your spouse's transferred Post 9/11 GI Bill and scholarships

opportunities. Contrary to what you may have heard, transferring the Post 9/11 GI Bill is rather easy. It is a step-by-step process that your Education Office can help with. Contact an Education Services Specialist today for assistance.

Did you know that there are millions of dollars in scholarship money just waiting for you? While some scholarships are more focused on certain careers than others, there are a large majority in which you may qualify. Your local Education Office has a comprehensive list of scholarships for you to review and apply for. One scholarship for military spouses in particular is the Military Spouse Career Advancement Account (MYCAA).

This program assists spouses of active duty servicemembers with up to \$4,000! You must be pursuing a license, certification, or associate degree with an approved school and your spouse must be in pay grades E-1 to E-5, W-1-W-2, and 01-02. Your servicemember must also be on Title 10 orders. To get more information about this scholarship specifically, you can go to <https://aiportal.acc.af.mil/mycaa/>. Lastly, when you have exhausted all Pell Grant opportunities and scholarship applications, you may need to apply for education loans.

There are a number of banks/vendors available to help fund your education. The key is to take only what you need. You will have to repay any loans that you accept. There are two different kinds of loans that the Federal Government may offer when you complete your FAFSA; the Stafford subsidized loan and/or a Stafford unsubsidized loan. Of course, there are eligibility requirements for each of these, but the biggest difference between the two is that with the Stafford Subsidized Loan no interest accrues while you are in school at least half time, varied by school. With these options, you should not let money stop you from pursuing your education. You can come to the Education Office or call to make an appointment to talk about these opportunities.

Once you know what degree you want to pursue and how you are going to fund it, how do you know which school to select? How do you apply? Does the school require entry exams? Should you pursue an online program or one that is seated? Locally, we have four colleges

located near the Education Office that may be able to fit your needs. These schools are Craven Community College, Park University, and Southern Illinois University. Of course, there are many more schools in the area and online that may fit your needs as well. Your Education Services Specialist can meet with you to help you discover your unique goals and choose the school that best fulfills them.

So you have signed up for school, are attending class regularly, and moving through your degree plan nicely. When you get to a class you did very well in previously or in high school you might be familiar with the material. You may ask yourself why I should sit through a basic 101 class when I know the material already? One option for you is to take a CLEP or DANTES test instead. These are credit-by-exam tests and can be taken at the Education Office. As a military spouse, you are eligible to take these for a small fee.

The advantage to taking CLEP or DANTES exams is that it can help you complete your degree faster and it costs less money than a seated class. The key is to always check with your college before you take the exam because it is up to the college as to how many and which tests they will accept.

What if you have decided to attend school online through an out-of-state university or technical program? Many colleges and schools require that you take proctored exams when taking classes online. The good news is, your Education Office is authorized to proctor exams for you!

The Education Office offers walk-in and scheduled appointments to all active duty, veterans, reservists, DoD Civilians, and family members. You can reach us at 252-466-3500 or visit us in the Jerry W. Marvel Training & Education Building 4335, C Street, Room 109.

– Courtesy of MCAS Cherry Point





Photo courtesy of marines.mil

UTILIZE **CHERRY POINT'S** INFORMATION & REFERRAL SPECIALIST

Have you ever found yourself wondering, “Where do I go for...?” or “Who should I call to...?” Well, wonder no more! You have a dedicated resource available to help you connect with programs and services you are searching for.

The Information & Referral Specialist works to link you with community resources and assists you with your relocation needs. Whether you are interested in finding out about benefits or programs and services on the air station or in the community, your Information & Referral Specialist is here to help!

Your Information & Referral Specialist is committed to empowering you with the information you need to successfully reach your goals.

If you have any questions or need information, please stop by Information & Referral located in the T&E Building (Bldg. 4335) Rm. 213. You can also call 252-466-6759/4201 or email Roxie.Emunson@usmc-mccs.org.

Useful Websites:

MCCS Forward: <https://usmc-mccs.org/>

Military One Source: <http://www.militaryonesource.mil/>

Military Kids Connect: <https://militarykidsconnect.dcoe.mil/>

National Military Family Association: <http://www.militaryfamily.org/>

Blue Star Families: <https://bluestarfam.org/>

DStress Line: <http://www.dstressline.com/>

- Courtesy of MCAS Cherry Point



Photo courtesy of marines.mil

TESTIMONIAL OF 2ND LIEUTENANT KWADWO O. DANKWA JR.

I was born in Ghana, Accra to a family that embodied leadership. When I was ten years old, my family moved to the United States. This opened up many more academic opportunities for me and was I eventually able to complete a bachelor's degree and enlist in the United States Marine Corps. With persistence and hard work, I finished as the alpha company honor graduate. My personal credo or motto is “aspiring to inspire higher”.

Keeping a positive mindset and being motivated to grow personally and professionally led me to enroll in a graduate program. I graduated in January of 2017 with a master's degree in leadership and a graduate certificate in project management. I had a dream of applying my degree as a Marine Corps officer. I encountered a few hiccups along the way, preventing me from applying when I planned to. Having been out of school for so long, I forgot some of the basic skills in English and math that are needed for the entrance exams required to qualify as a Marine Corps officer applicant.

I turned to the help of the Education and Career Specialists in the Cherry Point Education Office, who listened to my purpose and helped guide me with methods and tools that lead to a successful end state I ended up exceeding the required ACT score needed to apply as a Marine Corps Officer. This process took a little over a year but with their enthusiasm, dedication, and vigor I did not give up due to the fact that they never gave up on me.

My Marine Corps officer application was accepted in 2018 and I successfully graduated and commissioned in March 2019. I am thankful for all of the Education Office staff for their undying effort to help me begin living my dream as a Marine Corps officer, who “aspires to inspire higher”.

- Courtesy of MCAS Cherry Point

PLANNING FOR A CAREER IN STEM

By Amy Bernard, Major, USMC (Ret), George W. Bush Institute Military Service Initiative Senior Program Manager

When I served in the Marine Corps, I never thought the skills I learned would translate to a civilian career in STEM. I know I am not alone in thinking this. Answer honestly, do you see yourself working in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and math?

Since retiring, I have discovered that I not only qualify, but my skills are in dire need. So are yours.

America is facing a skills-gap in the STEM field. As a current or transitioning service member, you are a natural fit for these positions. We need your expertise and knowledge in these civilian positions.

A recent study completed by the Institute of Veteran and Military Families (IVMF) shows that veterans working in STEM may earn up to 8% more than their non-veteran peers. It also shows that top STEM occupations continue to be in all areas of IT, engineering, computer systems analysts, information security analysts, and accountants.

There are many pathways that can help you get into a STEM career. But you need to lay a strong foundation before you fully transition. Regardless of where you are in your military journey, it's important to think ahead and look to the future.

It is overwhelming, and you may not think you are ready to plan for the future, but laying a foundation can help you better understand how you can continue serving this nation as a veteran. Here are a few recommendations to get you started:

Research the career paths within STEM that sound interesting, and find higher education institutions that specialize in those paths. Contact the institution's career counselors or reach out to the military affairs office to request information on options to take courses online and/or the requirements for all transfer credits into the specific degree paths. Lastly, check to see if the institution uses the Yellow Ribbon Program,

which can help cover more than what the GI Bill does. Visit the Department of Veteran Affairs for more information on the Yellow Ribbon Program.

Meet with an education specialist at your Base Education Center to ask about options when deciding to use Tuition Assistance or the GI Bill. This office is part of the Defense Voluntary Education (VoEd) program that exists to assist you in college or career readiness exams.

Consider asking about the College Level Examination Program (CLEP), which allows you to test out of college courses and earn the credits upon passing the exam. Double check that the higher education institution you would like to attend accepts these credits.

The VoEd office can also help by informing you of your Service Branch's Credentialing Opportunities On-Line (COOL) where you can look up how your training and experience may align with civilian credentialing.

The Education Center can also help you download and track your Joint Service Transcript (JST), an academically accepted record of military training validated by the American Council of Education (ACE). It takes military training and translates it into civilian college credit. While your JST updates automatically, it's important to double check the document is correct.

Research the Department of Labor, United States Military Apprenticeship Program (USMAP). This is a program for active duty servicemembers to pick a trade that relates to the STEM fields, enroll in that apprenticeship program, document and submit competency hours and earn a Journeyman Card. These are for individuals who have completed both an apprenticeship program and required vocational studies.

Programs like the Warrior-Scholar Project can help

you prepare for college with training courses for the STEM program at campuses such as: Yale University, the University of Notre Dame, Texas A&M University, Princeton University, and MIT.

Narrow down the list of higher education institutions that best fit your goals then contact Service to School to assist in the admission process.

There are also specialized university career programs for students seeking to enter a STEM field. For example, San Diego State University has a program called The Troops to Engineers which provides custom career assistance for students in undergraduate or graduate engineering programs.

Nonprofits such as STEM Veterans USA exist to help companies' set up pipelines for internships to jobs for experienced veterans.

Companies like Microsoft offer additional avenues, career timing, and requirements to access STEM career pathways through skill credentialing, an option outside of traditional higher education.

COVID-19 has brought a new demand for STEM experts within the Office of Homeland Security and other government organizations. Additionally, the STEM Career Act recently signed into law, makes veterans eligible for certain National Science Foundation grants and fellowship programs that can open the door to endless career opportunities.

Servicemembers and veterans have critical skills and leadership attributes that our nation needs, especially in times of crisis. The resources and support that you need to succeed are available to assist you in making the most informed decisions possible. There are pathways for you to continue serving your country even after your transition or retirement. Your experience, skills, and talents are valuable and a STEM career is within your reach.





Photo courtesy of dodskillbridge.usalearning.gov/
The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) visual information does not imply or constitute DoD endorsement.

SKILLBRIDGE

The SkillBridge Employment Training Program is available to all eligible Servicemembers. This program is geared toward learning high-demand, industry-specific skills. There is a high-probability of securing employment prior to exiting the military, which helps ease end of service transition. Courses offer job interviews, placements, or certifications to enhance entry into the civilian workforce. During this time, Servicemembers still receive their military compensation and benefits, and industry partners provide the training and work experience. To explore DoD-approved programs located across the county, Servicemembers can visit <https://dodskillbridge.usalearning.gov/>.

The requirements to participate are set forth pursuant to MARADMIN 350/18 and NAVADMIN 222/15. Below is a highlight of important information regarding participation:

- It is the Servicemember's responsibility to contact the SkillBridge program they are interested in directly for specific information such as cost, application process, length of training, and the opportunity for employment at the conclusion of training.
- To participate in SkillBridge you must have 180 days of service or fewer remaining prior to your date of separation and have had at least 180 continuous days of active service. Individuals must also obtain approval from their unit commander; must have completed TRS; and agree that participation in SkillBridge can be terminated at any time by the Service if mission requirements dictate.

To learn more about this opportunity, contact the Cherry Point Education Office in the Jerry Marvel Training and Education Building (BLDG 4335) Room 109, send an email at ombchpteducation@usmc-mccs.org, or call 252-466-3500.

– Courtesy of MCAS Cherry Point

GRADUATION

MCAS Cherry Point is pleased to announce that we will be holding our 45th Annual Graduation Ceremony on June 3, 2021. All authorized patrons are invited to participate if they graduated or will graduate from a regionally or nationally accredited school, between the dates of August 2019 and May 2021. This event will be held at the Two Rivers Theater and Event Center beginning at 10:00 a.m. To register, one can call the Education Office at 252-466-3500, visit the Jerry Marvel Training & Education Building, Room 109, or register at <https://mccscherrypoint.com/programs/personal-professional-development/education-programs/>.

We look forward to celebrating our military community and their educational achievements.



TOP 10 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT USING YOUR GI BILL IN 2021

The GI Bill is a great education benefit for service members and veterans that helps pay for college, graduate school and approved training programs.

First introduced in 1944, the GI Bill has evolved several times, most recently in 2017 under the Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act, better known as the “Forever GI Bill.” It includes payment of tuition and fees, a monthly housing allowance, and a stipend for textbooks and supplies for up to 36 months.

If you are considering going back to school this fall, you may be wondering how the COVID-19 national emergency has affected the GI Bill program. The good news is that Congress has taken steps to ensure that veterans continue to receive educational assistance during these unprecedented times by passing S. 3503, signed by President Donald Trump on March 21, 2020.

Here are the top 10 things you need to know about using your GI Bill Benefit in 2021.

1. COURSE CONVERSION FROM IN-PERSON INSTRUCTION TO ONLINE TRAINING

In the interest of public health, most teaching institutions have altered their curricula to accommodate the need for quarantine and social distancing by offering virtual classrooms and online instruction. The new law allows the Department of Veterans Affairs to pay education benefits for programs that have been converted from resident training to online training, even if online training has not been approved. Keep in mind that the law authorizes this special authority only from March 1, 2020, to Dec. 21, 2020.

2. GRADING SCALE CHANGES

Following the change to online instruction, many schools opted to change their grading scales from letter grades (A, B, C) to pass/fail courses. The new law specifies that you will continue to receive your benefits as long as the classes you take count toward your pursued degree.

Some students have expressed concerns regarding how this change may affect future admission to graduate programs that require a specific grade point average for selection. To address this issue, most graduate schools are putting waivers in place or have opted not to adjust students' GPAs based on one semester or quarter of pass/fail classes due to the current health crisis.

3. SCHOOL CLOSURES

According to the VA, if your school closes due to a national emergency, your GI Bill payments will continue through the end of the

term or for 28 days, whichever is sooner.

4. ON-THE-JOB TRAINING AND APPRENTICESHIP

Thinking about pursuing a trade or an apprenticeship in a field like roofing, plumbing, firefighting or law enforcement? The GI Bill training program can help you pay for books and supplies. It may also provide you with a monthly housing allowance (MHA). Before you sign up, make sure the program is approved for VA education benefits. You can check with your VA regional office here: <https://www.va.gov/find-locations/>. If your training program changes to an online format due to COVID-19, you will continue to receive your MHA.

5. HOUSING BENEFITS

The GI Bill provides a Monthly Housing Allowance (MHA) based on the ZIP code of the campus where you attend most of your classes. The MHA is generally the same as Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) for an E-5 with dependents. You are not required to live on campus to receive an MHA. To figure out your expected MHA, consult the VA's GI Bill Comparison Tool. Search by school name or type and click on the results.

Before the outbreak of COVID-19, students attending school online received only 50% of the national average BAH as their MHA. The new legislation has changed this policy temporarily to allow students who moved from in-person instruction to online classes to continue to receive their MHA. Currently enrolled and new students can receive the resident housing rate when in school from March 1, 2020, to Dec. 21, 2020.

6. LEAVING SCHOOL DUE TO COVID-19

If you need to leave school because you contracted COVID-19, the VA will pay you through your last day of attendance, but not through the end of the school term. In these situations, the law does not allow the VA to continue payments beyond the last day of attendance. Be aware that by withdrawing from school, you may receive an overpayment of MHA. Your school will notify the VA that you have withdrawn, and the VA will bill you for any overpayment. Ask your School Certifying Official (SCO) to report your withdrawal due to COVID-19 as a mitigating circumstance.

7. BOOKS AND SUPPLIES

Post-9/11 GI Bill recipients are eligible to receive the VA Book and Supply Stipend, up to \$1,000 per academic year. This stipend aids students in covering the cost of supplies, equipment, books and other



Photo courtesy www.military.com

educational tools. The \$1,000 stipend equals approximately \$41 per credit hour for a maximum of 12 hours per semester. For each semester you enroll full-time, you will receive \$500. The money is paid directly to the student at the beginning of the school term.

8. COMMUNICATING WITH THE VA ABOUT YOUR GI BILL BENEFITS

The VA is asking GI Bill students to submit a current email address to increase its capability for a paperless environment. You can update your email address by filing a request through the “Ask a Question” portal. The VA will contact you with important benefit updates and information. Additionally, the VA is accepting some documentation only by electronic submission.

9. GET TO KNOW YOUR SCHOOL CERTIFYING OFFICIAL (SCO)

Educational Institutions that receive VA funds have a designated School Certifying Official (SCO) to act as a representative for the university to the VA for GI Bill-eligible students. If you have questions about enrollment changes, certification, course changes or payment of allowances, an SCO can help. They can assist students with applying for benefits, filing forms, and resolving payment problems. SCOs also ensure that the school remains in compliance with VA and Defense Department policies.

Schools like Western Governors University are eager to assist veterans as they pursue higher education. They offer a Military Support Department and enrollment counselors to help you maximize your GI Bill benefit.

10. FINANCIAL HARDSHIP

The current health crisis is putting a financial strain on many Americans. If you are a military-connected student with a coronavirus-related financial hardship, there is help available.

Start with your current institution. Contact your SCO as well as the financial aid office. Many schools are receiving funds from the federal government to provide emergency

grants to students during the pandemic. Each school has its own guidelines and policies for the distribution of these funds and can provide information regarding how to apply for aid.

If you owe money to the VA, the VA's Debt Management Center (DMC) is encouraging veterans affected by COVID-19 who have debt and need relief to contact them by telephone at 1-800-827-0648 to request assistance. They will assist you in suspending debt collection until the end of 2020 or establish an extended repayment plan for you.

ONE MORE THING

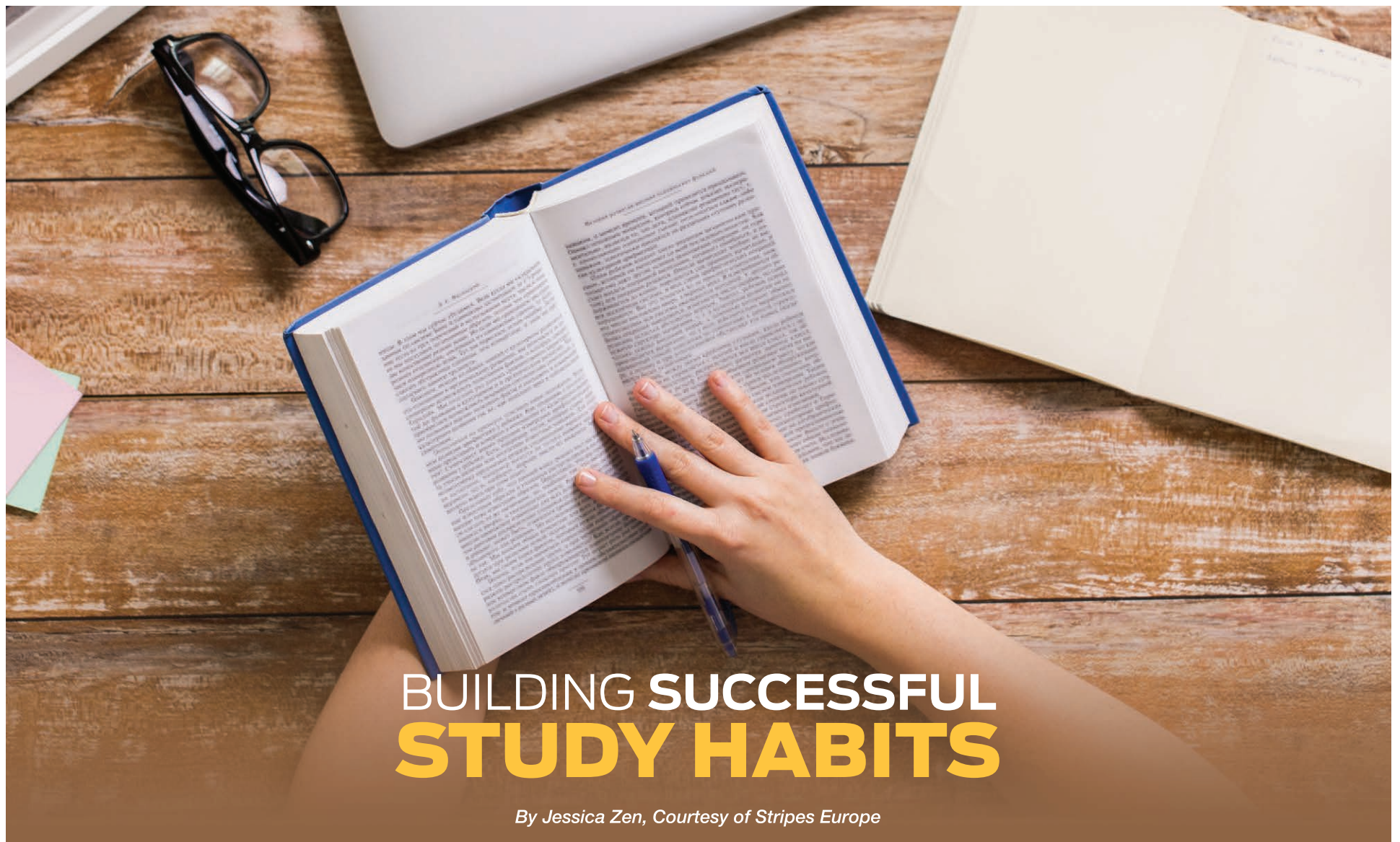
Education is expensive. Your GI Bill benefit may not be enough to cover all tuition costs. The Yellow Ribbon Program can help cover additional out-of-pocket expenses. Offered only to veterans and eligible dependents who receive VA education benefits, the Yellow Ribbon Program offsets costs through a partnership between the VA and the institution you attend. You can use funds from the program to pay mandatory fees and tuition. It cannot cover room and board, late fees, parking fines, etc.

Not all schools participate in the Yellow Ribbon Program, nor do all qualify. There are limits to how many students may be granted Yellow Ribbon benefits at a particular school. Check out <https://www.va.gov/education/yellow-ribbon-participating-schools/>

WGU IS A TOP YELLOW RIBBON, MILITARY-FRIENDLY UNIVERSITY

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- Courtesy of Military.com



BUILDING SUCCESSFUL STUDY HABITS

By Jessica Zen, Courtesy of Stripes Europe

During the school year, many students will be juggling homework and a life outside of school. While there are certainly more enjoyable tasks, there is no doubt that homework needs to take priority. Take the stress out of studying and homework by getting in the habit of utilizing these successful study habits.

- **Set aside a time for studying.** Pick a time that can always be utilized for studying. Perhaps it's right after dinner or as soon as you're done with work. Being consistent with timing will establish a routine.
- **Set goals.** Be aware of upcoming assignments and tasks that need to be completed. Prioritize assignments that are due first or studying for upcoming tests. Before study time is over, complete all necessary assignments.
- **Start with the hardest assignment.** In order to gauge how much time you will need to complete homework or studying, start with the hardest task first. That way you aren't already tired from multiple other assignments.
- **Utilize other students in your class.** If questions arise, don't hesitate to call other students for clarification or help. Just make sure it doesn't turn into cheating!
- **Don't procrastinate.** Often easier said than done, procrastinating can be a student's worst nightmare. It's important to stay on top of tasks so that you don't get bogged down with too much on a single day or weekend.
- **Eliminate distractions.** Be sure to find a space that will not distract you. If necessary, stay away from the TV, phone and radio in order to concentrate on the task at hand.
- **Get organized.** Keep some sort of planner or list of assignments and due dates. You can take pride in crossing items off the list as you complete them.

By utilizing these tips and tricks for studying, any student can stay on top of their schoolwork! All it takes is a little determination and organization. By following these guidelines, the stress of completing homework on time should be all but a thing of the past, if you stick with it!



Photo courtesy of army.mil

WHAT CAN YOU USE YOUR **GI BILL** FOR?

When most people think of the GI Bill they think of college. That is because most people do use their GI Bill benefits to go to a traditional college. Over the years the GI Bill has expanded greatly and it's not just for college anymore, Veteran Affairs (VA) realizes that many people do not want to go to college, and they have developed programs that pay for many different types of training besides college. You can use your GI Bill for many different types of training including:

- College degree programs including associate, bachelor, and advanced degree programs
- Vocational/Technical Training including non-college degree programs
- On-the-job/Apprenticeship Training
- Licensing & Certification Reimbursement
- National Testing Programs such as SAT, CLEP, AP, etc
- Flight Training
- Correspondence Training
- Work-study programs
- Tuition Assistance Top-Up
- Tutorial Assistance

- Courtesy of Military.com



AN EXPLANATION OF EDUCATION ADVANCEMENT EXAMS



Photo courtesy of marines.mil

You've been tested before and have the determination it takes to study hard and be prepared. Doing so on education advancement exams, which assess your skills, can help you earn your degree faster. Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support, or DANTEs, offers free or discounted tests for military members. By learning which tests to tackle and how best to prepare, you'll be ready to master exam time and be one step closer to your higher education goals.

Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support exams

Completing particular DANTEs-sponsored exams allows you to earn credits toward a college degree so you may be able to get your degree faster. Here are the basics on these tests.

- **ACT.** The ACT is designed to assess general educational development and measure performance of intellectual tasks required of a college student. The ACT is composed of four academic tests that measure academic development in English, mathematics, reading and science. Funding eligibility for service members varies based on type of testing location.
- **College-Level Examination Program.** The CLEP exam allows you to test

out of 33 test titles in subjects where you may have gained knowledge from work, education or military experience. Administration and examination fees are DANTEs-funded for eligible service members for the first attempt on all titles only.

- **DSST, formerly known as the DANTEs Subject Standardized Tests.** Prometric's DSST test is a form of prior-learning assessment offered via 38 college-subject exams. This nationally recognized credit-by-exam program grants college credit for learning outside of the classroom like on-the-job training, military experience or independent study. DANTEs funds fees for the first attempt on all DSST titles only, for eligible service members.
- **General Education Development Tests.** The GED test consists of four content areas designed to measure the high school level of adult learners who are not high school graduates. The content areas are math, science, social studies and language arts. DANTEs reimburses the test fee one time for eligible service members.
- **Graduate Management Admission Test.** The GMAT is available through some college and university test centers. This computer-adaptive test includes verbal, quantitative and analytical writing questions. The

GMAT is reimbursable (one time) for eligible service members.

- **Graduate Record Examinations.** The GRE is a computer-based test available through select college and university test centers. DANTEs will pay for one GRE General and one GRE Subject exam per lifetime for eligible service members.
- **PRAXIS I and II.** The PRAXIS I is a Pre-Professional Skills Test, or PPST, with three separate subject-area tests in reading, math and writing. Some states require students to pass the PPST before starting a teacher education program, or as a teacher-licensing exam. The PRAXIS II is a timed subject assessment focused on principles of learning and teaching. The exam offers more than 100 test subjects. Some states require you to pass this exam before teaching certain subject areas. Both PRAXIS exams are reimbursable one time for eligible service members.
- **SAT.** The SAT is an entrance exam used by most colleges and universities to make admissions decisions. The SAT assesses critical thinking skills needed for success in college and future career success. The test is based on knowledge developed through coursework in the reading, writing, language and math. Funding eligibility for service members varies

based on type of testing location.

Test prep scams

Protect yourself as you prepare and sign up for these exams. Be careful to avoid scams that could potentially waste your time and money. Keep an eye out for any test prep program that attempts to:

- Pressure you to buy test prep materials for exams you don't plan to take
- Give you purchasing credit with a third-party vendor
- Contact you at home with direct sales
- Promise college credit without enrolling in a college or university
- Include dictionaries or encyclopedias on book lists

Before you spend your hard-earned money on any test prep materials, contact your education services specialist. A specialist may be able to guide you to no-cost or low-cost materials through the education center, installation library or local college bookstores. Your education is a worthwhile investment of both time and money. Save a little of both by taking advantage of the available DANTEs-sponsored exams. Get more information on these exams at www.dantes.doded.mil.

– Courtesy of Military OneSource



Nicole E. & Kristian E.
Class of 2018; Class of 2018, Military Veteran

GET 25% OFF TUITION

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ELIGIBILITY

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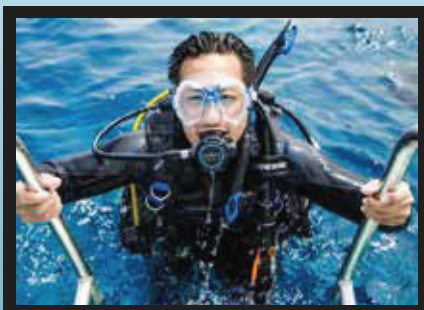
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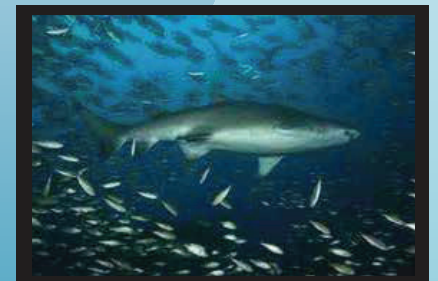
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See www.DiscoveryDiving.edu for extensive schedule and additional information.

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